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# The mediating effects of organizational conflict on the relationships between workplace ostracism with in-role behavior and organizational citizenship behavior

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – This study aims to examine the mediating effects of organizational conflict on the relationships between workplace ostracism with in-role behavior and organizational citizenship behaviors. The workplace is a social context where many individuals spend a great amount of their time. Frequently being excluded or ignored is a common experience within all social contexts, and the study emphasizes how those feelings can affect organizational members. The current study extends research, as prior empirical studies have focused mainly on the direct consequences of workplace ostracism.

**Design/methodology/approach** – The study was longitudinally designed, as data were collected using a two-wave self-reported survey. Confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modeling were conducted to test the study's hypotheses.

**Findings** – The study found workplace ostracism to be positively related to coworker conflict, supervisor conflict and task conflict. Coworker conflict was found to fully mediate the relationships between workplace ostracism with in-role behavior and organizational citizenship behaviors.

**Research limitations/implications** – As the study was conducted in Korea, the results cannot be generalizable and should be tested in Western cultures. Although the study was longitudinally designed, the first-wave survey measured the independent variable, while the second-wave survey measured the mediating and dependent variables. Also, self-reported surveys are always of concern; thus, multiple sources should be considered to strengthen the research model's relationships.

**Practical implications** – Organizations and managers need to continuously address the quality of interpersonal relationships among all organizational members. As studies reveal that being “out of the loop” is quite a common phenomenon, individual and organizational performance can be greatly affected, as work is becoming more interdependent and team work is frequently implemented within organizations.

**Social implications** – Individuals interact in numerous social contexts and as the workplace is an important context where many individuals spend a lot of their time and interact with other organizational members, the quality of the relationships at work can have spillover effects that can affect interpersonal relationships outside of the workplace.

**Originality/value** – The study explores and empirically tests the mediating effects of organizational conflict on the relationships between workplace ostracism with in-role behavior and organizational



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citizenship behaviors. The study extends research on the consequences of workplace ostracism and helps further understand how workplace ostracism can affect workplace attitudes and behaviors.

**Keywords** Task conflict, Organizational citizenship behavior, Coworker conflict, In-role behavior, Supervisor conflict, Workplace ostracism

**Paper type** Research paper

The workplace is an important social context where individuals spend a lot of their time and interact with one another. It is important for employees to maintain positive working relationships, as the quality of the relationship can greatly affect an individual's workplace attitudes and behaviors. As work has become very interdependent due to organizations frequently implementing teamwork, it is essential that working relationships are supportive and collaborative to achieve organizational performance. Consequently, as maintaining favorable working relationships is crucial for one's performance, [Fox and Stallworth \(2005\)](#) mentioned that the workplace is one of the most important social contexts where ostracism occurs; thereby, workplace ostracism has gained some attention, as studies have found workplace ostracism to negatively affect workplace attitudes and behaviors.

Previous studies have examined the direct effects of workplace ostracism to various attitudinal and behavioral outcomes, such as psychological well-being, job attitudes, job withdrawal and workplace deviant behavior ([Ferris \*et al.\*, 2008](#); [Hitlan and Noel, 2009](#)). Although studies have generalized the negative effects of workplace ostracism, research has not clearly provided the underlying mechanisms that can further explain the relationships. In this notion, recent research has suggested there are potential mediators that can further help understand the effects of workplace ostracism ([Robinson \*et al.\*, 2013](#); [Zhao \*et al.\*, 2012](#)). For instance, [Robinson \*et al.\* \(2013\)](#) proposed that there are pragmatic and psychological effects that can mediate the relationships between workplace ostracism and behavioral outcomes, such as job performance, organizational citizenship behavior and deviant behavior. They argued that working relationships, functional support and fundamental needs, such as the need to belong and self-esteem, are affected by workplace ostracism, which then can explain workplace behavioral outcomes. In this aspect, as working relationships are a pertinent factor for organizational success, this study investigates how organizational conflict (interpersonal conflict and task conflict) relates with the relationships between workplace ostracism with in-role behavior and organizational citizenship behavior. In general, ostracized individuals will perceive they have some unattractive characteristics or are different from others, which can then affect how they perceive organizational conflict. Consequently, when an individual experiences some form of organizational conflict, it can result in negative organizational outcomes such as reduced performance levels and reductions in citizenship behaviors.

### Workplace ostracism

Ostracism is a common phenomenon that humans can experience. Ostracism is a part of human life and can come in various forms such as exile and banishment on one extreme and complete end while simply being given the silent treatment or avoiding eye contact from a minimal end ([Ferris \*et al.\*, 2008](#)). Ostracism is the omission of appropriate actions that would otherwise engage someone, such as when an individual or group fails to acknowledge,

include, select or invite another individual or group. In this notion, ostracism can be referred to as inactions to socially engage with others and are acts of omission (positive attention) rather than acts of commission (negative attention) (Robinson *et al.*, 2013). For instance, workplace ostracism is when an individual or group omits to take actions that engage another organizational member when it is socially appropriate to do so.

