

The cost of isolation. Examining the impact of workplace ostracism on employees' extra-role behaviors

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Abstract

Purpose – Drawing from the conservation of resources (COR) theory, this study explores workplace ostracism's impact on employees' extra-role behaviors through the mediation of thriving at work and organization-based self-esteem (OBSE). Further analysis was conducted in order to examine the moderating role of job seniority in the "workplace ostracism–OBSE" relationship.

Design/methodology/approach – For the needs of this study, "partial least squares structural equation modeling" was applied based on a convenient sample of 234 employees across 12 pharmaceutical companies in Greece.

Findings – The findings underlined workplace ostracism's significant and negative impact on employees' extra-role behaviors, via the decrease of their levels of thriving and OBSE. In addition, job seniority was found to moderate the relationship between workplace ostracism and OBSE, showing that the effects are stronger for younger recruits.

Practical implications – This study's findings offer important theoretical and practical implications for implementing more nuanced, holistic interventions that foster inclusive environments, which enable employees to thrive, develop strong OBSE and engage in behaviors outside of their in-role spectrum.

Originality/value – The exploration of job seniority's moderating effect on the relationship between workplace ostracism and OBSE, along with the fact that the present study takes place in the pharmaceutical industry in Greece.

Keywords Workplace ostracism, Thriving at work, Organization-based self-esteem, Job seniority, Extra-role behaviors, Proactivity, Creativity

Paper type Research article

1. Introduction

In the midst of 500 BC, when the Athenians in ancient Greece had to determine with fragments of clay (*ostraka*) whether another citizen should be exiled or not for being perceived as a threat to their democratic regime, ostracism (*ostrakismos*) was born (Williams, 2007). Despite ostracism's conceptual longevity, interest amongst scholars arose in the early 2000s and mostly in relation to social studies (e.g. Williams *et al.*, 2005). Scholars examined ostracism as a general component of other social mistreatments and perceived it as less detrimental due to its concealed and ambiguous nature (O'Reilly *et al.*, 2015). Academic interest regarding workplace ostracism, specifically, emerged when Ferris *et al.* (2008) both conceptually and empirically distinguished it from any other form of misbehavior within the workplace by developing and implementing a reliable measure for its construct.

According to Ferris *et al.* (2008), workplace ostracism is "the extent to which an individual perceives that he or she is ignored or excluded by others in the workplace". Viewed as a distressful and agonizing experience, workplace ostracism is acknowledged as a rather



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widespread phenomenon that significantly and negatively influences both employees and organizations (Sharma and Dhar, 2022). Evidently, workplace ostracism has been linked with negative psychological impacts, including stress, anxiety (Ferris *et al.*, 2008) and deteriorated physical health (O'Reilly *et al.*, 2015). In addition, workplace ostracism impairs individuals' personal and professional relationships, including job satisfaction (Jones *et al.*, 2021) and work commitment (Anasori *et al.*, 2021). Collectively, the preceding discussion underlines ostracism's negative effect on core employee and organizational functions. However, despite its significance, limited research has been conducted exploring the influence of workplace ostracism on specific extra-role behaviors (Zhang *et al.*, 2023), thus indicating a need for further research.

On the opposite side of workplace ostracism, "thriving at work" is a positive mental and emotional state in which individuals experience a profound feeling of vitality and extensive learning within the workplace (Spreitzer *et al.*, 2005). Thriving at work has been significantly explored in the past decade (e.g. Porath *et al.*, 2012; Walumbwa *et al.*, 2018), underlining its positive influence on citizenship behaviors, along with its positive impact on innovation (Wallace *et al.*, 2016), job satisfaction, work performance and organizational commitment (Porath *et al.*, 2012). However, thriving at work is a contextual phenomenon in which workplace ostracism can portray a substantial negative role as a potential barrier (Spreitzer and Porath, 2014). Indeed, following the conservation of resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989) and the socially embedded model of thriving at work (Spreitzer *et al.*, 2005), it is suggested that employees who experience ostracism within the workplace, have depleted personal resources, thus hindering their ability to thrive at work and consequently to engage in beneficial employee and organizational outcomes (e.g. Kleine *et al.*, 2019). As a result, these negative effects lead to burnout, minimized attitudes toward self-development (Paterson *et al.*, 2014), lower affective organizational commitment (Walumbwa *et al.*, 2018) and decreased participation in extra-role behaviors (e.g. Xu and Hu, 2024). Nevertheless, despite the aforementioned relationships, limited research has been conducted demonstrating thriving at work's mediating influence amongst workplace ostracism and extra-role behaviors (e.g. Zhang *et al.*, 2023), highlighting a substantial need for further investigation.

Following the previous line of thinking, organization-based self-esteem (OBSE) is the degree to which employees perceive that they are valuable, significant and capable within an organization (Pierce *et al.*, 1989). Academic interest regarding OBSE arose, when Pierce *et al.* (1989) defined its construct as a contextual and conceptual aspect of generalized self-esteem, with emphasis on employees' esteem within the workplace. According to the meta-analysis by Bowling *et al.* (2010), OBSE yields positive employee and organizational results, including enhanced job satisfaction, organizational commitment, job involvement and organizational-citizenship behaviors. Furthermore, OBSE has been found to demonstrate a profound mediating role amongst workplace ostracism's negative impact on significant workplace behaviors, including job performance (Kuo and Wu, 2022), in-role behaviors and voice (Chung and Yang, 2017). However, there is a lack of documentation on OBSE's role as a mediator between workplace ostracism and extra-role behaviors.

Taking the previous discussion into consideration, the present study aims to explore the underlying mechanisms of workplace ostracism on employees' extra-role behaviors (i.e. proactivity and creativity), through the mediating roles of thriving at work and OBSE. Furthermore, this research moves a step further and examines the moderating role of job seniority in the relationship between workplace ostracism and OBSE, in an effort to shed additional light on other factors that might prohibit (or strengthen) the proposed relationships. In doing so, the present research takes place in the Greek pharmaceutical sector, which constitutes a significant contributor to the Greek economy (€6.5 billion to Greece's GDP) and overall employment rates (118.9 thousand jobs) (ΣfEE, 2023). To the best of our knowledge, empirical research on workplace ostracism and its impact on employees' extra-role behaviors in the Greek pharmaceutical sector is absent, particularly regarding the moderating role of job seniority. Indeed, acknowledging this issue, academics urge for additional research in different

contexts and countries (e.g. [Huang and Yuan, 2024](#), p. 796), by investigating additional mediators and moderators (e.g. [Takhsha et al., 2020](#), pp. 429-340), in an effort to uncover the underlying mechanism through which “workplace ostracism” operates (e.g. [Tu et al., 2019](#), p. 7). Thus, considering the detrimental impact of “workplace ostracism” on organizations and their members ([Chung and Yang, 2017](#), p. 266), the present research not only contributes to a deeper understanding on this issue, but also enhances the generalizability of the findings, as compared to other studies ([Kwan et al., 2018](#), p. 1365; [Rabiul, 2024](#), p. 8; [Zhang et al., 2023](#), p. 15). In summary, given the widespread nature of workplace ostracism ([Ferris et al., 2008](#)), it is vital to examine its impact on employees’ extra-role behaviors and to assess whether employee thriving and organizational-based self-esteem mediate this relationship.

