

# THE ROLE OF WORKPLACE OSTRACISM ON EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE MEDIATED BY WORK STRESS AMONG EMPLOYEES

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## ABSTRACT

*This study examines the impact of workplace ostracism as feeling ignored by coworkers on employee performance as involves actions aligned with organizational goals with job stress as an adverse response when job demands exceed employee abilities or resources considered as a mediator. Workplace ostracism, where employees feel neglected by colleagues, can hinder performance, especially among Generation Z, who are highly susceptible to stress and mental health issues. The study surveyed 247 Generation Z employees using the Workplace Ostracism Scale (WOS), Individual Work Performance Questionnaire (IWPQ), and Job Stress Scale (JSS). The data were analyzed using Pearson correlation and linear regression. The results showed that workplace ostracism negatively impacts employee performance, with work stress having the largest negative effect on performance. Additionally, ostracism was positively correlated with work stress. Mediation analysis revealed that work stress partially mediates the relationship between workplace ostracism and employee performance, a finding not previously explored. This study contributes to the literature by highlighting the significant role of work stress in the relationship between ostracism and performance. It suggests that employers should address workplace exclusion to improve performance. Furthermore, it provides valuable insights for managers to adopt and implement holistic human resources strategies like skill development, stress management, inclusive work environments, and employee engagement to boost productivity.*

**Keywords:** workplace ostracism, employee performance, work stress

## 1. PREFACE

In the workplace, improving employee skills is receiving more attention to improve company performance and competitiveness. This is reflected in Indonesia's improved ranking in the IMD World Talent Ranking 2023, from 51st to 47th out of 64 countries. This skill development enhances employee effectiveness and boosts the company's competitive edge. Improved employee performance leads to higher productivity, which is crucial for maintaining competitiveness and achieving company goals. A conducive work environment boosts employee productivity and job satisfaction, while a negative atmosphere, such as workplace ostracism, hinders performance by draining emotional resources and reducing motivation (Ibrahim & Olaleye, 2024). Workplace ostracism, often seen as a form of "silent treatment," includes subtle behaviors like ignoring greetings or excluding individuals from conversations (Ferris et al., 2008; Einarsen et al., 2020). Generation Z, valuing recognition, is particularly affected by neglect, leading to frustration and stress that harm productivity (Loring & Wang, 2022).

The 2023 Indonesian Health Survey highlights a 1.4% prevalence of stress among Gen Z, despite relatively short work hours, indicating other factors at play. Workplace ostracism has been studied quite extensively, as evidenced by research conducted by Choi (2020) and Imam et al. (2023) who recruited employees in Korea and Pakistan as participants and reported that workplace ostracism had a negative impact on employee performance. Other research conducted by Ibrahim and Olaleye (2024) reported that racism in the workplace positively and significantly reduces employee productivity or performance, and suggested that future research should use

work stress variables as mediator variables in this relationship. Furthermore, research on work stress on employee performance conducted by Muis et al. (2021) found that there was no influence of work stress on employee performance, while in Rijanto (2023) research, it was found that there were significant implications of the influence of work stress on employee performance. In addition, based on comparisons with previous research, researchers concluded that inconsistent findings (negative or positive effects in the relationship of workplace ostracism with employee performance as well as job stress with employee performance). Therefore, this research aims to review the positive or negative impact and significant or insignificant workplace ostracism on employee performance in Generation Z employees, with work stress as a mediator. The focus on Generation Z was chosen due to the high levels of stress and depression in this group, which can affect team dynamics and individual performance.

## **2. RESEARCH METHOD**

This study uses a quantitative, non-experimental correlational design to observe phenomena naturally, explore relationships between variables, and test hypotheses. According to Creswell (2018) quantitative research is ideal for identifying variable relationships, while non-experimental research observes situations without researcher manipulation. The study focuses on workplace ostracism and its impact on employee performance, particularly among Generation Z, who experience high stress and depression and uses convenience sampling based on willingness and workplace exclusion criteria. Addressing gaps in Ibrahim and Olaleye (2024), it examines work stress as a mediator.

### **Samples**

The data collection technique in this study used an online questionnaire distributed through Google Forms. In this study, the research team used an adapted questionnaire instrument as a tool to collect data. Participants in this study have criteria as individual employees who are in the age of generation Z (17-27 years old) with a minimum work experience of 1 year and a minimum high school education level. The number of respondents in this study was 250 subjects with a division of 3 subjects eliminated because they did not meet the criteria and left 247 subjects for research data. Furthermore, the description of the respondents consisting of aspects of gender, age, last education, last education level, marital status, and marital status, last education level, length of work, position, and company business sector can be seen in Table 1.

