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When does ostracism lead to turnover intention? The moderated mediation model of job stress and job autonomy

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Keywords

Workplace ostracism; Turnover Intention; Job Stress; Job Autonomy; Moderated Mediation

Abstract

The current study explored the mediating and moderating processes through which social exclusion or ignorance causes employee behavioural outcomes in a workplace. Based on the conservation of resources (COR) theory, this study investigated the effect of perceived workplace ostracism on turnover intention as mediated by job stress and moderated by job autonomy among a sample of 144 employees from the consumer services sector in Malaysia. The results suggest that employees' perceived workplace ostracism leads to job stress, which in turn leads to negative behavioural outcomes such as turnover intention. Job autonomy was also found to have moderated the mediated relationship, whereby the

relationship was stronger with low levels of job autonomy. The results provided some practical implications, highlighting the importance of addressing workplace ostracism and promoting job autonomy.

Introduction

The concept of ostracism has become increasingly significant in the workplace in recent years. When a person is ignored or excluded from activities by others (Ferris, Brown, Berry, & Lian, 2008), a very unpleasant situation for the ostracised individual is created (Eisenberger & Lieberman, 2004). Ultimately, such treatment could result in stress-related outcomes (K. D. Williams, 2002).

Recent studies suggest that ostracised employees have lower motivation to engage in organisational citizenship behaviour (C. Wu, Liu, Kwan, & Lee, 2016) and experience stress in the workplace, resulting in detrimental effects on family satisfaction (Liu, Kwan, Lee, & Hui, 2013). In fact, ostracism is considered more harmful and threatening than bullying (Monica, 2009). Research found that not all victims of bullying experience negative consequences (Miller & Rayner, 2012). Unlike bullying, ostracism or being given the "silent treatment" significantly impacts employees and organisations negatively. Studies found that perceived workplace ostracism has a negative effect on employee performance (Chung, 2015; Yang & Tsai, 2014) and reduces employees' contribution to the organisation (O'Reilly & Robinson, 2009). Based on the review of these studies, it appears that past researchers tended to examine the direct relationship between workplace ostracism and work behaviour.

As employees are an important resource for a successful organisation, managers in the organisation need to consider the impact ostracism has on employees. A possible impact pertains to employees' turnover intention, which has a significant influence on employees' well-being as well as organisational performance. Research examining the association between perceived workplace ostracism and turnover intention is still limited as only three studies conducted in China (Yan, Xu, & Lu, 2015; Yin & Liu, 2013; Yuanxia, Aoling, & Ruixiu, 2015) have thus far been reported. Furthermore, most researchers focused on either workplace bullying (Chang & Lyons, 2012; Houshmand, O'Reilly, Robinson, & Wolff, 2012; O'Reilly & Robinson, 2009) or actual turnover (Renn, Allen, and Huning (2013) rather than on perceived workplace ostracism and turnover intention.

According to Hobfoll's (1989) conservation of resources (COR) theory, individuals experience stress, due to environmental and cognitive perspectives lead to resource loss, which could be actual loss or potential loss. In other words, when individuals perceive a threat towards their resources, they experience stress (Hobfoll, 1989). Based on this theory, the association between perceived workplace ostracism and turnover intention could be explained by job stress. Employees who are ostracised in the workplace perceive the loss of resources and feel stress, indirectly influencing their intention to leave the organisation.

To further understand the relationship between perceived workplace ostracism and turnover intention, job autonomy, one of the job characteristics that allow employees to determine their own work methods (Hackman & Oldham, 1980), should also be examined. The current study theorized that job autonomy would have a possible moderating effect on the aforementioned relationship. Turnover intention in employees

occurs when employees feel resentment with their present job and start to think about quitting by searching for alternative jobs (R. N. Robinson & Beesley, 2010). As such, drawing from COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989), we reasoned that when individuals perceive energy resources as available to them (i.e., when they have job autonomy), the impact of perceived workplace ostracism on turnover intention as mediated by job stress will be minimal as individuals will feel valued and perceive less resentment in their job. Hence, job autonomy is identified as a moderating mechanism that provides a better understanding of the relationship between perceived workplace ostracism and turnover intention. We expected that the perceived availability of job autonomy will likely result in a stronger link between perceived workplace ostracism and turnover intention as mediated by job stress.