Ostracism may not always be intentional or punitive because, in some cases, people may ignore others simply because they are sometimes so engaged in their own work and, as a result, unintentionally ignore people and their responses (Williams, 2001). In addition, ostracism can be non-purposeful and occur when individuals are unaware that they are engaging in behaviors that socially exclude others (Robinson *et al.*, 2013). This form of ostracism is very common, as people are oblivious of their own inactions (Sommer *et al.*, 2001). For instance, people can forget to include another person's email address when sending group messages thinking that it has been already included. Ostracism may even be ambiguous because an individual may or may not know whether he or she is purposely being ostracized (Williams, 1997). In this aspect, motive may not be part of the definition, as ostracism is not necessarily intended to cause harm (Robinson *et al.*, 2013). In contrast, ostracism can be purposeful and occur when individuals are aware of their inactions to socially engage another individual and do so intentionally to hurt the target or help the actor. For example, the silent treatment can be used to intentionally punish, retaliate or hurt the target person as well as to avoid conflict, social awkwardness or unpleasant emotions (Robinson *et al.*, 2013). However, ostracism generally tends to be harmful, although it may not always have malicious intentions or even without any intentions of any kind because it still results to a painful experience (Williams, 1997).

Ostracism causes an individual to feel a painful and aversive experience. Ferris *et al.* (2008) argued that ostracism causes a sense of "social pain". Studies found that brain structures that were activated in physical pain were also activated after individuals experienced social rejection. Moreover, ostracism is aversive because it can simultaneously threaten the four fundamental human needs:

- (1) the need for self-esteem;
- (2) the need to belong;
- (3) the need to control; and
- (4) the need for a meaningful existence (Williams, 1997, 2001, 2007).

First, ostracism affects self-esteem because when individuals are ostracized, they feel they have done something wrong or that they have some unattractive characteristics, therefore, negatively affecting their sense of self-esteem. Second, the need to belong is negatively affected because an individual will feel they are removed from a group that they want to be a part of. Third, ostracized individuals' sense of control is undermined because others' responses are not given to their actions and ostracized individuals do not have a way of affecting an end to the ostracism. Finally, ostracism affects the sense of a meaningful existence because it represents a form of "social death" and shows how life would be if one did not exist (Sommer *et al.*, 2001).

### **Conflict**

Conflict is a dynamic process that occurs between individuals and/or groups. By nature, conflict is interactional, as it involves interaction between two or more parties,

such as when an individual experiences different perspectives with a targeted individual. Conflict involves committing the actual behavior that allows the target to acknowledge the source through some form of behavior and to when the behavior has ended; thus, conflict tends to be specific in nature. In this notion, task conflict and relationship conflict. Task conflict refers to disagreement with others about the way the work is done, about the goals they achieve and about what the best strategy is to accomplish one's goals. Task conflict focuses on the different perspectives and opinions about how the task should be done. In contrast, relationship conflicts are interpersonal incompatibilities such as values, needs, interests and norms (Wall and Callister, 1995). Relationship conflict involves more personal issues and emotions such as annoyance, frustration and irritation. Although task conflict and relational conflict are correlated, they can be differentiated because task conflict appears to be less harmful and even have positive consequences such as better group decisions, greater likelihood of using integration styles of conflict management, increased satisfaction with group decision and desire to remain in the group (Janssen *et al.*, 1999; Amason, 1996).

Moreover, conflict is conceptualized to have three properties: disagreement, negative emotion and interference (Barki and Hartwick, 2004). For instance, task conflict is defined as the discrepancies, incompatible wishes or irreconcilable desires between the parties (Jehn and Mannix, 2001). It focuses on the disagreements between the parties that are involved regarding what tasks need to be accomplished for work. Negative emotions have been closely related with conflict. Research has frequently associated conflict with negative emotions such as anger, frustration and other negative feelings (Pelled *et al.*, 1999). Also, conflict can be identified with interference because conflict is a process where one party perceives that its interests are being opposed or negatively influenced by another party (Wall and Callister, 1995).

### Hypothesis development

Ostracism decreases an individual's sense of belonging to and identification with the organization. When an individual becomes ostracized from the workplace, the individual will feel like an outcast from the group/organization and, consequently, may feel different from others. According to the social identity perspective (social identity theory: Tajfel, 1978; self-categorization theory: Turner, 1982, 1984; Turner *et al.*, 1987), how an individual perceives and identifies himself or herself with others is an important aspect that can affect an individual's attitudes and behaviors. Individuals categorize themselves into social categories using salient prototypical characteristics, and as they are closer to the prototypical group, they are likely to be categorized within the in-group as well as to be considered more attractive to others (Brewer and Gardner, 1996). In contrast, when individuals are less prototypical, they are thought to be less socially attractive and more likely to be grouped as members within the out-group (Hogg and Williams, 2000). Therefore, the social identity perspective explains that there is favoritism for in-group members, while members of the out-group are more likely to be perceived as less trustworthy, honest and cooperative in comparison to the in-group members (Brewer, 1979).

