Perceived Reasons and Consequences of Workplace Ostracism: Victims' Perspectives

K.D.S.W. Gunasekara[*], and N.P.G.S.I. Naotunna

Department of Business Management, Faculty of Management Studies, Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka, Belihuloya, Sri Lanka
[*]*sanduniwathsala81@gmail.com*

In recent years there is considerable attention on inclusion among researchers and practitioners. However, exclusion takes place in different forms in organizations. Workplace Ostracism (WO), which denotes 'an employee's perception of being ignored or excluded by another employee or group of employees is a way that has threatened the practice of inclusion in organizations. Although WO's existence in the Sri Lankan context has been proven through some preliminary investigations, it is a heretofore under-investigated phenomenon in Sri Lanka. In this backdrop, the present study aimed to explore the perceived reasons and consequences of WO from the victim's perspective. Following the qualitative research methodology, ten semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted among professional employees working in private and government sectors. Participants were selected purposively based on their experiences of WO. After transcribing the interviews, we carried out initial coding and categorizing based on the prior studies and Organizational Behaviour (OB) models. Our findings report that the professional employees perceive that perpetrator related reasons such as misperception, prejudice, and desire to dominate as the reasons for the perpetrators to engage in WO. Also, organizational related reasons such as informal cliques, weak organizational processes and practices, competitive work setting were perceived to be the reasons for WO. Further, our study found several psychological consequences of WO, which vary from highly negative to low negative in nature. Our study contributed to the literature by expanding the knowledge on the perceived reasons for WO and the consequences of WO in a novel and collectivist context, Sri Lanka. The adverse outcomes of WO imply to practitioners that the WO is a malicious behavior, which needs to be mitigated to make organizations more inclusive.

Keywords: *Inclusion, Sri Lanka, Workplace ostracism*