The service sector in Malaysia is one of the primary drivers of economic growth as its contribution to the gross domestic product (GDP) is expected to increase from 54.1% in 2016 to 56.5% in 2020 (Malaysian Investment Department Authority, 2015). However, the turnover rate, particularly in the hospitality sector, is high at 18%, which is double the turnover rate of the general Malaysian workforce (Ng, 2016). It was reported that a push factor why employees leave is because they do not feel valued in their current role (Michael Page Malaysia, 2015). Ostracism could be another push factor. Hence, the current study investigated the relationship between perceived workplace ostracism and turnover intention as mediated by job stress and moderated by job autonomy among employees in the consumer services sector within Malaysia.

It is interesting that researchers have yet to empirically test the conceptual linkages between perceived workplace ostracism, job stress, and turnover intention, as well as the moderating role of job autonomy. It is vital to understand the effect of perceived workplace ostracism on

employee behaviour, as it could lead to detrimental effects on individuals and the organisation. Effective strategies are required to reduce the negative linkages between workplace ostracism and job outcomes (Kipling D Williams, 2007). This study developed and examined a model that links perceived workplace ostracism with negative behavioural outcomes, namely turnover intention. We proposed that job stress is the variable that mediates the relationship while job autonomy is the variable that moderates the mediated relationship.

Theoretical Background and Hypotheses

The impact of perceived workplace ostracism on turnover intention

According to Ferris, Brown, Berry, and Lian (2008), workplace ostracism refers to a situation whereby individuals perceive themselves as excluded or ignored by others in the workplace. This is a pervasive phenomenon that can happen across all aspects of a person's social life (O'Reilly & Robinson, 2009). Ostracism occurs when employees receive the "silent treatment" from their peers, such as when they are not invited to social events or ignored in conversations (O'Reilly & Robinson, 2009). This reduces the opportunity for social communication and interaction that help employees achieve their psychological needs in the workplace (Heaphy & Dutton, 2008). Thus, ostracism is viewed as an organisational stressor (Kipling D Williams & Sommer, 1997).

One of the important principles of COR theory is the primacy of resource loss, which could be object resources (e.g., fixed assets), condition resources (e.g., health), personal resources (e.g., traits and skills), and energy resources (e.g., knowledge and current assets) (Hobfoll, 2012). In the workplace, resource loss occurs when employees perceive that their energy resources or personal resources are excluded or ignored

by other employees. COR theory explains that individuals will try to protect and conserve their resources as doing so can help them manage their routines. In contrast, employees who have insufficient resources may become exhausted and stressed (Hobfoll, 1989). Employees will place great effort into protecting resources and avoiding negative job-related outcomes, such as stress and emotional exhaustion (Leung, Wu, Chen, & Young, 2011).

Turnover intention is defined as an employee's willingness to voluntarily and permanently withdraw from an organisation (Price, 2001) as well as an employee's wishes, tendencies, and plans regarding such withdrawal (L. J. Williams & Hazer, 1986). It is also defined as comprising an employee's ideas and attitudes about pursuing other employment (H. E. Miller, Katerberg, & Hulin, 1979) and an employee's intentional and carefully planned efforts to depart from the organisation (Egan, Yang, & Bartlett, 2004). According to Bluedorn (1982), higher turnover intention is associated with higher actual turnover. Therefore, turnover intention is a significant predictor of actual employee turnover (Bigliardi, Petroni, & Ivo Dormio, 2005).

According to Shaw, Gupta, and Delery (2005), turnover intention has detrimental effects on organisational performance as it leads to a loss of human and social resources and eventual decrease in profits. It is crucial for an organisation to determine appropriate ways to retain the right employees when such employees have already formed intentions to leave (Yang & Tsai, 2014). In relation to workplace ostracism, an excluded employee will often choose to leave (Kurzban & Leary, 2001) as he will want to seek positive social networks and social acceptance from new co-workers in a new employment situation (Maner, DeWall, Baumeister, & Schaller, 2007). Renn et al. (2013) claimed that workplace ostracism leads to turnover, as individuals tend to avoid the source of ostracism in order to escape the experience of being ostracised. This is an

adaptive reaction in which individuals seek to protect their psychological needs and avoid the painful experiences associated with ostracism through job withdrawal, which refers to an employee's effort to remove himself from a particular organisation (Adams & Beehr, 1998).