According to the social identity theory, it is natural that conflicts arise because different groups exist within organizations (Ashforth and Mael, 1989) and that different groups have different perspectives. When there is a divergence in values, needs, interests, opinions and goals, individuals tend to disagree with each other, which can

then negatively affect interpersonal relationships (Barki and Hartwick, 2004). In this note, perceived dissimilarity has been found to be related to conflict (Jehn, 1994, 1997) because dissimilar people are less likely to validate other individuals' beliefs and values (Bryne, 1971). Thus, conflicts naturally arise due to the polarity of groups, as in-group members and out-group members will develop negative beliefs about each group. When individuals are ostracized, they are likely to perceive themselves to be less prototypical, belong to the out-group and be different from other organizational members. As part of the out-group, ostracized individuals will tend to perceive that their values and beliefs are different from in-group members. Moreover, when individuals consider themselves to be part of the out-group, they are likely to have more negative interpersonal exchanges such as relationship conflicts with other organizational members (Pelled, 1996); hence, hypothesizing the following:

*H1.* Workplace ostracism will be positively related to interpersonal (coworker and supervisor) conflict.

Social category diversity refers to the dissimilarities among individuals in social category membership and provides a salient basis by which individuals can categorize themselves and others. Social category memberships group individuals into distinct groups (e.g. in-groups and out-groups), which can then generate conflict among each group's personal preferences or disagreements due to the effects of social identity. When an individual is part of one group, it will result in one to perceive a shared identity. When there is strong shared group identity, individuals will have a tendency to be loyal, trusting and concerned about promoting the welfare of the group (Brewer and Miller, 1996). However, when there is an absence of shared identity, individuals will be likely to evaluate others' behaviors negatively because they will assume there is a competitive rather than a cooperative perspective; thus, research has found shared identity to be associated with conflict (Hinds and Mortensen, 2005). In this notion, when individuals are ostracized, they will perceive themselves not to have the shared beliefs, which results in decreased interaction with other organizational members. The lack of interaction will tend to inhibit sharing resources and information with other organizational members, thereby increasing the likelihood of experiencing different perspectives regarding task-related issues.

*H2.* Workplace ostracism will be positively related to task conflict.

Interpersonal relationships can greatly affect how individuals feel about their work. Poor working relationships tend to negatively affect workplace attitudes and behaviors. Conflict can interfere with one's performance because it creates tension and antagonism that then distracts an individual from performing effectively. Carnevale and Probst (1998) suggested that as conflict increases, an individual's cognitive responsibilities increase, which then interferes with one's cognitive flexibility and creative thinking. Furthermore, when conflict exists, individuals will tend to perceive negative emotions such as anger, frustration and other negative feelings (Pelled *et al.*, 1999). Negative emotional reactions can greatly affect how individuals work and attain their goals and as individuals experience conflict, tension and antagonism arise, therefore distracting task performance (De Dreu and Weingart, 2003). In this notion, the information-processing perspective explains that conflict can reduce performance because when interpersonal conflict exists, negative emotions can hinder an individual's



ability to process and exchange information, which then can reduce performance and also allow an individual to engage in destructive conflict spirals (Giebels and Janssen, 2005). Also, as Jehn (1994, 1995, 1997) suggested that relationship conflict generally interferes with task performance, I propose the following:

- H3. Interpersonal (coworker and supervisor) conflict will be negatively related to in-role behavior.
- H4. Task conflict will be negatively related to in-role behavior.

When individuals experience conflict, not only do they perceive interpersonal incompatibilities, they also feel strong negative emotions such as tension and friction with one another. Conflict has been characterized to cause negative emotions, and as the workplace is a context where emotions exist, emotions help individuals to formulate intentions to engage in workplace behaviors (Bies *et al.*, 1997). For instance, when interpersonal conflict exists, it can involve various personal issues and negative emotions such as disliking others and feelings of annoyance, frustration and irritation. Research has found interpersonal conflict to be associated with several different behaviors such as debate, argumentation, competition, back-stabbing, aggression and hostility (Barki and Hartwick, 2004). Therefore, the emotion-focused approach (Lazarus, 1995) can explain that emotions involve numerous actions such as avoidance or retaliation. In this perspective, conflict tends to allow an individual to reciprocate in negative behaviors and be less likely to engage in positive behaviors such as helping behavior, and as Deustch (1969) argued that relationship conflict can decrease mutual understanding and goodwill, individuals experiencing conflict will be less likely to engage in favorable workplace behaviors:

- H5. Interpersonal (coworker and supervisor) conflict will be negatively related to organizational citizenship behavior.
- H6. Task conflict will be negatively related to organizational citizenship behavior.

