RESEARCH ARTICLE

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Dispositional Antecedents and Consequences of Workplace Ostracism: An Empirical Examination

Abstract   Drawing on the victim precipitation theory and self-esteem theory, this study examines the dispositional antecedents and consequences of workplace ostracism. Using data from 208 employees and their 96 immediate supervisors in two petroleum and gas companies in China, this study finds that agreeableness and extraversion are negatively, and neuroticism is positively related to workplace ostracism. Moreover, workplace ostracism is found to be negatively related to employee job performance, and this relationship is mediated by employee organization-based self-esteem.

Keywords   personality traits, workplace ostracism, organization-based self-esteem, job performance

1   Introduction

A considerable amount of research has revealed that ostracism is an important social phenomenon that substantially impacts the way people treat and are treated by others (Williams, 1997, 2001, 2007). Despite the importance of ostracism, little attention has been paid to workplace ostracism. This is surprising given that

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workplace is one of the most important social contexts where ostracism occurs (Fox and Stallworth, 2005; Miceli and Near, 1992). For example, a survey for 262 full-time workers indicated that, over a five-year period, 66% respondents received the silent treatment and 29% respondents reported that other people intentionally left the area when the respondents entered (Fox and Stallworth, 2005). Recently, however, studies have begun to examine workplace ostracism (Ferris, Brown, Berry and Lian, 2008), and their initial evidence suggest that workplace ostracism has significantly detrimental impact on both employees and organizations, including deteriorated psychological well-beings (depression, anxiety, emotional exhaustion and job tension), unfavorable job attitudes (job dissatisfaction and reduced affective commitment), job withdrawals (turnover intention and job search behavior), workplace deviance (organizational and interpersonal deviance), and decreased job performance contributions (decreased job performance and organizational citizenship behavior).

In spite of the significant progress that recent studies have made in understanding the consequences of workplace ostracism, there has been no published research (to the best of our knowledge) that ever examined its antecedents. An examination of the antecedents of workplace ostracism is indeed important because only when the antecedents are specified, can efficacious interventions be taken to minimize the incidence of workplace ostracism. It is to this point that scholars have recently called for more research on this issue, so as to better understand how workplace ostracism happens (Ferris et al., 2008).

Drawing on the victim precipitation theory (Curtis, 1974; Elias, 1986), we respond to the call by investigating employee personality traits as the antecedents of workplace ostracism. As core and stable characteristics of individuals, personality traits reflect the unique way an individual interacts with others (John and Srivastva, 1999; McCrae and Costa, 1987). Researchers have argued that individuals possessing certain personality traits are more likely to be ostracized in workplace (Williams, 1997, 2001, 2007). However, they have barely investigated the specific personality traits. This research is intended to fill this gap, which may provide the answer for the critical question of "who is likely to be ostracized in workplace." Since there are various kinds of personality traits, to conduct a focused examination and facilitate comparison, this research will employ the well-known five-factor model of personality (FFM) as a framework to examine the relationships between employee personality traits and workplace ostracism (John and Srivastva, 1999; McCrae and John, 1992).

Moreover, a review of workplace ostracism literature reveals that the underlying process linking workplace ostracism to employee work outcomes has been largely unexplored. In other words, it is still unclear how workplace ostracism functions. Self-esteem theory and research on ostracism suggest that

when an individual is ostracized by others, his or her sense of self-esteem will be threatened (Ferris et al., 2008; Korman, 1970; Williams, 1997, 2001). It is thus likely that workplace ostracism is related to employee work outcomes at least in part because workplace ostracism undermines target employee's self-esteem. We, therefore, not only test the direct relationship between workplace ostracism and employee work outcome (i.e., job performance), but also test the mediating effect of organization-based self-esteem on this relationship. Job performance is focused in this research because it is the most widely studied work behavior and is closely related to organizational effectiveness.

In sum, the purpose of this paper is threefold: (1) Employ the Five Factor model of personality to examine the relationships between employee personality traits and workplace ostracism; (2) investigate the effect of workplace ostracism on employee job performance; (3) examine the mediating effect of organizational-based self-esteem on the relationship between workplace ostracism and employee job performance. Besides, to alleviate common method bias and help confirm our proposed causal relationships (Cook and Campbell, 1979; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee and Podsakoff, 2003), a three-wave research design will be employed. The conceptual model of this study is illustrated in Fig. 1.
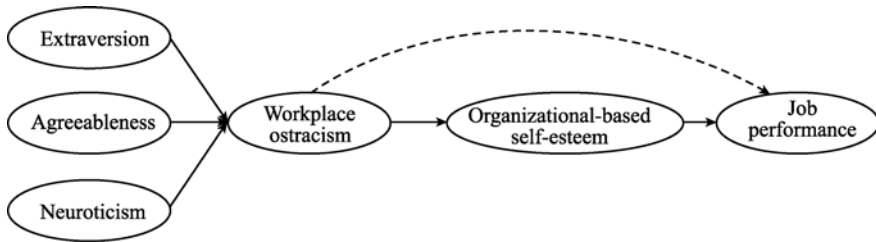