If ostracised employees are likely to leave their jobs, then employees who perceive ostracism will likely form intentions to quit before actually leaving (Maertz & Campion, 2004). Employees who perceive themselves as socially ostracised may initially hope to repair their social relationship with their co-workers (Smart Richman & Leary, 2009). During this stage, turnover intentions may have already been formed but employees remain in the organisation hoping to achieve a better social connection. It is thus expected that if they can improve their social relationship, they will not have the desire to leave the company. In contrast, when their effort to repair their social relationship fails, their intention to leave increases. Thus, we posited that workplace ostracism has a significant positive relationship with turnover intention. We hypothesised that:

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Perceived workplace ostracism is positively related to turnover intention.

The mediating influence of job stress on the relationship between perceived workplace ostracism and turnover intention

Hobfoll's (1989) COR theory stated that individuals are motivated to gain resources, driving them to invest resources in order to enhance status, love, possessions, or self-esteem, depending on their goals and the direction of their investment. When individual resources are threatened or

individuals face a possible significant loss of their valuables, psychological stress occurs. Hobfoll (1989) claimed that the loss of resources accounts for occurrences of depression and other significant negative emotions such as anxiety, which can be experienced when an individual's sense of belonging is threatened (Leary & Kowalski, 1995). In the context of workplace ostracism, ostracised employees perceive a threat to their social resources, which are important assets used as supporting tools in solving problems and handling challenging situations in the workplace (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). The lack of social resources may cause employees to become preoccupied with work-related matters which could lead to job stress. Job stress occurs when employees are unable to meet or deal with a significant number of work-related demands within a short period of time because existing resources are insufficient to accomplish the tasks. Ostracism reduces employees' available resources in the workplace as ostracised employees must deal with the difficulty in refilling their resources. Ostracised employees experience a threat to their social resources and this results in a lower level of cognitive performance (Baumeister, Twenge, & Nuss, 2002) and affects their physical, psychological and behavioural responses (Dollard, Winefield, & Winefield, 2003), leading to job stress. Therefore, we hypothesised that:

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Perceived workplace ostracism is positively related to job stress.

As noted earlier, job stress will occur where individuals fail to gain sufficient resources following significant resource investment (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). A significant relationship between actual turnover and job stress was reported among employees who have higher work-related demands, especially those in the service industry such as health and human service workers (Flinkman, Laine, Leino-Kilpi, Hasselhorn, & Salanterä, 2008; Leiter & Maslach, 2009). Furthermore, studies also found a significant relationship between stress and intention

to quit among police offers (Adebayo & Ogunsina, 2011); a finding that has been generalised to other occupational groups as well (Farquharson et al., 2012). Therefore, job stress could lead to turnover when employees have difficulty coping with work-related demands (Sumner & Townsend-Rocchiccioli, 2003; Takase, Oba, & Yamashita, 2009).

In summary, the proposed mediation makes intuitive sense as based on COR theory, perceived workplace ostracism (resource loss) increases job stress. Aforementioned past studies have established that a high level of job stress is one of the more significant causes of turnover intention. Hence, when employees perceive a loss in resource through workplace ostracism, this increases job stress and contributes to turnover intention. Therefore, we proposed that:

Hypothesis 3 (H3): Job stress mediates the relationship between perceived workplace ostracism and turnover intention.

Moderating influence of job autonomy

Employees can manage their work more effectively if the environment allows them to protect and retain their resources, which would prevent negative work outcomes (Wright & Hobfoll, 2004). The need-threat model of ostracism established by K. Williams (2002) is similar to Hobfoll's (1989) COR theory in terms of the effects of ostracism in the workplace. Continuous experiences of ostracism can diminish an individual's resources and eventually, his motivation (K. Williams, 2002). According to Hobfoll (2001), stress arises when individuals invest

their resources but do not gain the expected outcomes in return. When they are exposed to long-term ostracism, the further loss of resources may lead to job stress as they feel exhausted at work (Kipling D Williams & Sommer, 1997).