Workplace ostracism has been argued to cause maladaptive responses. Studies found that when individuals are excluded, it negatively affects their cognitive state. Twenge *et al.* (2003) suggested that the deconstructed cognitive state results in individuals minimizing self-awareness, focusing more on the present state and having no concern for long-term goals. The effect of ostracism affects an individual's ability to self-regulate or adapt behavior to comply with social norms, therefore having a tendency to engage in maladaptive behaviors (Baumeister *et al.*, 2005) and impair logical reasoning (Baumeister *et al.*, 2002). As a result, being self-aware and being able to understand long-term consequences related with one's own behaviors, which are pertinent aspects of self-regulation, can be negatively affected (Carver and Scheier, 1981). Moreover, according to the beliefs of negative reciprocity, ostracized individuals rationalize that it is acceptable to retaliate directly to those who have excluded them, which, in turn, might cause them to engage in more interpersonal forms of counterproductive work behaviors (Zhao *et al.*, 2012). Hence, research has found workplace ostracism to be related with negative workplace behaviors such as aggression (Twenge *et al.*, 2001) and workplace deviant behavior (Ferris *et al.*, 2008; Hitlan and Noel, 2009).

In similar notion, ostracized individuals will be less likely to engage in positive work behavior, such as helping and prosocial behaviors. As mentioned, ostracism will

negatively affect an individual's ability for self-regulation. To engage in citizenship behavior, individuals need to regulate themselves to maintain the persistence and effort needed to perform tasks and maintain the good image of organizational citizens (Bolino, 1999; Latham and Pinder, 2005). Moreover, according to the social exchange theory and norm of reciprocity, ostracized individuals will be less likely to be motivated to return such behaviors to other employees. Research has found social rejection to be associated with reduced prosocial behavior (Twenge *et al.*, 2007), while social acceptance was found to be positively related with prosocial behavior (Schonert-Reichl, 1999). Furthermore, studies have found that children and adolescents from stable and cohesive family upbringings and having other adult support were more likely to engage in caring and prosocial behaviors (Cochran and Bo, 1989; Romig and Bakken, 1992). In similar light, studies suggest that individuals who perceive organizational support and support from their supervisors and coworkers are likely to engage in citizenship behaviors (Jex *et al.*, 2003; Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002).

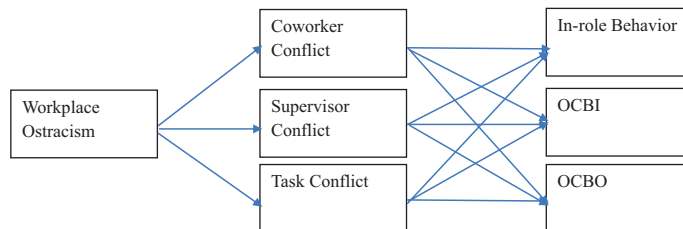
Following *H1* and *H2* and understanding the relationships between task and interpersonal conflict with in-role behavior and organizational citizenship behavior, we can naturally hypothesize that task and interpersonal conflict can mediate the relationships between workplace ostracism with in-role behavior and organizational citizenship behavior, as shown in Figure 1:

- H7.* Interpersonal conflict (coworker and supervisor) will mediate the relationship between workplace ostracism and in-role behavior.
- H8.* Task conflict will mediate the relationship between workplace ostracism and in-role behavior.
- H9.* Interpersonal conflict (coworker and supervisor) will mediate the relationship between workplace ostracism and organizational citizenship behavior.
- H10.* Task conflict will mediate the relationship between workplace ostracism and organizational citizenship behavior.

**Methodology**

*Sample*

Data were collected using a two-wave self-reported survey. The questionnaires were administered, as they were given in-person in a sealed envelope to each respondent and later returned into a box to the person of contact. For the first wave (T1), questionnaires were given to 434 full-time employees and 366 questionnaires were returned (84 per cent response rate). Out of the 366 questionnaires, 343 were usable, as cases with missing data were discarded. The T1 questionnaires provided demographic information and



**Figure 1.**  
Proposed model



measured workplace ostracism. A two-month interval was used between the first and second wave. The second wave (T2) questionnaires were sent to 343 employees and 281 were returned (82 per cent response rate). Out of the 281 questionnaires, 262 were usable due to missing data. The T2 questionnaires reported task conflict, coworker conflict, supervisor conflict, in-role behavior and organizational citizenship behavior. The average respondent was 35.3 years old ( $SD = 7.83$ ), average tenure was 6.6 years ( $SD = 6.82$ ) and the average team tenure was 4.1 years ( $SD = 4.59$ ). In all, 72.5 per cent of the respondents were male, and 77.2 per cent had a college degree or higher. In terms of organizational position, the three largest groups were the first three organizational positions: entry level (29.4 per cent), deputy section chief (17.2 per cent) and deputy department head (19.1 per cent).

### Measures

As the study was conducted in Korea, the measures were translated into Korean and were later back-translated into English by two fluent bilingual persons to validate the quality of the translations. All of the measure items used a seven-point Likert scale from 1, “strongly disagree”, to 7, “strongly agree”:

Workplace ostracism was measured with Ferris *et al.*'s (2008) ten-item scale. Sample items included:

- “Others at work treated you as if you weren't there”;
- “Others avoided you at work”; and
- “Others ignored you at work”.

