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# The Impact Of Workplace Ostracism On Counterproductive Work Behavior With Organizational Cynicism As A Mediator

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## ABSTRACT

This research aims to investigate the relationship between workplace ostracism, organizational cynicism, and counterproductive work behavior (CWB) within the Multimedia Community of Wonosobo Regency, using the Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory. The research method employed is quantitative with a descriptive approach. Data were collected through questionnaires distributed to 100 members of the Multimedia Community in Wonosobo. The data were analyzed using the SPSS 21 statistical tool. The results of the study indicate that workplace ostracism has a significant positive impact on counterproductive work behavior. Organizational cynicism serves as a significant mediator in the relationship between workplace ostracism and counterproductive work behavior. The implications of this research emphasize the importance of management efforts in addressing workplace ostracism and reducing organizational cynicism to minimize counterproductive work behavior.

**Keywords**: Workplace Ostracism, Organizational Cynicism, Counterproductive Work Behavior.

## 1. Introduction

Human social life reflects the reality that individuals often experience various behaviors from their coworkers, both positive and negative. Unsupportive behavior in the workplace can have detrimental effects on both the organization and the individual. Numerous studies have examined this phenomenon, including in areas such as organizational cynicism, which emerges as a response to dissatisfaction and injustice in the workplace. Organizational cynicism also acts as a mediator between workplace ostracism and counterproductive work behavior (CWB).

In the workplace context, CWB has become a serious concern for organizations because it can negatively impact employee productivity and well-being, as well as cause significant financial losses (Gürlek, 2021). One factor identified as a cause of CWB is workplace ostracism, which refers to "an individual's perception of being ignored and excluded by others in the workplace" (Chen & Song, 2019).

Workplace ostracism is a common phenomenon that can lead to negative consequences for employees who experience it. Employees who feel ostracized may see a decline in their performance, and as a result, they may also ignore others in the workplace. Due to ostracism, employees may refrain from participating in innovation and creativity processes, as they feel ignored, avoided, or

excluded at work. Workplace ostracism has been identified as a potential trigger for CWB, which includes negative behaviors such as sabotage, theft, work avoidance, and harmful interpersonal action One possible mechanism that explains this relationship is through organizational cynicism, which involves negative perceptions of the organization as a whole, including doubts about the organization's goals, policies, and integrity.

Previous research has attempted to link the relationship between workplace ostracism and CWB through job satisfaction, emotional exhaustion, psychological contract breach, and work withdrawal (De Clercq et al., 2019). Most of these studies were conducted in Western countries, particularly the United States, and focused on large companies, thus less consideration was given to the Asian context, especially in small organizations or communities. To date, few studies have explored how employees' perceptions of workplace ostracism and organizational cynicism influence their intentions to engage in interpersonal deviance leading to CWB (Saif et al., 2021). Therefore, this study aims to investigate the impact of workplace ostracism on CWB through the attitude of organizational cynicism, which can be detrimental to organizations.

The Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, developed by Hobfoll (1989), posits that individuals strive to acquire, retain, and protect their resources, such as social support, recognition, and psychological well-being. When employees experience ostracism at work, they lose crucial social and emotional resources, such as support from coworkers or recognition from the organization. This loss can lead to stress and emotional exhaustion, which often triggers cynicism toward the organization.

Organizational cynicism may arise when employees feel that the organization or management is unfair, unsupportive, or indifferent to their well-being. In an effort to protect their remaining psychological resources, employees may develop CWB as a form of self-defense or as a response to dissatisfaction and cynicism. In this context, workplace ostracism is seen as a threat to employees' resources, leading to the emergence of organizational cynicism, which eventually results in CWB.

This research will examine the influence of workplace ostracism on counterproductive work behavior among community members. Organizational cynicism will be tested as a mediating variable in this study. In general, the goal is to determine the factors that most influence counterproductive behavior among the Multimedia community in Wonosobo. Specifically, the objectives of this research are: (1) to identify the level of workplace ostracism experienced by community members, (2) to identify the level of organizational cynicism within the community, (3) to analyze the relationship between workplace ostracism and counterproductive work behavior among community members, and (4) to analyze the mediating role of organizational cynicism in the relationship between workplace ostracism and counterproductive behavior in the workplace.