Perception of job autonomy is expected to help employees to recover their energy resources as individuals can use the knowledge and skills available to them freely without being controlled by others or confined to constraints. The freedom to determine their own way of doing things increases employees' motivation and self-determination (Deci, Connell, & Ryan, 1989; Spreitzer, 1995). The availability of job autonomy in the workplace shows that an employee has control over his work and this can reduce stress as well as enhance motivation and growth (Hackman & Oldham, 1976; Karasek Jr, 1979). Job autonomy has been posited as a type of job resource as according to the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001), job resources are defined as physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects of the job that facilitate job demand in reducing negative costs and encouraging personal growth, learning, and development. In summary, the JD-R model is in line with COR theory as maintaining and accumulating resources are primary motivating factors for individuals. If resources such as job autonomy are at stake, motivation is affected. Employees with high job autonomy are more likely to experience reduced negative impacts of psychosocial risks in the workplace as the opportunity to accumulate resources increases their ability to handle their workload, which in turn is expected to reduce job stress.

In the current study, we proposed that job autonomy moderates the mediated relationship between perceived workplace ostracism, job stress, and turnover intention. When the level of job autonomy is high, the potential dilemma associated with the perceived work ostracism-job stress relation is likely to be reduced. High levels of job autonomy indicate more resources given to employees to determine their own work,

pace, and effort in completing their jobs (Hackman & Oldham, 1980). While workplace ostracism creates a loss of resources and support, particularly social loss, an autonomous job design allows employees to deal with a significant number of work-related demands within a short period of time that would have otherwise contribute to job stress. Workplace ostracism thus tends to have a reduced impact on job-demand-related factors when autonomous job design is present.

In contrast, low levels of job autonomy indicate that employees have no or minimal freedom to determine their work tasks and ways to complete those tasks (Amabile, Conti, Coon, Lazenby, & Herron, 1996; Oldham & Cummings, 1996). The absence of job autonomy hinders the maintenance and accumulation of resources. When employees do not have the latitude to manage their work-related demands, they experience even greater resource loss as their knowledge or energy resources are excluded by other employees. This insufficiency of resources, such as the ability to control and determine their own work, increases their job stress. Thus, we hypothesized:

Hypothesis 4 (H4): Job autonomy will moderate the mediated relationship between perceived workplace ostracism and turnover intention through job stress, such that the mediated relationship is stronger when the level of job autonomy is low than when it is high.

Method

Sample and procedure

The respondents chosen for this survey were employees of private and public limited companies in the consumer services sector in the region of Klang Valley, Malaysia. A total of 250 questionnaires were distributed manually and online but only 144 completed questionnaires were usable

for the study, resulting in a response rate of 58%. Majority of the respondents (76.4%) were from private limited companies whereas 23.6% were from public limited companies. There were 51.4% male and 48.6% female respondents respectively. In terms of age, more than half of the respondents (71.5%) were aged between 20 to 29 years whereby 7.6% of the respondents were aged between 30 to 39, 11.1% were aged between 40 to 49, and another 9.8% were above 50 years of age. As for service duration, 37.5% of the respondents worked less than a year, 29.2% worked more than a year but less than three years, 11.1% worked more than three years but less than five years, 3.5% worked more than five years but less than seven years, 0.6% worked more than seven years but less than nine years, and 18.1% worked more than nine years.

Measurements

Workplace ostracism

Workplace ostracism was measured using a 10-item scale originally developed by Ferris et al. (2008). Responses were recorded on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Sample items included, "Others ignore me at work", "Others leave the area when I enter", and "My greetings have gone unanswered at work". The scale's reliability for these items was 0.89 (L. Wu, Wei, & Hui, 2011), indicating relative accuracy and reliability. The Cronbach's alpha of the scale in this study was 0.93.

Job stress

Job stress was measured using a 12-item scale developed by Parker and DeCotiis (1983). Respondents indicated their experiences and conditions of job stress using a five-point scale that ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Sample items included, "I have felt

uneasy or nervous as a result of my job", "I have too much work and too little time to do it in" and "I feel like I never have a day off". The current study indicated relative reliability with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.85.

Job autonomy

We adopted a four-item scale from Morgeson and Humphrey (2006) to measure job autonomy. Items were rated on a seven-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Sample item included, "I am allowed to decide how to go about getting my job done". The reliability of the scale in this study was .88.

Turnover intention

Turnover intention was measured with a six-item scale developed by Michaels and Spector (1982) as well as Mobley, Horner, and Hollingsworth (1978). Items were rated on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Sample items included, "I often seriously consider leaving my current job" and "I am actively searching for an alternative to this organisation". The reliability of the scale in this study was 0.91 .