A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to test the uni-dimensional structure of this measure, and the model's overall chi-square, goodness-of-fit index (GFI, Joreskog and Sorbom, 1993), comparative fit index (CFI, Bentley, 1990), Tucker–Lewis Index (TLI, Tucker and Lewis, 1973) and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA, Browne and Cudeck, 1993) were used to assess model fit. Convention suggests that a value above 0.90 for GFI, CFI and TLI and a value below 0.08 for RMSEA indicate a good fit between the proposed model and the observed data (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988). By these criteria, the results show a good fit (GFI: 0.82, CFI: 0.93, TLI: 0.90 and RMSEA: 0.80). The reliability of this scale was 0.97.

Task conflict was measured with Jehn's (1995) four-item measure. Sample items included:

- “There are frequent conflicts about ideas in my work unit”;
- “There is much conflict about the work I do with others in the work unit”; and
- “People in my work unit often disagree about opinions regarding the work being done”.

The reliability of this scale was 0.91.

Coworker conflict was measured with Spector and Jex's (1998) four-item measure. Sample items included:

- “I often get into arguments with my coworkers”;
- “I often yell at my coworkers at work”; and
- “My coworkers are often rude to me at work”.

The reliability of coworker conflict was 0.90.

Supervisor conflict was also measured with [Spector and Jex's \(1998\)](#) four-item measure, but there was a shift of the referent from coworker to supervisor. Sample items included:

- "I often get into arguments with my supervisor";
- "I often yell at my supervisor at work"; and
- "My supervisor is often rude to me at work".

The reliability of supervisor conflict was 0.92.

In-role behavior was measured with Williams and Anderson's six-item scale. Sample items included:

- "I fulfill responsibilities specified in my job description";
- "I perform tasks that are expected of me"; and
- "I engage in activities that will directly affect my performance evaluation".

The reliability of this scale was 0.95.

Organizational citizenship behavior was measured with [Williams and Anderson's \(1991\)](#) 14-item measure. Seven items measured organizational citizenship behavior toward individuals (OCBI): "Help others who have been absent", "Goes out of the way to help new employees" and "Takes a personal interest in other employees". The reliability of this scale was 0.87. Seven items measured organizational citizenship behavior that benefited the organization as a whole (OCBO): "Gives advance notice when unable to come to work", "Attendance at work is above the norm" and "Takes undeserved work breaks". The reliability of this scale was 0.80.

### Data analysis

AMOS 18 was used for the study, and CFA and path analyses were conducted to test the hypotheses. For the first step, CFA was conducted to examine the distinctiveness of the study's variables. In the next step, a model comparison was conducted to evaluate the structural models. In conducting the CFA, the proposed seven-factor model was compared with a six-factor model, five-factor models (two), a four-factor model, a three-factor model and a one-factor model. For the six-factor model, OCBI and OCBO were combined together. For the five-factor models, one model loaded task conflict, coworker conflict and supervisor conflict together, while the other model loaded in-role behavior, OCBI and OCBO together. For the four-factor model, task conflict, coworker conflict and supervisor conflict were combined and OCBI and OCBO were also combined. Finally, the three-factor model loaded task conflict, coworker conflict and supervisor conflict together and in-role behavior, OCBI and OCBO together.

### Results

[Table I](#) displays the means, standard deviations and correlations. To assess model fit, the overall model chi-square measure ( $\chi^2$ ), GFI, CFI, the TLI and the RMSEA were used. In general, the values for GFI, CFI and TLI are considered to be a better fit when they are above 0.90 ([Bollen, 1989](#)), while the RMSEA value should be ideally 0.05, but values up to .08 are considered to be reasonable ([Browne and Cudeck, 1993](#)). As shown in [Table II](#), the proposed seven-factor model ( $\chi^2 = 1,156.3$ ,  $df = 506$ ,  $GFI = 0.80$ ,  $CFI = 0.92$ ,

Descriptive statistics and intercorrelations	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Gender	0.27	0.45	1												
2. Age	35.30	7.83	-0.45**	1											
3. Education	2.84	0.75	-0.01	0.23**	1										
4. Position	3.00	1.87	-0.25**	0.66**	0.21**	1									
5. Tenure	6.60	6.82	-0.30**	0.79**	0.21**	0.55**	1								
6. Team tenure	4.12	4.59	-0.22**	0.57**	0.13*	0.46**	0.65**	1							
7. Workplace ostracism	1.58	0.91	-0.19**	0.31**	0.14*	0.12	0.27**	0.16**	1						
8. Task conflict	2.75	1.19	-0.03	0.12*	0.01	0.09	0.10	0.04	0.31**	1					
9. Coworker conflict	2.04	1.06	-0.05	0.20**	0.10	0.13*	0.23**	0.11	0.53**	0.56**	1				
10. Supervisor conflict	1.95	1.11	-0.05	0.12	0.08	0.06	0.14*	0.07	0.37**	0.51**	0.66**	1			
11. In-role behavior	5.43	0.85	-0.23**	0.32**	0.07	0.24**	0.24**	0.16**	-0.18**	-0.17*	-0.25**	-0.19**	1		
12. OCBI	5.11	0.89	-0.17**	0.11	-0.05	0.07	0.06	-0.01	-0.21**	-0.11	-0.28**	-0.19**	0.58**	1	
13. OCBO	5.90	0.90	0.04	0.01	0.03	-0.01	-0.04	-0.02	-0.26**	-0.18**	-0.35**	-0.27**	0.51**	0.43**	1