In conclusion, the originality and value of the present study reside in several important contributions. To begin with, the analysis of the effects of workplace ostracism on employees in pharmaceutical companies in Greece sheds light on research areas with limited documentation, despite their economic and strategic significance. In addition, this study enhances workplace ostracism research since it investigates two important psychological mechanisms, compared to most workplace ostracism studies (e.g. [Xu et al., 2020](#); [Gkorezis and Bellou, 2016](#)) which examine a single mediator, thus providing a more comprehensive understanding of ostracism’s underlying processes in shaping workplace behavior. Furthermore, this study contributes to the growing body of literature examining the effects of workplace ostracism on employees’ extra-role behaviors. Evidently, taking into account the significance of creative thinking and proactive performance, in reaching business excellence and ensuring competitive advantage, this research is deemed vital, especially in the pharmaceutical sector, where both “proactivity” and “creativity” ensure pharma excellence, optimal patient-life quality and navigation through challenging environments. Lastly, the examination of job seniority as a moderator contributes to the identification of important boundary conditions that explain workplace ostracism’s detrimental impact on employee behavior.

To test the hypotheses of this research, quantitative research was conducted and structured questionnaires were distributed. The present research is structured as follows. First, the theoretical framework is provided, along with the proposed hypotheses. Subsequently, the methodology, results and discussion of this study are depicted. In the final segment of the study, theoretical and practical implications are outlined, along with this study’s limitations and suggestions for future research.

2. Literature review

2.1 Workplace ostracism and extra-role behaviors

Workplace ostracism is defined as “an individual’s perception of feeling ignored, overlooked, or excluded by their colleagues within the workplace” ([Ferris et al., 2008](#)). Workplace ostracism is a significant, widespread phenomenon that represents a unique social pain experience, which can take various and substantial forms ([Duffy et al., 2002](#)). If left unresolved or disregarded, it can lead to severe outcomes for both employees and organizations ([Qian et al., 2019](#)). Ostracism within the workplace is defined by subtle behaviors, with or without intention, including “silent treatment”, avoiding eye contact, restraining verbal communication, eluding social interactions as well as not being responded to greetings ([Ferris et al., 2008](#)). Such behaviors can be viewed in person, digitally through text messages and via social media ([Schneider et al., 2017](#)). Since workplace ostracism can be unintentional, solving it is much more challenging compared to other forms of misconduct ([O’Reilly and Banki, 2016](#)). Evidently, workplace ostracism occurs “without excessive explanation or explicit negative attention” ([Williams, 2007](#), p. 429). Therefore, its passive, subtle and rather invisible nature leads to types of aggression that are not as direct or apparent. As a result, observers of workplace ostracism are often unable to determine such behavior, let alone offer emotional and practical support to the victims, as they often view ostracism as

less damaging or significant (Balliet and Ferris, 2013). All of the above highlight the vitality of workplace ostracism's conceptual and empirical distinction from other forms of misconduct within the workplace (e.g. incivility, bullying, social undermining, workplace harassment, workplace deviance and aggression), thus enabling a new "wave" of literal interest to emerge (Ferris *et al.*, 2008).

What is interesting, is that according to relevant research, the subjects who are chronic recipients of workplace ostracism indicate that they prefer being the receivers of physical or verbal abuse, rather than ostracism, as the former allows them to feel more seen and acknowledged (e.g. Ferris *et al.*, 2008). Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that workplace ostracism is more detrimental to an employee's wellbeing compared to other forms of mistreatment within the workplace. Put simply, victims of workplace ostracism feel inadequate even of receiving negative attention (O'Reilly *et al.*, 2015). As a result, deviant (e.g. Gkorezis and Bellou, 2016) and counterproductive work behaviors (e.g. Yan *et al.*, 2014) often emerge from those being ostracized within the workplace. Hence, they desire to regain authority as well as their presence within the workplace (e.g. Ferris *et al.*, 2008).

On the other hand, extra-role behaviors are exhibited when employees participate in behaviors outside of their job description's scope, which substantially contribute to the increase of organizational effectiveness and efficiency (Eldor and Harpaz, 2016). According to Eldor and Harpaz (2016), extra-role performance can be demonstrated through proactivity, creativity, adaptivity and knowledge sharing. In this present research, emphasis will be placed upon proactive and creative behaviors. Specifically, "proactivity" is referred to the self-driven actions which are based on future behaviors and results, emphasizing altering a challenging situation or circumstance (Grant and Ashford, 2008). Indeed, proactivity within the workplace motivates employees to take initiative and induce change and progress (Bateman and Crant, 1999). Evidently, people with proactive personalities have the tendency to take the necessary measures in order to impact and alter their surroundings (Bateman and Crant, 1993). Similarly, workplace creativity refers to the generation of original, practical and beneficial ideas, solutions, products, or procedures by an employee or a team (Shalley *et al.*, 2004). Apart from contributing to innovative idea generation, creativity in the workplace portrays a crucial role in maintaining sustainable organizational advantage and establishing effectiveness (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 2007). As a result, employee creativity is key to ensuring the longevity and prosperity of an organization within the constantly evolving and immensely competitive corporate environment (Lua *et al.*, 2023).

Interestingly enough, employees who feel ostracized tend to adopt more conventional and compliant behaviors to enhance their sense of belonging and self-esteem, thereby avoiding risk-taking and refraining from extra-role behaviors (Williams and Nida, 2011). Therefore, an ostracizing work environment is less likely to foster work-related behaviors that promote creativity and proactivity. Evidently, workplace ostracism has been empirically proven to negatively affect employees' helping behavior (Huang and Yuan, 2024; Peng and Zeng, 2016), workplace proactivity (Liu *et al.*, 2015; Wu *et al.*, 2016), as well as employee creativity (Zhang *et al.*, 2023; Chenji and Sode, 2019; Kwan *et al.*, 2018; Tu *et al.*, 2019). Indeed, according to COR theory, ostracized employees experience ostracism as an adverse phenomenon that poses a significant threat to their valued personal, social (Hobfoll *et al.*, 2018; Xia *et al.*, 2019) and task-related resources, which are considered essential in predicting employee proactivity and creativity within the workplace (e.g. Wu *et al.*, 2016). Fundamentally, employees who experience a loss of their resources, strive to preserve what remains in order to cope with upcoming challenges, which in turn makes them less attentive to their performance outcomes (Wright and Hobfoll, 2004) and extra-role behaviors:

H1. Workplace ostracism is negatively related to extra-role behaviors.

2.2 Workplace ostracism, thriving at work and extra-role behaviors

Thriving at work has been developed by Spreitzer *et al.* (2005), who defined it as “the psychological state in which individuals experience both a sense of vitality and a sense of learning at work” (p. 538). It is considered a key psychological driver that enables personal growth as well as optimal and sustainable organizational performance (Spreitzer *et al.*, 2012). According to Spreitzer *et al.* (2005), the socially embedded model of thriving includes two dimensions, “vitality” and “learning”. Both dimensions enhance one another and are considered essential in encompassing the affective (“vitality”) and cognitive (“learning”) basis of individual thriving (Porath *et al.*, 2012, p. 251). With “learning”, employees acquire and employ new knowledge that facilitates them to grow and develop, whilst with “vitality” an individual’s perception of energy and alertness is fostered (Spreitzer *et al.*, 2005). However, in order for employees to thrive, unit-level contextual features (such as decision-making discretion, broad information sharing and a climate of trust), along with specific resources (including knowledge, positive meaning, positive affective resources and relational resources), are required. These elements enhance employees’ agentic work behaviors, such as task focus, exploration and heedful relating (Spreitzer *et al.*, 2005). If acquired, thriving in the workplace can lead to employee success, personal development, increased health, as well as positive organizational outcomes, such as lower turnover intentions and increased organizational commitment (see Kleine *et al.*, 2019). Evidently, thriving at work’s contextualized nature underscores the need for benevolent, civilized environments, where employees are treated equitably (Bensemmane *et al.*, 2018), with acceptance and support, by their coworkers and supervisors (Wu *et al.*, 2016; Zhai *et al.*, 2017). To be precise, employees with supportive workplace interactions thrive as they gain strength, dignity and assurance from their interpersonal relationships at work (Kabat-Farr and Cortina, 2017). Meanwhile, supportive coworker behavior has been found to positively affect employees’ vitality (Dutton and Ragins, 2007) and learning (Carmeli *et al.*, 2009), thus increasing their levels of thriving at work (e.g. Frazier and Tupper, 2016). Relevant research has also found that civility within the workplace enhances thriving at work (Abid *et al.*, 2018). Therefore, organizational cultures that promote ostracizing behaviors, result in limited employee thriving, as they diminish employees’ sense of vitality (Rabiul, 2024) and learning opportunities (Zhang *et al.*, 2023).