A pilot study was conducted to test the reliability and validity of the items in the aforementioned measurements. Reliability tests found Cronbach's alphas greater than 0.80 for all measurements. Since all the items in the measurements were adopted from previous studies, the results of the pilot test were aligned with those of prior research confirming the reliability and content validity of the measurements. Due to the favourable results, all items in the measurements were retained.

Control variables

In our data analyses, the effects of variables such as age, gender, job sector, and service duration in the current organisation were held constant. These control variables were included in the analyses because Joshi and Roh (2009) found that these contextual factors had small but significant direct effects in their meta-analytic review.

Results

Descriptive statistics

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics, correlations, and scale reliabilities for all variables. All correlations in the study were below 0.70, indicating that all measures were appropriate for usage and that the likelihood of multicollinearity in a regression is low (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996). Prior to further analyses, variance inflation factor (VIF) in the regression analysis was also examined, and all variables were found to have VIF values below 2. As such, the possibility of multicollinearity in this study is minimal.

"Table 1 about here"

Measurement models

Before further analyses were conducted, common method bias was checked in the study to ensure that no single principal factor accounted for the majority of the variance explained (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986). The unrotated factor analysis showed that the first factor accounted for only 34.55% (less than 50%) of the total 64.08% variance indicated and thus, common method bias was not a serious threat in the study.

A series of confirmatory factor analyses were conducted using AMOS maximum likelihood to reduce the possibility of common method bias by ensuring that our measurement model fits our data. Six fit indices were used to determine the fit of our model as recommended by (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2006). Overall, the measurement model exhibited good psychometric properties (see Table 2): the x^2/df value is 1.67 less than 2.50 (Arbuckle, 2008), the incremental fit index (IFI) is .919, the Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) is .907, and the comparative fit index (CFI) is .918. Thus, all indices' values are greater than .90 and meet the condition of good model fit (Bentler, 1990). Additionally, the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) is .069 and the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) is .066, both of which meet the acceptable threshold of less than .08 (Browne, Cudeck, Bollen, & Long, 1993; Hu & Bentler, 1999). Alternative models, as described in Table 2, were compared to the full measurement model. The sequential x^2 difference tests were measured to show that the full measurement model was significantly better than alternative models as all variables showed significant differences at $p < .001$. These results suggest that the variables studied were distinct and appropriate for further analyses.

"Table 2 about here"

Test of hypotheses

This study used hierarchical multiple regression to test H1, H2, and H3. In addition, H3 was also analysed using steps proposed by Baron and Kenny (1986) and the bootstrapping approach (Hayes & Preacher, 2014). The moderated mediation (H4) was examined using the approach suggested by Preacher, Rucker, and Hayes (2007). As shown in Table 3, perceived workplace ostracism was positively related to turnover intention ($\beta = .390$ $p < .01$; see Model 4), thus supporting H1. The results also supported H2 as perceived workplace ostracism was found to be positively related to job stress ($\beta = .505$, $p < .001$; see Model 2).

For H3, it was proposed that job stress mediates the relationship between perceived workplace ostracism and turnover intention. Results in Table 3 indicate that the first condition of (Baron & Kenny, 1986) approach, whereby the independent variable (IV) has to be significantly related to the mediator, was supported as perceived workplace ostracism was found to be positively related to job stress (see Model 2). The second condition, whereby the IV has to be significantly related to the dependent variable (DV), was also supported (see Model 4). The third condition, whereby the mediator has to be significantly related to the DV, was supported as job stress was positively related to turnover intention ($\beta = .434$, $p < .001$; see Model 5). Lastly, to satisfy the fourth condition, the relationship between the IV and the DV should become non-significant while the mediator's effect on the dependent variable holds. The results showed that the relationship between perceived workplace ostracism and turnover intention was still significant when job stress was entered into the model ($\beta = .231$, $p < .01$; see Model 6). However, it can be seen that the strength of the relationship between perceived workplace ostracism and turnover intention was significantly weaker than before, indicating partial mediation has occurred which supports H3.

"Table 3 about here"

Additional support to confirm the results of the mediation was sought by using the bootstrapping approach (Hayes & Preacher, 2014). The PROCESS macro for SPSS was used to examine the direct and indirect effects, as presented in Table 4. Results showed that perceived workplace ostracism (the IV) had a significant effect on turnover intention (the DV) ($\beta = .258$, $p < .01$; see Link C). Next, perceived workplace ostracism was found to be significantly linked to job stress ($\beta = .360$, $p < .001$; see Link A) while job stress has a significant effect on turnover intention ($\beta = .421$, $p < .001$; see Link B). The bootstrapping method, which generates 5000 alternative samples and a 95% confidence interval, was used to verify the indirect effect. The indirect effect (i.e., perceived workplace ostracism→job stress→turnover intention) was significant at 95% CI [.005, .498], providing evidence for mediation and thus supporting H3.