**Notes:** \*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed); \*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (two-tailed)

**Table I.**  
Correlations

TLI = 0.91 and RMSEA = 0.07) is the best fit, therefore suggesting support for the distinctiveness of the study's constructs. To test the hypothesized model, the conditions of mediation were first assessed. As seen in Table I, first, workplace ostracism was significantly related to in-role behavior, OCBI and OCBO. Second, the baseline structural or hypothesized model resulted in workplace ostracism to be associated with task conflict, coworker conflict and supervisor conflict; therefore, H1 and H2 were supported. Third, coworker conflict was significantly related to in-role behavior, OCBI and OCBO; supervisor conflict was significantly related to in-role behavior, OCBI and OCBO; and task conflict was significantly associated with in-role behavior and OCBO. Therefore, H3, H4 and H5 were supported, while H6 was partially supported. Finally, to evaluate the condition for mediation, the fit of several full and partial mediating models was compared to the hypothesized model and it was found that the models were significantly different in terms of the fit indices. Thus, as shown in Table III, Model 3 ( $\chi^2 = 5.6$ ,  $df = 9$ , GFI = 0.99, CFI = 0.99, TLI = 0.99 and RMSEA = 0.01) was revealed to be the best fitting model, indicating partial support for H7 and H9, while H8 and H10 were unsupported. Figure 2 presents the coefficient paths for the best fitting model. As shown, the figure shows that workplace ostracism is positively related to task conflict ( $\beta = 0.45$ ), coworker conflict ( $\beta = 0.62$ ) and supervisor conflict ( $\beta = 0.41$ ). Coworker

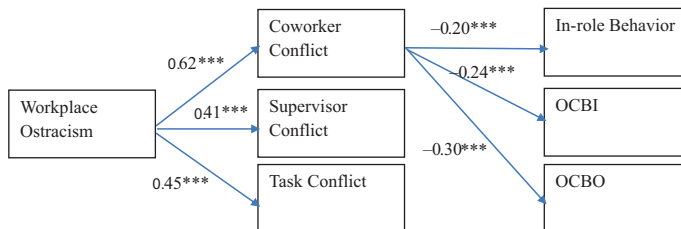
**Table II.**  
CFA results

Models	$\chi^2$	df	GFI	CFI	TLI	RMSEA
One-factor Model	5,268.2	527	0.33	0.43	0.39	0.18
Three-factor Model	2,420.1	524	0.60	0.77	0.75	0.12
Four-factor Model	2,055.7	521	0.65	0.81	0.80	0.11
Five-factor Model 1	1,894.8	517	0.67	0.83	0.82	0.10
Five-factor Model 2	1,687.1	517	0.70	0.86	0.84	0.09
Six-factor Model	1,320.8	512	0.76	0.90	0.89	0.08
Seven-factor Model	1,156.3	506	0.80	0.92	0.91	0.07

**Table III.**  
Results of model comparisons

Results of model comparisons	$\chi^2$	df	GFI	CFI	TLI	RMSEA
Model 1	67.5	4	0.92	0.88	0.42	0.24
Model 2	66.7	7	0.93	0.89	0.70	0.18
Model 3	5.6	9	0.98	0.99	0.99	0.01

**Notes:** Model 1 (hypothesized full mediation model); Model 2 (partial mediation) and Model 3 (adjusted model)



**Figure 2.**  
Adjusted model

conflict was found to related to in-role behavior ( $\beta = -0.20$ ), OCBI ( $\beta = -0.24$ ) and OCBO ( $\beta = -0.30$ ), thus mediating the relationships between workplace ostracism with in-role behavior, OCBI and OCBO. Finally, supervisor conflict and task conflict were found not to mediate the relationships.

Due to study model's multiple mediating variables, additional regression analyses were conducted. As recommended by Hayes (2013), the parallel multiple mediator method was also conducted to test for mediation. As shown in Table IV, workplace ostracism was found to be significantly related to coworker conflict ( $\beta = 0.60$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), supervisor conflict ( $\beta = 0.45$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and task conflict ( $\beta = 0.41$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Within organizational conflict, only coworker conflict was found to be significantly related with in-role behavior ( $\beta = -0.16$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), OCBI ( $\beta = -0.23$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and OCBO ( $\beta = -0.23$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Furthermore, Tables V-VII show the indirect effects of workplace ostracism on in-role behavior, OCBI and OCBO, revealing coworker

Multiple mediators regression analysis	Coworker conflict			Supervisor conflict			Task conflict		
	Coefficient	SE	<i>p</i>	Coefficient	SE	<i>p</i>	Coefficient	SE	<i>p</i>
Workplace ostracism	0.604	0.063	< 0.001	0.445	0.069	< 0.001	0.409	0.077	< 0.001