**Table 1**  
*Participants Demographic*

| <i>Type</i>         | <i>Total (n = 247)</i> | <i>Percentage (%)</i> | <i>Information</i>                       |
|---------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|--|
| Gender              | 82                     | 33.19                 | Male                                     |
|                     | 165                    | 66.81                 | Female                                   |
| Age                 | 7                      | 2.83                  | 17-19 years old                          |
|                     | 142                    | 57.49                 | 20-22 years old                          |
|                     | 51                     | 20.65                 | 23-25 years old                          |
|                     | 47                     | 19.03                 | 26-27 years old                          |
| Education Level     | 89                     | 36.03                 | SHS/VHS (High School)                    |
|                     | 17                     | 6.87                  | Associate's Degree (D1, D2, & D3)        |
|                     | 140                    | 56.68                 | Bachelor's Degree (D4 & S1)              |
|                     | 0                      | 0.00                  | Master's Degree (S2)                     |
|                     | 1                      | 0.40                  | Doctor's Degree (S3)                     |
| Employee Tenure     | 181                    | 73.27                 | 1-3 Years                                |
|                     | 25                     | 10.12                 | 3-5 Years                                |
|                     | 41                     | 16.59                 | > 5 Years                                |
| Position            | 197                    | 79.75                 | Staff                                    |
|                     | 24                     | 9.71                  | Analyst                                  |
|                     | 18                     | 7.28                  | Coordinator/Supervisor                   |
|                     | 5                      | 2.02                  | Manager                                  |
| Job Business Sector | 0                      | 0.00                  | General Manager                          |
|                     | 3                      | 1.21                  | Director                                 |
|                     | 18                     | 7.28                  | Information and Communication Technology |
|                     | 11                     | 4.45                  | Manufacturing                            |
|                     | 45                     | 18.21                 | Banking and Finance                      |
|                     | 21                     | 8.50                  | Education                                |
|                     | 16                     | 6.47                  | Health                                   |
|                     | 30                     | 12.14                 | Retail and Trade                         |
|                     | 6                      | 2.42                  | Transportation and Logistics             |
|                     | 5                      | 2.02                  | Tourism and Hospitality                  |
|                     | 27                     | 10.93                 | Construction and Real Estate             |
|                     | 20                     | 8.09                  | Media and Entertainment                  |
|                     | 5                      | 2.02                  | Energy and Mining                        |
|                     | 6                      | 2.42                  | Agriculture and Plantation               |
|                     | 11                     | 4.45                  | Government and Public Services           |
|                     | 25                     | 10.12                 | Others                                   |

### Measurements

Participants in this study will need a device with stable internet access to complete an online questionnaire. The first page will display informed consent, followed by statements measuring research variables. The instruments used include the Workplace Ostracism Scale (adapted by Suyono et al., 2023), the Individual Work Performance Questionnaire (IWPQ) (adapted by Widyastuti & Hidayat, 2018), and the Job Stress Scale (JSS) (adapted by Angelita, 2024). The Workplace Ostracism Scale contains 10 positive items, the IWPQ includes 18 items (13 positive and 5 negative), and the JSS has 22 items (19 positive and 3 negative). Participants will respond to research variables using a five-point Likert scale (Never = 1 to Very Often = 5), following Kusmaryono et al. (2022) approach, which found odd-numbered Likert scales effective for reliability and validity. After completing the research variables, participants will provide

demographic data, including optional name, gender, age, education level, job position, business sector, and tenure. Once all questions are answered, participants will submit their anonymized responses. Reliability testing was conducted to ensure accuracy, with results represented by a coefficient between 0 and 1, indicating the level of reliability (Azwar, 2017). The reliability results for each dimension are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2**

*Dimensions Reliability*

| <i>Variable</i>      | <i>Dimension</i>                                    | <i>Reliability (Items)</i> | <i>Total</i> |       |
|----------------------|---|----------------------------|--------------|-------|
| Workplace Ostracism  | Cognitive, Affective, and Coactive (Unidimensional) | 0.624 - 0.849              | 0.937        | 0.937 |
|                      | Task Performance                                    | 0.659 - 0.774              | 0.885        |       |
| Employee Performance | Contextual Performance                              | 0.518 - 0.745              | 0.881        | 0.846 |
|                      | Counterproductive Work Behavior                     | 0.669 - 0.790              | 0.892        |       |
| Work Stress          | Job Stress Scale (Anxiety and Time)                 | 0.428 - 0.711              | 0.869        | 0.867 |
|                      | Role Expectation Conflict                           | 0.546 - 0.712              | 0.840        |       |
|                      | Co-Worker Support                                   | 0.719 - 0.855              | 0.905        |       |
|                      | Work Life Balance                                   | 0.242 - 0.759              | 0.779        |       |