"Table 4 about here"

For H4, it was posited that job autonomy will moderate the mediated relationship between perceived workplace ostracism and turnover intention through job stress, such that the mediated relationship is stronger when the level of job autonomy is low than when it is high. We examined four conditions to assess the moderated mediation proposed by Hayes and Preacher (2014). Table 5 shows that perceived workplace

ostracism was significantly related to turnover intention, fulfilling the first condition for the moderated mediation whereby the IV is significantly related to the DV. To test for the second condition, we mean-centered the product terms (Aiken & West, 1991) and held constant age, gender, job sector, and service duration in the analysis. Results of the moderated regression showed that there was significant interaction between perceived workplace ostracism and job autonomy in predicting job stress, whereby the interaction term was significantly related to job stress (β = -.104, p < 0.01) and hence, satisfied the second condition. The third condition was also supported as job stress was found to be positively related to turnover intention (β = .433, p < 0.01). As for the fourth condition, the results in Table 6 show that the indirect effect of perceived workplace ostracism via job stress on turnover intention was stronger when the level of job autonomy was low (b = .209, SE = .074, p < .01) than when it was high (b=.119, SE = .056, p<.05). The significant interaction was examined using the values of plus and minus one standard deviation from the means of job autonomy. The statistical significance tests appeared to indicate that job autonomy moderated the strength of the mediated relationship and therefore, H4 is supported.

"Table 5 about here"

"Table 6 about here"

Discussion

The current study provided an understanding of the moderated mediation model between perceived workplace ostracism and turnover intention within the framework of Hobfoll's (1989) COR theory. Results revealed perceived workplace ostracism to be indirectly related to turnover intention through job stress. Consistent with our proposed notion, results also showed that job autonomy increased the strength of the indirect influence of perceived workplace ostracism on turnover intention through job stress, such that this relationship is stronger when the level of job autonomy is low but not when it is high.

Past researchers have found that untapped perceived social support could be more effective and beneficial than utilised social support (Uchino, 2009). Instead of measuring functional social support, the current study measured the perception of dysfunctional social support and contributed to literature on industrial psychology by examining the effect of perceived ostracism rather than actual received ostracism. Results found that perceived workplace ostracism influences turnover intention in employees and illuminated that job stress is the mediating variable between the two variables. Employees with perceived experience of workplace ostracism are more likely to encounter job stress and therefore, have a higher propensity to leave or intent to leave the organisation. Although job stress conceptually influences turnover intention, our results showed that job stress should be addressed as mediator instead between perceived workplace ostracism and employee behaviour, which in this case was turnover intention. Examining job stress as a mediating variable is a more holistic approach in investigating the relationship between the aforementioned variables as perceived workplace ostracism was found in our study to have led to turnover intention in the presence of job stress.

Furthermore, our study suggested that the characteristics of the job have an impact on job stress. The extent to which high levels of job stress lead to turnover intention is influenced by the level of freedom to decide upon one's work, pace, and effort in accomplishing job tasks. Specifically, our results demonstrated that stressed employees who perceived workplace ostracism have turnover intention when there are boundary conditions in place, as such conditions strengthen or weaken the mediating effect of job stress on turnover intention. These findings illustrated that the relationship between perceived workplace ostracism, job stress, and turnover intention might not be as straightforward as it seemed. Most studies have ignored job characteristics, such as the level of freedom to make decisions, as potential moderators of workplace ostracism (Wan, Chan, & Chen, 2016). Our study contributed to the literature on job stress as the characteristics of the job that could possibly influence an individual's level of stress were explored. We found that job autonomy should be incorporated as a moderator to explore the nature of the relationship between perceived workplace ostracism and turnover intention in employees.

Findings from our study have some practical implications. The results indicated job stress to be an important variable in the prediction of turnover intention, implying that organisations should encourage work-life balance in the workplace. Based on our findings, the majority of our respondents agreed that they have difficulty in finding enough time to spend with their families as their work requires too much of their time and that they are not given sufficient time to complete projects. Hobfoll (1989) had identified workplace ostracism as a stressor that threatens resources needed by employees, leading to a higher level of experienced stress (Leung et al., 2011; L. Z. Wu, Yim, Kwan, & Zhang, 2012). Therefore, it is recommended that managers seek to reduce ostracism in the workplace.