In agreement with COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989), workplace ostracism negatively affects employees’ vital affective and interpersonal resources (e.g. Zhu *et al.*, 2017), thus deteriorating their opportunities to learn and feel invigorated within their organization (Spreitzer *et al.*, 2005). Indeed, COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989) underlines that individuals intrinsically aspire to acquire, maintain, preserve and cultivate their personal resources, including individual characteristics, energy, conditions and belongings (see Halbesleben *et al.*, 2014). These resources enable them to address challenging situations, accomplish objectives and navigate through difficulties and barriers within the workplace (Hobfoll, 1989). Therefore, employees that initially lose resources, tend to deplete them further in a cumulative and escalated manner, ultimately leading to resource exhaustion and reduced capacity for future resource acquisition (Wright and Hobfoll, 2004). As a result, employees who believe that they have lost their valuable resources and might be unable to regain them later on are more susceptible to stress, anxiety, helplessness, depression and psychological exhaustion (Hobfoll, 1989). In addition, employees’ motivation to retain existing resources or obtain new ones is profoundly influenced by their working conditions (Halbesleben *et al.*, 2014). Evidently, limited social and emotional support from coworkers, results in employees acquiring less valuable interpersonal and affective resources (Chiaburu and Harrison, 2008). Therefore, workplace ostracism demonstrates a pivotal role in the depletion of an employee’s valued personal resources (Zhu *et al.*, 2017), thus resulting in deteriorating employee and organizational outcomes (Holmgreen *et al.*, 2017). Moreover, workplace ostracism has been proven to negatively affect workplace proactivity (Zhang *et al.*, 2023; Han and Hwang, 2021), which in turn has a negative impact on employees’ extra-role behaviors (e.g. Chenji and Sode, 2019; Yang *et al.*, 2018). Hence, we formulate the next hypothesis:

H2a. Workplace ostracism is negatively related to thriving at work.

On the other hand, thriving at work has been positively linked with employee extra-role behaviors (e.g. [Xu and Hu, 2024](#)). With regards to the specific extra-role behaviors explored in this study, employees who experience vitality within the workplace are more likely to achieve higher cognitive thinking, as well as creative problem solving ([Bledow et al., 2013](#)), and overall creativity. Furthermore, the acquisition of knowledge (learning) has been found to positively impact creative behavior and, thus, creativity within the workplace ([Hirst et al., 2009](#); [Wallace et al., 2016](#)). Accordingly, studies have demonstrated that employees with proactive personalities are more prone to thriving at work (e.g. [Jiang, 2017](#)). To the best of our knowledge, no research has been conducted regarding the direct effects of thriving at work on proactive behaviors. However, considering the broader impact of thriving on various extra-role behaviors (e.g. [Xu and Hu, 2024](#)), the extensive evidence demonstrating a direct positive relationship between proactive personality and thriving at work (e.g. [Jiang, 2017](#)), and the fact that vitality ([Carmeli et al., 2009](#)) and learning-oriented organizational cultures stimulate proactivity ([Caniëls and Baaten, 2019](#)), it is suggested that thriving at work enhances employee proactivity.

Considering the preceding discussion, thriving at work has been suggested to positively relate to different aspects of employee extra-role behaviors, such as knowledge sharing and innovative thinking (e.g. [Xu and Hu, 2024](#)). According to the socially embedded model of thriving ([Spreitzer et al., 2005](#)), work culture and supervisor/coworker support enable employees to feel empowered, advance their knowledge as well as obtain a sense of liveness, enthusiasm and zest, leading to positive employee attitudes, including extra-role behaviors. Therefore, an organizational environment that fosters exclusionary and ostracizing behaviors, hinders employees' ability to thrive, thus preventing them from engaging in positive behaviors, such as proactive and creative thinking. By integrating both COR theory ([Hobfoll, 1989](#)) and the socially embedded model of thriving ([Spreitzer et al., 2005](#)), thriving at work is proven to provide employees with critical effective resources, including contextual (learning) and psychological resources (vitality), that are fundamental to their sense of creativity and proactivity. Keeping in mind the aforementioned, as well as thriving at work's crucial role in mediating workplace ostracism's effect on notable employee behaviors, including creativity ([Zhang et al., 2023](#)) and organizational citizenship behaviors ([Han and Hwang, 2021](#)), it is expected that thriving at work will mediate the relationship between workplace ostracism and extra-role behaviors (i.e. proactivity and creativity):

H2b. Thriving at work increases employees' extra-role behaviors.

H2c. Thriving at work mediates the relationship between workplace ostracism and extra-role behaviors.

2.3 Workplace ostracism, OBSE and extra-role behaviors

Organizational-based self-esteem (OBSE) is defined as "the magnitude to which employees perceive themselves as competent, qualified, talented, valued and deserving as members of their organization" ([Pierce et al., 1989](#)). In essence, employees with high levels of OBSE, regard themselves as essential, impactful, respected and efficient, thus exhibiting positive organizational behaviors with high efficiency and increased output. In contrast, people with low OBSE perceive themselves as inept, inadequate, insignificant and tend to feel unrecognized by their peers, supervisors and their organization ([Pierce et al., 1989](#)). Therefore, such employees have the tendency to display more deviant behaviors within the workplace ([Chung and Yang, 2017](#)), along with lower job performance and affective commitment ([Arshadi and Hayavi, 2013](#)).

With regard to the present research, workplace ostracism can stimulate a significant risk to an employee's general self-esteem ([Ferris et al., 2014](#)). Indeed, the implicit social cues and

interpersonal relationships within the workplace may substantially influence employees' perception of their self-worth and value within the organization (Pierce and Gardner, 2004). Drawing from Coopersmith (1967) conceptualization of global self-esteem, OBSE is considered a contextualized component of self-esteem. Therefore, it is logical to suggest that ostracism within the workplace negatively influences OBSE. Indeed, ostracism within the workplace has been found to negatively influence OBSE (Kuo and Wu, 2022; Chung and Yang, 2017). To be exact, favorable work environments where employees feel respected, supported and appreciated by their organizations and supervisors, foster a sense of value, competence and trust, thus enhancing their levels of OBSE (Pierce and Gardner, 2004; Takhsha *et al.*, 2020; Zhang *et al.*, 2023). In contrast, according to COR theory, ostracized employees may experience a depletion of their valuable social resources (Hobfoll *et al.*, 2018; Xia *et al.*, 2019), which are vital for their organizational self-esteem, thus leading to lower levels of OBSE. Based on the preceding discussion, the next hypothesis is stipulated as follows:

H3a. Workplace ostracism is negatively related to organization-based self-esteem.