The table shows that the Workplace Ostracism Scale (WOS) has a high-reliability value of 0.937, with item reliability ranging from 0.624 to 0.849, meeting the required reliability and validity standards (corrected item-total correlation > 0.3). The Individual Work Performance Questionnaire (IWPQ) has a reliability value of 0.846, with the counterproductive work behavior dimension having the highest reliability (0.892) and the contextual performance dimension the lowest (0.881), all meeting the reliability and validity requirements. The Job Stress Scale (JSS) has a reliability value of 0.867, with the Co-Worker Support dimension having the highest reliability (0.905) and the Work-Life Balance dimension the lowest (0.779). However, the Work-Life Balance dimension does not meet the reliability and validity requirements, as its item-total correlation is below 0.3. In this study, one item from the work-life balance dimension (item 20: "*Saya mengalami kesulitan menyeimbangkan pekerjaan saya dan aktivitas lainnya*") was deemed invalid and eliminated, leaving 3 items in the dimension. The reliability test results indicate that the Workplace Ostracism Scale (WOS), Individual Work Performance Questionnaire (IWPQ), and Job Stress Scale (JSS) all have high reliability, confirmed by the Cronbach's Alpha values for each instrument. The reliability results for the work-life balance dimension are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3**

*Work-Life Balance Dimensions Reliability*

|             | <i>Dimension</i>  | <i>Reliability (Items)</i> | <i>Total</i> |
|-------------|-------------------|----------------------------|--------------|
| Work Stress | Work Life Balance | 0.719 - 0.830              | 0.894        |

### 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

#### Result

In this study, a normality test was carried out using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. Based on The results of the data normality test is considered normally distributed with a p-value of  $0.200 > 0.05$ . Next, the researcher carried out a Pearson correlation and regression linear test to find out about the relationship between variables and the research dimensions that have been determined and can be obtained in Table 4.

**Table 4**

*Pearson Correlation and Regression Linear Test*

|   | <i>Pearson Correlation</i> | <i>R<sup>2</sup></i> | <i>P</i> | <i>Hypothesis</i> |
|---|----------------------------|----------------------|----------|-------------------|
| Workplace Ostracism -> Employee Performance | -0.302                     | 0.091                | 0.000    | H1                |
| Workplace Ostracism -> Work Stress          | 0.393                      | 0.174                | 0.000    | H2                |
| Work Stress -> Employee Performance         | -0.417                     | 0.155                | 0.000    | H3                |

Based on the data processing conducted, the results show that H0 is rejected. Workplace ostracism significantly predicts employee performance ( $r = 0.302$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), with a negative impact (unstandardized coefficients = -0.302) accounting for 9.1% of the variance ( $R^2 = 0.091$ ). This suggests that increased workplace ostracism leads to higher job stress. Additionally, workplace ostracism significantly predicts perceived work stress ( $r = 0.393$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), with a positive effect (unstandardized coefficients = 0.694) explaining 15.5% of the variance ( $R^2 = 0.155$ ). Finally, work stress negatively affects employee performance ( $r = 0.417$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), with a total effect of 17.4% ( $R^2 = 0.174$ ), meaning lower work stress improves employee performance. After conducting a classical assumption test to meet the requirements and a correlation test with a correlation matrix, the researcher continued the hypothesis testing using bootstrapping through the JASP (Jeffrey's Amazing Statistics Program) 0.19.0.0 application to test variables with mediators. In the implementation of further hypothesis testing, researchers used Hayes theory in testing the research hypothesis with the bootstrapping method to calculate the direct role of the three variables of this study, namely workplace ostracism, employee performance, and work stress. The goal is to see the role relationship between the three variables which can be obtained as seen in Table 5.