	In-role behavior			OCBI			OCBO		
	Coefficient	SE	<i>p</i>	Coefficient	SE	<i>p</i>	Coefficient	SE	<i>p</i>
Workplace ostracism	-0.063	0.066	0.337	-0.076	0.071	0.282	-0.069	0.071	0.328
Coworker conflict	-0.159	0.073	0.031	-0.225	0.079	0.005	-0.233	0.078	0.003
Supervisor conflict	-0.023	0.064	0.716	-0.019	0.096	0.777	-0.026	0.069	0.703
Task conflict	0.001	0.053	0.981	0.044	0.057	0.442	0.056	0.057	0.328
	$R^2 = 0.08$			$R^2 = 0.10$			$R^2 = 0.10$		
	$F = 4.72^{**}$			$F = 6.17^{***}$			$F = 6.32^{***}$		

Notes: \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$

**Table IV.**  
Multiple mediators regression analysis

Indirect effects of workplace ostracism on in-role behavior through conflict	Point estimate	SE	Bootstrapping Percentile 95 per cent CI	
			Lower	Upper
<i>Indirect effects</i>				
Coworker conflict	-0.095	0.052	-0.209	-0.003
Supervisor conflict	-0.010	0.037	-0.098	-0.051
Task conflict	0.001	0.023	-0.043	-0.003
Total	-0.105	0.039	-0.199	-0.036

Notes: Bias-corrected bootstrapping results; 1,000 bootstrap samples

**Table V.**  
Indirect effects of workplace ostracism on in-role behavior through conflict

**Discussion**

The social context in organizations is important, as it can affect an individual's attitudes and behaviors. Individuals at work can greatly affect how one individual feels about his or her work and himself/herself. In this aspect, the study found workplace ostracism to be positively related to task conflict, coworker conflict and supervisor conflict. When individuals feel they are ostracized, they are likely to perceive they have poor working relationships with other organizational members and have different perceptions about their work and work processes. According to the social identity perspective, ostracized individuals will be likely to consider themselves to be part of the out-group and be different from their colleagues. As a result, they may have a tendency to be uncooperative, unsupportive, less likely to like others and even aggressive to others, which may then make ostracized individuals to perceive more negative interpersonal exchanges with other organizational members, such as experiencing conflicts with their coworkers and supervisors.

**Table VI.**  
Indirect effects of workplace ostracism on OCBI behavior through conflict

Indirect effects of workplace ostracism on OCBI through conflict	Point estimate	SE	Bootstrapping Percentile 95 per cent CI	
			Lower	Upper
<i>Indirect effects</i>				
Coworker conflict	-0.134	0.054	-0.256	-0.041
Supervisor conflict	-0.012	0.036	-0.094	0.048
Task conflict	0.019	0.026	-0.030	0.072
Total	-0.126	0.041	-0.215	-0.051

**Notes:** Bias-corrected bootstrapping results; 1,000 bootstrap samples

**Table VII.**  
Indirect effects of workplace ostracism on OCBO behavior through conflict

Indirect effects of workplace ostracism on OCBO through conflict	Point estimate	SE	Bootstrapping Percentile 95 per cent CI	
			Lower	Upper
<i>Indirect effects</i>				
Coworker conflict	-0.137	0.058	-0.274	-0.044
Supervisor conflict	-0.015	0.041	-0.097	0.072
Task conflict	0.022	0.024	-0.024	0.074
Total	-0.129	0.044	-0.239	-0.059

**Notes:** Bias-corrected bootstrapping results; 1,000 bootstrap samples



The study further hypothesized task conflict, coworker conflict and supervisor conflict to be negatively related to in-role behavior, OCBI and OCBO. The study results show that when task conflict, coworker conflict and supervisor conflict are examined together, only coworker conflict was found to be significantly related to in-role behavior, OCBI and OCBO and fully mediate the relationships between workplace ostracism with in-role behavior, OCBI and OCBO. When individuals experience interpersonal conflict, negative feelings such as frustration and anger can form. According to Weiss and Cropanzano (1996), negative events such as coworker conflicts can affect an individual's emotions and moods, which then can influence an individual's work attitudes and behaviors, such as job performance and organizational citizenship behaviors. In addition, conflict can have negative effects on processing information and, consequently, affect one's performance behaviors. Although Jehn's (1995, 1997) findings are based on teams, the studies have found interpersonal conflict to result in lower performance. Moreover, when conflict exists between coworkers, individuals are likely to respond by being less helpful to other organizational members. As coworker conflict is foci-specific, as a result, individuals are likely to retaliate against sources that have caused the individual some kind of negative experience. Also, coworker conflict can reduce commitment toward the organization because when individuals experience conflict, they will be less satisfied with their interactions and less committed to other organizational members that will then result in less commitment toward the organization (Janssen *et al.*, 1999; Jehn, 1995).