## 2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

### 2.1 Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory

The Conservation of Resources (COR) theory by Hobfoll (1989) focuses on how individuals strive to retain, preserve, and acquire their vital resources. This theory assumes that stress arises when a person loses or fails to obtain resources they deem essential. In cases of loss, stress and psychological pressure emerge as employees feel threatened by their inability to recover or replace lost resources (Akram et al., 2019).

In the workplace context, this theory can be used to understand the impact of workplace ostracism. Individuals feel ignored or sidelined by colleagues, which essentially threatens their social and psychological resources. Workplace ostracism can trigger cynicism toward the organization. Employees who feel neglected or treated unfairly are likely to develop a cynical attitude, wherein they begin to doubt the integrity and goodwill of the organization. This cynicism acts as a mediator in the relationship between ostracism and counterproductive work behavior (CWB), as a cynical attitude leads employees to feel less emotionally attached to the organization and more inclined to engage in negative actions against it.

Employees who view their workplace negatively experience stress when their resources are depleted (Akhtar et al., 2017). Consequently, workers who are mistreated feel frustrated due to the loss of vital resources, prompting them to engage in CWB. As cynicism toward the organization increases, employees feel less compelled to maintain their commitment, ultimately driving them to take CWB actions in response to ostracism and resource loss.

## 2.2 Workplace Ostracism and CWB

According to Attaullah and Afsar (2021), workplace ostracism is a conceptual phenomenon concerning individuals' feelings toward the organization, demonstrated in situations where they are ignored by others and group members within the organization. Psychology professors assert that workplace ostracism has a negative impact on organizations (Zhao et al., 2016).

Ferris et al. (2016) state that workplace ostracism is a highly detrimental form of unfair treatment, as employees who are ignored or ostracized experience a significant loss of social resources. This aligns with findings from Williams (2011), who emphasized that ostracism leads to profound psychological pain and can threaten fundamental human needs for connection and self-esteem.

Therefore, ostracism is regarded as social death by its victims (Einarsen, Skogstad, & Glasø, 2013). Previous research concludes that workplace ostracism adversely affects employees' attitudes and behaviors. According to Wu, Liu, Kwan, and Lee (2016), workplace ostracism negatively impacts employees' tendencies to engage in organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) and motivates them to participate in counterproductive work behavior (CWB) (Yang & Treadway, 2018).

In an effort to cope with stress and protect their remaining resources, employees may exhibit counterproductive behaviors. Yan, Zhou, Long, and Ji (2014) explain that CWB often arises as a defensive mechanism to address resource loss and dissatisfaction stemming from poor working conditions. Therefore, based on the COR theory, it can be hypothesized that workplace ostracism leads to the loss of psychological resources, which in turn increases the likelihood of CWB as a response to stress. This research aims to explain that the relationship between workplace ostracism and CWB is mediated by the loss of psychological resources, where ostracism causes stress and dissatisfaction that subsequently trigger counterproductive behavior as an attempt to maintain or restore balance from lost resources.

H1**:** Workplace ostracism positively influences counterproductive work behavior (CWB).

**2.3 The Mediating Role of Organizational Cynicism in the Relationship Between Workplace Ostracism and CWB**

When employees feel ignored or treated unfairly through ostracism, they may develop beliefs that their organization is dishonest, unjust, and untrustworthy. This aligns with findings from O'Reilly and Banki (2016), which state that perceptions of injustice within an organization can increase employee cynicism. According to Durrah (2020), organizational cynicism encompasses various detrimental attitudes and actions among members, including counterproductive work behavior (CWB).

Both organizational cynicism and CWB are harmful to organizations. Organizational cynicism is a negative attitude, while CWB refers to negative behaviors that undermine the organization; in terms of activity, negative attitudes are often followed by negative behaviors (Cohen and Liu, 2021). Previous research by Mousa et al. (2020) has found a positive relationship between organizational cynicism and CWB, indicating that the presence of organizational cynicism can lead to higher instances of CWB.