Moving a step further, as suggested by Haar and Brougham (2016, p. 722), "OBSE shapes employee attitudes, motivations, and behaviors". Hence, employees with high levels of OBSE perceive themselves as valuable members of their organizations, which consequently serves as a significant drive that urges them to work more efficiently, productively, effectively and, thus, outside of their job requirements. Hence, employees with increased OBSE, set ambitious goals for themselves and pursue high achievements, which, subsequently, lead to creative ideas (Ghafoor and Haar, 2020). Moreover, employees whose needs are met by their organization, tend to "reciprocate by making positive, proactive contributions to the organization" (van Dyne and Pierce, 2004, p. 446). As a result, employees with high levels of OBSE are more likely to seek opportunities to implement non-routine behaviors and initiatives (Liu *et al.*, 2013). All in all, empirical evidence underlines a positive relationship between OBSE and employees' extra-role behaviors (e.g. Ghafoor and Haar, 2020; Zhang *et al.*, 2023; Zhang and Liu, 2019; Le *et al.*, 2023). Last but not least, following the previous arguments, OBSE has been shown to act as a significant mediator in workplace ostracism's negative impact on valuable workplace behaviors and outcomes (e.g. Chung and Yang, 2017), as well as in enhancing job performance (Kuo and Wu, 2022). As indicated by the COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989), employees strive to obtain, retain and protect their personal resources, which will enable them to achieve optimal personal outcomes (Hobfoll *et al.*, 2018). Fragile organizational settings, such as ostracizing environments, heighten employees' inability to retain and obtain valuable resources, thus resulting in them being incapable of excelling in their role and, subsequently, engaging in extra-role behaviors. Therefore, workplace ostracism, by negatively affecting employees' perceived organizational value, minimizes their probability to act in proactive and creative ways, thus implying a negative mediation effect of OBSE amongst workplace ostracism and employees' extra-roles. Considering the preceding discussion, the following hypotheses are presented:

H3b. Organization-based self-esteem is positively related to extra-role behaviors.

H3c. Organization-based self-esteem mediates the relationship between workplace ostracism and extra-role behaviors.

2.4 The moderating role of job seniority

Finally, research suggests that OBSE is more susceptible to change in the early stages of an employee's tenure since the organizational experiences are more limited and less influential to employees within the organization (Gardner *et al.*, 2015). Indeed, as suggested by prior research, the higher the employee's tenure, the more rigid and invariable their levels of OBSE

are (Pierce *et al.*, 1989; Pierce and Gardner, 2004). Hence, the present article, examines the moderating role of “job seniority” in the relationship between workplace ostracism and OBSE:

H4. Job seniority moderates the relationship between workplace ostracism and OBSE.

Figure 1 depicts the conceptual framework.

3. Methodology

3.1 Procedure and sample

For the needs of the research, data was collected in Autumn (2024), following a “convenient sampling process” across 12 pharmaceutical companies (9 multinational, and 3 local), located in Athens and Thessaloniki. The collected data were derived from online structured questionnaires that were distributed through email and LinkedIn. Each survey instructed the participants about the scope of the questionnaires, underlining their anonymous and voluntary nature.

Overall, the questionnaires were distributed to 539 employees, of whom 234 responded, resulting in a response rate of 43.41%. With regard to demographics, 60% of the sample were female and 40% were male. The average age of the sample ranged between 26 and 40 (49%). Moreover, 38% of the sample were between 41 and 55, and only a minority ranged between 18 and 25 (7%), and above the age of 56 (6%). Regarding their educational background, 33% of the participants held a Bachelor’s degree, while the majority (63%) held postgraduate qualifications (e.g. Master’s degree, PhD). In relation to job positions, most of the employees (48%) held senior and specialist positions (e.g. Product Specialists), whilst 23% were occupied in junior and 20% in middle management positions. Meanwhile, a smaller segment of the sample was employed in upper management jobs (7%) and only 2% as chief executives or part of the board of directors. With regard to the sample’s years of experience, the majority had less than 10 years of experience (47%), 40% of the participants’ experience was above 15 years and the minority of the sample’s experience was ranging between 10 and 15 years (13%). The average tenure of the participants, with their current employer, was ranging from 1 to 3 years (40%), whereas 18 and 17% of the employees had a tenure of over 15 years and between 5 and 15 years, respectively. Finally, most of the participants were working full-time (98%) and on-site (63%), with 35% of them working hybrid and only a fragment remotely (2%).

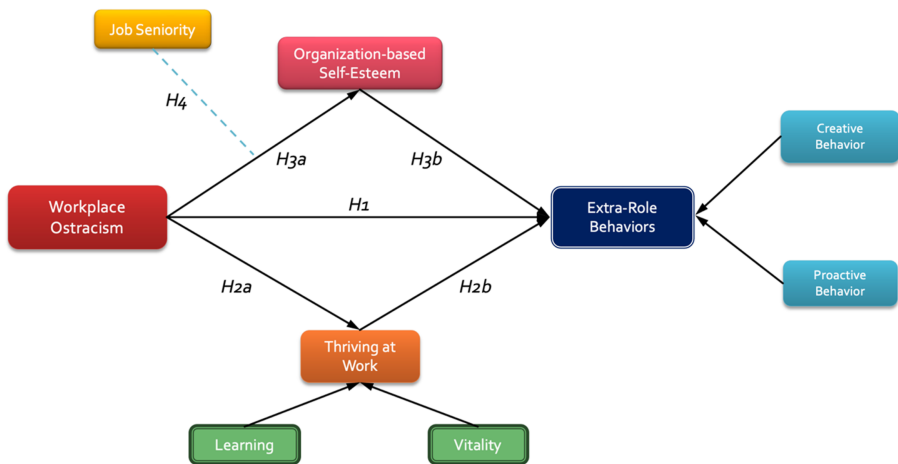


Figure 1. The conceptual model. Source: Authors’ own work

3.2 Measures

All survey items were measured using a five-point Likert scale (“1 = strongly disagree” to “5 = strongly agree”). “Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)” was conducted (“maximum likelihood extraction method”; “promax rotation”; “cutoff value = 0.50”). Detailed information regarding the loadings and the measures used, can be found in [Appendix](#).

3.2.1 Workplace ostracism. Workplace ostracism was measured based on 10 items of the Workplace Ostracism Scale, developed by [Ferris et al. \(2008\)](#), loaded into a single factor. Sample items include: “Others ignored you at work” and “Others at work shut you out of the conversation”. The Cronbach’s α for the workplace ostracism measure was 0.909.

3.2.2 Thriving at work. Thriving at work was measured using the homonymous ten-item scale developed by [Porath et al. \(2012\)](#). This scale was utilized since it measures both key aspects of thriving at work (“learning” and “vitality”) according to the socially embedded model of thriving, as proposed by [Spreitzer et al. \(2005\)](#). All items loaded satisfactorily on their respective components, resulting in two separate factors, including “learning” ($\alpha = 0.833$) and “vitality” ($\alpha = 0.826$). Sample items include: “At work I continue to learn more as time goes by” (learning) and “At work I feel alive and vital” (vitality). The Cronbach’s α for the “thriving at work” measure was 0.795.

3.2.3 Organization-based self-esteem. OBSE was measured based on a ten-item scale developed by [Pierce et al. \(1989\)](#), loaded into one factor. Sample items of this factor include: “I am taken seriously” and “I can make a difference”. The Cronbach’s α for the OBSE measure was 0.921.

