

**PERCEIVED WORKPLACE OSTRACISM: PROFESSIONALS'  
EXPERIENCES IN SRI LANKAN CONTEXT**

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**PERCEIVED WORKPLACE OSTRACISM: PROFESSIONALS'  
EXPERIENCES IN SRI LANKAN CONTEXT**

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Bachelor of Science in Business Management

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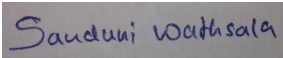
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## ABSTRACT

There is a considerable discourse on inclusion among researchers and practitioners. Yet, exclusion takes place in different forms. 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. In particular, the experience of workplace ostracism has been drawn the curiosity among scholars highlighting the requirement of applying qualitative methodology in investigating the phenomenon of WO. In this backdrop, the present study aimed to explore the experience of workplace ostracism from the victim’s viewpoint. It particularly examined victim’s perceived reasons of WO, the WO experience encountered by the victims, and the victim’s reactions to WO experience. Following the inductive approach and the qualitative research methodology, the researcher conducted 10 in-depth and semi structured interviews among professionals working in both the private and government sector, Sri Lanka. The data were analyzed by using the content analysis and resulted in a model that explains three phases; victim’s perceived reasons to the WO experience, victim’s experience of WO, and victim’s reactions to the WO experience. The findings revealed, individual and organizational victim’s perceived reasons to the first phase, three consecutive stages of triggering ostracism acts and events, making attributions to the ostracism acts and events and concluding ostracism experience to the second phase and psychological, physical, and behavioral reactions to the final phase. The current study contributed to the existing literature by expanding the knowledge on the experience of workplace ostracism. From the practitioner’s perspective, this study is benefited to discourage ostracism behaviors while preserving the inclusive practices inside the organizations.

**Keywords:** Inclusion, Professional employees, Sri Lanka, Workplace ostracism

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

WO	Workplace Ostracism
SL	Sri Lanka
HEI	Higher Education Institute
IT	Information Technology
BPO	Business Processes Outsourcing
HOD	Head of the Department
HR	Human Resource
SUSL	Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Background of the study**

Inclusion has become a buzz word in today's business world (Chen & Tang, 2018) and it has received attention in today's organizational context with the concern of creating better organizations for everyone. For instance, organizations are keen in implementing organizational inclusive practices and processes such as ensuring psychological safety, allowing equal involvement in the workgroups, provide opportunities to make decisions for everyone, recognizing without discriminations, enhancing self-esteem, and appreciating the diversity of employees which will thrive the success of the organizations (Shore et al., 2018).

Given the importance of inclusion, it has received attention among management researchers in recent decades (Tang et al., 2015). Researchers pay more attention to perceived inclusion which reflects the individual's feeling on inclusion and inclusive practices of the organizations. Initially, researchers' focus was the perceived inclusion in the diversity context by considering the aspects of gender, religions, age, race, and disabilities (Saunders et al., 2007; Morbarak, 2000). Later, their attention moved beyond the acceptance of the diversity by broadening the perception of inclusion to every employee as to feel they are being accepted and recognized in the workplace (e.i., the fulfillment of needs of belongingness and uniqueness by all) (Chen & Tang, 2018).

Taking one step further, recent literature suggests that fair treatment is a key inclusive behavior of the organization (Shore et al., 2018). Thus, now the individual feels workplace inclusion not just achieving the needs of belongingness and uniqueness but being treated fairly and with respect as well (Stark, 2020).

Notwithstanding the attention and importance of the concept of inclusion, exclusion can take place in different forms, and researchers identified social exclusion commonly assumed to be a general phenomenon that involves putting an individual into the condition of socially isolated (Blackhart et al., 2009). A wide range of exclusionary experiences commonly shares the characteristic of inaction to socially engage with others (Robinson et al., 2013). Simply it implies a loss of social engagement that emerges as a result of another collective point. Ostracism is considered to be such a primary exclusionary behavior. Particularly, recent literature demonstrated that ostracism as a version which entails the serious violation of inclusion (Chen & Tang, 2018).

As such, ostracism is defined as an individual who perceives that he or she is being ignored or excluded by another individual or group (Williams, 2007; Ferris et al., 2008, p.1348). Indeed, the experience of ostracism takes place when the actor fails to provide interpersonal acknowledgment, responsiveness, or inclusion in a social context where such behaviors are expected and in line with prevailing social norms of the context (Robinson et al., 2013). Mainly, there are two parties involved in ostracism named; actor or the perpetrator (i.e., person who initiates to the ostracism) and the target or the victim (i.e., a person who is being ostracized). When social ostracism is brought in to the workplace domain, from the target's perspective, Ferris et al (2008) workplace ostracism is defined as an individual's perception that he or she is being ignored or excluded by others in the workplace. Also, from the actor's perspective, it is defined as individual or group omits to take actions to engage another organizational member when it is socially appropriate to do so (Robinson et al., 2013). However, the present study aimed to explore the unique experience of workplace ostracism standing on the victims' perspectives.

Moreover, it is important to note that, workplace ostracism is a unique construct as opposed to the other negative behaviors in work settings such as bullying, harassment, aggression, and incivility. The distinction comes in several ways. First, ostracism is not necessarily intended to harm the target. Simply, even without the intention of the actor, ostracism can occur (Robinson et al., 2013). Second, ostracism is a contextually bound concept since it occurs when someone violates the social norms in the given context (Robinson et al., 2013). Last but not least, the most unique characteristic of ostracism is the omission of positive attention from others rather than the commission of negative attention (Robinson et al., 2013).

Taken together, as per Robinson et al (2013), the concept of workplace ostracism is a distinct construct with threefold unique characteristics that set it apart from other constructs and is a relatively new research area, one which leaves many research questions as of yet unanswered (Gamianwilk & Madejabien, 2018).

## **1.2 Research problem**

Ostracism is a painful negative interpersonal experience that can be common or universal to individuals (Eisenberger et al., 2003; Ferris et al., 2008). For example, the survey results conducted among employees in Asia, America, and Spain supported, over 66% of employees experience „silent treatment“ in their workplaces, 29% of employees intentionally left the area when they entered and 42.6% of employees reported others failed to respond to their phone calls and emails (Fox & Stallworth, 2005). Including these studies, the majority of studies illustrated that ostracism can objectively investigate at the workplace (Ferris et al., 2008; Dotaneliaz et al., 2009).

However, it has been growing interest regarding researches on the subjective view of ostracism in recent years. This subjective experience of workplace ostracism can be portrayed in several ways. First, most of the experimental studies evident that, ostracism is a painful experience which makes a significant threat to the fundamental needs of human beings (e.g., belonging, control, self-esteem, and meaningful existence) and it consequently affects, psychological wellbeing, physical and social state over time (Eisenberger et al., 2003; Williams, 2009). Despite such a unique painfulness incorporated with ostracism, it is a matter to surprise, scant usage of a variety of different approaches to this phenomenon in understanding different



interpretations of ostracism (Sanderson, 2017) or subjective deal with individuals who are experiencing ostracism really at the workplace.

Second, it is necessarily required to have the victim's perception towards the experience of ostracism, to generate pain through mainly psychological effects (Robinson et al., 2013). It implies the perceptual component of ostracism emphasized the subjectivity of the experience. Indeed, one person perceived a particular event as ostracism may not be perceived by another person as ostracism (Williams & Nida, 2017). To this end, aligning with the major theme of this study, perceiving a certain event as an ostracism experience is opened to different interpretations of the victims.

Third, ostracism is a workplace constructed phenomenon derived through interactions among members and is bounded with its organizational context which cannot be considered as common to all of the organizations and individuals (Waldeck et al., 2015; Ferris et al., 2008). For instance, the interactions among members in the workplace different from each other, and those relationships are mostly shaped by interdependence among others (Ferris et al., 2008). In addition to that, contextual aspects (e.g., norms) bounded to the workplace also created a unique understanding of ostracism experience at the workplace. In this backdrop, it is significant to address the experience of ostracism subjectively.

Fourth, as aforementioned, „inaction to socially engage with another“ is a major characteristic that can distinguish ostracism from the other similar negative behaviors in the workplace (e.g., bullying, harassment, incivility, and workplace deviance) done by the perpetrator. In particular, „action“ and „inaction“ are two polar opposite sociological concepts and subjective matters that have gained scholars considerable attention during recent years (Albarracín et al., 2019). Importantly, action or inaction is defined as a behavior with judgmental nature and in turn, it is a variable construal by the person or the social actor. In particular, it was noted that actions are positive and contrary inactions generate more negative circumstances (Albarracín et al., 2019). With this mind, it is more appropriate to investigate, the subjective nature of workplace ostracism occurred through inactions.

In this backdrop, the present study focus on the subjective experience of ostracism with different interpretations by the individuals rather than taking an objective view on it. However, to date, most workplace ostracism researches have been conducted by employing a 10 item Likert scale in quantitative studies (See, for example, Xia et al., 2019; Declercq et al., 2019) or cyberball paradigm (i.e., inclusion/exclusion style in a virtual platform) in experimental studies (See, for example, Ren et al., 2016; Zimmerman et al., 2016). When considering these approaches mostly researchers argued ostracism as an objective construal (e.i., common to all) rather than subjective construal. Considering this methodological limitation, being on the victims' position, elaborating the ostracism experience through several individualistic aspects is noteworthy to get a unique and comprehensive understanding of this phenomenon since the concept is very novel to the Sri Lankan nation.

In doing so, relying on the core of the research (e.i., victim's experience of WO), the present researcher begins with finding the victim's perceived reasons for WO experience to create the working culture which discourages ostracism behaviors by identifying the causes behind that. Although there were many empirical investigations on finding the antecedents or reasons for workplace ostracism (Cullen et al., 2014; Kim & Glomb, 2010; Jones & Kelly, 2010; Wu et al., 2011) it is very rare to find subjective investigation on victim's perceived reasons for the experience of WO while adding the perceptual component to the reasons of ostracism. Supported to this argument, very recently researchers conducted an empirical investigation on finding the perceived causes to WO through the interpretivism approach (Bilal et al., 2020). Those findings primarily based on the rationale of perceived causes are unique and not common to all individuals and contexts (Howard et al., 2020). On the other hand, although ostracism is a social process has resulted from the interactions between, perpetrator, victim, and the organizational context (Howard et al., 2020), investigation on the reasons to the WO by considering all these aspects from the victim's viewpoint in a single study has not yet empirically tested. With this mind, as timely significant attention of the researchers, it is worth to find victims' preserved reasons for ostracism in elaborating the subjective ostracism experience at the workplace.

Next, it is inevitable to investigate the victims' experience of workplace ostracism, since individuals encountered the experience of WO on daily basis and some are

experienced for a year or more with significant negative effects on social connections (Williams & Nida, 2017). Victim's exposure on more subtle to overt, ambiguous ostracism acts, and events (Wesselmann & Williams, 2010) play a major role within the experience of ostracism. Further, researchers indicated that the experience of ostracism is more memorable to the victim rather than the perpetrator or a third party (Williams & Nida, 2017). All in all, since the previous researchers argued that, a particular event perceiving as ostracism by one person is not may perceive by another person as ostracism (Williams et al., 2005), victim exposed to the ostracism trigger (e.i., acts or events) and perceived it as ostracism is important in investigating separately through the subjective experience of workplace ostracism from the victim's viewpoint, which has not been previously captured in a qualitative inquiry on ostracism.

In addition to the above, victims' reactions over ostracism experience take as another important aspect required subjective investigation of the scholars. Indeed, victims' responses to the ostracism experience primarily subjective in nature, since it was proved by the justification on reactions to the ostracism are varied based on the individual and contextual reasons (Williams & Nida, 2017). Because of this reason, investigations on reactions to ostracism were subjected to many qualitative studies to date (Waldeck et al., 2015; Fatima et al., 2019). In particular, although some psychological reactions occurred while experiencing the workplace ostracism (e.g., being worthless, threatened belongingness), getting a separate understanding on victim's reactions to the ostracism experience as psychological, physical, and behavioral reactions is important to clear the understanding on the experience of workplace ostracism with a separate phase to reactions, which has not previously investigated in a single study.

Taken together, the present researcher intended to explore the experience of WO particularly examining victim's perceived reasons for the experience of WO, victim's WO experience encountered, and victim's reactions to the experience of WO from the victim's perspective as three phases into one model for the experience of WO. Importantly, the present researcher has uncovered three specific gaps throughout this study.

### *Knowledge gap*

Although the investigations on the experience of WO have gained attention in the field of WO recently (Waldeck et al., 2015), the existing literature does not give enough understanding on the experience of WO particularly examining the victim's perceived reasons of WO, the WO experience encountered by the victim, and victim's reactions to the experience of WO in a single study being on the victim's position. This is the empirical gap the present study attempted to fill.

### *Methodological gap*

Although ostracism is a unique painful and emotional experience (Yaakobi & Williams, 2016) to the victim which necessarily required a sensitive understanding on the victim's experience, there have been very fewer studies to date examined WO by employing a qualitative methodology (Waldeck et al., 2015) which is the best choice of conducting sensitive research on traumatic experience standing on the position of individuals who are vulnerable with that experience (Creswell et al., 2007). Thus, the present study is capable to fill the gap in methodologies of workplace ostracism by conducting a qualitative inquiry on the experience of workplace ostracism.

### *Contextual gap*

Although there was empirical evidence for ostracism as one of the forms of workplace harassment in the Sri Lankan context (Adikaram & Liyanage, 2018; Adikaram, 2018), the experience of workplace ostracism as a separate phenomenon has not yet been investigated in the Sri Lankan context. Thus, the researcher wanted to conduct a preliminary investigation to prove the existence of experience of workplace ostracism in the Sri Lankan context. The researcher had some pilot interviews with several professionals and there was one respondent who worked in an audit team shared his experience willingly with the researcher which is given below.