Fig. 1 The Conceptual Model of the Study

2 Theory and Hypotheses

2.1 Workplace Ostracism

Workplace ostracism, defined as "the extent to which an individual perceives that he or she is ignored or excluded by others in workplace" (Ferris et al., 2008), is a common and universal phenomenon that occurs across nations, organizations and hierarchical levels. Examples of ostracism behaviors in workplace include withholding needed information, giving the silent treatment, avoiding conversation or eye contact, and giving the cold shoulder (Williams, 2001). Although ostracism behaviors in workplace can display in various forms, a common feature is that their underlying motives are often ambiguous (Williams,

2001). Indeed, ostracism can either be intentional and unintentional, and it is the target's subjective explanations that determine its impact (Sommer, Williams, Ciarocco and Baumeister, 2001; Williams, 2001).

2.2   Employee Personality Traits and Workplace Ostracism

The theoretical foundation underlying the relationships between employee personality traits and workplace ostracism (which can be conceptualized as a specific form of workplace victimization) is the victim precipitation theory. According to the theory, individuals engaging in aversive behaviors do not randomly choose their targets; rather, people possessing certain characteristics are more likely to be targeted than others (Curtis, 1974; Elias, 1986; Olweus, 1978). The person who is particularly at risk of being victimized possesses two different characters (Olweus, 1978). One is being highly anxious, insecure and quiet, which signals that the target is weak and unwilling/unable to defend him/her against victimization. Another is not only being highly anxious but also very aggressive, and therefore is likely to provoke hostile behaviors from others. According to Olweus (1978), the former and the latter can be described as submissive and provocative victims, respectively.

   Although the victim precipitation theory originally comes from criminology, recent studies suggest that it can also be applied to workplace victimization research (Aquino, 2000; Aquino, Grover, Bradfield and Allen, 1999; Bowling and Beehr, 2006; Coyne, Seigne and Randall, 2000; Scott and Judge, 2009). For example, based on Olweus's (1978) typology of submissive and provocative victims, Aquino (2000) and Aquino et al. (1999) examined how target self-determination (as an indicator of submissiveness), negative affectivity and trait aggressiveness (indicators of provocativeness) were related to workplace victimization. They found support for the idea of submissive and provocative victims by showing that self-determination was negatively to workplace victimization, and negative affectivity and trait aggressiveness were positively related to workplace victimization. Similarly, Coyne et al. (2000) found that individuals high in neuroticism (as an indicator of provocativeness) and low in extroversion (as an indicator of submissiveness) are more likely to be the targets of workplace bullying. Furthermore, in another recent study, Scott and Judge (2009) found that employees low in agreeableness (as an indicator of provocativeness) received more counterproductive workplace behavior from their coworkers.

   Based on these findings and the victim precipitation theory, this study examines how target extroversion (as an indicator of submissiveness), agreeableness and neuroticism (indicators of provocativeness) are related to workplace ostracism. As three of the Big Five dimensions of personality,

extraversion is the tendency for an individual to experience positive emotions, activity, and flexibility; agreeableness is the tendency to be altruistic, sympathetic, cooperative, trusting, and considerate; and neuroticism is the tendency for an individual to experience negative emotions such as such as anger, anxiety, temperament, and worry (Goldberg, 1990; McCrae and Costa, 1987; John and Srivastava, 1999). Relating to the remaining traits comprising Big Five (i.e., conscientious and openness to experience), extroversion, agreeableness and neuroticism are unique in that all of them possess a social interaction component (Goldberg, 1990; McCrae and Costa, 1987). Since introversion (low in extraversion), disagreeableness (low in agreeableness) and neuroticism are all socially unfavorable individual characteristics (Anthony, Holmes and Wood, 2007), based on the victim precipitation theory, we posit that employees with these characteristics are more likely to be ostracized by others in workplace.

Extraversion. Extraversion is a central dimension of human personality. Eysenck (1982) argued that people score high in extroversion (extraverts) have a low arousal level and thus tend to seek external stimulation. In contrast, those score low in extroversion (introverts) have a relatively high base rate arousal level and thus often avoid outside stimulation. This causes introverts to be more passive, more reserved, less outgoing, and less sociable than extraverts (Goldberg, 1990; McCrae and Costa, 1987). In the context of workplace, there are two reasons to expect that introverts are more likely to be ostracized. First, introverts generally prefer solitary over social activities. Since they spend little time and efforts on interpersonal interactions, it is likely that others may form prejudices or misunderstandings toward them (Ashton, Lee and Paunonen, 2002), thus putting them at higher risks of being ostracized. Second, introverts are quiet and passive, which may signal to the potential perpetrators that they are unwilling to defend themselves against ostracism. The potential perpetrators may thus feel safer to perform ostracism toward introverted targets. Hence, as the victim precipitation theory implies, introverts are more likely to become the 'submissive victims' of workplace ostracism (Olweus, 1978).