Supervisor conflict was found to be negatively correlated with in-role behavior, OCBI and OCBO, while task conflict was negatively correlated with in-role behavior and OCBO. However, the study results found supervisor conflict and task conflict not be related to in-role behavior, OCBI and OCBO. This finding can be explained by how an individual's attitudes and behaviors tend to be more foci-specific and also are relative to the actual relationship. As supervisor conflict involves the relationship between the subordinate and supervisor, OCBI and OCBO can have been found to be unrelated because organizational citizenship behaviors are specifically toward an individual's coworkers and the organization. In addition, the relationship between subordinates and supervisors usually tends to be hierarchical and based on authority and rank. People with higher position can greatly influence a subordinate's outcomes, such as performance evaluations, pay raises, promotions and work schedules. Due to this relationship, subordinates fear from engaging in any form of retaliatory behavior or negative behaviors due to the possibility of receiving negative consequences, such as poor evaluations. In contrast, when individuals have conflict with their coworkers, the relationship is perceived to be less threatening because coworkers have the same organizational authority as they do and cannot directly influence each other's outcomes.

Although task conflicts cause heated discussions and personal excitement, task conflicts are less likely to involve intense interpersonal negative emotions, which are more frequently associated with interpersonal conflict. De Dreu *et al.* (2002) argued that task conflicts seem to be less of a job stressor in comparison to relationship conflicts. In this perspective, this can help explain the study's findings for the relationships between task conflict with in-role behavior and organizational citizenship behaviors.

Although task conflict was negatively correlated with in-role behavior and OCBO, the study found it not to have a direct effect.

### Theoretical and practical implications

As suggested by Ferris *et al.* (2008), the study was conducted in a longitudinal approach which provides a stronger support of work ostracism's causal relationships. The study extends research, as it aligns with Robinson *et al.*'s (2013) workplace ostracism integrated model, as coworker conflict mediates the relationships between workplace ostracism and behavioral outcomes. Therefore, the study moves beyond the direct effects of workplace ostracism that most studies have investigated (Balliet and Ferris, 2013; Wu *et al.*, 2011). In addition, our study findings found workplace ostracism to be positively related to organizational conflict. In this notion, organizations and managers must pay close attention to workplace ostracism, as it can negatively affect an individual's workplace attitudes and, as a result, influence workplace behaviors such as organizational citizenship behaviors, team performance, communication and interpersonal conflict (Aryee *et al.*, 1998). Due to the increased use of teams and work interdependence, interpersonal relationships at work are crucial for individual and organizational performance. Organizations and managers need to address the importance of trust among team members, team cohesiveness and team efficacy for individuals to not feel "out of the loop". In addition, managers as well as coworkers need to be more careful with their own relationships with other organizational members because even slight biases can significantly affect how an individual perceives his or her interpersonal relationships. For example, leader-member exchange (LMX) studies suggest there are differences between in-groups and out-groups and when managers biases, they are likely to distinguish between the individuals, as in-group members will be favored and have closer interpersonal relationships with each other, while out-group members will feel that they are not favored and, as a result, feel that they are ostracized from their work group members.

### Limitations and future directions

The study is not without any limitations. First, as the study was conducted in Korea, Koreans tend to be collectivistic, focus on solidarity and have concern for others, hence perceive interpersonal relationships differently from other cultures. In this light, the study's findings may not be generalizable to Western societies, as it needs to be replicated in individualistic societies. Second, although the study was longitudinally designed, T2 surveys measured task conflict, coworker conflict and supervisor conflict with organizational citizenship behavior. Task conflict, coworker conflict and supervisor conflict were not separated with the dependent variables. In addition, all measures were self-rated and the use of multi-raters, such as peers and supervisors, should be considered, such as for organizational citizenship behavior (Stewart *et al.*, 2009), to reduce common method variance. Third, workplace ostracism's measure does not differentiate the types of ostracism behaviors nor does it identify the source of ostracism. As people may experience more of one kind of ostracism behaviors such as the silent treatment and that some forms of ostracism behaviors can be more impactful, different ostracism behaviors should be considered, as they can result in different

outcomes. Fourth, the study did not include emotions within the research model, although emotions can help explain the relationships within the study model, as emotions are thought to play an important role in interpersonal conflict (Gayle and Preiss, 1998).

We do not know much about workplace ostracism's occurrence and impact within organizations (Ferris *et al.*, 2008); therefore, the study suggests a few directions for future research. First, studies need to further understand why ostracized individuals can retaliate to all people whether they are involved or uninvolved (Twenge *et al.*, 2001). The source of ostracism should be a relevant factor, as the multi-foci perspective can result in foci-specific behaviors. Second, ostracism includes many forms of behaviors such as the silent treatment and exile. As these behaviors have different levels of severity, they may result in different consequences. Moreover, ostracism can be in the form of partial ostracism, acts that are done by one person or a few persons, or full ostracism, acts that are by a larger number of individuals. Hence, these differences may affect individuals differently and result in different attitudinal and behavioral consequences. Third, according to Robinson *et al.* (2013), future studies should also examine other mediators that are more task-related and relationship-based. For instance, ostracized individuals are more likely to not receive appropriate information; therefore, knowledge sharing and team-member exchange can be potential mediating variables that can influence workplace behavioral outcomes due to workplace ostracism.

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