In addition to that, our study provided new evidence pertaining to the moderating effect of job autonomy on the relationship between perceived workplace ostracism and job stress. Our results suggest that organisations need to pay attention not only to perceived workplace ostracism but also the availability of job resources, such as job autonomy, as the latter is vital in influencing employee behaviour. Job autonomy could also either strengthen or weaken the effect of perceived workplace ostracism and job stress on turnover intention. Thus, organisations should look into existing job descriptions and design work tasks that provide employees a sense of control and freedom in their task performance. Furthermore, training programmes to increase self-confidence are necessary to encourage employees in making the right decisions in their jobs. Job autonomy encourages employee empowerment, knowledge sharing, promotion of harmony and care within the organisation, and teambuilding in creating a healthy work environment.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

For future research, organisational activities such as workplace flexibility could be integrated into our model to measure the relationship between perceived workplace ostracism and turnover intention. Researchers have suggested that when employees receive social support from the organisation, stress and turnover intention can be reduced (Thompson & Prottas, 2006), which in turn, suggests that workplace flexibility may also act as a moderator in our model. Moreover, future research could analyse job characteristics specifically as a moderator to examine its effect on the relationship between employees' perception of work and their attitude and behaviour.

The current study has some limitations. Firstly, the sample was specific to employees in consumer services sector from Malaysia and this study did not measure the potential cultural differences that could impact individual perception on the variables studied. Yamaguchi (2013)

suggested exploring the causal relationship of job autonomy in organisations of different countries and culture. Secondly, this study used a cross-sectional design to explain any inferences of causality. We suggest that future research should adopt a longitudinal design to provide a clearer causal basis of the relationships studied as according to S. L. Robinson, O'Reilly, and Wang (2012), the timing of workplace ostracism results in different responses and behaviour. Thirdly, this study only focused on analysing the effect of perceived workplace ostracism of employees on turnover intention and thus, excluded correlations and antecedents of individuals' various personalities in relation to perceived workplace ostracism. As personality traits of employees could influence some of the variables used in this study (Zhao, Peng, & Sheard, 2013), further research is needed to investigate the extent to which personalities of employees in the service sector could affect the relationships examined in our study. It is important for organisations to study the antecedents of workplace ostracism in order to implement sufficient interventions to reduce its occurrence.

Conclusion

In summary, the purpose of this study was to provide an understanding of the influence of perceived workplace ostracism on turnover intention with job stress as a mediating factor and job autonomy as a moderating factor among Malaysian employees in the consumer services sector. Workplace ostracism is a painful experience that has significant detrimental effects on employees. Past research had identified the influence of workplace ostracism on job stress and turnover intention, causing negative implications for individuals and affecting organisational performance. Job stress is associated with increases in organisational costs, which include frequent sick leaves and insurance fees (Lofland, Pizzi, & Frick, 2004), while turnover intention causes a loss of skilled workers and organisational knowledge (Ramlall, 2003). Both outcomes will influence

employees' job efficiency as well as business performance. Overall, the issue of workplace ostracism needs to be addressed as any form of ostracism may negatively impact individuals and in extreme cases, may result in negative job outcomes.

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Table 1

Descriptive statistics, correlations, and scale reliabilities for scale variables

	Variable	*Mean*	*SD*	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*
1	Age	34.05	10.54	-							
2	Gender (men=0, women=1)	.51	.50	-.081	-						
3	Job sector (public=1, private=2)	1.76	.43	.080	.015	-					
4	Service duration	2.55	1.82	.743**	-.012	.069	-				
5	Perceived workplace ostracism	2.33	.843	.008	-.661**	-.020	-.084	(.93)			
6	Job satisfaction	3.06	.635	.055	-.289**	-.022	.069	.478**	(.82)		
7	Turnover intention	2.78	.879	-.039	-.195*	-.013	-.132	.393**	.423**	(.91)	
8	Job autonomy	4.04	1.00	.091	-.023	.029	.038	.014	.180*	.103	(.88)

Note. n = 144, **p < .01, *p < .05. Coefficient alpha reliabilities are reported in parentheses in the correlation diagonals.