H1   Extraversion is negatively related to workplace ostracism.

Agreeableness. People who are agreeable are characterized as likeable, friendly, compliant, courteous, flexible, trusting, good-natured, tolerant, and conforming to social conventions (Goldberg, 1990; McCrae and Costa, 1987). In contrast, disagreeable employees are generally unkind and very aggressive. They often behave antagonistically toward others when confronted by aversive stimuli, and are very argumentative (Graziano and Eisenberg, 1997). Consistent with this observation, there is evidence that disagreeable individuals are often involved in a larger number of interpersonal conflicts (Graziano and Eisenberg, 1997; Graziano, Jensen-Campbell and Hair, 1996; Tobin, Graziano, Vanman and

Tassinary, 2000). While these findings are not entirely surprising, less obvious are the findings of workplace bullying studies that suggest a negative relationship between agreeableness and victimization (Coyne et al., 2000). Following the logic of victim precipitation theory, especially Olweus's (1978) notion of provocative victims, it is logical to propose that disagreeableness employees are more likely to be ostracized in workplace. This will happen because the cognitive and behavioral characteristics of disagreeableness employees tend to make them prone to respond to threats with hostility, which, in turn, can invite frequent aversive responses, such as ostracism, from others.

H2   Agreeableness is negatively related to workplace ostracism.

Neuroticism. People high in neuroticism (neurotics) are sensitive to rejection. They tend to perceive interactions with others as threatening, and are inclined to interpret an ordinary unintended interpersonal ignorance as an intended rejection (Horney, 1937; Downey and Feldman, 1996). Moreover, when facing threat, neurotics tend to be upright and often express hostile emotions and behaviors toward others, which in turn may provoke others to response to them in adverse way, such as ostracism (LePine and Van Dyne, 2001; Downey and Feldman, 1996). Drawing on Olweus's (1978) victim precipitation theory, it seems that the cognitive and behavioral characteristics of neurotics are consistent with the prototypical cognitive and behavioral characteristics of provocative victims (Olweus, 1978). In support of this argument, previous research has indicated that neurotics suffer more interpersonal problems (e.g., interpersonal conflict) and are more likely to become the provocative victims of workplace victimization (Donnellan, Conger and Bryant, 2004; Scott and Judge, 2009). Hence, we expect that neurotics are more likely to be ostracized in workplace.

H3   Neuroticism is positively related to workplace ostracism.

We do not expect conscientiousness and openness to experience to be related to workplace ostracism because their theoretical linkages are quite vague. Conscientiousness is characterized by achievement orientation, dependability, orderliness, and responsibility, while openness to experience reflects intelligence, unconventionality, and creativity (Goldberg, 1990; McCrae and Costa, 1987). At the first glance, these variables may seem to be negatively associated with workplace ostracism. For example, individuals with high levels of conscientiousness may set aside personal goals to meet the requirements set by others, which would be helpful to build up a cooperative image. Similarly, individuals high in openness to experience tend to be more capable of generating novel ideas and solving challenging problems, which is likely to be appreciated by other colleagues. However, a careful examination of the negative aspects of

conscientiousness and openness to experience reveals that conscientiousness and openness to experience may also facilitate workplace ostracism. For instance, highly conscientious individuals may be task-focused and insensitive to interpersonal relationships by acting as compulsive perfectionists and workaholics, while highly open individuals adhere little to traditional values and/or norms, which may provoke unfavorable responses (e.g., ostracism) form traditional employees. Hence, conscientiousness and openness can be a two-edge sword for workplace ostracism. Accordingly, we do not hypothesize that conscientiousness and openness to experience are related to workplace ostracism. Rather, following previous studies (Liao and Chuang, 2004; Major, Turner and Fletcher, 2006), we treat conscientiousness and openness to experience as control variables in this research.

2.3   Workplace Ostracism and Job Performance

Due to the social nature of human beings and our basic need to be accepted in groups, being ostracized can be painful and unpleasant. This is especially true in workplace, where the frequency of team works has increased, thereby providing powerful needs to communicate with other colleagues (Sundstrom, McIntyre, Halfill and Richards, 2000). Consistent with this argument, research has showed that workplace ostracism is related to lower levels of satisfaction and commitment, and higher levels of anxiety, depression, and turnover intention (Ferris et al., 2008).

In addition to deteriorate psychological well-beings and job attitudes, workplace ostracism is also likely to undermine employee job performance. First, workplace ostracism threatens employee's basic human needs and depletes his or her psychological resources (Hobfoll, 1989; Williams, 2001). Given that psychological resources are limited and critical for individual growth and development, to regain such resources, employees may spend more time and energy on managing their interpersonal problems rather than focusing on their core job tasks, which may downgrade their job performance (Hobfoll, 1989). Second, workplace ostracism "cuts" target employees' social ties with other organizational members (Williams, 2001). As critical work-related information and resources are often embodied in social ties, employees with few social ties are likely to have fewer chances to access to these important information and resources, which in turn leads to lower level of job performance (Seibert, Kraimer and Liden, 2001). Finally, initial empirical evidence from Ferris et al. (2008) showed that workplace ostracism was negatively correlated with job performance. Hence, taken the above argument together, we propose that:

H4   Workplace ostracism is negatively related to employee job performance.