*Me and my boss we need to work in one office cabin as a team with the other two persons. In there, often they end their conversations when I enter the office cabin. Also, I hear they speak behind my back. My boss had informal chat with others about my mistakes, during the times when I was not there. Also, my ideas were not considered when they take the main decisions regarding the company.*

The existence of ostracism in the Sri Lankan context inspired the present researcher to investigate the phenomenon. Moreover, it assists to novice researchers to conduct their studies in the Sri Lankan context with the ideal cultural basis on collectivist and high power distance (Ibrahim & Irfan, 2016) for studying in this regards as other cultures (e.g., China, Pakistan) were based for studying ostracism (Zhao et al., 2019; Fatima et al., 2019). Hence, as a novel endeavor to the organizational researches, this study will address the contextual gap by exploring the experience of workplace ostracism of professional employees who are working in the Sri Lankan organizational context. In particular, it is important to note that, WO is a painful experience common or universal to all and not a unique experience to the professionals only (Gamianwilk & Madejabien, 2018). If so, three reasons were supported for the selection of professionals to the present research context; results of preliminary investigation confirmed the prevalence of the experience of WO among the professionals in Sri Lankan context, curiosity of the researcher for examining the experience of WO among the professionals who recognized as salient group of knowledge workers with important contribution to the organization (Krausert, 2013) and therefore generating cost to the organization when they take decision on leaving and, the capability of professionals in reviewing the their experiences than other level employee categories like lower/operational level employees.

In sum, the aforementioned knowledge, methodological, and contextual gaps in existing literature encouraged the present researcher to investigate the research problem of; “How do professionals experience workplace ostracism in the Sri Lankan context?”

The research problem can be unpacked into the following research questions to gain a comprehensive understanding of workplace ostracism in the Sri Lankan context.

- What are the perceived reasons behind the workplace ostracism experienced by professionals in the SL context?
- What ostracism experiences/s encountered by the professionals at the workplace in the SL context?
- What are the professionals’ reactions to ostracism experience/s at the workplace in the SL context?

In response to research questions, research objectives are as follows;

- To explore the perceived reasons behind the workplace ostracism experienced by professionals in SL context
- To explore the ostracism experience/s encountered by the professionals at the workplaces in SL context
- To explore the professionals' reactions to ostracism experience/s at the workplace in SL context

### **1.3 Significance of the study**

Workplace ostracism is a new field of research in the world. Thus, one which leaves many research questions as of yet unanswered (Gamianwilk & Madejabien, 2018). Also, the concept of workplace ostracism has far been understudied in the organizational context. Hence, this study offers significant theoretical and practical contributions to organizational literature and context.

#### **1.3.1 Theoretical significances**

On one hand, it contributes to the theory in three ways. First, this the very study exploring the experience of workplace ostracism from the victim's perspective, particularly examining victim's perceived reasons, victim's workplace ostracism experience that encountered, and victim's reactions to the experience of workplace ostracism has not been investigated by any other study to date. Second, this study departs from mainstream researches on workplace ostracism by employing qualitative research design other than quantitative and laboratory research designs which are mostly used in existing literature, since there has been a scarcity of research using qualitative methodology to study this phenomenon (Waldeck et al., 2015). Third, this study contributes to broad the organizational literature in Sri Lanka, by emphasizing the appropriate contextual basis to study this phenomenon.

#### **1.3.2 Practical significances**

First, workplace inclusion is one of the major concerns by organizations (Shore et al., 2018). Thus, the organization should have inclusive values while reducing the most

serious violation of inclusion or workplace ostracism. Second, the culture-specific to the organization in Sri Lankan context support to determine how individuals perceive, respond to, and overcome to workplace ostracism in the Sri Lankan context (Mao et al., 2017). As such, organizations should need to create cultures that discourage workplace ostracism (Wu et al., 2011). This study delves deeply into the antecedents, consequences, and ostracism experiences of employees in the Sri Lankan context that will provide rich information on the phenomenon to the practitioners in enhancing the inclusion.

#### **1.4 Chapter summary**

As previously discussed, the interest in workplace ostracism has been increasing in recent years. However, total researches on workplace ostracism are limited. With this mind, this chapter will support getting a basic understanding of workplace ostracism mentioned in the existing literature and it broadens the path to get a deep understanding of the subjective experience of ostracism with special reference to professionals instead of investigating common ostracism experience to individuals at their workplace. Owing to the theoretical, methodological, and contextual gaps, the present study investigates, “how do professionals experience workplace ostracism in the Sri Lankan context?”. Also, this study offers valuable theoretical and practical contributions.

#### **1.5 Chapter organization**

The whole study consists of six chapters. The first chapter provided explanations about the background of the study which tells about the arrival of ostracism as an opposite form of inclusion at the workplace, justification of the research problem, „how do professionals experience ostracism at workplace“ and research objectives to the research questions. Chapter two contains a theoretical review regarding workplace ostracism which consists of the evolution of workplace ostracism as a unique phenomenon, theoretical bases for three of the gaps highlighted in the study (e.g., knowledge gap, methodological gap, and contextual gap), and gaps relevant to specific research questions. Chapter three details the methodology specific to conduct the study with the ideal research context (e.g., professionals who experienced workplace ostracism in the Sri Lankan context) and participants. Further, the study aligned to the social constructionism research philosophy, qualitative research

methodology, inductive research approach, exploratory research purpose, multiple case study strategy, primary data source, purposive and respondent-driven sampling for data collection, and content analysis as data analyzing method. Chapter four outlined the analysis of the results of interviews conducted with the 10 participants based on the content analysis and the discussion has contained with comparing and contrasting of the unique findings of the present study with the previous studies. Next, chapter five concluded all the findings and additionally, it includes limitations, theoretical and practical implications, and directions for future researchers by especially inspired to the novice researchers who have an interest in doing researches in workplace ostracism in the Sri Lankan context.



## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction to the chapter**

A critical review of the literature provides a foundation for the research project. It helps to explore the research questions and achieving research objectives (Saunders et al., 2013). The first paragraphs discussed the conceptual clarity of the ostracism with the definitions itself and comparisons over similar constructs (i.e., incivility, interpersonal deviance, aggression, bullying) provide sufficient knowledge on defining workplace ostracism as a unique construct. Next, since the workplace ostracism is a novel endeavor to the Sri Lankan context, the contextual gap of the present study has been discussed by comparing and contrast the cultural appropriateness of different nations and the Sri Lankan nation. Next, the existing body of knowledge has been reviewed to identify the theoretical gap of the present study. Moreover, a review of different research approaches to date benefitted to reasoning the current choice of qualitative research methodology to conduct this study since the experience of workplace ostracism is paramount.

## **2.2 Definitions of Ostracism and comparison with similar constructs**

Origin of the ostracism dates back to ancient Greece where they were using the term “ostrakimos” in the practice of eliminating people from the democratic state, those who are with dictatorial ambitions (Zippelius, 1986). Moving with time, ostracism gets academic attention mostly by social scientists (Williams, 2007). As such, earlier researchers identified the ostracism as more overt and harmful behavior to maintain social control. Next, the behaviors of ostracism have been identified in more subtle ways. Avoiding eye contact from the ostracized party or the victim is an example of this subtle ostracism behavior (Williams & Zadro, 2001). To this end, the acts of ostracism are ranging from more subtle to overt.

Furthermore, the roots of ostracism researches are placed in the field of social science. In social science, ostracism is typically defined as, being ignored or excluded by others in a social context (Williams, 2007). Social disengagement or denial of social interaction is the core characteristic of ostracism (Robinson et al., 2013). In this backdrop, recently, researchers realized workplace or organization is an ideal setting to study ostracism since every organization has its unique interdependence on doing tasks and social interactions among others (Robinson et al., 2013; Ferris et al., 2017). Beyond that, more recently, the value of inclusion popular among academic researches by extending the diversity management practices in the context. The basis of inclusion provided the appropriate background for studying ostracism in the workplace by valuing the equal opportunity to all level members at the workplace. Earlier the discussion has grounded from the inclusion and exclusion framework (Shore et al., 2011). It reflects, involving treatment towards employees at work to satisfy both the individuals’ need for belongingness (i.e., individuals’ desire for maintaining strong interpersonal relationships) and uniqueness (i.e., individuals’ desire for preserving the differentiated self-perception). This is the basis for the value of inclusion in the workplace. In this backdrop, today from the individual perspective, inclusion defines as every individual’s perception of being included, accepted, and appreciated in the workplace (Chen & Tang, 2018). In particular, if anyone is not treated as an insider or being rejected is a matter to the individual. As such, workplace ostracism reflects individuals’ perception of being ignored or excluded by others at work (Ferris et al., 2008) and it is the most severed opposite of the perceived

inclusion at the workplace (Chen & Tang, 2018). In this backdrop, as a new research area many of the research questions yet unanswered regarding workplace ostracism (Gamianwilk & Madejabien, 2018). With this mind, the purpose of this chapter is to review the past literature regarding workplace ostracism with a separate conceptual understanding at the beginning and then derives the methodological contextual and theoretical gaps of the present study by analyzing the past relevant researches. For instance, the present researcher has done the review based on the books, dissertations and research papers related to the workplace ostracism collected from several databases (e.g., Wiley online, Emerald insight, Science direct, Google scholar).

As aforementioned, three features help to make the unique nature to the workplace ostracism (Robinson et al., 2013). The researcher now elaborates on these three features and how does each feature contribute to developing the unique nature by comparing with other negative workplace behaviors.

Before starting the comparison, it is significant to note that, like bullying, harassment, incivility, aggression, workplace ostracism is also one of the formations come under the negative workplace behaviors (i.e., any behavior brings harm, or is intended to bring harm, to an organization, its employees or stakeholders). Alternatively, it is termed as, counterproductive work behavior, dysfunctional behavior, deviant or unreliable work behavior, or mistreatment in the workplace (Giacalone & Greenberg, 1997; Neuman & Baron, 2006). Moreover, researchers' interest over counterproductive work behaviors also increased to date and it represented the dark side of organizational behaviors through breaks up the widely accepted norms at the workplace (Cohen & Diamant, 2019). With this mind, it is noteworthy for comparing and contrasting the uniqueness of workplace ostracism from other counterproductive work behaviors.

In explaining the characteristics of workplace ostracism, the first feature indicates, the actor's harmful motive is not necessarily to ostracize someone. In other words, an actor's harmful motivation doesn't require to create the experience of ostracism within the target's mind. It implies, with the intention or even without an actor's awareness of harming someone ostracism can occur. This is the fact that ostracism is classified as purposeful (e.g., giving silent treatment intentionally to punish or to hurt

someone) and non-purposeful ostracism (e.g., coworkers forget to send a person an important work memo repeatedly, since that person is new to the organization). In comparison, incivility (i.e., low-intensity deviant behavior in a workplace with ambiguous intent to cause harm the target, in violation of social norm for mutual respect towards both individuals and organization) and workplace deviance (i.e., voluntary individual behavior that violates organizational norms and threatens the wellbeing of the organization, its members, or both) (Andersson & Pearson, 2013; Ferguson & Barry, 2011) also do not require motive or intention to cause harm. However, this connotation is critical in aggression (i.e., any form of behavior directed toward the goal of harming or injuring another living being who is motivated to avoid such treatment) and harassment (i.e., interpersonal behavior aimed at intentionally harming another employee in the workplace) that identified in the existing literature (Neuman & Baron, 2006; Adikaram, 2009; Duffy et al., 2006).

Second, the context is highly important in defining ostracism, since it originates from violations of the social norms of the context (Robinson et al., 2013). It implies norms of the context are the determinants of what is socially appropriate and conversely violation of norms is socially inappropriate. Importantly, the experience of ostracism occurred through a violation of norms of the context. Moreover, due to this feature, the discrepancy is generated between what is expected (e.g., all need to include when doing the works) and what is happened (e.g., others fail to include him). In comparison, unlike harassment, aggression, and bullying, this feature is similar to define incivility and interpersonal deviance since it occurs when the context is bounded with violation of norms.

Third, but the most important characteristic of the distinct nature of ostracism implies that ostracism involves in making social disengagement due to inactions rather than actions. The „action“ entails behaviors that socially appropriate and conversely, inactions are socially inappropriate (Robinson et al., 2013). As aforementioned, social norms are behaviors, socially appropriate, and are expected in a particular social context. Further, it is found that actions are more positive than inactions (Albarracín et al., 2019). With this mind, ostracism defines particularly „omission of positive attention rather than the commission of negative attention“ and it is another way of addressing this feature. Simply, it is the fact that tells ostracism only occurred when

there is a social disengagement among people in a social context (i.e., ostracism never involves increasing social interactions). In comparison, incivility and workplace deviance, which identified as the most akin two constructs to the ostracism in previous cases, are also differentiated from the ostracism in this case, since these two behaviors involve to increase social interactions.

Combining all the three features, Robinson et al. (2013) defined workplace ostracism from the actor's perspective, as "individual or group omits to take actions that engage another organizational member when it is socially appropriate to do so" (p. 206). Simply it implies, although engaging with organizational members is a socially appropriate norm of the context, individual/s fail to engage with another individual or group in the organization is a social norm violation occurred in the context as workplace ostracism.