Within the COR framework, organizational cynicism emerges as a protective mechanism when employees feel their resources are threatened. For example, employees who feel isolated or ignored may develop cynicism as a way to alleviate the emotional pressure they experience. Simultaneously, they may engage in CWB as a means to "take back" lost resources or as a form of retaliation against an organization perceived as unjust (Jiang et al., 2019). According to COR theory, when employees perceive their resources are continually diminishing without compensation or recovery, they are more likely to engage in CWB as a response to feelings of frustration and exhaustion (Taimur & Khan, 2017).

H2**:** Organizational cynicism mediates the relationship between workplace ostracism and counterproductive work behavior (CWB).
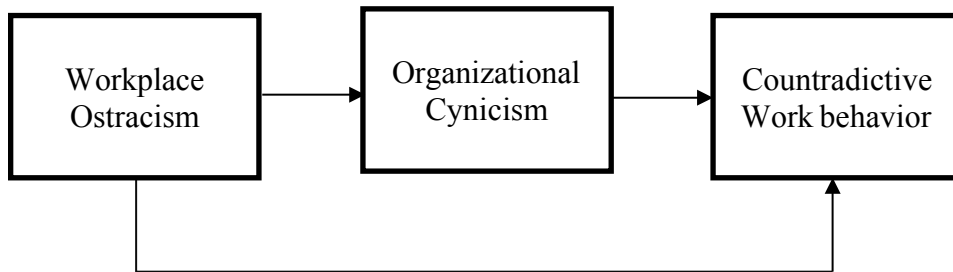


Figure 1. Research Model

**3. Research Methodology**

**3.1 Sample**

The subjects of this study are 100 respondents who are members of a multimedia community in Wonosobo. This research employs a quantitative approach with a descriptive design. This approach is based on positivist philosophy and aims to investigate a specific population and sample. Data

collection was conducted using a research instrument that had been prepared, and data analysis was performed quantitatively/statistically. The object of this research is the relationship between workplace ostracism, mediated by organizational cynicism, and its influence on counterproductive work behavior (CWB). The data source for this study consists of primary data obtained directly from the research subjects through the distribution of questionnaires. To determine the sample size for this research, a calculation formula quoted from Hair (2010) was used, whereby the sample size is five times the total number of indicators employed.

## 4.2 Measures

To measure the variable of workplace ostracism, a scale consisting of 10 items developed by Ferris et al. (2008) was used. The variable of organizational cynicism was measured using 6 items from Wilkerson et al. (2008). The variable of counterproductive work behavior (CWB) was measured using 9 items adopted from the scale by Spector et al. (2006), which assesses CWB across four dimensions: sabotage, production deviance, withdrawal, and theft. All items were measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from one to five.

## 4.3 Data Analysis Methods

Data were analyzed applying statistical tool SPSS 21. Mediation/ moderation regression was conducted through Process Macro SPSS 21 applying bootstrap process proposed by Hayes, (2013) for hypotheses testing.

## 4. Results

## 4.1 Respondent Profile

The descriptive statistics show that the sample consists of 100 respondents, with 59% being female and 41% male. The age profile indicates that the majority of respondents, 45%, are aged between 26-35 years, followed by 42% aged between 20-25 years, 9% aged between 36-45 years, and 4% aged between 46-65 years. In terms of education, the majority of respondents, 64%, hold a bachelor's degree, 25% hold a master's degree, and 11% have a high school diploma. Regarding work experience, the majority of respondents, 35%, have less than 3 years of work experience, followed by 34% with 1-3 years of experience, and 31% with less than 1 year of experience.

## 4.2 Results of Data Quality Test

## 4.2.1 Validity Analysis

Table 4.1 Validity Analysis

| Workplace Ostracism (WO) | rhitung | rtabel | Kesimpulan |
|---|---|---|---|
| WO1 | 0,905 | 0.196 | Valid |
| WO2 | 0,901 | | Valid |
| WO3 | 0,722 | | Valid |
| WO4 | 0,836 | | Valid |
| WO5 | 0,890 | | Valid |
| WO6 | 0,869 | | Valid |
| WO7 | 0,902 | | Valid |
| WO8 | 0,798 | | Valid |