2.4   The Mediating Role of Organizational-Based Self-Esteem

Drawing on self-esteem theory (Korman, 1966, 1970; Dipboye, 1977; Sedikides, Gaertner and Tosuchi, 2003), we examine the mediating role of organizational-based self-esteem in the relationship between workplace ostracism and employee job performance. Self-esteem theory argues that people have a unique and fundamental need for self-esteem. Satisfaction of the self-esteem need leads to the senses of self-confidence, adequacy, and worth, and without it people experience inferiority, weakness and helplessness (Korman, 1966; Rosenberg, Schooler, Schoenbach and Rosenberg, 1995). Moreover, the need for self-esteem is posited to exist across cultures and nations (Sedikides et al., 2003), and play a critical role in determining human motivation, attitudes and behaviors (Korman, 1966, 1970; Dipboye, 1977).

Self-esteem is a multifaceted phenomenon and usually exists at different levels of specificity, such as global, organization, and task or situation-specific self-esteem (Korman, 1970; Pierce and Gardner, 2004). Since in our study the research context is organization, we focus on organizational-based self-esteem, which is often defined as "the degree to which organizational members believe that they can satisfy their needs by participating in roles within the context of the organization" (Pierce, Gardner, Cummings and Dunham, 1989). Research on the originals of organizational-based self-esteem suggests that social messages sent from meaningful and significant others (e.g., supervisor and team members) are one of the primary sources of information by which employees form their self-esteem beliefs in organizations (Pierce and Gardner, 2004; Pierce et al., 1989). In other words, organizational-based self-esteem is at least to a certain degree socially constructed. As an aversive interpersonal experience, workplace ostracism threatens the target employee's organization-based self-esteem. This is because workplace ostracism is often associated with punishment and implies that the employee has done something wrong or is inherently bad or unwanted (Williams, 2001). The incorporation of such negative information into the employee's self-concept leads to deteriorated organization-based self-esteem.

The deteriorated organization-based self-esteem may in turn take away the employee's motivation to perform. Self-esteem theory argues that individuals will engage (or disengage) in certain behavioral roles so as to enhance (or maintain) their senses of self-esteem (Korman, 1970; Dipboye, 1977; Sedikides et al., 2003). Because individuals possessing high levels of organization-based self-esteem place a high value on their performance, they tend to perform more to reinforce their positive images. In contrast, people who have negative images of themselves commonly engage in "damage control." Since they have little confidence in performing their works, to prevent further loss of their self-esteem, they usually withhold their work efforts, which ultimately results in poor

performance (Dipboye, 1977; Pierce and Gardner, 2004). Consistent with the above reasoning, empirical evidence has shown that low levels of organization-based self-esteem are associated with decreased job performance (Chen and Aryee, 2007; DiPaula and Campbell, 2002; Erez and Judge, 2001; Murray, Holmes and Griffin, 2000; Murray, Holmes, MacDonald and Ellsworth, 1998). Taken the above arguments together, it is logical for us to propose that organization-based self-esteem serves as a mediator in the relationship between workplace ostracism and job performance.

H5   Organization-based self-esteem mediates the relationship between workplace ostracism and employee job performance

3   Methods

3.1   Sample and Procedures

Participants in this study were employees of two large petroleum and gas firms located in a northwest city of China. Three waves of data collection were performed in order to reduce the common method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003). In the first-wave survey (T_1), the subordinates provided information on their own demographics and Big-Five personality traits. In the second-wave survey (T_2, four months after T_1), the subordinates reported their perceptions of workplace ostracism. In the third-wave survey (T_3, four months after T_2), the subordinates provided information on organizational-based self-esteem, while their supervisors rated their job performance.

Data were collected based on the following procedures. With the assistance of the firm's human resource managers, questionnaires were administered to 443 randomly selected subordinates (corresponding to 120 supervisors). Survey questionnaires were coded before distribution and the human resource department assisted to record the identity numbers and the respondents' names to match supervisor-subordinate dyads. The scales were converted into Chinese following the commonly used back translation procedure (Brislin, 1980). Respondents were informed that the survey was aimed to examine the experience of the human resource practices and were assured of the confidentiality of responses. Each respondent placed his or her completed survey in a sealed envelope and returned it to a box set up in the human resource department.