## **2.2 Appropriateness of Sri Lankan culture**

The culture (i.e., learned, shared, and valued behavior of people in the society or an organization) in a particular context influences how people construe social relationships and how they respond to ostracism (Yaakobi & Williams, 2016). As a nation, Sri Lankans have a unique culture. Since this is the very first study on workplace ostracism conducting in the Sri Lankan context, it is interesting to know whether the national culture in Sri Lanka provides an appropriate basis for studying this phenomenon. As the other contexts which have done many of studies like China and Pakistan (Zhao et al., 2019; Fatima et al., 2019), Sri Lanka is a collectivist nation according to the world accepted cultural dimensions (Ibrahim & Iran, 2016). It reflects, people in Sri Lanka most likely to belong and loyal to each other (Samaranayaka, 2006). In other words, the collectivist culture primarily emphasized the importance of interpersonal interactions. The core of collectivist culture is valuing close and harmonious interpersonal relationships among individuals (Leung et al., 2011). Since workplace ostracism is the negative interpersonal experience that occurred because of being alone or denied from social interactions by others, investigating this phenomenon within the interactive cultural background gives a clear understating of this experience (Fathima, 2016).

On the other hand, social bonds or contacts with others strengthen the recovery from ostracism (Ferris et al., 2017). However, it does not mean that the experiences of ostracism that occurred in the collectivist culture are not severe. It means whatever the ostracism experiences are painful or distressed and individuals are mostly engaging in retaliatory behaviors when they have less control over the experience of workplace ostracism (Williams, 2009). For instance, people with weak self-esteem, are more likely to pain or distress from ostracism when they underprivileged of social support (e.g., social companionship friends, family members) for overcoming to that bad situation (Teng & Chen, 2012). In other words, the absence of social support discourages the victim to cope up with the ostracism experience. Hence, available social support is more benefitted to the individuals when they have high self-esteem individual trait. Unfortunately, there were scant studies that discussed the role of social support to mitigate the negative reactions over ostracism (Waldeck et al., 2015).

The next dimension, power distance, prevailed at a higher score in Sri Lankan society. It reflects largely inequality in society. As a nation, there were more power inequalities among social classes, different ethnicities, and different religions in Sri Lankan society. However when it comes to the organizational level, there can be seen, subordinates are largely depending on their bosses in the hierarchal organizational structure with formal rules under centralized authority. It means the organizational context itself emphasized more inequality between high and lower-level employee categories (Ibrahim & Irfan, 2016). Regarding workplace ostracism, the unequal power distribution among various employee categories caused to make the ostracism experience within the person who has comparatively low power (e.g., subordinates) than the power with the perpetrator (e.g., supervisor). In this backdrop, supervisory or leader ostracism is the one way of ostracism that occurred in the culture with high power distance (Zhao et al., 2019; Jahanzeb et al., 2018). All in all, it is significant to note that, Sri Lanka is a nation that has an appropriate contextual background to study the phenomenon of workplace ostracism.

### **2.3 Contexts of the present ostracism researches**

To date, within several work contexts, studies on workplace ostracism have been conducted. As aforementioned, Pakistan is a nation that has growing attention on

scholarly works regarding workplace ostracism. In there, it was a study conducted in the telecommunication sector. The reason for the selection of this choice is, telecommunication sector as a highly interactive work environment, all in the team (e.g., team leader and other, the team member at the same level) collectively work by interacting and communicating with each other (Fathima, 2016). Also, there is a growing interest in doing qualitative studies by focusing on the teachers in the higher education sector regarding workplace ostracism (Fatima et al., 2019). Further, there were many of quantitative studies conducted within several sectors like diversified companies having multiple businesses for manufacturing, R & D and logistics (Zhao & Xia, 2017), oil and gas firms (Wu et al., 2012), hotels in the hospitality industry (Zhu et al., 2017; Leung et al., 2011). In addition to these nations, there were some studies in the USA and Spain within higher education and hospitality industries as well (Zimmerman et al., 2016; Huertasvaldivia et al., 2019).

Taken together, it seems contexts in terms of the higher education sector has recently gained the attention of scholars, and targeting the professionals working in the private sector has still lacked to date. Therefore, collecting the experiences of workplace ostracism from the professionals (e.g., lecturers in state universities and professionals in the private sector) in the Sri Lankan context is more appropriate to that end.

## **2.4 Aspects of workplace ostracism**

To date, there were many aspects of workplace ostracism that have covered by the researchers. Those aspects were further discussed below.

### **2.4.1 Antecedents of workplace ostracism**

First, as per the extant literature, when summarizing antecedents, the majority of them represented the victim's position or the antecedents arise from the victimized party. In the sense, victim's ability and skills like political skills, cognitive capacity, possessing unique expertise in a team (Cullen et al., 2014; Kim & Glomb, 2010; Jones & Kelly, 2010), victim's personality traits (e.g., introverts, disagreeable and neuroticism) people are more likely to affect to the workplace ostracism (Wu et al., 2011; Hales et al., 2016), and victim's behavioral features (e.g., coworkers have distrusted others when they displayed incivility) can be identified as antecedents to workplace ostracism. Specifically aligned with disagreeableness, researchers recently noted that

disagreeableness is a predictor as well as the consequence of the ostracism (Hales et al., 2016).

On the other hand, researchers revealed that, antecedents to the ostracism being on the perpetrator's position from the perpetrator's perspective. Those were the perpetrator's personality, perpetrator's purposive or non-purposive motive (Robinson et al., 2013), and perpetrator's self-favoring attitude or ingroup bias (Scott & Duffy, 2015). Moreover, being on the most common two levels dyad relationship in the work setting; relevant to the supervisor and their corresponding subordinates, antecedents were made recently. It is noted that competent subordinates are more likely to be ostracized by their supervisors (Chang et al., 2019). Further, a recent study was evident that different leadership styles are also involved in predicting ostracism in the workplace. In particular, the findings suggested, authoritative, transactional, laissez-faire leadership styles have a direct association with workplace ostracism while the transformational leadership style does not predict the workplace ostracism (Kanwal et al., 2019). In addition to that, being on the actor's position, the actors' motive or intention is also caused to make ostracism experience within the individual in two ways as purposeful and non-purposeful.

On the other hand, organizational factors such as organizational structure, culture, diversity, physical distance, cooperative (e.i., the success of a person is an assist another person) and competitive (e.i., the success of a person is an expense to another person) interdependence goals are also made reasons behind the workplace ostracism (Robinson et al., 2013; Wu et al., 2015). Moreover, when the organizational structure is steep rather than flat, more power or controlling authority relies upon organizational members. Moreover, there is another example that tells that, people may ostracize others since they are more like to keep bonds and interactions with the parties who are more akin to themselves. It implies people exclude to connect socially with another who has dissimilar characteristics to them. It can be a diversity effect in the organizational culture that may on language, race, or age which can reason behind ostracism (Robinson et al., 2013).

When looking at all the above, getting the consideration of perceived reasons by the victim rather than just the investigation on antecedents to the workplace ostracism is



very rare in the existing literature. That was the reason for conducting a very recent investigation of the victim's perceived reasons for workplace ostracism (Bilal et al., 2020).

In this backdrop, this study convinced the timely importance of the gap related to the perceived reasons. Moving a step further, the present researcher identified, although there is growing attention on victim's perceived reason to the workplace ostracism, no study to date, to find victim's perceived reasons related to the victim, perpetrator, and the organizational environment in a single study. This gap can be justified since workplace ostracism is a social process developed with the interactions among victim, perpetrator, and the organizational environment (Howard et al., 2020). With this mind, there is a timely and worthy gap to fill through empirical investigation.

#### **2.4.2 Experience of workplace ostracism**

Next, since we humans are social creatures, being ignored or excluded by others in a social context generates painful negative interpersonal experiences for the individuals. It is important to note that, many people in the society experiencing ostracism at least one time in their lives or some have more than one experience regarding ostracism (Richman & Leary, 2009; Wesselmann & Williams, 2010; Waldeck et al., 2015). However, both the experience of ostracism is painful for individuals and even the smallest cue of ostracism is painful to the individuals. With this mind, the present researcher has paid the attention to the acts of ostracism which can generate negative pain to the individuals. Regarding the ostracism acts, researchers indicated that there is an inherent ambiguity within the ostracism behaviors which make difficulties over the targets in whether it happened. Due to this uncertainty on the ostracism acts lead to many negative consequences to the victim like rumination, sleep disturbances (Williams & Nida, 2017). On the other hand, it included ostracism behaviors that stay within the range from more subtle to overt nature. Taken together, exposed to the ambiguous, more subtle to overt ostracism acts, created the question within the target's mind on the ostracism experience which has not much investigated in the existing literature. In addition to that, although there was a recent qualitative inquiry which has discussed the ostracism experience with the victim's psychological and behavioral reactions (Fatima et al., 2019; Waldeck et al., 2015), how the victim, conclude or perceived their experiences after exposure to the ambiguous, subtle to

overt ostracism incidences, is worth in investigation, since there is a notion that without perceiving as they were ostracized victims not getting reactions over the ostracism experiences (Williams & Nida, 2017). Hence, the present researcher addressed this gap as worthy in investigation through qualitative inquiry based on the victim's perspective.

### **2.4.3 Reactions of workplace ostracism**

When discussing the victim's reactions to the ostracism experience, those were commonly subjected to investigate under qualitative inquiries in the field of ostracism, since the reactions are inherently subjective.

Those reveals indicated that individuals' psychological needs are threatened due to ostracism at the beginning under reflexive responses, and then individuals responding to the ostracism prosocially or antisocially to cope up with the ostracism overtime under reflective responses. Then the resignation is the response where individuals react to withdraw since they fail to cope up with the ostracism (Williams, 2009). However, recently researchers identified that regulation (i.e., attempts to manage their behavior) and adjustment (i.e., recover from ostracism experiences) can be taken as reactions over ostracism experience in addition to the reflexive and reflective responses to coping up with ostracism experiences (Waldeck et al., 2015).

Similar responses have been discussed in another study instead of reflexive and reflective responses. In particular, tend to be a fight and flight responses reflect prosocial (i.e., organization orient helping behaviors) and antisocial reactions (i.e., derogative and aggressive responses) over ostracism. Also, freeze (i.e., cognitive and emotional shutdown) and flight (i.e., escape psychologically as well as physically) responses in the model represent the social avoidance reaction of the ostracism (Richman & Leary, 2009). Seeking solitude is the one way responding under social avoidance strategy (Ren et al., 2016). Moreover, the existing literature is evident that the aforementioned reactions can be moderated by individual differences (e.g., victim's personality, attitudes, skills), group (e.g., group identification) and organizational reasons (e.g., tenure and power) further (Robinson et al., 2013; Ren et al., 2016; Yaakobi & Williams, 2016; Williams, 2007). Different interpretations of the

experience of workplace ostracism can be explained clearly by exploring the different reactions over ostracism experience.

In addition to the above, the existing studies evident that, workplace ostracism influences many work-related attitudes and work-related behavioral responses of the victim. For example, turnover intention, emotional exhaustion, work stress, job satisfaction, psychological wellbeing, psychological capital, job engagement, organizational commitment, and perceived organizational support under work-related attitudes. Additionally, organizational citizenship behaviors, job performance, turnover are recognized under behavioral reactions (Bedi, 2019).

When getting all these reactions together, although researchers empirically revealed a considerable part of the reactions with the experience of ostracism and investigation on psychological, physical, and behavioral reactions as a separate understanding in a single study is relatively rare. So the present study has intended to fill this empirical gap through this qualitative inquiry.

#### **2.4.4 Methodological review**

At the early stages, the phenomenon of ostracism vastly tested in the laboratory setting (e.g., cyber ball paradigm) under artificial environmental conditions (Williams, 2007; Williams, 2009; Pharo et al., 2011; Ren et al., 2016; Wolf et al., 2015) and these experimental studies generated many of insights to study about this area which is valuable to the present investigations as well. Later, with the movement of the ostracism into the organizational domain, workplace ostracism is identified as a pervasive phenomenon that is common to every individual at the workplace (Williams, 2007). To this end, being the victims'' position the construct of workplace ostracism has measured mostly through the use of 10 items scale in most of the quantitative studies (Ferris et al., 2008). Next, the initial development of scale has rearranged according to the source of ostracism (e.g., supervisor, coworker), being on the victims'' position (Hitlan & Noel, 2009). For example, the items in the scale represented separately both the ostracism behaviors; supervisor and coworker being on the victims'' position (e.g., coworkers give you silent treatments). Then, the scale has changed beyond the victims'' position giving importance to the perpetrators''

position as well. As such, the scale viewed on two perspectives; perpetrator's perspective and victim's perspective (Wu et al., 2015).

Moreover, as a suitable research design recently scholars' attention turned in to qualitative research design for investigating workplace ostracism (Waldeck et al., 2015; Zhao et al., 2019; Fatima et al., 2019). However, the researches focus on qualitative research methodology in the field of ostracism still at its early stages. Among the limited qualitative studies which were particularly relevant to the focus of the present study revealed that positive or negative behavioral outcomes of the experience of workplace ostracism (Fatima et al., 2019), potential interventions (Sanderson, 2017), coping responses (Waldeck et al., 2015). Moreover, apart from a single method (e.g., quantitative qualitative, and experimental approaches), some studies used mixed methods for investigating workplace ostracism (Zimmerman et al., 2016; Balliet & Ferris, 2013) as well. When looking at all these, it seems, although, all the above findings generated information relevant to the experience of workplace ostracism, all those broadly covered aspects relevant to the reactions of ostracism experience since the reactions to the ostracism inherently demanded subjective interpretations of the participants. This has been created the necessity of comprehensive underrating of the experience of ostracism by separating the reactions to the experience from the experience itself.

All in all, by addressing all the gaps mentioned in the existing literature, the present study, intended to focus the experience of workplace ostracism from the victim's perspective, based on the victim's perceived reasons, the experience victim encountered and the reactions to the experience in a single study as by introducing a conceptual model for the experience of workplace ostracism.