| Workplace Ostracism (WO) | rhitung | rtabel | Kesimpulan |
|---|---|---|---|
| WO9 | 0,724 | | Valid |
| WO10 | 0,846 | | Valid |
| Organizational Cynicism (OC) | | | |
| OC1 | 0,957 | 0.196 | Valid |
| OC2 | 0,954 | | Valid |
| OC3 | 0,964 | | Valid |
| OC4 | 0,949 | | Valid |
| OC5 | 0,845 | | Valid |
| OC6 | 0,833 | | Valid |
| Countradictive Work behavior(CWB) | | | |
| CWB1 | 0,861 | 0.196 | Valid |
| CWB2 | 0,784 | | Valid |
| CWB3 | 0,860 | | Valid |
| CWB4 | 0,849 | | Valid |
| CWB5 | 0,791 | | Valid |
| CWB6 | 0,865 | | Valid |
| CWB7 | 0,864 | | Valid |
| CWB8 | 0,864 | | Valid |

Based on Table 4.1, an item is considered valid if it has a correlation coefficient (r calculated) greater than (r table). The r table is obtained through the degree of freedom with a significance level of 5% from the sample size; in this study, the sample consists of 100 respondents, resulting in an r table value of 0.196. In the validity test conducted in this research, each item demonstrated a value above the r table, specifically greater than 0.196, indicating that all items are valid.

### 4.2.2 Reliability Analysis

Table 4.2 Reliability Analysis

| Standar Alpha | Cronbach's Alpha | Kesimpulan |
|---|---|---|
| 0.70 | 0.874 | Realibel |

Based on Table 4.2, the instrument testing for data collection aims to assess whether the questionnaire used is reliable. A questionnaire is considered reliable if it has a Cronbach's Alpha value < 0.70. From the table, it can be observed that all variables utilized in this study have Cronbach's Alpha values < 0.70, indicating that all variables are reliable.

### 4.3 Classical Assumption Test

Table 4.3 Classical Assumption Test

| Test | Description | Mark |
|---|---|---|
| Normality | Kolomogorov-Smirnov | |
| | Significance Asymptotic | 0.200 |
| Multicollinearity | Variance Inflation Factor | |
| R Square | Workplace Ostracism | 2.247 |
| R Square | Organizational Cynicism | 2.247 |
| | Tolerance | |

| | Workplace Ostracism | 0.445 |
|---|---|---|
| | Organizational Cynicism | 0.445 |
| Heteroscedasticity | Glester Test | |
| | Workplace Ostracism | 0.218 |

Tabel 4.3 shows the results of the classical assumption tests, including normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity tests. The autocorrelation test was not performed because the data used is not secondary data. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test results indicate an asymptotic significance value of 0.200, which is greater than 0.05, demonstrating that the data is normally distributed. The VIF value of 2.247 (below 10) and the tolerance value of 0.445 (above 0.05) indicate no multicollinearity. The Glejser test also does not show any heteroscedasticity issues, with significance values of 0.218 for Workplace Ostracism and 0.213 for Organizational Cynicism. All classical assumption criteria have been met, thus the data qualifies for regression analysis.

## 4.4 Regression Test

### Table 4.4 Regression of the Relationship Between Workplace Ostracism and CWB

| Test | Description | Mark |
|---|---|---|
| Model Summary | R Square | 0.766 |
| | Standard Error | 0.930 |
| Analysis of Variance | F | 321.207 |
| | Significance | 0.000 |
| Coefficient Regression | Constants | |
| | Workplace Ostracism | |
| | Unstandardized. Coeff. B | 0.648 |
| | t | 17.922 |
| | Sig | 0.000 |

Table 4.4 shows that the Workplace Ostracism (WO) variable significantly affects the Counterproductive Work Behavior (CWB) variable, with 76.6% of the variation explained by the model ($R^2$ = 0.766). The Standard Error is 0.930, with an F-test value of 321.207 and a significance level of 0.000, indicating that the regression model provides a good prediction.