In wave one, 321 complete subordinate questionnaires were returned, with a response rate of 72.5%. Four months later, the second-wave survey was conducted, and questionnaires were distributed to the 321 subordinates (as one subordinate left, only 320 subordinates got the questionnaires). Among 320 subordinate questionnaires, 268 complete questionnaires were returned, with a response rate of 83.8%. Finally, four months after the second-wave survey, the

third-wave survey was conducted, and questionnaires were distributed to the 268 subordinates and their 106 immediate supervisors (we confirmed from the human resource department that all subordinates did not change their supervisors across Times 1, 2, and 3). In total, 215 complete subordinate questionnaires and 102 complete supervisor questionnaires were returned. After deleting those mismatched cases, the final sample of this study consisted of 208 matched supervisor-subordinate dyads, including 208 subordinates and 96 supervisors.

Each supervisor rated one to four subordinates. Of the 208 subordinates, 51.4% were male. The average age was 36.45 years, and the average organizational tenure was 10.02 years. Of the 96 supervisors, 61.5% were male, with an average age of 38.33 years and an average organization tenure of 10.81 years.

3.2 Measures

Unless otherwise indicated, response options of the following scales ranged from 1, "strongly disagree," to 5, "strongly agree."

Big-Five personality traits. A fifty-item scale developed by Goldberg (1990) was used to measure employee Big-Five personality traits: extraversion, agreeableness, neuroticism, conscientiousness, and openness to experience. Sample items included: "I feel comfortable around people (extraversion)," "I am interested in people (agreeableness)," "I get stressed out easily (neuroticism)," "I am always prepared (conscientiousness)," and "I have a rich vocabulary (openness to experience)." The reliabilities for the extraversion, agreeableness, neuroticism, conscientiousness, and openness to experience domain scales were 0.87, 0.85, 0.90, 0.89, and 0.87, respectively.

Workplace ostracism. A ten-item scale developed by Ferris et al. (2008) was used to measure workplace ostracism. Sample items included: "Others ignored you at work," "Others left the area when you entered," and "Your greetings have gone unanswered at work." The scale's reliability was 0.89.

Organizational-based self-esteem. A ten-item scale developed by Pierce et al. (1989) was used to measure organizational-based self-esteem. Sample items included: "I count around here," "I am taken seriously around here," and "I am an important part of this place." The scale's reliability was 0.92.

Job performance. A five-item scale originally developed by Williams and Anderson (1991) and later used by Hui, Law and Chen (1999) in the Chinese context was used to measure job performance. Sample items included: "This employee always completes the duties specified in his/her job description," "This employee meets all the formal performance requirements of the job," and "This employee fulfills all responsibilities required by his/her job." The scale's reliability was 0.86.

Control variables. Employees' personality traits (i.e., conscientiousness, and openness to experience) and demographic variables (i.e., age, gender, and organizational tenure), and supervisor demographic variables (i.e., age, gender, and organizational tenure) were statistically controlled for because of their potential effects on organizational-based self-esteem and job performance (Chen and Aryee, 2007; Ng and Feldman, 2008; Williams and Anderson, 1991). Age and organizational tenure were self-reported in years. Gender was dummy-coded with male coded as "0" and female coded as "1."

4   Results

4.1   Preliminary Analyses

Design effect. Since 96 supervisors provided ratings of job performance for 208 subordinates, it is possible that supervisor ratings were nested within the supervisor. We tested this possibility by calculating the design effect of job performance (design effect = 1 + (average cluster size − 1) * intraclass correlation). Results indicated that the design effect of job performance was 1.40, which is below the conventional cut-off of 2. According to this result, we believe that supervisor-ratings of job performance were relatively independent and did not affect the findings significantly.

Confirmatory factor analyses. We conducted confirmatory factor analyses (CFAs) to examine the convergent and discriminant validity of the key variables. Given the small sample size relative to the measurement items, we adopted procedures frequently used by other researchers (Aryee, Chen, Sun and Debrah, 2007; Mathieu and Farr, 1991). We reduced the number of items by creating three indicators for each construct. On the basis of factor analysis results, the items with the highest and lowest loadings for each construct were combined first, followed by items with the next highest and lowest loadings, until all the items had been assigned to one of the indicators. Scores for each indicator were then computed as the mean of the scores on the items that constituted each indicator.

We first examined an eight-factor model, in which extraversion, agreeableness, neuroticism, conscientiousness, openness to experience, workplace ostracism, organizational-based self-esteem, and job performance were included. We used the chi-square, the Akaike information criterion (AIC, Akaike, 1987), the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI, Tucker and Lewis, 1973), the comparative fit index (CFI, Bentler, 1990), and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA, Browne and Cudeck, 1993) to assess the model fit. The model yielded an acceptable fit to the data: χ^2 (224) = 282.46, $p < 0.01$; AIC = 434.46; CFI = 0.98; TLI =0.98; RMSEA = 0.036. In addition, all the factor loadings were significant, demonstrating satisfactory convergent validity.

The discriminant validity of the eight constructs was tested by contrasting an eight-factor model against a one-factor model. The one-factor model was obtained by loading all items measured into a "grand" latent factor. The one-factor model yielded poor fits to the data: $\chi^2 (252) = 2\,341.58$, $p < 0.01$; AIC $= 2\,437.58$; CFI $= 0.31$; TLI $= 0.25$; RMSEA $= 0.200$. Thus, the discriminant validity of the constructs was confirmed. Given the above results, all proposed constructs were applied in further analyses.