## **2.5. Chapter summary**

The entire chapter consisted of the theoretical review of the existing body of knowledge regarding the workplace ostracism with its major findings on antecedents, the experience, and the reactions of workplace ostracism. In addition to that, contextual appropriateness with cultural background and review of the existing methodologies and reasons for selecting a qualitative approach to this study is mentioned in this chapter. However, all these theoretical aspects are benefited to the

researcher to build arguable research questions by addressing the research gaps in the literature. The next chapter is contented with the specific methodology that the present researcher employed for this study.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction to the chapter**

This chapter has outlined the overview of the methodology which was consisted of research philosophy, research methodology, research approach, and research strategy with more suitable alternatives to conduct this study. Next, it was explained appropriateness of sources of data, context, participant, data collection, and data analysis methods opted for this study. At the endpoint, the researcher emphasized the ethical considerations of the present study and throughout the study it was confirmed the quality criteria of the present qualitative inquiry.

#### **3.2 Research Philosophy**

Being on the stance of social constructionism, the present study has conducted and this selection was due to several reasons. First, the phenomenon of ostracism (i.e., being isolated from social interactions) has been examined as socially unacceptable experience prevalence among every social animal including human beings which can generate psychological, social, and physical pain to an individual who is being ostracized. Indeed, ostracism is a central social phenomenon that requires an empathetic understanding of the investigator (Williams, 2009; Robinson et al., 2013).

With this mind, since social constructionism is the best paradigm to investigate the social phenomenon by empathizing to the situation through understanding the different interpretations of the social actors (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016), the applicability of this paradigm to the present study was more appropriate.

Second, the social constructionism paradigm advocates individuals' involvement in mapping their world based on their different experiences and perceptions (Galbin et al., 2015). To this end, the use of this paradigm to the present study was more applicable since the core focus of this study is to get a holistic understand of exploring the experience of workplace ostracism perceived by the victims.

Third, most of the ostracism researches have been conducted within the artificial environment using the inclusion/exclusion style (See, for example, (Ren et al., 2016; Zimmerman et al., 2016) and those studies could not visibly observe the behavioral experience of ostracism (e.g., verbal ostracism). In other words, many laboratory studies regarding ostracism were generated only one side of understanding occurred through the void of language (i.e., nonverbal). To this end, unlike others, the social constructionism paradigm is the ideal paradigm for exploring the experience of workplace ostracism. Because it focuses on the artifacts that developed through the social interactions of a group while focusing on an individual's learning that takes place due to their interactions in a group. Indeed, the paradigm subjected with the human life exists due to social and interpersonal influences (Galbin et al., 2015). Hence, in order to fully explore the subjective experiences of workplace ostracism, social constructionism paradigm had proposed to this study.

Taken together, social constructionism was the most appropriate research philosophy to the present study.

### **3.3 Research methodology**

The qualitative research methodology was the typical research methodology selected for the present study due to several reasons (Williams, 2007).

First, although the scholars' interest in qualitative researches is rapidly growing recently in the social science field (Mohajan, 2018), the use of qualitative research

methodology for the investigations on ostracism as a social phenomenon, remaining low to date (Waldeck et al., 2015). To fill this gap, the researcher mainly selected the qualitative research methodology for the present study.

Second, the qualitative research method specifically interests in exploring the experiences of individuals, from the perspective of people who experience it (Mohajan, 2018). Indeed, the interpretation of respondents made to a certain phenomenon shaped by their own experiences and backgrounds they have (Creswell et al., 2007). With this mind, applying the qualitative research methodology is suitable, since the aim of this study is to explore the professionals' experience of WO from their perspectives.

Third, different perceptions of respondents particularly focused on the qualitative research method and it (Saunders et al., 2009) supports for making sense of the respondents' lives events (Waldeck, 2017). Indeed, consideration of the respondents' perception of ostracism is a major part that has been ignored by the previous ostracism studies (Bilal et al., 2020). It implies there is a timely need for a qualitative inquiry for investigating the experience of workplace ostracism based on the different perceptions of the ostracized professionals.

Fourth, the qualitative research method is the best selection in conducting typical sensitive research for revealing the distressful experience of individuals who were subjected to that experience (Creswell et al., 2007). As such, the investigation on workplace ostracism also a sensitive research area that has required the qualitative research methodology for the investigation.

Taken together, according to the aforementioned matters, qualitative research methodology was the best selection in understanding the subjective experience of professionals regarding workplace ostracism as they perceived.

### **3.4 Research approach**

The present researcher selected the inductive approach because it is mainly considered how the individuals interpret their social world (Saunders et al., 2009), and therefore it is benefitted for getting an understanding of how the workplace ostracism



experienced by the victims according to their views. In addition to that, since the selected qualitative research method to the present study is inherently inductive (Mohajan, 2018), the inductive approach was the most appropriate alternative available to the present study. Accordingly, the present researcher developed a theory or model on the experience of the workplace ostracism at the endpoint of this study.

### **3.5 Research purpose**

The researcher undertook exploratory research in reaching the purpose of the study. The reason behind this selection is exploratory studies that involve answering the questions and assessing the phenomenon in a new light. In other words, it uses to clarify the understanding of the problem (Saunders et al., 2009). As such, aligning with the exploratory research purpose, the present study aimed for getting a comprehensive understanding of the total picture of the experience of workplace ostracism from the victim's point of view. In addition to that, since the exploratory research purpose often relies on a qualitative research method (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016), the applicability of exploratory purpose to the present research context was suitable. Moreover, exploratory researches begin with broad at first and increasingly narrows along with the research proceeds (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). As such, begin with a broad investigation on the experience of workplace ostracism it has narrowed into three phases as victim's perceived reasons to the experience, victim's experience encountered, and victim's reactions to the experience of workplace ostracism. Further, it has narrowed and discussed more specific aspects of each research question.

### **3.6 Research Strategy**

Among the various research strategies for qualitative studies, the present researcher selected multiple case studies as a suitable research strategy due to several reasons. Generally, researchers apply a case study strategy for doing an empirical investigation on particular contemporary phenomenon regarding real-life contexts of the individuals (Saunders et al., 2009). Also, it is popular in the field of social science (Creswell et al., 2007). Appropriately to the above reason, here the present researcher investigated the workplace ostracism as a contemporary phenomenon using real-life experiences of professionals in the Sri Lankan context. Moreover, rather than experimental studies under controlled contexts, case study strategy inevitably covers and gives a rich understanding of the contextual conditions through analyzing the

different cases (Creswell et al., 2007). Due to this reason, the use of a case study strategy to this study was more suitable, since the investigation on workplace ostracism was a novel endeavor to the Sri Lankan context. Specifically, multiple case study strategy has been used by researcher to this study (Saunders et al., 2009), since it use in cases where findings on the first case occurred in another and to generalize those findings. Furthermore, researchers employed a case study strategy to the research questions developed for getting a deep understanding of how the multiple cases provide insights into the particular issue (Creswell et al., 2007). In addition to the above, research questions started with “what” and “how” is answered by the multiple case study strategy (Saunders et al., 2009). With this mind, multiple case study is the appropriate research strategy to the present study for answering the research questions (e.g., What are the perceived reasons behind the workplace ostracism experienced by professionals in SL context? ).

### **3.7 Source of data**

The present study used only the primary data source collected through in-depth and semi structured interviews with the participants. The choice of this method for the present study was due to several reasons. First, since the purpose of this study is to explore the professionals’ experience of workplace ostracism, the use of in-depth and semi structured interviews were benefited to collect the real experience from participant (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Indeed participants who experienced workplace ostracism were the sources to collect the required data.

### **3.8 Context**

The context of the present study was the professionals who experienced workplace ostracism worked in the Sri Lankan context. In particular, although there is contextual appropriateness to conduct the investigations on workplace ostracism in Sri Lanka (e.g., collectivist and high power distance culture) when compared to the existing research contexts like China, Pakistan (Zhao et al., 2019; Fatima et al., 2019), yet has not conducted any empirical investigations related to the workplace ostracism in Sri Lanka. By fulfilling this contextual gap, the present researcher targeted professionals who worked in the Sri Lankan context. There were three reasons for getting focus on professional employees rather than lower-level /operational level employees. First, professionals’ experiences of WO were the evidence resulted from the preliminary

investigation of the present study in order to prove the existence of WO in the Sri Lankan context relevant to a specific employee category since the field of WO at its initial stage in Sri Lanka and its unavailability of previous empirical investigations in Sri Lanka. Second, it was something curious and interesting to investigate the experience of WO among professionals since they are a salient group of knowledge workers (Krausert, 2013) with high education level critically contributed to the organization and economy (Ho et al., 2013). Consequently, their decision on leaving the organization because of the experience of WO (Bedi, 2019) generates considerable cost to the organization. Third, professionals have the ability to review their experiences than the lower-level employees. In particular, being a lecturer in the university is an appropriate employee category considered as a profession and (Su & Wood, 2012) also a knowledge worker. With this mind, the present researcher targeted to collect data from the professionals (e.g., accountants, auditors, etc) in the private sector and the university academic staff in the state universities of Sri Lanka.

### **3.9 Selection of participants**

Participants were selected to the present research context using a purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling is the sampling technique that involves selecting cases that will best enable them to answer the research questions and research objectives (Saunders et al., 2009). Simply, in this sampling technique, sampling is limited to specific types of people who can provide the desired information (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Because they are the people who only have it or qualified with some criteria set by the researcher. Those sampling criteria to the present study were they must have experience of workplace ostracism in their present or former workplaces. And also they must work as a professional employee (e.g., Academic professionals in the state and private universities and professionals in the private sector were targeted). Moreover, since the experience of ostracism primarily required a violation of social norms in the given context (Robinson et al., 2013), the present researcher initially conducted some discussions with the participants for asking whether there were any social norms violated in their experiences as they perceived. Consequently, participants who were evident in such a norm violation within their experiences were the only qualified participants to the present research context those who selected by the researcher. As such, confirming the above criteria, professional employees who have experience of workplace ostracism in the Sri Lankan context were the target

group which can only provide the desired information to the researcher to explore the research questions for achieving research objectives.

Moreover, when recruiting the participants, the present researcher jointly followed the respondent-driven sampling method with the purposive sampling technique. Since studying on workplace ostracism is a highly sensitive and stigmatized research area mostly prevailed among the hidden population (e.i., a specific population that cannot be studied by employing standard sampling and estimation techniques), it was suggested respondent-driven sampling method to the present research context (Salganik & Heckathorn, 2004). Respondent-driven sampling is a variation of the snowball sampling method and it involves recruiting the respondents not based on the sampling frame but from the friendship network or social contacts of the existing members of the sample (Tongco, 2007). In this backdrop, the researcher initially recruited 2 respondents through personal acquaintance and later 8 were recruited through the respondent-driven sampling method. In particular, participants' recruitment process has ended from participant #10 since it was reached to the data saturation point (Saunders et al., 2009) which signals no new information relevant to the subject emerged in repeated cases (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Importantly, all 10 professionals were rich with the experience of workplace ostracism and they fulfilled the criteria desired by the researcher previously under the purposive sampling method. On the other hand, when searching the academic professionals who are vulnerable with this experience, from the state universities in Sri Lanka, since the present researcher is a final year undergraduate from one of the state university, at the very first stage, as a preliminary survey, created and shared scenarios based document (Appendix A) among few academics with the support of the research supervisor to convey the research area which is novel to Sri Lankan nation.

### **3.10 Data Collection Method**

Since the present study is a qualitative inquiry, the researcher selected in-depth and semi structured interviews as the appropriate data collection method to the present research context (Saunders et al., 2009). In doing so, the present researcher conducted 10 in-depth interviews with ostracized professionals who worked in the Sri Lankan context by confirming the data saturation (Saunders et al., 2009) and all the interviews were lasting between 45-85 minutes. In there, 2 of the participants interviewed

through face-to-face conversations, and another 8 were interviewed via telephone conversations. When starting the conversation, the present researcher introduced herself and clarifying the purpose of the study with a brief introduction to interview questions which developed according to the research questions of the study (Appendix B). Then the researcher collected demographic, job related and experience related details from the participants which included in Table 3.1

Table 3.1 Details of the participants

<b>Participant's Reference #</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Profession of the victim</b>	<b>Organizational context</b>	<b>Duration of ostracism in months</b>	<b>Source or the perpetrator of the ostracism</b>
P1	Male	Lead associate of the team	BPO company in the private sector	One year	Coworkers, Leader
P2	Male	HR executive	Manufacturing company in the private sector	One year	Manager
P3	Male	Lecturer	University in the government sector	Current	Coworkers, Juniors, Seniors
P4	Female	Audit Supervisor	Audit firm in the private sector	within the last few months	Firm owner
P5	Female	Lecturer	HEI in the private sector	One and a half years	Coworkers, Manager

<b>Participant's Reference #</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Profession of the victim</b>	<b>Organizational context</b>	<b>Duration of ostracism in months</b>	<b>Source or the perpetrator of the ostracism</b>
P6	Male	Lecturer	University in the government sector	Whole the period as a temporary lecturer	Co-worker
P7	Female	Lecturer	University in the government sector	One year	Coworker, Head of the department
P8	Female	Lecturer	University in the government sector	Past three months and current	Co-workers
P9	Female	Sales coordinator and secretary to the MD	Shipping line company in the private sector	Two years	Sales manager
P10	Male	Industrial Executive	Garment factory in the private sector	Six months	Factory manager

Source: (Primary data collected by the researcher)

### **3.11 Data analysis methods**

Among the various inductive based analytical procedures, the present researcher applied a specific analytical tool called a content analysis. Content analysis specifically involved in systematic evaluation of content in the recorded interviews. Simply it analyses the large contents available in the interview transcriptions and systematically identifies the concepts or categories (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). The aim of content analysis under the inductive approach is resultant to develop a model on the phenomenon in a conceptual form and it uses in the case where the known information from previous studies is limited to the phenomenon (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). As such, after analyzing the interview transcriptions the present study developed a model for the experience of WO since it was limited the knowledge in this regard. With this mind, content analysis is suitable for this study to achieve the aim of exploring the experience of WO.