**Table 5**

*Test Result of the Relationship of Workplace Ostracism to Employee Performance with Work Stress as a Mediator*

|  | <i>Estimate</i> | <i>P</i> | <i>Result</i>   | <i>Hypothesis</i> |
|--|-----------------|----------|-----------------|-------------------|
| Workplace Ostracism -> Employee Performance        | -0.023          | 0.009    | Negative (Sig.) | H1                |
| Workplace Ostracism -> Work Stress                 | -0.353          | <0.001   | Negative (Sig.) | H2                |
| Work Stress -> Employee Performance                | 0.056           | <0.001   | Positive (Sig.) | H3                |
| <b><i>Indirect Effect</i></b>                      |                 |          |                 |                   |
| Work Stress -> Work Stress -> Employee Performance | -0.020          | <0.001   | Negative (Sig.) |                   |
| <b><i>Total Effect</i></b>                         |                 |          |                 |                   |
| Workplace Ostracism -> Employee Performance        | -0.043          | <0.001   | Negative (Sig.) | H4                |

Based on the results of the mediation analysis of 247 research participants' data, it can be seen in H1 that the workplace ostracism variable can significantly predict ( $p = 0.009 < 0.05$ ) the employee performance variable. The relationship between the two variables shows a negative direction (estimate = -0.023; SE = 0.009; 95% CI = -0.045; -0.005) this indicates that high levels of workplace ostracism can reduce the level of employee performance, so H1 can be accepted. Then in H2, it is known that the work stress variable can significantly predict the employee performance variable as the dependent variable ( $p = <0.001 < 0.05$ ). The data analysis above shows that there is a relationship between work stress and employee performance in a negative direction (estimate = -0.353; SE = 0.062; 95% CI = -0.491; -0.216), this indicates that high levels of work stress can reduce the level of employee performance, so H2 can be accepted. In H3 regarding the role of workplace ostracism variables as independent variables can predict work stress significantly ( $p = <0.001 < 0.05$ ) as a mediator variable. It is known that the role of workplace ostracism and work stress shows a positive direction (estimate = 0.056; SE = 0.008; 95% CI = 0.039; 0.076) this indicates that the greater the level of workplace ostracism, the

higher the level of work stress experienced, so H3 can be accepted. Furthermore, a bootstrapping confidence interval (CI) on the indirect effect was conducted between workplace ostracism and employee performance variables to see whether or not there is a mediating effect of work stress variables on the relationship between the two variables. With the CI value not including zero, this indicates that in H4 the relationship between workplace ostracism and employee performance is mediated by work stress (estimate = -0.020; SE = 0.005; 95% CI = -0.032; -0.010). Based on the results of the mediation analysis, it can be concluded that H4 can be accepted, where the work stress variable has a mediating effect, namely partial mediation. The effect of workplace ostracism can occur either directly (direct effect) or indirectly (indirect effect), namely through the role of a mediator by the work stress variable on employee performance. Further calculation of the indirect effect regarding the relationship between workplace ostracism and employee performance mediated by work stress shows an effect size of -0.20 and can be categorized as a moderate level, so it can be concluded that work stress is a significant mediator in mediating the role between workplace ostracism and employee performance.

The researcher also conducted additional analysis on several collected criteria. The results of the additional analysis were obtained from the descriptive analysis of the average employee performance values towards job position and job business sector aspects. The data was processed using the independent sample one-way ANOVA method with SPSS application in Table 6.

**Table 6**

*Employee Performance Based On Job Position and Job Business Sector*

|                     | <i>F</i> | <i>Sig.</i> |
|---------------------|----------|-------------|
| Job Position        | 2.682    | 0.032       |
| Job Business Sector | 3.574    | 0.000       |

Based on the job position, the obtained significance scores are 0.032, and because of sig. < 0.05, it can be interpreted that there is a difference in employee performance between subjects who are in a job position. Also based on the job business sector, the obtained significance scores are 0.000 < 0.05 so it can be interpreted that there is a difference in employee performance between subjects who are in a job business sector.

## Discussion

This research responds to the limited knowledge regarding ostracism in the workplace, especially in Generation Z in Indonesia, by investigating the influence of ostracism on employee performance and the role of work stress as a mediator in this relationship. There is research noted that 73% of respondents experienced ostracism at work, highlighting the urgency of research in Pakistan and Korea found that workplace ostracism had a negative impact on employee performance, with culture and organizational support as moderators, while other research in Jordan showed that ostracism reduces productivity through the mediation of emotional exhaustion and low motivation. (Ibrahim & Olaleye, 2024; Imam et al., 2023; Choi, 2020). The findings show workplace ostracism significantly decreases employee performance by 9.1% and increases work stress by 15.6%, leading to negative perceptions, potential unethical behavior, and higher turnover intentions among emotionally sensitive Generation Z employees, who highly value recognition. Generation Z prioritizes recognition and immediate feedback at work, which increases their sense of appreciation, loyalty, and motivation to achieve better results (Vanderson et al., 2024). Generation Z values quick, constructive feedback, which boosts performance, job satisfaction, and productivity.