4.2   Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 presents the means, standard deviations, and zero-order Pearson correlations of all key variables. As shown, extraversion ($r = -0.26$, $p < 0.01$) and agreeableness ($r = -0.27$, $p < 0.01$) are negatively correlated with workplace ostracism, and neuroticism ($r = 0.25$, $p < 0.01$) is positively correlated with workplace ostracism. In addition, workplace ostracism is negatively correlated with organizational-based self-esteem ($r = -0.45$, $p < 0.01$) and job performance ($r = -0.23$, $p < 0.01$). Finally, organizational-based self-esteem is positively correlated with job performance ($r = 0.38$, $p < 0.01$). These results provide initial support to our hypotheses.

4.3   Hypothesis Testing

To test the first three hypotheses, we applied Cohen, Cohen, West and Aiken's (2003) procedures. Specifically, a two-step hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted: the control variables were entered first, followed by the subordinate's three personality traits (i.e., extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism) in the second step (workplace ostracism was treated as the outcome variable). Table 2 presents the results. As shown in Table 2, extraversion ($\beta = -0.16$, $p < 0.05$, Model 2) and agreeableness ($\beta = -0.19$, $p < 0.05$, Model 2) are negatively related to workplace ostracism, and neuroticism is positively related to workplace ostracism ($\beta = 0.14$, $p < 0.10$, Model 2). Hence, H1, H2, and H3 are supported.

Hierarchical multiple regression analyses were also applied to test H4 and H5. We entered the variables into the regression analysis at three hierarchical steps: control variables (step 1) were entered first, followed by the main effect of workplace ostracism (step 2) and the mediation effect of organizational-based self-esteem (step 3 and 4). Table 3 presents the results. As shown in Table 3, workplace ostracism is negatively related to job performance ($\beta = -0.18$, $p < 0.01$, Model 6), thus supporting H4.

Table 1 Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1. Subordinate age														
2. Subordinate gender	0.08													
3. Subordinate tenure	0.46**	0.10												
4. Supervisor age	0.11	0.03	0.11											
5. Supervisor gender	0.07	0.09	0.11	0.06										
6. Supervisor tenure	0.15*	0.10	0.10	0.58**	0.11									
7. Extraversion	−0.06	−0.06	0.03	0.02	−0.02	−0.04	(0.87)							
8. Agreeableness	0.02	−0.01	0.08	0.08	−0.02	0.05	0.41**	(0.85)						
9. Neuroticism	0.03	−0.03	−0.08	−0.07	0.00	−0.05	−0.38**	−0.42**	(0.90)					
10. Conscientiousness	−0.07	0.10	0.03	−0.06	−0.08	−0.08	0.24**	0.37**	−0.32**	(0.89)				
11. Openness to experience	−0.15*	0.04	−0.01	0.04	−0.13	0.02	0.31**	0.30**	−0.30**	0.30**	(0.87)			
12. Workplace ostracism	0.04	0.03	−0.03	−0.09	−0.02	0.02	−0.26**	−0.27**	0.25**	−0.09	−0.06	(0.89)		
13. OBSE	−0.13	0.03	0.05	0.06	0.05	−0.04	0.08	0.15*	−0.15*	0.24**	0.01	−0.45**	(0.92)	
14. Job performance	−0.03	0.08	−0.01	0.17*	0.04	0.16*	0.04	0.18*	−0.24**	0.21**	0.00	−0.23**	0.38**	(0.86)
Mean	36.45	0.49	10.02	38.33	0.39	10.81	3.40	3.58	2.31	3.55	3.34	2.08	3.34	3.69
S.D.	6.41	0.50	5.15	6.24	0.49	4.88	0.61	0.57	0.62	0.63	0.56	0.59	0.65	0.70

Note: $N = 208$; ** denotes $p < 0.01$; * denotes $p < 0.05$ (two-tailed).

Bracketed values on the diagonal are the Cronbach's alpha value of each scale.

OBSE = Organizational-based self-esteem.

Table 2 The Effects of Employee Personality Traits on Workplace Ostracism

	Workplace ostracism (T_2)	
	M1	M2
Control variables		
Subordinate age	0.06	0.06
Subordinate gender	0.04	0.02
Subordinate tenure	−0.06	−0.03
Conscientiousness (T_1)	−0.09	0.04
Openness to experience (T_1)	−0.03	0.09
Independent variables		
Extraversion (T_1)		−0.16*
Agreeableness (T_1)		−0.19*
Neuroticism (T_1)		0.14†
R^2	0.02	0.13
ΔR^2	0.02	0.12
F	0.61	3.50**
ΔF	0.61	5.34**

Note: $N = 208$; ∗∗ denotes $p < 0.01$; ∗ denotes $p < 0.05$; † denotes $p < 0.10$ (two-tailed).