When started with analyzing the interviewed data 10 interviews which have conducted and interviews were recorded with the consent of the respondents to get the whole information to write the transcriptions, and then the researcher transcribed Sinhala voiced audio records into separate word documents written in English (Appendix C). Before starting the analysis of the interviews the present researcher first, familiarized with transcriptions of the interviewed data by reading and rereading the whole transcriptions. At the endpoint, the researcher started to apply the procedure of content analysis consisted of two major steps (e.i., initial coding /open coding, creating categories).

Under open coding or line by line coding, the researcher coded the text in the transcriptions by giving the headings while reading and closely examining the content (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). Importantly, all headings were written down in the margins that can explain all the content. Next, the headings were collected to the coding sheets and consequent coding sheets enabled the second step of the content analysis; creating categories. In particular, the researcher grouped the concepts or headings together that were giving similar meanings and developed the categories based on the findings of the previous studies relevant to workplace ostracism, other

negative workplace behaviors and looking insights of the real phenomenon (e.g., named the category as „informal cliques“ under organizational reasons of WO). As such axial codes and categories were derived.

At the end of the process, it was found model for the experience workplace ostracism consisted of three phases (i.e., victim's perceived reasons to the WO experience phase, victim's experience of WO phase, and victim's reactions to the WO experience phase).

### **3.12 Ethical considerations**

When dealing with the respondents in the interviews, researchers should have to respect and take responsibility for the values, needs, rights, and desires of the respondents. For instance, researchers always need to agree with the different ideologies and requests arise from the respondents. Importantly, aligning with this ethical considerations the present study ensured one of the quality criteria of the quality inquiry as well (Tracy, 2010). In doing so, the present researcher first clearly conveyed the intentions and role of the research (Robinson, 2014) to the contacted participants while communicating how the anonymity of the shared information was assured to ensure confidentiality. As such, the present study preserved ethics which is expected from the quality qualitative inquiry beyond the data collection process.

### **3.13 Quality of the qualitative research**

When collecting the data through interviews, the present researcher careful to ensure the rich rigor of the qualitative inquiry through deciding the number and length of the interviews, appropriateness, and breath of the interview sample (Tracy, 2010). Moving further, the present researcher careful on establishing trust and rapport with the participants (Saunders et al., 2009) which were particularly beneficial to ensure the sincerity of the qualitative inquiry (Tracy, 2010) and also specifically careful on getting an empathetic understanding of the social action from the viewpoint of the participant to ensure the multivocality (e.g., multiple voices of participants included in the qualitative report) which included in checking the credibility (e.i., trustworthiness, verisimilitude, plausibility) of qualitative inquiry (Tracy, 2010). Multivocality has emerged particularly from the „Verstehen“ practice which involves in putting the researcher on the place of the actor. As such, the researcher getting empathetic to the



ostracism experience shared by the ostracized professionals, being on their viewpoint (Tracy, 2010). In addition to the credibility, trustworthiness of the study further ensured through dependability which has confirmed the consistency of the process and the product of the research (e.i., outcome of the study match with row data and process of the study) (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Ensuring the dependability, the outcome; model of the experience of WO has aligned with the process of data collection and data analysis of the present research. Taken together, both credibility and dependability ensured the trustworthiness of the reader. Moreover, the ethical consideration also ensured the quality of the present qualitative inquiry by avoiding the unjust consequences to the participants (Tracy, 2010).

### **3.14 Chapter summary**

Taken together, the chapter comprised several aspects related to the methodology of the present study. It contained social constructionism paradigm as the research philosophy, qualitative research methodology, inductive research approach, exploratory research purpose, and multiple case studies strategy. Professional who experienced workplace ostracism in Sri Lanka is the present research context and qualified participants recruited through purposive and respondent-driven sampling methods. Then the researcher ended up with the appropriate data analysis process based on the content analysis which has resulted to develop an integrated model for the experience workplace ostracism. Further, it was mentioned the ethical considerations and quality criteria of the present qualitative inquiry (e.g, rich rigor, sincerity, confidentiality, credibility- multivocality, dependability).

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **4.1 Introduction to the chapter**

Firstly, the chapter explains the analysis of the interview results by employing a content analysis analytical tool. The analysis consisted of three phases developed according to the three research questions which described the experience of WO; victim's perceived reasons to the WO experience phase, victim's experience of workplace ostracism phase, and victim's reactions to the WO experience phase. Next, the study discussed the unique findings generated from the analysis by comparing and contrasting with the existing knowledge relevant to the present investigation.

#### **4.2 Analysis**

After transcribed the interviewed data researcher started to analyze the data according to the analytical procedure under content analysis. Consequently, the present researcher had lists of open codes, axial codes, and categories as mentioned in the below tables to the three phases explained by three research questions of the study. Table 4.1 represents codes relevant to the first research question of the study.

Table 4.1 Victim's perceived reasons for the WO experience phase

Open codes	Axial codes	Categories	
Perpetrator misunderstood about the victim as a supporter to the opposed party	Perpetrator,,s Misperception	Perpetrator related	Individual
Personalization of the common problem			
Perpetrators' dislikes towards collective works	Perpetrator's work- related attitudes		
Perpetrators' nonaccountability on collective works			
Perpetrators' non-transparency on collective works			
Perpetrator's desire to replace the staff based on personal connections	Perpetrator's Prejudices		
Perpetrator's preference for social, geographical, and educational backgrounds			
Perpetrator's self-interest			
Perpetrator preferred personal connections to grow on career			
Perpetrator's preference for gossipers			
Perpetrator's egoism	Domineering role of the perpetrator		
Perpetrator's dominant perception			
Perpetrator's inferiority			
Perpetrator perceived the victim as the major obstacle to gain the controlling power over the whole staff			

Open codes	Axial codes	Categories			
Perpetrator's desire to centered the formal power	Domineering role of the perpetrator	Perpetrator related	Individual		
Manipulating seniority					
Envy on status and respect of the victim	Perpetrator's Psychological issues			Perpetrator related	Individual
Perpetrator reluctance to hear good things about the victim					
Perpetrators' endless desire to make troubles					
Jealousy on victim's social power					
Jealousy on victim's villages power					
Perpetrator's mental disorder					
Perpetrator's personality disorder					
Perpetrators' poor human qualities					
Perpetrators' poor values					
Perpetrator's mood changes					
Victim being a competent person	Victim's competencies	Victim related	Individual		
Victim's higher skills and abilities					
Age with experience gap					
Having long term work experience than others					
Perceived victim as a threat by others due to degree qualification					
Victim's qualifications were mattered					
Perceived victim as a threat due to English knowledge					

<b>Open codes</b>	<b>Axial codes</b>	<b>Categories</b>	
Overloading works on people who completed the tasks perfectly	Victim's competencies	Victim related	Individual
Getting a timely irrelevant promotion			
Perpetrator's over-expectation on victim's abilities to qualifications			
Victim's ego due to Qualifications	Victim's ego		
Self-overestimation			
Economic matters of the family	Victim's personal issues		
Work and family pressure			
The institute divided into two cliques as newcomers and older members	Informal cliques	Organizational	
The institute getting circles based on the false class consciousness in mind			
Organizational politics			
Competed to gain a higher career position	Competitive work setting		
Competed on getting awards			
Perceived victim as a competitor by others due to protect and grow on the career ladder			
Female dominance culture	Organizational culture		
Mattered Culture and subculture of the university			
Non-cooperative culture			
No collective consciousness			
Cubical layout of the university limited the enclosure movements			

<b>Open codes</b>	<b>Axial codes</b>	<b>Categories</b>
Too homely culture	Organizational culture	Organizational
Power distance		
Ways of addressing people in the organization		
Juniors' continuation of the wrong tradition		
Weakly defined job rolls in the hierarchical structure	Organizational structure	
Team-based work environment		
Unavailability of punishment mechanism	Weak organizational processes and practices	
Unavailability of a proper appraisal system for collective tasks		
Unavailability of a proper appraisal system for individual performance		
Inappropriate evaluation of qualification when recruiting staff to the university		
No monetary compensation		
Absence of a standardized recruitment process for lecturing		
Absence of systematic processes		

Source: (Primary data collected by the researcher)

According to Table 4.1, the victim's perceived reasons are mainly divided into two categories; individual reasons and organizational reasons. Then, for a second time, the individual reasons are divided into two subcategories as victim-related and perpetrator related individual reasons.

## **Individual reasons**

### **Perpetrator related individual reasons**

Some reasons stated by the victims according to their perspectives regarding ostracizer/s or the perpetrators. Those are the perpetrator's misperception, the perpetrator's work-related attitudes, perpetrator's prejudices, the domineering role of the perpetrator, and the perpetrator's psychological issues.

### **Perpetrator's misperception**

In particular, participant #9 and #1 perceived that they ostracized due to the misunderstandings of the perpetrators towards them as a spy of the top management or supporter of the opposed party.

*He assumed me as a spy of my boss [Managing Director] (Participant, #9)*

Also, participant #5 said that perpetrator misunderstood her since she vocalized and brought the common problems of the members to the superiors as her personal problem. Due to this reason, the participant experienced ostracism. This was mentioned by the participant #5 as follows.

*I am the person who vocalized any problem on behalf of all the members in my clique. In particular, although it was a common problem, it was directed toward me like my personal problem (Participant, #5)*

### **Perpetrator's work-related attitudes**

According to the view of participant #3, most of the people in organizations prefer to continue their traditions without contributing to the modifications of the progress of the organization. Sometimes, they resist the suggestions for improvements or irresponsible in doing so. Because of that, the initiator of modification experienced ostracism in organizing and getting cooperation from others to compete and succeed in the collective tasks of the project. It seems perpetrators' work-related attitudes were mattered to ostracize someone in the organization who genuinely works for the improvements of the organization. This reason has been mentioned by the participant #3 as follows.

*Their dislikes towards collective works was also a matter to my experience (Participant, #3)*

*They are not accountable and transparent to the collective tasks we did (Participant, #3)*

### **Perpetrator's prejudices**

Next, under the perpetrator's prejudices, self-interests, and personal preferences of the perpetrator were found as perceived reasons for ostracism. For instance, participant #2 and #7 stated that there were perpetrators who had personal preferences based on the social, geographical, and educational backgrounds of the victim which caused to ostracism experience.

*She recruited a girl who had a degree from a private university to a higher salary scale than me even in her training period. Technically she had fewer qualifications than me. It seems my boss prioritized the gender and social class a lot. Even without proper skills, performance, she prioritized and preferred the social, educational, and geographical backgrounds like Colombo dominance hometown, school attended, university graduated, and westernized family. Always she likes to maintain social status inside the company and she highly worried about the recognition even an employee as an intern (Participant, #2)*

*When they [One lecturer with HOD] introduce us to others, we understood one lady didn't smile and talk with us since we came from different universities (Participant, #7)*

Also, perpetrators' prioritization over their connections and preference on the gossipers was mentioned by participant #10 and #4 as perceived reasons to their experiences.

*That new factory manager has a big need, for recruiting people who have personal connections with him to replace my position (Participant, #10)*

*She was flexible only for the people those who gossiped with her. But I don't like to gossip. Due to that, she rearranged some works according to their requests. But my requests were rejected (Participant, #4)*

### **Domineering role of the perpetrator**

In this regards participant #10 stated that their perpetrator ostracized them to gain the controlling power over all organizational members.



*Since all staff members partial to me, he thought to first leave me from the organization. Then only he can keep control over others. Because I am the one who gave commands and orders after the factory manager. [...] the HR department didn't recruit even a girl to the garment line, without asking my opinions and recommendations (Participant, #10)*

Further, participant #1 highlighted the ego level of the perpetrator to dominate in the organization under domineering role of the perpetrator.

*I thought it was because of his ego level. Although he was my trainer, I worked for a higher position than him from the beginning. On the other hand, he was a degree holder from a state university, but I didn't have a degree qualification instead I had firm experience and partial professional qualification. That's why he had that ego-mind according to my view (Participant, #1)*

Additionally, as per participant #9 and #3 perpetrator's inferiority in engaging collective tasks and perpetrator manipulated their seniority at the organizational works mentioned by the participants under the domineering role of the perpetrator.

*He had a big inferiority when engaging with the collective tasks (Participant, #9)*

*They [senior staff members] mostly manipulate their seniority. It means they are getting things by putting force or influence on others (Participant, #3)*

### **Perpetrator's psychological issues**

According to participant #6 and #10, some perpetrators had envy or jealousy over the victim's status, power, and respect, which caused them to experience ostracism in their organizations.

*I thought they had envy on my status and respect (Participant, #6)*

*He had a jealousy on the support I received from my villagers to resolve the difficulties inside the factory (Participant, #10)*

Importantly, participant #9 and #7 emphasized that, because of the personality and mental disorder of the perpetrator, they were subjected to ostracism as they perceived.

*Later I got to know, there was a small personality disorder with him since his childhood (Participant, #9)*

*Other lecturers told us she had a mental problem from her birth and therefore not to worry on her treats on you (Participant, #7)*

In addition to the above, poor human qualities and values, mood changes of the perpetrators also were found by the present researcher as the perpetrator's psychological issues reasoned for participant #7 and #8.