This research found a positive significant link between workplace ostracism and work stress, confirming that ostracism increases stress, burnout, and worsens performance (Manninen et al., 2024; Kim & Jang, 2023). The research shows that work stress partially mediates the link between ostracism and performance, with Generation Z experiencing higher stress and lower performance, in line with Social Reciprocity and Exchange theories (Reece et al., 2021; Syafei et al., 2023; Zhu & Zhang, 2023; Zhu et al., 2021). Work stress mediates the negative impact of ostracism on performance (15.5%), reducing productivity and well-being. Generation Z, more vulnerable to unsupportive conditions, experiences decreased motivation and well-being due to isolation and stress (Kutlák, 2020). This research found significant differences in workplace ostracism impact employee performance across job positions and job business sectors. Srimulatsih (2023) found that work placement significantly impacts employee performance. Inappropriate positions can disrupt team dynamics and lead to employee ostracism. The banking sector based on the current research states that in high-risk sectors like banking, where competence, integrity, emotional intelligence, and HRM practices are crucial, ostracism can reduce performance and increase turnover (Hamzah et al., 2021). This research is the first study on workplace ostracism among Generation Z in Indonesia and the method used is valid, and the response rate exceeded power analysis requirements (Musari & Hidayat, 2022). A limitation of this study is the diverse sample, making causal interpretation difficult. Low response rates may reflect flexible work arrangements reducing ostracism, along with growing awareness of inclusion and well-being, which may lower the perception of ostracism in Indonesia (Davidescu et al., 2020; Bloom et al., 2022). Future research could explore job insecurity as another mediator, as ostracism hinders performance by suppressing valuable ideas (Jahanzeb et al., 2019) and mediates the relationship between ostracism and employees' intent to leave (Reza et al., 2022). Also, companies can implement programs such as AKAP (Avoidance and Knowledge of Alienation in the Workplace Accelerates Work Productivity) to illuminate employee well-being, reduce isolation, and increase productivity.

#### **4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

##### **Conclusions**

Based on data analysis, it was found that workplace ostracism has a significant and negative relationship with employee performance, which shows that the higher the ostracism in the workplace, the lower the employee performance. Apart from that, workplace ostracism is significantly positively related to work stress, which means that the higher the ostracism, the higher the work stress. Job stress has a negative relationship with employee performance, indicating that the higher the stress, the lower the performance. When work stress is included as a mediator, the relationship between workplace ostracism and employee performance becomes significant, indicating that work stress acts as a partial mediator. The results of different tests show differences in employee performance based on position and business sector, which are influenced by position responsibilities and industry dynamics. This research has limitations in the sample used, with levels of workplace ostracism and work stress tending to be low, so the impact on employee performance is not very clear, and the results may not be generalizable to a wider population.

##### **Recommendations**

This research suggests further exploration of organizational and personal factors that influence workplace exclusion, including the role of job level and mediator effects such as job insecurity (Jahanzeb et al., 2019; Raza et al., 2022). In addition, qualitative research is recommended to provide a deeper understanding of the experience of workplace exclusion (Manninen et al., 2024). This research also suggests practical steps to reduce workplace ostracism and improve

employee performance. With low levels of workplace ostracism in Gen Z employees, companies can maintain a family culture and implement the AKAP (Avoidance and Knowledge on Workplace Ostracism Accelerate Work Productivity) project through training, mentorship, anonymous reporting systems, and inclusion campaigns (Reece et al., 2021). Employees are also advised to build communication through informal activities such as outings, which can strengthen social bonds, trust, and team productivity.

### Acknowledgement

This is the first study of workplace ostracism among Generation Z in Indonesia, covering a wide range of large companies with heterogeneous work groups, particularly in the banking and finance sectors. Generation Z has the potential to accelerate financial inclusion through digitalization (Musari & Hidayat, 2022), so this study can reveal the role of occupational groups in the prevalence of ostracism. The research instruments have been tested valid, and statistical reliability is enhanced by an adequate number of respondents. A limitation of this study lies in the cross-sector sample, so the observed associations need to be interpreted with caution, especially regarding the relationship between ostracism, performance, and job stress.

Low levels of ostracism may be influenced by flexible work cultures such as WFH and hybrid, which reduce negative social interactions (Davidescu et al., 2020). In addition, increased attention to employee well-being and organizational inclusion also minimizes ostracism. The low awareness of the term workplace ostracism in Indonesia may also affect response rates. Research is limited in comparing ostracism by job level and in exploring mediators other than job stress. Most previous studies have been quantitative, thus lacking the depth of individual experiences. Therefore, future research needs a more holistic approach to understand the phenomenon of ostracism more thoroughly.

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