3.2.4 Extra-role behaviors. Two types of extra-role behaviors were included in this study, namely “proactive” behavior and “creative” behavior (see [Eldor and Harpaz, 2016](#)). Proactive behavior was assessed by a three-item scale, based on [Griffin et al. \(2007\)](#). All items of the aforementioned scale were loaded into one factor. Sample items of this factor include: “Initiated better ways of doing your core tasks” and “Made changes to the way your core tasks are done”. The Cronbach’s α for the proactive behavior measure was 0.839. In addition, creative behavior was assessed by a four-item scale, developed by [Farmer et al. \(2003\)](#). All items were satisfactorily loaded into one factor. Sample items include: “I seek new ideas and ways to solve problems” and “I generate ground-breaking ideas related to the field”. The Cronbach’s α for creative behavior was 0.884. Overall, Cronbach’s α for the “extra-role behaviors” bundle was 0.799.

3.2.5 Control variables. Previous research has identified certain control variables (e.g. gender, age, education, seniority etc.) to be related to employees’ extra-role behaviors (e.g. [Liu et al., 2011](#); [van Veldhoven and Dorenbosch, 2008](#)). Therefore, in this present research 7 demographic individual-level variables were controlled, including gender (“0 = Male”, “1 = Female”), age (“1 = 18–25”, “2 = 26–40”, “3 = 41–55”, “4 = 56+”), level of education (“1 = High School Diploma”, “2 = Bachelor’s Degree”, “3 = Master’s Degree”, “4 = Doctorate”), job seniority (“1 = Junior level”, “2 = Senior level/Specialist”, “3 = Middle level Management”, “4 = Upper level Management”, “5 = Director”, “6 = Executive”), years of experience and tenure (“1 = 0–1 years”, “2 = 1–3 years”, “3 = 3–5 years”, “4 = 5–10 years”, “5 = 10–15 years”, “6 = 15+ years”). Recent studies ([Berry and LeBlanc, 2024](#)) have also highlighted the distinction between remote and on-site workplace ostracism, hence work location was also integrated into the control variables (“1 = On-site”, “2 = Hybrid”, “3 = Remote”). However, since most respondents worked on-site (98%), work location was not considered a control variable in this study. Furthermore, the sample consists of medium- to large-scale pharmaceutical companies in Greece; hence, company size was not included as a control variable. It should be noted that these companies share a similar organizational culture. Overall, the analysis demonstrated that the control variables were statistically insignificant. Hence, they had no effect on the proposed model. As a result, the analysis proceeded without taking these factors into consideration.

3.3 Common method variance

Following the EFA, “Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)” was conducted in AMOS 20. The 6-factor model revealed satisfactory “model fit indices” (“ $\chi^2/df = 2.691$ ”; “RMSEA = 0.057”; “CFI = 0.918”; “TLI = 0.903”; “SRMR = 0.044”). Moreover, since the data was collected through the use of questionnaires from a single source (employees in the pharmaceutical sector in Greece), the possibility of Common Method Variance (CMV) was examined via Harman’s Single-Factor (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003, p. 889). The results from the analysis demonstrated that only 32.065% of the total variance was explained by a single fixed number of factors. Furthermore, the threat of “Common Method Variance (CMV)” was further mitigated by following the Podsakoff *et al.* (2003) guidelines. In addition, the full (6-factor) measurement model was compared to alternative ones where (a) thriving, and extra-role behaviors were combined into two discrete single factors (“ $\chi^2/df = 5.028$ ”; “RMSEA = 0.090”; “CFI = 0.855”; “TLI = 0.832”; “SRMR = 0.070”), (b) all variables were incorporated into a single factor (“ $\chi^2/df = 9.211$ ”; “RMSEA = 0.143”; “CFI = 0.675”; “TLI = 0.452”; “SRMR = 0.11”). Based on the preceding information, the full 6-factor measurement model fitted the data better as compared to all other models. Last but not least, CMV was also tested by using the Unmeasured Latent Method Construct (ULMC) and by measuring the Collinearity Statistics (VIF) based on Kock (2015). Since all values were the value of 3.3, the model is not exhibiting any signs of common bias. In summary, all statistical tests showed no evidence of method bias. Therefore, common method bias is not expected to be a considerable issue in the present study.

3.4 Method of analysis

With regards to the needs of this study, “Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was employed with “SmartPLS 4” software (Ringle *et al.*, 2024). The main advantages of this method concern its flexibility and overall ability to manage complex models, including hierarchical component models comprised of both formative and reflective measurement models (Hair *et al.*, 2021), which are also implemented in this present research. Since the proposed model combines both reflective - formative higher-order components (i.e. thriving and extra-role behaviors), the use of SmartPLS is highly beneficial (see Becker *et al.*, 2012; and the “two-step approach” model).

3.5 Assessment of the measurement model

Based on the preceding discussion, the proposed conceptual model (Figure 1) encompasses both “reflective” and “formative” indicators. Regarding the reflective components, “validity and reliability” were measured following the guidelines proposed by Hair *et al.* (2021), including “Cronbach’s α (CA), <0.7 ”, “Composite Reliability (CR), <0.7 ” and “Average Variance Extracted (AVE), <0.5 ”. As can be evident by Table 1, all factors were above the proposed thresholds and met the relevant criteria.

Table 1. Construct reliability and validity

	Cronbach’s alpha	Composite reliability	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Creative behavior	0.884	0.920	0.743
Learning	0.833	0.884	0.607
Organization-based self-esteem (OBSE)	0.921	0.935	0.593
Proactive behavior	0.839	0.903	0.756
Vitality	0.826	0.880	0.599
Workplace ostracism	0.909	0.924	0.551

Source(s): Authors’ own work. Values generated through SmartPLS 4.0 Ringle *et al.* (2024)

Moreover, discriminant validity was examined based on the heterotrait–monotrait (HTMT) ratio following the recommendations proposed by [Henseler et al. \(2015\)](#). Evidently, discriminant validity ([Table 2](#)) was secured since all of the HTMT values were below the 0.85 threshold. As a result, reliability and validity for the reflective indicators were achieved.

Finally, regarding the formative components, they were all examined for “multicollinearity” by examining the “Variance Inflation Factors” (VIF), as proposed by [Hair et al. \(2021, p. 96\)](#). The results revealed that all VIF loadings were below the maximum threshold of 3.33 (see [Cenfetelli and Bassellier, 2009](#)). In summary, all of the above underline the achieved construct reliability and validity of the structural reflective-formative model, thus enabling us to further proceed to the overall analysis.

4. Results

In order to proceed to the analysis of the structural model, the bootstrapping procedure was implemented (5.000 subsamples). [Figure 2](#) and [Table 3](#) show the path coefficients along with the significance levels.

As can be seen in [Table 3](#) and [Figure 2](#), workplace ostracism is negatively associated with extra-role behaviors ($\beta = -0.201, p < 0.01$). Hence, [Hypothesis 1](#) is supported. Moreover, the analysis showed that workplace ostracism is negatively related to thriving at work

Table 2. Discriminant validity – heterotrait–monotrait (HTMT) ratio – matrix

	Creative behavior	Learning	OBSE	Proactive behavior	Vitality	Workplace ostracism
Creative behavior						
Learning	0.442					
OBSE	0.621	0.583				
Proactive behavior	0.765	0.333	0.497			
Vitality	0.534	0.826	0.710	0.472		
Workplace ostracism	0.197	0.293	0.377	0.080	0.299	

Source(s): Authors’ own work. Values generated through SmartPLS 4.0 [Ringle et al. \(2024\)](#)