*They had lack of human qualities. Actually they didn't respect others (Participant, #7)*

*His moods were changed suddenly. The person at a particular position has been changed immediately to another position (Participant, #8)*

### **Victim related reasons**

For the victim related reasons, the present study is evident, victim's competencies, ego, personal issues as perceived reasons for the experience of workplace ostracism.

### **Victim's competencies**

Under the victim's competencies participant #1, #4, and #8 reported that they were being ostracized by the perpetrator since they were more competent than the perpetrators in terms of work qualifications, work experiences, skills, and abilities.

*At the beginning, I felt they had small fear towards me since I have 6 years of firm experience [Audit firm]. They thought their positions were threatened because of me (Participant, #1)*

*She had quite a hesitation to engage me in works that I can be able to perform with my full competence than her. Always she tried to undervalue my competencies and performance (Participant, #4)*

*On the other hand, disqualified with a bachelor's degree was a reason to this (Participant, #8)*

Further, participant #3 mentioned that exhibited perfection in doing works due to the victims' competencies, caused them to experience workplace ostracism as a work stressor.

*People give work after work when completing one work successfully in a good manner by using my competencies (Participant, #3)*

### **Victim's ego**

Furthermore, the victim's ego represented the instances, where the victims had the overestimation on the qualifications they gained. As per the participant #5, self-overestimation and her ego led her to inflexible on others' commands and orders in doing works with them. Because of this reason, participant #5 stated that she was ostracized by other organizational members.

*To be honest, I also had a small ego during that period, since I was the only one who had the degree qualification worked in that institute (Participant, #5)*

*Sometimes I feel, from my side also, there was a small reluctance to close with them since I am a degree holder, why do I close with them (Participant, #5)*

### **Victim's personal issues**

As per the given response to the victim's personal issues, when the individual is weakened to bare the work and family pressures that individual is targeted to ostracized by the hands-on unemotional perpetrators. Moreover, those perpetrators engaged in comparison over the socio-economic status of the victim and criticizing the victim unfairly. Consequently others also socially rejected the victim.

*My family was not a rich one. After my father's passed away, my mother went abroad. I have two younger brothers who were schooling at that time. Due to that, I am the person who had taken all the family responsibilities. We didn't have much money to spend our lives happily. I wanted to take care of my brother. In this backdrop, one office mate who knew all my personal information discussed those matters with other colleagues. The sales manager got to know about these from others and highly criticized my family background in the office. After hearing those criticisms other members also rejected me with the sales manager from their community, collectively (Participant, #9)*

### **Organizational reasons**

According to the participants' reveals, they perceived they were ostracized because of some factors in the organization.

#### ***Informal cliques***

As perceived by the participant #5 and #2, when the whole organization divided into cliques or circles based on the organizational memberships (i.e., newcomers or older members) or false class consciences in minds of members, participants #5 and #2 experienced ostracism as being a member of such organization.

*Although newcomers were educated, and some of them had teaching experiences, the whole institute was divided into two cliques engaged in non-acceptance of the members in the opposed clique (Participant, #5)*

*The whole organization divided into different circles based on the false class conciseness in the mindsets of members and continuing the relationships only with the parties who selected (Participant, #2)*

Moreover, participant #1 and #3 highlighted internal politics inside their organization caused them to experience ostracism through exclusion.

*They didn't include me. Sometimes that was because of the internal politics inside the organization (Participant, #3)*

#### **Competitive work setting**

Next organizational reason is indicted that competitive work setting. The competition occurred because of the competitive goals inherent to the organization for achieving by the members. For instance, participants #7, #5, and #4 stated that competition over getting the best teacher award, grow on the career ladder, and secure the job position was matted them for having the experience of ostracism.

*In the beginning, I was also not aware of this reason. There is a career ladder from the position of the temporary lecturer to the dean of the faculty in the university hierarchy. So obviously this has created the competition among the lectures when growing on this ladder (Participant, #7)*

*That was because of the competition within the staff members to secure their positions and getting promotions (Participant, #4)*

## **Organization Culture**

Different cultural artifacts in the organization were covered in a wide area of organizational reasons for the ostracism. As perceived by the participant #2 when the culture dominated female employees, being a male employee caused for the experience of ostracism. Moreover, participant #5 emphasized too homely culture prevailed in her organization was mattered her lot, since the members in those cultures strongly bounded each other formally as well as informally as she never seen at the organization. Therefore she experienced ostracism since she is unable to adapt to that culture. In addition to that, two cultural dimensions of collectivism and power distance were also mentioned by the participants #3, #6 under this category. Moreover, the way of addressing and cubical layout of the office cabin also mattered to workplace ostracism as perceived by the participant #3.

*Another major reason is the cubical shapes of the lecture rooms of the university. The private sector is not like this. It's open to everyone. Here we can see the enclosure movements [not open or fewer interactions] (Participant, #3)*

*The main reason is its power and authority. The university is a culture, having high power distance (Participant, #6)*

Moreover, the way of addressing people in different organizational cultures is also emphasized by participant #8 as a reason for ostracism.

*My first job was at the private research center. On the very first day, they introduced and addressed me using words like "Aiya and Nangi". But the day after the first day the person who is in my cabin not greeted me although I greeted him as "Good morning Aiya". At that time I thought the way how I addressed that person was not match to their culture which I understood the previous day (Participant, #8)*

## **Organizational structure**

To the organizational structure, participants stated that, although some organizations have a hierarchical organizational structure, it is not well arranged and defined as suitable for specific job roles. So, it created confusion inside the organizational members when accepting the newcomer to the organization for a new job role. Therefore, as perceived by participant #5 poorly defined hierarchical structure caused her to create the experience of ostracism.

*When I join to that institute, they already established hierarchy like assistant managers, headteachers. However, they didn't have a specific job position to the lecturer, since I was the first lecturer recruited to that institute.[...] I didn't have a specific job role at that time. Therefore other members not accepted me as I expected (Participant, #5)*

On the other hand, a team-based working structure is a reason emphasized by participant #1 for his ostracism experience. Although, the acceptance as an insider to the team is expected by the individual from the team, receiving experience as an outsider generated pain to the individual when doing team works.

*The team which I joined has 50 members and that large team has sub-teams. I joined the team which is for reimbursement works. That team was a small team. It consisted of 4 members including myself. My position was as a lead associate. I reported to the deputy leader and two members worked for the associate and senior associate levels which were two levels below to me. Before joining that team [reimbursements team], there was a strong bond among existing team members for some reason that I didn't know at the beginning. Therefore, although I didn't have an intention to intervene in that relationship, they didn't like to include me (Participant, #1)*

### **Weak organizational processes and practices**

The weak organizational processes and practices lowered the cost of engaging in ostracism. Therefore this has become a reason to the experience of ostracism of the victim. The reason has been explained by participant #3 as unavailability of a punishment mechanism, proper appraisal system for collective and individual tasks, and use of inappropriate evaluation of qualification when recruiting staff to the university.

*There is no proper punishment mechanism for the lecturers who do not give their support to collective things in the university (Participant, #3)*

*Since there was no proper performance appraisal system, there was no matter whether anyone contributed to the collective tasks or not (Participant, #3)*

Next, the researcher analyzed the interview results to the second phase.

Table 4.2 Victim's experience of workplace ostracism phase

Open codes	Axial codes	Categories
Not invited for outings	Exposed to perpetrator exclusionary acts	Triggering ostracism acts and events
No invitation for organization functions		
Not informing the meetings		
Dislike to include the victim		
Fail to keep direct eye contact		
Keeping silence		
Not greeting		
Not receiving genuine greetings		
Not accepted the victim's operation plan		
Treated as an invisible person		
Treated as an outsider		
Feeling out of the loop		
Careless and inactive participation of the audience at the interview		
Coworkers Not paying attention when addressing		
Didn't care		

Open codes	Axial codes	Categories
Raising irrelevant questions from the victim	Exposed to perpetrator's exclusionary acts	Triggering ostracism acts and events
Overlooking the victim		
Intentionally avoid meetings		
Nonresponsiveness to emails		
Absence of support when expected		
Lowered the others' attention on building social relationships with the victim		
Avoiding participation for the meetings arranged by the victim		
Not accepted the reasonable job related request of the victim		
Not appreciating the victim		
Indirectly stated to not to keep the connections with higher positions	Exposed to perpetrator's aggressive ironical signs	
Indirectly stated to leave		
Indirectly shown the dislike towards the victim		



Open codes	Axial codes	Categories
Perpetrator interrupted the progress while becoming a voluntary supporter	Exposed to perpetrator's aggressive ironical signs	Triggering ostracism acts and events
Perpetrator's inner aggression		
Perpetrator shown the aggressive expressions		
Devaluing opinions	Exposed to perpetrator's undermining	
Undervaluing performance		
Undervaluing competency		
Devalued victim's ideas		
Perpetrator devalued the victim's valuable dedication		
Criticizing for unfair reasons		
Not concerning the victim's acknowledgments		
Irrelevant subject allocation		
Tortured without considering the victim's desire		
Imposing disregard works relevant to a particular organizational event		

Open codes	Axial codes	Categories
Intentionally made stress	Exposed to perpetrator's unbearable work stressors	Triggering ostracism acts and events
Imposed unbearable workload		
Imposed hard tasks without asking the possibility of doing		
Roused others against the victim	Exposed to perpetrator's rabble rousing	
Roused others against the victim to create purposeful interpersonal conflict		
Engaged in gossiping	Exposed to perpetrator's gossiping and rumoring	
Noticed and gossiped to the HOD		
Spreading rumors		
Unbelievably organizational members accused the victim to a wrongdoing	Exposed to perpetrator's false accusation	
Accused the victim to wrongdoing		
False complaints about the victim		
Observing mistakes		
Perpetrator withheld the work-related knowledge	Exposed to perpetrator's knowledge hiding	

<b>Open codes</b>	<b>Axial codes</b>	<b>Categories</b>
Intentionally hide important information	Exposed to perpetrator's knowledge hiding	Triggering ostracism acts and events
Doubt on his behaviors	Victim experienced ambiguity on acts and events	
Confused with incidences that experienced		
Victim doubting on the trigger, by blaming the self-competent level	Internalization	Making attributions to ostracism acts and events
Internalize all the negatives into victim side		
Received the evaluation on events from the third party		
Purposefully ostracized	Experienced intentional ostracism	Conclude the ostracism experience
Perpetrator's planned rejection		
Victim already expected the rejection decision of the perpetrator		
Perpetrator had a direct problem with the victim not with the works done by the victim	Experienced high intense ostracism	
Perpetrator's voice always against the victim		
Childish experience	Experienced low intense ostracism	
Cold war		

Source: (Primary data collected by the researcher)

According to Table 4.2, results to the second research question of the study revealed that the victims' experience of workplace ostracism consisted of three main sequential categories; triggering ostracism acts and events, making attributions to ostracism acts and events, and conclude the ostracism experience. Further explanations were given below.

### **Triggering ostracism acts and events**

Triggering ostracism acts and events consisted of victims' exposures on more subtle to overt, ambiguous nature of ostracism acts and events. It implies all the ostracism triggers created ambiguity within the victim at the beginning while developing the conditions for the experience of workplace ostracism.

### **Exposed to perpetrator's exclusionary acts**

As per the ostracism experiences shared by the participants #7 and #8, they were exposed to the exclusionary acts and events when they engaged with the works related things as well as outside the works. Specifically, receiving silent treatments from the perpetrator like avoiding direct eye contact and absence of the expected verbal responses were triggered the ostracism to the participants as social exclusionary acts and events.

*On the very first day of the university, when introducing us to the staff of the faculty, although others welcome warmly, one lady looked at our faces but didn't tell anything. She was silenced and it was very unusual (Participant, #7)*

*She didn't give direct eye contact to us (Participant, #7)*

*He worked in a single room with us. Sometimes, he heard my voice. But pretended as not listened and didn't give me any response (Participant, #8)*

In addition to the above, participants #10, #7, and #8 stated that they were exposed to the perpetrators' careless or not giving attention to the works done by them and treated them as invisible.

*They always treated me like I'm invisible there (Participant, #8)*

*When imagining the way of conducting the interview, [...] normally people paid their attention to the interviewee and listen to him or her. Previously I had such kind of interview experience. People in the interview board respect interviewee and kindly accepting his or her answers. But the interview experience here I had is not as previous one. It means when I presenting, the lecturers in the audience didn't listen to it. They answered their phone call, talked to each other and even they didn't know how to seat there. Only the dean sir listened and kept the attention on me (Participant, #7)*

Moreover, as participants #1, #6, and #3 stated that overlooking the victim, walking away to avoid the meeting of the target, not responding emails by others, not accepted the reasonable job related request of the victim, and not appreciating the victim also conveyed the participants as ostracism triggers under the exclusion.

*They overlooked me a lot when they arrange or go for outings. Sometimes they discussed each other and arranged outings. All they gathered at a particular time, but not informed me at that time. Sometime I got late or sometimes I went earlier (Participant, #1)*

*They didn't show big changes from their facial expressions in front of me. But they didn't like to meet me [...] First I contacted the person who wants to meet and I arranged a separate time to meet them. However, when I went to meet, they were not at their seats. At that time I understood, they tried to avoid my present intentionally (Participant, #6)*

*The most common thing is they do not respond to my mails even. Therefore they didn't participate in the workshops organized by me for quality assurance informing through emails. For example, if I expect 86 members in whole lecturer panel, only 20 members participated there (Participant, #3)*

### **Exposed to perpetrator's aggressive ironical signs**

In this regard, there were ostracism acts participants exposed to the perpetrator's aggressive ironical warnings and signs. For instance, participant #6 stated that perpetrators indirectly warned them not to keep the connections with higher positions of the university hierarchy and participant #7 stated that, perpetrators indirectly warned her to leave from the university. Moreover, participant #9 was evident for tackled the victims by changing the perpetrator's direct harmful approach to the indirect fake supportive approach.