Table 3 The Mediating Effect of Organizational-Based Self-Esteem

	Organizational-based self-esteem (T_3)		Job performance (T_3)			
	M3	M4	M5	M6	M7	M8
Control variables						
Subordinate age	−0.19*	−0.16*	−0.05	−0.04	0.01	0.01
Subordinate gender	0.02	0.02	0.05	0.05	0.04	0.04
Subordinate tenure	0.11	0.10	−0.04	−0.05	−0.08	−0.08
Supervisor age	0.12	0.07	0.12	0.10	0.08	0.07
Supervisor gender	0.05	0.04	0.02	0.02	0.00	0.00
Supervisor tennure	−0.09	−0.04	0.10	0.12	0.13	0.13
Extroversion (T_1)	−0.00	−0.07	−0.08	−0.11	−0.08	−0.08
Agreeableness (T_1)	0.06	−0.02	0.09	0.05	0.07	0.06
Neuroticism (T_1)	−0.08	−0.02	−0.20*	−0.18*	−0.17*	−0.17*

(*To be continued*)

	Organizational-based self-esteem (T_3)			Job performance (T_3)		
	M3	M4	M5	M6	M7	M8
Conscientiousness (T_1)	0.21**	0.23**	0.18*	0.19*	0.11	0.12
Openness to experience (T_1)	–0.12	–0.08	–0.13	–0.12	–0.09	–0.09
Independent variable						
Workplace ostracism (T_2)		–0.44**		–0.18*		–0.04
Mediator						
Organizational-based self-esteem (T_3)					0.33**	0.32**
R^2	0.11	0.28	0.14	0.17	0.24	0.24
ΔR^2	0.11	0.17	0.14	0.03	0.10	0.07
F	2.26*	6.32**	2.95**	3.31**	5.13**	4.74**
ΔF	2.26*	45.36**	2.95**	6.41**	25.17**	18.36**

Note: $N = 208$; ** denotes $p < 0.01$; * denotes $p < 0.05$; † denotes $p < 0.10$ (two-tailed).

H5 predicts that organizational-based self-esteem mediates the relationship between workplace ostracism and job performance. According to Baron and Kenny (1986), the full mediation is supported if four conditions are met: (1) The independent variable (i.e., workplace ostracism) is significantly related to the mediator (i.e., organizational-based self-esteem); (2) the independent variable is significantly related to the dependent variable (i.e., job performance); (3) the mediator is significantly related to the dependent variable (i.e., job performance); and (4) when both independent variable and mediator were entered into the model, the relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable becomes nonsignificant.

In support of H5, the results in Table 3 indicate that, (1) workplace ostracism is negatively related to organizational-based self-esteem ($\beta = -0.44$, $p \leqslant 0.01$, Model 4); (2) workplace ostracism is negatively related to job performance ($\beta = -0.18$, $p \leqslant 0.01$, Model 6); (3) organizational-based self-esteem ($\beta = 0.33$, $p \leqslant 0.01$, Model 7) is positively related to job performance; and (4) the relationship between workplace ostracism and job performance became nonsignificant ($\beta = -0.04$, $p > 0.05$, Model 8) when both workplace ostracism and organizational-based self-esteem are entered into the model. Thus, H5 is supported.

Although Baron and Kenny (1986) devised the most widely used procedures to test the mediating effect, those procedures do not test whether or not the mediating effect is significantly different from zero. As a result, we performed

the Sobel test to address the limitations of the Baron and Kenny's (1986) procedures (Sobel, 1982). Results substantiated that the mediating effect of organizational-based self-esteem is significant in the relationship between workplace ostracism and job performance ($Z = -3.60$, $p < 0.01$). Therefore, H5 receives further support.

5   Discussion

We theorized and found that extraversion and agreeableness negatively and neuroticism positively influence workplace ostracism. Moreover, workplace ostracism is found to be negatively related to organizational-based self-esteem, which in turn leads to low levels of job performance. The theoretical and managerial implications of this study are discussed as below.

5.1   Theoretical Contributions

Our research makes several distinct contributions. First, drawing on victim precipitation theory, we built and empirically tested a conceptual model that links employee personality traits with workplace ostracism. Our results empirically demonstrated for the first time that personality traits of the target employees are important determinants of workplace ostracism. Specifically, consistent with Olweus's (1978) typology of submissive and provocative victims, we proved that employees high in neuroticism and disagreeableness (indicators of provocativeness) and low in extraversion (as an indicator of submissiveness) are more likely to be the targets of workplace ostracism. Such results not only contribute to the workplace ostracism research by indicating some critical dispositional antecedents, but also provide additional evidence for the transportability of victim precipitation theory from criminology field to management field (Aquino, 2000; Aquino et al., 1999; Curtis, 1974; Elias, 1986).