### Table 4.5 Mediasi pengaruh Workplace Ostracism terhadap CWB

| Test | Description | Mark |
|---|---|---|
| Model Summary | R Square | 0.926 |
| | Standard Error | 0.729 |
| Analysis of Variance | F | 393.069 |
| | Significance | 0.000 |
| Coefficient Regression | Constants | |
| | Workplace Ostracism | |
| | Unstandardized. Coeff. B | 0.397 |
| | t | 9.365 |
| | Sig | 0.000 |
| | Organizational Cynicism | |
| | Unstandardized. Coeff. B | 0.693 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| t | 7.918 | |
| Sig | 0.000 | |

Table 4.5 indicates that both the Workplace Ostracism (WO) and Organizational Cynicism (OC) variables significantly affect the Counterproductive Work Behavior (CWB) variable, with 92.6% of the variation explained by the model ($R^2 = 0.926$). The Standard Error is 0.729, with an F-test value of 393.069 and a significance level of 0.000. This demonstrates that both Workplace Ostracism and Organizational Cynicism have a positive and significant impact on CWB. As the levels of ostracism and cynicism in the workplace increase, so do the CWB behaviors exhibited by employees.

## 5. Discussion

### *5.1* **The Impact of Workplace Ostracism on** *CWB*

In this study, Hypothesis 1 states that workplace ostracism positively influences counterproductive work behavior (CWB). This is evidenced by a t-value of 17.992 with a significance value of 0.000, supporting the research hypothesis.

Workplace ostracism (WO) significantly affects counterproductive work behavior (CWB). Various studies indicate that WO often triggers negative emotions such as anger and frustration, which in turn motivate individuals to engage in CWB as a means to vent their emotions or retaliate against the treatment they receive (Liu, M., 2021). Another study by Zhao et al. (2013) also found that workplace ostracism increases employees' tendencies to participate in CWB, such as procrastination, job sabotage, or aggressive actions toward colleagues. This is attributed to the emotional dissatisfaction arising from feelings of exclusion.

### 5.2 **The Mediating Relationship of Organizational Cynicism Between Workplace Ostracism and Counterproductive Work Behavior (CWB)**

In this study, Hypothesis 2 indicates that organizational cynicism mediates the relationship between workplace ostracism and counterproductive work behavior (CWB). This is evidenced by a t-value of 7.918 with a significance value of 0.000, thereby supporting the hypothesis.

Recent research shows that social injustice, workplace ostracism, and authoritarian leadership reinforce organizational cynicism. For example, social exclusion in the workplace tends to increase feelings of frustration and alienation, which encourages cynical behavior and undermines work productivity (Ewis, 2014; Ferris et al., 2015). The study by Ferris et al. (2015) supports this view, demonstrating that organizational cynicism strengthens the relationship between workplace ostracism and CWB. The greater the level of perceived ostracism, the more likely employees are to develop cynicism, which in turn triggers behaviors detrimental to the organization. In such conditions, organizational cynicism acts as a key connector that exacerbates the negative impact of workplace ostracism on employee behavior.

Moreover, various prior studies have revealed that the increase in CWB is largely due to the significant impact of workplace ostracism on employee attitudes (Ullah, 2019; Jahanzeb & Fatima, 2018). As feelings of cynicism develop, they can motivate employees to engage in CWB, such as shirking responsibilities, working inefficiently, or even damaging organizational assets (Ugwu, 2023)

## 6. Conclusion

Workplace ostracism within the Multimedia Community of Wonosobo directly increases the likelihood of members engaging in detrimental behaviors. Cynicism toward the community exacerbates the negative impact of ostracism, leading to higher instances of counterproductive work behavior (CWB). Therefore, this community needs to focus on creating an inclusive environment that minimizes exclusion and promotes active member engagement to reduce cynicism and enhance productivity and collaboration within the community.

This study has several limitations. First, it is cross-sectional in nature. Future research could gather longitudinal data, as it is nearly impossible to draw causal conclusions based on cross-sectional data (Nour & Plourde, 2019). Second, the study was conducted within a specific regional context. Future research should consider moderator variables such as social support or leadership, which may influence the dynamics of workplace ostracism, cynicism, and CWB. Third, employing multi-source measurement methods, including data from supervisors or colleagues, would complement self-report data. Lastly, involving samples from various cultural contexts and industry sectors would enhance generalizability.

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