*I'm the only one who participated in that meeting as a junior staff member and I had a connection with the dean's office, because of the works I had done*

*associated with them. Although they didn't talk to me directly, they indirectly warned me not to keep connections with the higher positions (Participant, #6)*

*The first impression I had on him, changed into the new mood. He told me not to work with the new assistant sales manager and invited me to get support from him (Participant, #9)*

### **Exposed to perpetrator's undermining**

Regarding undermining, participants #2, #3, and #10 stated that they were exposed to undervaluing their ideas and work-related suggestions. Asking irrelevant questions from the victim and exposed to the perpetrator's criticisms over unfair reasons also recognized under undermining acts by the perpetrator.

*They didn't value my ideas (Participant, #2)*

*They criticized my university, as my university has more first classes without a research component to the degree. They told me "although you are qualified with a professional qualification, we expect more researches other than professional qualifications" (Participant, #7)*

Moreover, as mentioned by the participants #6, #4, and #7 victims' exposes to the manipulation of the formal power and irrelevant subject allocations are also considered as triggers of ostracism in this regard.

*I'm the only one who passed out from the newly introduced degree program of our department with the first-class qualification. Therefore I have sufficient knowledge in this regard. But senior lecturers have not given me a chance to teach those subjects when the subject allocation (Participant, #6)*

### **Exposed to perpetrator's unbearable work stressors**

According to the participants, #6 and #7 exposed to the unbearable work stressors of the perpetrator also triggered them for ostracism experiences. For instance, participants were evident for imposing disregard works and unbearable workloads by the perpetrators.

*There was a big event organized by our department and the head of the department intentionally gave me that event to organize. Others rejected to organize that event by telling different reasons. So all the responsibilities put on my shoulders even preparing the letters relevant to the event also need to be done by myself (Participant, #7)*

### **Exposed to perpetrator's rabble-rousing**

Rabble rousing is another trigger for ostracism perpetrator has involved in instigating the third party to ostracize the victim. As per the participants #9 and #10, the perpetrator ostracizes the victims through rousing on minus work staff of the organization against the victim. As a result of the perpetrator rubble rousing there were some perpetrator supporters inside the organizations.

*I can remember, there was a cleaning lady she cleaned all the places of others, without my place at the office. She washed tea mugs of all, without my one. When I asked her, she told me, the sales manager gave commands her, not to do my works and keep me aside to do my works by myself (Participant, #9)*

*In the beginning, he told some supervisors not to work according to the plans for the operation. But I didn't know about this. As a result of this, I didn't pay incentives for some girls who were machine operators. So they asked me, what the reasons for cutting their incentives. My answer was, since your daily garment targets not achieved by yourselves, I did like that. But later I got to know, the reason was not that one, and the reality was, that the factory manager instigated the supervisors to do as such (Participant, #10).*

### **Exposed to perpetrator's gossiping and rumoring**

According to the participants #4, #7, and #8, exposed to the acts of gossiping and rumoring, triggers the ostracism experience to them. In the organizations, both coworkers and supervisors engaged in gossiping and rumoring about the victim. This has been stated by participants as follows

*She noticed us and told it to the HOD. So HOD said to us, "you cannot go to another department to get your lunch and don't do this again". After this incident, we didn't go to any department for our lunch. [...] later I realized, she gossiped about us (Participant, #7)*

*That day I didn't have a vehicle to go to my place. It was about 4 p.m. Environment was not so dark. However, although I'm a junior staff member, one male senior lecturer gave me a lift. I get on to the vehicle and sat on the sheet in the backside of the vehicle. That small incidence spread as a rumor. It [The rumor] was like a person who does not have a personal vehicle, is so like to go with others' vehicles (Participant, #8)*

### **Exposed to perpetrator's false accusation**

In particular participants, #8 and #7 mentioned that they were exposed to the accusations for false mistakes or wrongdoings. They couldn't believe those accusations and those cannot be justified by the perpetrators.

*I also did such activities [students' union activities] in my university life. However, I told my students, "I don't mind whatever you are doing out of my classes, but you have to come to my class and cover your CAs". It is a must. Problem was, the message I gave them spread as I was supporting to ragging and I was promoting union activities of students. [...] Those students were my juniors at my university ages. So they know the ways I behaved in the university as a student. I couldn't involve their union works as I did previously. Raising such a problem from the students' side was unbelievable. Consequently, the lecturers complained about this matter (Participant, #8)*

### **Exposed to perpetrator's knowledge hiding**

When the perpetrator intentionally withholds the knowledge from the victim, the act of knowledge hiding was triggered the victims to ostracism. This has been stated by participants #1, #4, and #9 as follows.

*Normally audit firms engaged with the works related to auditing, accounting, and taxation [...] I was like to know about the works related to taxation. Because of this reason, I asked several times from the supervisor to appoint me assignments related to taxation. But she didn't like to share that knowledge with me (Participant, #4)*

*He intentionally made me work-related many losses. He hides many important details from me (Participant, #9)*

### **Making attributions to ostracism acts and events**

Here, the participants mentioned that they were being with uncertainty, ambiguity, or doubts on triggers of ostracism. With this ambiguity, they made the attributions on those negative events. First, their self-doubts lead to self-blame or to internalize the entire negatives into their sides. This has been stated by participant #2, as follows.

*There were some days I worked until 10 or 12 p.m. [...] Heavy workload they assigned me unnecessarily. For instance, sometimes I thought, I had no enough competence to perform the level that they expected from me (Participant, #2)*

*I internalized all that happened to me. It means, I felt, all the things that happened to me due to my inabilities. I didn't clear what's wrong with me.*



*Always, I thought, there was a matter with my knowledge, skills, language, and leadership. All the negatives, I turned into my side. I was not going to reflect all those into the environment external to me (Participant, #2)*

Then, in resolving the participants' uncertainty on ostracism acts and events, they came to consider the third party evaluation on ostracism acts and events other than the participants' attributions. As such participants resolve the ambiguity on triggers of ostracism. This was stated by participant #7.

*To be honest, I did lots on behalf of students from my side. Therefore I didn't think that was because of my fault. Confirming my assumption, other lecturers also told me, "those people perceived you as a threat, that's why those happened to you" (Participant, #7)*

### **Conclude the ostracism experience**

Consequent to the attribution process participants concluded or perceived the acts they exposed as ostracism. For instance, participant #7 and #6 concluded they purposefully ostracized by the perpetrators.

*I understood, she did this intentionally and eventually with a good plan (Participant, #7)*

*However, before going to the interview I already knew the decision to my permanent position lies in the hands of the head of the department. Therefore I knew obviously, the head of the department rejected me (Participant, #7)*

*I know they purposefully did these (Participant, #6)*

Some participants perceived the ostracism experience with high intensity or severity and some were low.

*Sometimes he told me, the plans I developed were not enough, the targets were not covered. However, he was unable to give rational arguments to reject my plans. The plans developed by him had no good engineering bases. That's why I understood, he had not a problem with my plans, but the problem with me (Participant, #10)*

*There were 20 or 30 staff members for teaching. They are divided into separate cliques based on so random and simple things. [...] one clique was getting lunch separately from the other clique. The members in those two*

*cliques were never interrelated. As such, I experienced this as a very basic or childish way (Participant, #5)*

In this way participants perceived they were ostracized by perpetrators and how they reacted to the ostracism as psychological, physical, and behavioral reactions were discussed below.

Table 4.3 Victim's reactions to the WO experience phase

Open codes	Axial codes	Categories
Crying	High negative	Psychological
Worry		
Hate		
Extreme sadness		
Stress		
Frustration		
shocked		
Getting panic		
Extreme disappointment		
Hopelessness		
Helplessness		
Annoyed		
Reduced empathy		
Disgusting feeling towards the perpetrator		
Dislike to stay more at the organization		
Rumination		
Turnover intention		
Lower job satisfaction		
Depressed		
Feeling worthless		
Non-expressive inner anger		
Threatened belongingness		

<b>Open codes</b>	<b>Axial codes</b>	<b>Categories</b>
Shame	Low negative	Psychological
Guilt consciousness		
Embarrassment		
Declined enthusiasm		
Damaging to the first impression		
Loneliness		
Demotivated to works		
Eating more		Physical
Sleep disturbance		
Declining Performance		Behavioral
Low individual productivity		
Resigned from the job		
Increasing work mistakes	Poor in fulfilling job demands	
Weak to fulfill job responsibilities		
React as same as the Perpetrator	Avoiding reconnections	
Pressured back him		
Reject the reinvitation		
Questioning from the perpetrator after toleration	Vocalize to the perpetrator	
Vocalize		
Arguing up to some extent		
Raised the problem to the HR department		
Directly complained over irresponsible work behaviors		

<b>Open codes</b>	<b>Axial codes</b>	<b>Categories</b>
Defending irrational argument on qualification matter	Vocalize to the perpetrator	Behavioral
Being wordless	Being silence	
Tactically silenced and observed		
Non vocalized		
Non-arguable reactions		
Self-isolation	Moving away	
Staying at the denial stage		
Give up		
Tolerated	Using positional wisdom	
The belief of complaining about the perpetrator is useless		
Self-hiding the competencies		
Reject the support from the perpetrator wisely		
Following precaution Strategies		
Learned a lesson to get fully responsible	Self-management strategies	
Learned not to connect with the students too much		
Self-management on troubles without troubling family		
Self-serving		
Surface acting		
Self-studied work matters		

Open codes	Axial codes	Categories
Family Support	Seeking support of the close people	Other
Supported future life		
Partner		
Sharing experience with companions who had a similar experience		
Informal discussion with work colleagues having similar experiences		
Other lecturers supported to overcome the worries		
Other coworkers supported to overcome		
Others collectively agreed with the victim's work suggestions		
Getting advice from senior staff members in other departments	Getting support from the emphatic leader	
Dean sir supported to defend		
Senior staff members empathetic to the situation		
MD empathized to the Situation		
AGM supported to remove the internalization	Other social support	
Religious spirituality		
Sharing experience with friends from childhood		

Source: (Primary data collected by the researcher)

This is the final phase of the experience of workplace ostracism. According to Table 4.3, the phase consisted of psychological, physical, behavioral, and other reactions to the experience of WO.

### **Psychological reactions**

In the present research, psychological reactions were divided into two main categories as high negative as well as low negative psychological reactions. For instance, it is important to note that, these psychological reactions combined with the wide range of negative emotions and attitudes related to the job that occurred after the experience of workplace ostracism.

### **High negative psychological reactions**

As per the participants' statements, high negative psychological reactions included crying, worry, hate, extreme sadness, frustration, shock, panic, extreme disappointment, annoying, helplessness, hopelessness, and stress. Specifically, participant #8 mentioned that, after experiencing WO, her empathy towards others in the organization has reduced and participant #7 mentioned that she felt disgusting over the perpetrator and the organization after experienced WO. Additionally, depression, felt worthless, and non-expressive inner anger were also psychological reactions shared by the participants. Further, participants #2 and #4 were evident that job-related negative attitudes like, turnover intention and job dissatisfaction. The statements have mentioned below.

*I frustrated to work as a team with them (Participant, 3)*

*I didn't see these types of behaviors from the probationers in the past... the situation has been changed now. They habitually dislike to cooperate on collective tasks, that's the problem therewith [...] I have extreme disappointment towards them (Participant, #3)*

*But times ago I felt, they have no compassion on me, [...]why I think of them (Participant, #8)*

*There was a monitory claim which I need to collect after getting the signature from the HOD. Now it is a big amount. Even to collect it I don't want to go there. Looking at him is very unpleasant to me (Participant, #7)*

### **Low negative psychological reactions**

Under the low negative psychological reactions, participants mentioned that after experiencing ostracism they felt shame, guilt consciousness, and embarrassment. Further, related to work attitudes participants felt their enthusiasm was declined, damaged the first impression, loneliness, and demotivation on works.

*I had guilt consciousness in my mind at the meetings since I didn't have records to present in the meeting (Participant, #9)*

*When they were disgraced, suddenly my mood gets changed [shame mood] (Participant, #1)*

*All lecturers stand opposite to me, I felt loneliness (Participant, #8)*

### **Physical effect**

Concerning the physical effects, participants #1 and #6 stated that the experience of ostracism influenced them to increase their eating habits and sleep disturbances also they had.

*I ate a lot to reduce my stress than normal days (Participant, #1)*

*[...]I had no good sleep tonight even on those days (Participant, #6)*

### **Behavioral reactions**

Under behavioral reactions, there were some reactions, basically related to the victims' jobs. According to the responses made by participant #2 and #4, it was consisted of declining job performance, lowers individual productivity, and resigned from the job. Specifically, under poor in fulfilling job demands participant #9 stated that she was unable to complete errors free job tasks and she lost in fulfilling job responsibilities after experiencing ostracism.

*I had a lot of mistakes in my works (Participant, #9)*

*I couldn't fulfill job responsibilities properly. Since no one supported me, there were penalties imposed by the custom to the company due to the irresponsible works I had done after experiencing this (Participant, #9)*

### **Avoiding reconnections**

Moreover, under behavioral reactions, participants #7 and #10 further stated that they avoided reconnecting with the perpetrators after ostracism. For instance, they mentioned, they react as same as the perpetrator, returning the pressure to the perpetrator and reject the reinvasion of the perpetrator.