   Second, going beyond previous correlation analysis of the relationship between workplace ostracism and employee job performance (Ferris et al., 2008), we applied the regression analysis and found that workplace ostracism is negatively related to employee job performance. Moreover, different from Ferris et al.'s (2008) single source and cross-sectional research design, we employed multi-wave, multi-source research design to test the relationship between workplace ostracism and job performance, thus providing more solid evidence of the causal relationship and alleviating the problem of common method variance (Podsakoff et al., 2003; Cook and Campbell, 1979).

   Finally, our examination of the mediating effect of organizational-based self-esteem moves research on workplace ostracism beyond the main effect to an investigation of the underling mechanisms. Consistent with self-esteem theory,

our results indicated that employee organizational-based self-esteem mediated the relationship between workplace ostracism and employee job performance. We thus have a better understanding about why workplace ostracism impacts employee job performance: It does so through undermining employee organizational-based self-esteem. Moreover, the results from the current study may further encourage future research to address the processes by which workplace ostracism impacts employee outcomes. According to William's (1997, 2001) model of ostracism, ostracism can simultaneously threaten targets' four basic human needs, namely the need to belonging, the need for self-esteem, the need for control, and the need for a meaningful existence, which in turn negatively influence targets' reactions and functions. Hence, besides organizational-based self-esteem, the threatened need to belonging, need for control and need for a meaningful existence may also be the candidates that mediate the relationships between workplace ostracism and employee outcomes.

5.2 Practical Implications

Our theoretical model and empirically findings also have important practical implications. Our study shows that workplace ostracism is costly for both employees and organizations because employees who experience ostracism are likely to have low levels of organization-based self-esteem, which in turn decrease their levels of job performance. To decrease the negative impact of workplace ostracism, management should create a culture that discourages workplace ostracism, and encourage employees to use discussion to solve problems (Williams, 1997, 2001). Moreover, our findings suggest that employees low in agreeableness and extraversion and high in neuroticism are more likely to be ostracized. Hence, management should pay special attention to these employees, and provide training, counseling, and social support for them so as to help them stay away from workplace ostracism.

5.3 Strengths and Limitations

The present study has several strengths worth mentioning. First, three waves of data were collected from the subordinates and one wave of data was collected from the supervisors. Data collection from different sources and times reduces the potential problems associated with the common method variance (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Moreover, the collection of data at three distinct points in time lends some support to the causal nature of the model with regard to the antecedents of workplace ostracism and the effect of workplace ostracism on employee organizational-based self-esteem and job performance (Cook and Campbell, 1979).

There are also limitations in this study. First, due to the limited page number of the questionnaires, other important workplace mistreatments, such as social undermining (Duffy, Ganster and Pagon, 2002) and abusive supervision (Tepper, 2000), were excluded in this study. We are not sure the influence of workplace ostracism on employee organizational-based self-esteem and job performance when those mistreatments are included. As employees often experience various workplace mistreatments at the same time (Duffy et al., 2002; Fox and Stallworth, 2005; Tepper, 2000), it may be necessary to add those mistreatments in the study to see the unique contribution of workplace ostracism on employee organizational-based self-esteem and job performance.

Second, this study only examines target characteristics, namely personality traits, as the antecedents of workplace ostracism. As Williams (1997, 2001, 2007) suggested, ostracism can have three board categories of antecedents, namely the characteristics of the target, the characteristics of the source and the characteristics of the situation. Hence, in addition to target characteristics, we encourage future research to pay more attention to the linkages between source and situation characteristics and workplace ostracism. For example, it will be very interesting for future research to investigate the relationship between workplace climate/culture and workplace ostracism. Such investigation may help answer the question of "where ostracism exists."

Third, although the data were collected in three waves, it was not possible to separate the antecedents (Big-Five personality traits), independent variable (workplace ostracism), mediator (organizational-based self-esteem) and dependent variable (job performance) by time. Indeed, the demonstrated relationship between organizational-based self-esteem and job performance is cross-sectional, implying that the causal relationship can not be inferred from our findings. Further longitudinal research with four waves of data collection (e.g., separate the antecedents, independent variable, mediator and dependent variable by time) will be more appropriate to ascertain our suggested causal relationships.

Finally, it is worth noting that ostracism may be a bigger factor in countries high in collectivism, such as China. Collectivism refers to "a set of feelings, beliefs, behavioral intentions, and behaviors related to solidarity and concern for others" (Hui, 1988). Collectivistic cultures put heavy emphasis on close and harmonious interpersonal relationships. Therefore, it may be that employees and organizations in collectivistic cultures will be more negatively impacted by workplace ostracism (Wilkins and Dyer, 1988). Since our data were collected in China, the findings may not be generalizable in more individualistic cultures.

6   Conclusion

Despite these limitations, the present study has addressed some crucial issues

regarding the antecedents and consequences of workplace ostracism. It revealed that employees low in extraversion, agreeableness, and emotional stability are more likely to be ostracized in workplace, and that workplace ostracism negatively influenced job performance via undermining employee organizational-based self-esteem. We hope that our study will stimulate future research to advance theory in understanding how workplace ostracism happens and how it influences employee outcomes.

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