Table 2

Comparison of measurement models

Models	$\chi^2(df)$	IFI	TLI	CFI	RMSEA	SRMR	$\Delta\chi^2$ (Δdf)
Full measurement model, 4 factors	405 (243)	.919	.907	.918	.069	.066	-
Model A, 3 factors[a]	697 (246)	.781	.750	.777	.113	.109	292 (3)
Model B, 2 factors[b]	795 (248)	.734	.700	.730	.124	.120	98 (2)
Model C, 1 factor[c]	1064 (249)	.604	.555	.598	.151	.145	269 (1)

Note. n = 144, ***p < .001; χ^2, chi-square discrepancy; df, degrees of freedom; IFI, incremental fit index; TLI, Tucker-Lewis index; CFI, comparative fit index; RMSEA, root mean square error of approximation; SRMR, standardized root mean square residual; χ^2_{diff}, difference in chi-square; df_{diff}, difference in degrees of freedom.

[a]Perceived workplace ostracism and job autonomy combined into a single factor; compared to full measurement 4-factor model.
[b]Perceived workplace ostracism, job autonomy, and job stress combined into a single factor; compared to full measurement 4-factor model.
[c]Harman's single factor model: All variables combined into a single factor; compared to full measurement 4-factor model.

Table 3

Results of hierarchical regression analyses of the direct and mediating effects

	Job Stress			Turnover Intention		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Control Variables						
Age	-.113	-.155	-.141	-.177	-.095	-.129
Gender	-.291***	.062	-.193*	.114	-.074	.095
Job sector	-.019	-.015	.003	.006	.011	.011
Service duration	.139	.210	-.078	-.017	-.135	-.082
Independent Variable						
PWO		.534***		.464***		.297**
Mediator						
JS					.409**	.313***
R^2	.092	.249***	.071	.190***	.223**	.263*
ΔR^2	-	.216***	-	.154***	.189**	.225*
F	2.78	7.57	2.10	5.35	6.55	6.94
ΔF		4.79	-	-	1.20	.39

Note. n = 144. *p < .05; **p < .01. PWO = perceived workplace ostracism, JS = job satisfaction

Table 4

Mediation results with turnover intention as dependent variable (DV)

Independent variable (IV)	Mediator variable (MV)	Total effect of IV on DV	Effect of IV on MV (Link A)	Effect of MV on DV (Link B)	Direct effect (Link C)	Indirect effect (Link C')
PWO	JS	.31**	.40***	.43***	.31** [.08, .54]	.17[a] [.06, .32]

Note. Final models: F (7, 136) = 6.94, p < .001; R^2 = .2632; *p < .05, **p < .01, p < .001
[a] Significant at a confidence interval of 95%. PWO = perceived workplace ostracism, JS = job satisfaction

Table 5

Regression results for testing moderation of job autonomy on the relationship between perceived workplace ostracism, job stress, and turnover intention.

Variables	Job Stress			Turnover Intention		
	Beta	*SE*	*t*	*Beta*	*SE*	*t*
Control Variables						
Age	-.002	.007	-.318	-.105	.125	-.841
Gender	-.077	.123	-.627	-.155	.174	-.888
Job sector	-.033	.114	-.287	.022	.157	.138
Service duration	.066	.051	1.298	-.040	.069	-.576
Independent Variable						
PWO	.379***	.074	5.139	.310**	.111	2.791
JS	-	-	-	.433**	.138	3.136
Moderating Variable						
AT	.115**	.041	2.820	-	-	-
Interaction Term						
PWO x AT	-.104**	.035	-2.984	-	-	-
R^2	.300			.263		
F	(8, 135) = 12.753***			(7,136) = 8.756***		

Note: PWO = perceived workplace ostracism, JS = job satisfaction, AT=autonomy

Table 6

Moderated mediation results for perceived workplace ostracism across levels of job autonomy on turnover intention.

Path	Level	Conditional indirect	Boot z	p	Boot	Boot ULCI

	effects		SE			LLCI	
Simple path for high level of AT	+1.004	.119	.056	1.822	< .05	.036	.261
Simple path for low level of AT	-1.004	.209	.074	3.201	< .01	.084	.371

Note. n= 144; AT = job autonomy. High level of AT refers to one standard deviation above the mean of job autonomy; low level of AT refers to one standard deviation below the mean of job autonomy.