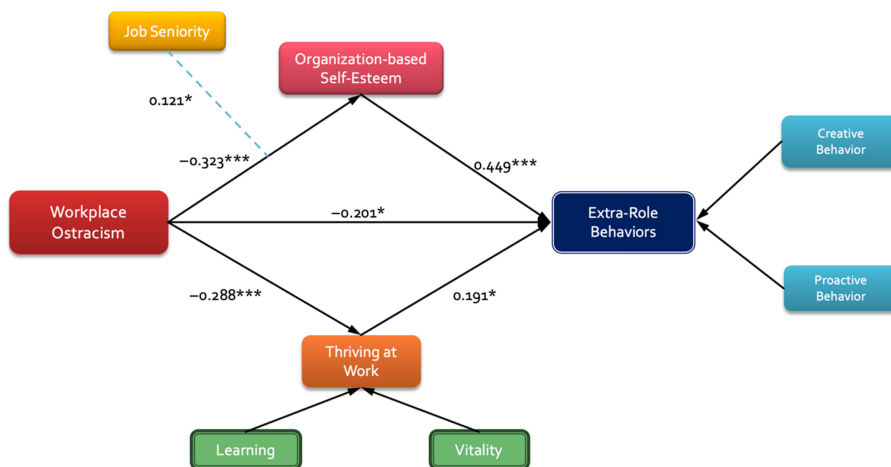


Figure 2. The final “two-step approach” conceptual framework with path coefficients and p -values. Source: Authors’ own work. Values generated through SmartPLS 4.0 [Ringle et al. \(2024\)](#)

Table 3. Path coefficients and direct effects

Direct corresponding paths			
	Path coefficient	T-statistics*	Hypothesis support
Workplace ostracism → Extra-role behaviors	−0.201	2.166*	H1 supported
Workplace ostracism → Thriving at work	−0.288	5.150***	H2a supported
Workplace ostracism → Organization-based self-esteem	−0.323	6.344***	H3a supported
Thriving at work → Extra-role behaviors	0.191	2.289*	H2b supported
Organization-based self-esteem → Extra-role behaviors	0.449	6.467***	H3b supported
Note(s): *indicates significant paths: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$ ns = not significant			
Source(s): Authors' own work. Values generated through SmartPLS 4.0 Ringle et al. (2024)			

($\beta = -0.288, p < 0.001$) and OBSE ($\beta = -0.323, p < 0.001$), thus supporting [Hypotheses 2a](#) and [3a](#). In addition, thriving at work was positively associated with extra-role behaviors ($\beta = 0.191, p < 0.05$), supporting [Hypothesis 2b](#). Similarly, OBSE was positively associated with extra-role behaviors ($\beta = 0.476, p < 0.001$), thus, supporting [Hypothesis 3b](#).

Last but not least, [Hypotheses 2c](#) and [3c](#) suggested that both thriving at work and OBSE will mediate the relationship between workplace ostracism and extra-role behaviors. Based on the mediation process, the “indirect effects” between the “independent” (i.e. workplace ostracism) and “dependent” (i.e. extra-role behaviors) variables should be statistically significant ([Zhao et al., 2010](#), p. 204). These indirect relationships were calculated based on the “product-of-coefficient ($\alpha\beta$)” approach, via the bootstrap analysis (2.000 samples) option in SmartPLS. According to [Table 4](#), the indirect effects between workplace ostracism and extra-role behaviors, via thriving at work ($\alpha\beta = -0.055, p < 0.05$) and OBSE ($\alpha\beta = -0.173, p < 0.001$), were statistically significant. Thus, [Hypotheses 2c](#) and [3c](#) are supported. At this point, it should be noted that when both mediators were present, the direct relationship between workplace ostracism and extra-role behaviors was not significant. Hence, both variables fully mediate the proposed relationships.

Finally, [Hypothesis 4](#) proposed that “job seniority” would demonstrate a moderating role in the “workplace ostracism - OBSE” relationship. All in all, the analysis highlighted that the moderating effect is statistically significant ($\beta = 0.121, p < 0.05$), thus supporting [Hypothesis 4](#). The “simple slope analysis” is presented in [Figure 3](#). The next section further discusses the relevant findings.

5. Discussion

5.1 Theoretical implications

Taking into consideration workplace ostracism’s ubiquitous and multidimensional nature, this present study aimed to enhance existing literature by shedding light to ostracism’s impact on

Table 4. Path coefficients and specific indirect effects (mediation)

Mediation effects			
	Path coefficient	T-statistics*	Hypothesis support
Workplace ostracism → Thriving at work → Extra-role behaviors	−0.055	2.073*	H2c supported
Workplace ostracism → Organization-based self-esteem → Extra-role behaviors	−0.173	4.442***	H3c supported
Note(s): *indicates significant paths: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$ ns = not significant			
Source(s): Authors' own work. Values generated through SmartPLS 4.0 Ringle et al. (2024)			

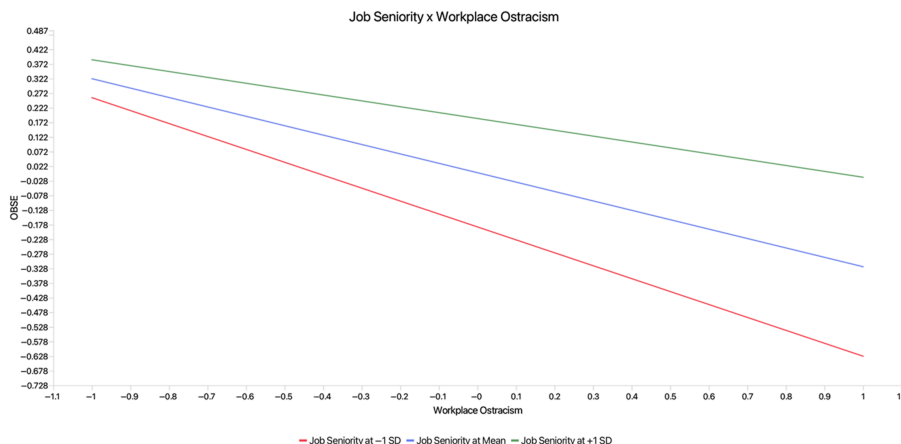


Figure 3. The moderating role of job seniority (simple slope analysis). Source: Generated in SmartPLS 4 software [Ringle et al. \(2024\)](#)

employee extra-role behaviors, where research is still relatively limited and in need of further exploration. Moreover, the present research aimed to address the inquiry for unique contextual exploration by investigating workplace ostracism's impact on "underexplored" countries as well as industries where relevant research is scarce. Evidently, this study aimed to close the gap in literature regarding workplace ostracism in Greece, as well as to contribute to the limited documentation of its effects on the pharmaceutical sector. Furthermore, by drawing on the COR theory ([Hobfoll, 1989](#)), this present research developed a unique conceptual framework that facilitated the investigation of the underlying mechanisms regarding workplace ostracism's impact on employees' extra-role behaviors, with the mediation of thriving at work and OBSE. In addition, further analysis was conducted in order to explore the moderating role of job seniority in the "workplace ostracism - extra role behaviors" relationship.

To begin with, the findings underlined that workplace ostracism was negatively related to both thriving and OBSE. This finding implies that employees who are ostracized within their workplace tend to be less energetic, have fewer opportunities to gain knowledge and expand their understanding ([Spreitzer et al., 2005](#)), as well as perceive themselves as less competent, significant and worthy in their organization. These findings support and enhance relevant studies ([Han and Hwang, 2021](#); [Kuo and Wu, 2022](#)). Indeed, adverse working environments, where ostracism is fostered, often impede the cultivation of vital resources to their employees ([Hobfoll et al., 2018](#)), thus making them more prone to generate negative outcomes, including lack of thriving and OBSE. Accordingly, the reason why thriving at work was most profoundly impacted by workplace ostracism is due to thriving requiring dynamic, social and contextual resources ([Spreitzer et al., 2005](#)), which are immensely hindered when ostracism occurs.

Furthermore, thriving at work was positively linked with extra-role behaviors. Evidently, thriving at work positively influences employee proactivity and creativity. To be exact, employees who perceive that their companies emphasize learning opportunities ([Hirst et al., 2009](#)), engage in behaviors outside of their typical job requirements, including creativity and proactivity at work. In line with COR theory ([Hobfoll, 1989](#)) and the socially embedded model of thriving at work ([Spreitzer et al., 2005](#)), employees with preexisting strengths in the form of cognitive and psychological resources (e.g. increased know-how and alertness), are more likely to obtain further resources in the future, which can be translated to positive employee outcomes, and, subsequently, behaviors outside of their job spectrum.

Moreover, this study demonstrated that OBSE was also positively linked with extra-role behaviors. This means that employees who perceive themselves as valuable members within their organizations are more likely to act in advance, foresee and avert problems (Parker *et al.*, 2010). Overall, these findings support and enhance existing research (Le *et al.*, 2023). Notably, OBSE's significant impact on creativity is justified since employees with high levels of OBSE pursue excellence and set high standards for themselves, thus enabling creative flow and innovation to emerge toward achieving optimal performance (Ghafoor and Haar, 2020). It is noteworthy that the positive impact of OBSE on extra-role behaviors was considerably stronger than "thriving at work". In essence, employees with increased OBSE have a higher tendency to exhibit behaviors outside of their job requirements, compared to those who exhibit high levels of energy and receive significant learning opportunities. Though intriguing, this outcome was foreseeable, as high levels of OBSE reinforce employees' self-esteem, self-worth and self-concept, which constitute critical psychological resources that they strive to acquire and maintain (Yang *et al.*, 2018). In alignment with COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989), psychologically empowering resources stimulate beneficial employee attitudes for both individuals and organizations.

With regard to the mediation analysis, the results depicted that both thriving at work and OBSE negatively mediated the effect of workplace ostracism on extra-role behaviors. Overall, the findings suggest that workplace ostracism hinders employees' extra-role behaviors by significantly reducing their sense of thriving and, in particular, undermining their core perceptions of self-competence and self-efficacy within the workplace (Pierce *et al.*, 1989). As a result, it can be inferred that in workplace cultures where ostracism is fostered, employees demonstrate fewer proactive and creative behaviors, by receiving limited learning prospects, feeling less energetic and perceiving themselves as less capable. The negative mediating effects of thriving and OBSE on proactive behavior appear similar, yet OBSE demonstrates a moderately stronger mediating role on creative behavior, which is reasonable in relation to its significant direct impact on creativity.

In addition, this study, also, highlighted that job seniority moderates the relationship between "workplace ostracism and OBSE". As illustrated in Figure 3, workplace ostracism tends to reduce OBSE. However, this reduction appears to be more pronounced in lower levels of job seniority, particularly among new employees. In contrast, this effect is milder for employees with longer tenure in the companies under investigation. Indeed, this finding can be explained by the COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989), which states that employees with a plethora of resources have a higher probability of engaging in positive employee outcomes that subsequently benefit the organization, due to resource "gain spiral". Therefore, employees who have received learning opportunities at their work, and who experience vitality and confidence as professionals, are more likely to engage in work-related task activities and to exhibit higher levels of self-esteem, compared to their younger colleagues. Thus, older employees who have received the necessary resources throughout the years (e.g. via Human Resource Management) are more likely to possess higher resource gains and, consequently, display better outcomes and behaviors.

Overall, the findings in this study highlight the negative effects of workplace ostracism on core employee functions, which subsequently result in pivotal organizational results (Hobfoll *et al.*, 2018).

5.2 Practical implications

This study offers substantial practical implications for potential HR interventions against workplace ostracism, which by nature are inherently challenging to design and implement, due to ostracism's pervasive and ambiguous nature (Williams, 2007).

To begin with, this study's findings underline the negative influence that workplace ostracism exhibits on employees' thriving at work and OBSE. Evidently, dysfunctional ostracizing environments hinder employees' ability to learn, feel energetic and develop

organizational self-esteem, thus leading to lower levels of extra-role behaviors. Subsequently, this study draws attention to the key importance of minimizing workplace ostracism, as well as strengthening employees' learning and self-esteem, in order to promote positive employee behaviors outside of their in-role spectrum. Therefore, HR practitioners and senior leadership teams are advised to foster a culture of openness, transparency, diversity and inclusion (see [Sharma and Dhar, 2024](#)), where workplace civility and positive coworker interactions are promoted, thus enabling employees to refrain from experiencing ostracism in the workplace ([Hu et al., 2021](#)). Furthermore, open communication is recommended to be cultivated so that minimal misunderstandings or potential misinterpretations occur, leading to less exclusion and isolation within the workplace ([Wu et al., 2016](#)). It is crucial to establish team-building activities ([Zhu et al., 2017](#)) and task interdependence ([Haldorai et al., 2022](#)), since they ensure an organizational culture characterized by collaboration, inclusion and a sense of belonging. In the realm of task performance, evidence supports the positive correlation between illegitimate tasks and workplace ostracism ([Ahmad et al., 2022](#)), thus highlighting the importance of providing employees with significant and reasonable tasks. Moreover, in order to proactively detect and attend ostracizing behaviors, consistent feedback and reporting systems are crucial to be integrated within the organizations (see [Sharma and Dhar, 2024](#)). In case of ostracizing behaviors, HR professionals are encouraged to promote employee assistance programs ([Hu et al., 2021](#)) that, amongst others, provide them with the necessary psychological safety to voice their experiences and mitigate challenging events.

Consistent with the preceding, HR practitioners are endorsed to implement training and development programs that foster diversity, equity and employee psychological well-being within the organization ([Fatima et al., 2023](#)). These training initiatives should be integrated in all levels of organizational hierarchy, especially for young recruits. Indeed, considering the moderating role of job seniority, it is evident that younger recruits need to enhance their self-esteem, as early as possible, in order to mitigate the potential negative effects of workplace ostracism. Within the scope of training and development, leadership training is also required, as certain leadership types play a crucial role in fostering an ostracizing workplace environment. For example, Machiavellian ([Karatepe et al., 2023](#)), authoritative, transactional and laissez-faire leadership ([Kanwal et al., 2019](#)), are proven to encourage ostracizing behaviors. On the contrary, transformational ([Kanwal et al., 2019](#)), spiritual ([Ali et al., 2020](#)), authentic ([Yuan and Charoensukmongkol, 2023](#)), empowering ([Okçu et al., 2024](#)) and ethical leadership ([Christensen-Salem et al., 2021](#)) decrease ostracism within the workplace. Therefore, senior leadership teams and the management team are advised to recruit accordingly, as well as train existing managers on the aforementioned leadership styles, in order to decrease or even prevent ostracism within their firms.

Additionally, it is recommended that managers reflect on their emotions, self-perceptions, feelings and views toward their subordinates, in order to assess whether they feel insecure regarding their subordinates' competences, as such relative perceptions often lead to ostracizing behaviors ([Chang et al., 2021](#)). Similarly, coworkers are also encouraged to participate in reflective exercises, since perceived coworker incompetence ([Ng et al., 2022](#)) and coworker envy ([Soliman et al., 2022](#)) were positively correlated with workplace ostracism. Keeping in mind the ongoing technological advancement, all of the aforementioned initiatives can be integrated with future-forward, innovative ways, such as the implementation of gamification, virtual reality and artificial intelligence. Therefore, the detection and alleviation of ostracism's negative influence could be executed more sustainably and effectively. Overall, achieving such results will subsequently foster higher levels of OBSE and employee thriving.

In order for employees to thrive, HR professionals are encouraged to develop psychological empowering seminars, trainings and workshops, which will enable employees to enhance their psychological capital and core self-evaluations ([Walumbwa et al., 2018](#)). In addition, fostering a supportive climate in which organizational justice and trust are secured enables employees with opportunities to enhance their learning and sense of

vitality (Liu *et al.*, 2021). In addition, providing employees with relevant autonomy, job crafting, as well as meaningful work and challenging tasks that stimulate challenge stress, will increase the necessary resources which will strengthen their knowledge (Liu *et al.*, 2021). It is noteworthy that authentic, empowering, servant and transformational leadership styles were, also, proven to immensely enhance thriving at work, whereas abusive supervision was found to restrain the development of thriving employees (Liu *et al.*, 2021). All of the above enhance employees' thriving and, consequent, levels of OBSE, along with their enrollment in proactive and creative behaviors.

Accordingly, OBSE was proven to increase the aforementioned extra-role behaviors. Therefore, emphasis should be placed upon OBSE, and, thus, HR managers are suggested to cultivate a supportive organizational culture (Ferris *et al.*, 2009), where coworker and supervisor support are established, along with limited job stressors, role ambiguity, role conflict and job insecurity (Bowling *et al.*, 2010). In essence, HR managers are encouraged to foster cultures that prioritize healthy interpersonal relationships and fulfilling psychological contracts, hence permitting the enhancement of employees' OBSE levels (Gardner *et al.*, 2015; Liu *et al.*, 2013). Similarly to thriving, line managers are, also, endorsed to provide employees with meaningful challenging jobs, whilst ensuring job complexity and relative job autonomy (Bowling *et al.*, 2010). In addition, line managers are inclined to offer employees effective performance appraisal systems that align with their career growth plans, as well as set clear expectations and goals for both parties (Gardner *et al.*, 2015). Meanwhile, it is vital to strengthen employees' skills and knowledge through upskilling trainings and workshops, thereby fostering a sense of competence and vitality in their organizational workshops (see Pierce and Gardner, 2004). Therefore, managers are encouraged to highlight the importance of a growth mindset and goal-orientation among their employees, whilst providing them with the broader impact of their contributions, along with insightful recognition for their substantial work (Lin *et al.*, 2018). Consequently, HR professionals, senior leadership teams and line managers are advised to carefully implement each aforementioned practice, in order to boost employees' self-esteem, self-efficacy and overall confidence within the organization, thus resulting in their participation in behaviors outside of their job scope.

In conclusion, minimizing or even eradicating workplace ostracism encourages employees to engage in proactive and creative extra-role behaviors. This is achieved through the maximization of thriving at work and OBSE. Evidently, proactivity and creativity within the workplace can yield fundamental benefits for both employees and organizations (e.g. Parker *et al.*, 2006; Lua *et al.*, 2023), especially in the pharmaceutical sector (e.g. Griebel, 2017; Ehmann *et al.*, 2013). However, it is proposed that such implications, as presented above, apply to various sectors and industries, since they support relative research findings that emerged from different sectors respectively. With the best-case scenario being industries showcasing "immunity" or complete eradication of workplace ostracism, it is vital for HR professionals, lower and upper management, as well as senior leadership teams, to focus on more rational probabilities, such as mitigating ostracism's negative impact on employees' outside of their job scope behaviors, through reinforcing their learning, vigor and organizational self-esteem. As a result, organizations will be better guarded when mitigating ostracism's destructive nature and navigating through its ambiguity, thus yielding the most optimal outcomes.

6. Limitations and future research

Despite this study's important theoretical and practical implications, certain limitations need to be addressed along with suggestions for future research. To begin with, a cross-sectional design was integrated in this study, since the data were collected at a one time-point; hence, "reverse causality" may occur. In order to address this issue, a longitudinal or cross-lagged study is proposed for future research, which would provide valuable insights into the effects of chronic workplace ostracism on both organizations and employees.

In addition, the data from this research were collected through self-reports from a single source (employees) in the pharmaceutical sector in Greece. Hence, although no evidence of CMV was found, future research should include a multi-level assessment of workplace ostracism by collecting data from separate sources, such as employee self-reports and supervisor assessments.

Furthermore, the study's sample could be considered relatively limited, as it was drawn from several companies within a single country. Therefore, caution should be exercised when generalizing the findings. As a result, future research should also be conducted in other contexts and countries with a larger overall sample, providing an in-depth analysis of workplace ostracism's holistic effects.

Finally, the study's conceptual model can be further enhanced through the integration of moderators and mediators, such as leadership styles, work-life balance, employees' emotional regulation processes and individual characteristics, including narcissism and emotional intelligence. The aforementioned variables will allow a more profound investigation of workplace ostracism's intermediate mechanisms and boundary conditions regarding its impact on a dual level (employee and organizational). Last but not least, drawing from recent studies, it is also recommended to further identify distinctive aspects of workplace ostracism, such as coworker and supervisor ostracism (e.g. [Gu et al., 2024](#)), in order to provide a rigorous analysis of the unique impact that each type of ostracism has on both individuals and organizations.

Appendix

Item loadings are based on exploratory factor analysis for all measures used in this study (maximum likelihood extraction method; promax rotation) with a cutoff value = 0.50)

Table A1. Factor loadings and measures

Dimension	Items	Loadings
Workplace ostracism Ferris et al. (2008)	Others ignored you at work	0.682
	Others left the area when you entered	0.695
	Your greetings have gone unanswered at work	0.670
	You involuntarily sat alone in a crowded lunchroom at work	0.647
	Others avoided you at work	0.821
	You noticed others would not look at you at work	0.722
	Others at work shut you out of the conversation	0.742
	Others refused to talk to you at work	0.810
	Others at work treated you as if you weren't there	0.830
	Others at work did not invite you or ask you if you wanted anything when they went out for a coffee break	0.778
	Cronbach's α	0.909
	In the workplace . . .	
Organization-based self-esteem (OBSE) Pierce et al. (1989)	I count around here	0.792
	I am taken seriously	0.806
	I am important	0.839
	I am trusted	0.788
	There is faith in me	0.844
	I can make a difference	0.757
	I am valuable	0.815
	I am helpful	0.805
	I am efficient	0.677
	I am cooperative	0.716
	Cronbach's α	0.921

(continued)

Table A1. Continued

Dimension	Items	Loadings
Thriving at work Porath et al. (2012)	Learning	
	At work I find myself learning often	0.851
	At work I continue to learn more as time goes by	0.855
	At work I see myself continually improving	0.847
	At work I'm developing a lot as a person	0.766
	Cronbach's α	0.833
	Vitality	
	At work I feel alive and vital	0.795
	At work I have energy and spirit	0.874
	At work I feel alert and awake	0.714
	At work I am looking forward to each new day	0.823
	Cronbach's α	0.826
	Extra-role behaviors proactive behavior,	
	Griffin et al. (2007) , creative behavior, Farmer et al. (2003)	
	Creative Behavior	
	Tries new ideas or methods first	0.838
	Seeks new ideas and ways to solve problems	0.873
	Generates ground-breaking ideas related to the field	0.902
	Is a good role model for creativity	0.833
	Cronbach's α	0.884
	Proactive Behavior	
	Initiated better ways of doing your core tasks	0.878
	Come up with ideas to improve the way in which your core tasks are done	0.867
	Made changes to the way your core tasks are done	0.864
	Cronbach's α	0.839

Source(s): Authors' own work

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Further reading

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