*When that lady met after the first day, we said “good morning”, but she didn’t say. Then we decided not to greet her since we couldn’t get responses from her (Participant, #7)*

*Before I came back, I returned the pressure to him, which he put on me (Participant, #10)*

### **Vocalize to the perpetrator**

Next, vocalize to the perpetrator is also a behavioral strategy followed by participants #1, #7,#5, and #10 to their experiences of ostracism. It included questioning, arguing, raising the problem, and complained over the unfair decisions that the perpetrator had taken over the participants.

*I didn’t raise my voice within the first five months since I had a good salary there. Then I questioned, “why don’t you inform this to me?”, “Why don’t you clear this to me?” likewise I asked them when they hide important information from me without a proper reason (Participant, #1)*

*At the final day, I asked from HOD, “why do you resign me”, when he asked me to wait for more months in the university as a temporary lecturer (Participant, #7)*

### **Being silence**

Contrary to the above, participants exhibited a silent response over their experience of workplace ostracism. This has been mentioned by participants #1 and #7 as follows.

*Most of the time I kept silence and observed the situation (Participant, #1)*

*We never argued with her, because we didn’t want to be her status (Participant, #7)*



### **Moving away responses**

Regarding the defensive strategies, participants #8, #5, and #2 stated that they mainly followed defensive strategies to prevent further ostracism acts of perpetrators. For instance, self-isolation, staying at the denial stage, and give up negative situations were mentioned by the perpetrator.

*I felt, I ,,was trying to individualize me by myself, without engaging with them (Participant, #5)*

*Most of the times, I stay at the library lonely (Participant, #8)*

### **Using positional wisdom**

Inconsistent to the behavioral reaction, participants #1,#3 and #7 mentioned that they tolerated and sometimes, rethink to complain against unfair incidences, self-hide the competencies, reject the support from the perpetrator wisely, and followed precaution strategies to prevent from perpetrator"s harmful actions directed to them

*I have tolerated calmly (Participant, #1)*

*I was not going to complain to higher positions about these matters. Because I thought it was useless to do so (Participant, #3)*

*We always locked the door of the cabin when we go out since we had a fear that the lady intentionally would make trouble by stolen or damaged the valuable documents [students" examination papers] inside the cabin. As such always we try to prevent from her (Participant, #7)*

### **Self-management strategies**

Also, participants #8, #9, #1, and #7 mentioned that they manage themselves in responding to the ostracism when it is hard to go against the perpetrator. For instance, they followed the strategies related to self-studying the work-related materials, self-serving, self-management on troubles without troubling family, and self-learning from the lessons experienced and surface acting before the perpetrator.

*All the work-related things I learned through self-studies (Participant, #9)*

*The mistake was done by me and my student. So I told the student “don’t worry about that, it’s okay”. However, getting a lesson from that, after this incident, I was fully responsible for my works (Participant, #7)*

*I was there with a small smile and shaping mood (Participant, #1)*

### **Other reactions**

As per the participants #2 and #1, individuals seek support from the close people, emphatic leader, and seeking social support in responding to the ostracism experience. As support from the close people who are at the workplace or family, participants mentioned as follows,

*My girlfriend and family members supported me and push me to leave from that organization since I experienced this because of the working culture in that organization (Participant, #2)*

*MD of my company was a person who has good human qualities. He understood the situation clearly. He knows me from the beginning. Then he assigned me to accounts related works as I expected (Participant, #9)*

*Religious spirituality and my friends from school ages helped me a lot to bear these troubles (Participant, #9)*

Taken together, including all the findings of three phases based on the three research questions, the present study developed a model for representing the holistic view of victim’s experience of workplace ostracism as illustrated in Figure 4.1

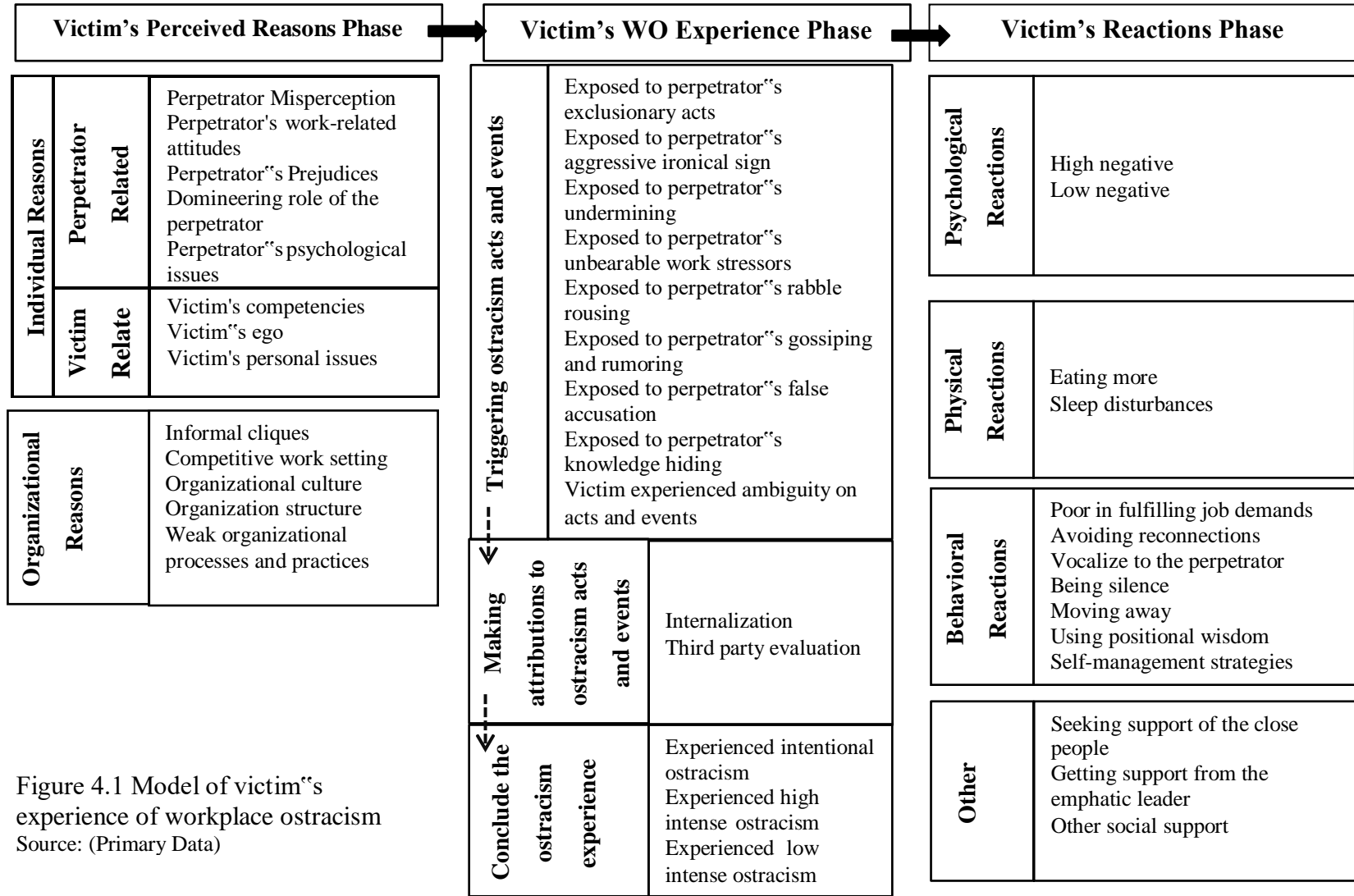


Figure 4.1 Model of victim's experience of workplace ostracism  
Source: (Primary Data)

### **4.3 Discussion**

#### **Victim's perceived reasons for the experience of workplace ostracism**

When considering the first phase, recently researchers' attention has turned to find the victim's perceived reasons to workplace ostracism (Bilal et al., 2020). However, the findings of that study were limited to a particular theoretical perspective and demonstrated only the perceived reasons generated from the particular type of victims. In comparison, without limiting to such a theoretical perspective the present researcher investigated victims' perceived reasons from every type of ostracized individuals since there is a notion that, anyone can be targeted to ostracism in his or her workplace at any time (Nezlek et al., 2012). Moreover, since workplace ostracism is a social process based on the interactions among the victim, perpetrator, and the work environment (Howard et al., 2020), the present study discussed the victim's preserved reasons to the experience of workplace ostracism, related to the perpetrator, victim, and the organization.

When moving to discuss the perpetrator-related perceived reasons, perpetrator's misperception is a unique cause found in this study. Under that, having perpetrators' misperception on victims as untrustworthy members caused for the victims' experience of ostracism, since previous evidence suggested that untrustworthy individuals or when any individual is unable to keep trusted interrelationship is more vulnerable to ostracized by others (Hales et al., 2016).

Next, although perpetrator's prejudices strongly influence discriminatory acts of the workplace (This & Americans, 2006), still it is rare to find the influence of perpetrator prejudices on engaging ostracism behaviors from the justice perspective which is particularly important to inclusive practices of the organization (Shore et al., 2011). To this end, the present study is uniquely evident for perpetrator prejudices as a perceived cause of workplace ostracism.

When considering the domineering role of the perpetrator, recently it was identified in the field of workplace ostracism as the use of power by individuals to mistreat others

to success their self-centered purposes (Howard et al., 2020). In particular, the present researcher revealed that when the perpetrator being a dominant character, engaged in control and maintaining superiority over others which is perceived by the participants as reasons for WO.

In addition to the above, the present study revealed some of the important several aspects of perpetrator under perpetrators' psychological issues which were not more discussed in the existing literature. For instance, previous researchers investigated that, when the perpetrator becomes an envier, being an envied victim experienced workplace ostracism (Liu et al., 2019). To this end, the perpetrator's envy is a reason for the experience of WO perceived by the victim. Moreover, since the changing moods of the person determine the negative workplace behaviors in the organization (Umphress et al., 2020), perpetrators' mood changes can cause for WO as a negative workplace behavior. Furthermore, when discussing on perpetrator's personality disorders, it is evident that, personality disorder which leads to many antisocial and counterproductive work behaviors particularly associated with the psychopathic personality trait of the individual (Baloch et al., 2017). This evidence is a clue to the present researcher to justify the perpetrator's personality disorder which can be a cause for workplace ostracism as a counterproductive workplace behavior. In sum, all the mentioned psychological issues were unique findings to this study.

When moving to discuss victims' related perceived reasons to the WO, recent findings were evident that being a competent person or the competencies of a particular individual targeted to the ostracism in the eyes of the perpetrator, who poor with the competencies, since it is directly linked with the individuals' entitlement to the benefits at the workplace (Chang et al., 2019). Additionally, although the recent literature is evident for considering the egoistic climate as a contextual reason to the WO (Bilal et al., 2020), it is scant to date the findings on victims' ego as a reason for ostracism engendered from the victim's side. In particular, the egoistic victims experience ostracism as its punitive approach (Howard et al., 2020) since those victims quite inflexible on others' commands and suggestions. Taken together, being a competent person is an important latest finding in this regard and victim's ego is a unique finding to this study.

Regarding organizational reasons, the study emphasized organizational politics as an underlying theme of fairness that breaks the norm of equality in the organization (Cohen & Diamant, 2019). To this end, organizational politics can be a perceived reason for the experience of WO in terms of breaking the norm of equality under inclusion that was not mentioned in the previous studies on WO.

In addition to the above, sometimes the organizational work environment gets more competitive by creating an ideal background for the workplace ostracism. This has been suggested by many previous scholars in the field of WO (Ferris et al., 2017). On one hand, competition emphasized the interdependence of individuals to achieve their competitive goals and directly it was found that competition as an antecedent to workplace ostracism (Wu et al., 2015).

When considering on the organizational culture, structure, and cultural dimensions, although it emphasized in the existing studies as reasons to ostracism (Robinson et al., 2013; Ferris et al., 2017; Mao et al., 2018; Gamianwilk & Madejabien, 2018), the present study is unique in findings some of the aspects under organizational culture (e.g., cubical layouts, subculture of the institute, too homely culture, ways of addressing people in the organization, juniors' continuation of the wrong tradition).

Moreover, weak organizational policies and practices also found by previous scholars as a reason to the WO since it involves in reducing the cost of ostracism to the perpetrator (Robinson et al., 2013) while encouraging the more ostracism acts over the victim.

### **Victim's experience of workplace ostracism**

The most important phase of the present study is the investigation of professionals' experience of WO. The experience separately consisted of three consecutive stages (e.i., triggering ostracism acts and events, making attributions to ostracism acts and events, and conclude or perceived the ostracism experience) particularly interpreted with some aspects available in the integrated mistreatment process (Olsonbuchanan & Boswell, 2008; Pondy, 1967) since WO is also a workplace mistreatment having large

ambiguity in its nature and is coupled with the interpersonal conflict through triggering the disagreements in interactions among individuals (Howard et al., 2020).

According to the integrated mistreatments process, a trigger is a fact (e.i., act or event) that corresponds to the situation and it enables with developing conditions or background for enhancing the experience of mistreatment (Olsonbuchanan & Boswell, 2008). Also, exposure to the triggering act or event generated more ambiguity within the individuals about the mistreatment (Olsonbuchanan & Boswell, 2008). As such, ostracism-related studies primarily defined ostracism acts and events as ambiguous (Robinson et al., 2013), and the existing literature suggested that many of subtle to explicit ostracism acts ad events (Williams & Nida, 2017). To this end, victims“ exposure to subtle and/or overt, ambiguous nature of ostracism acts and events triggered the ground for the ostracism experience of the victim.

Before beginning the discussion on the stage of triggering ostracism acts and events, the following justification is supported to ensure the appropriateness of collected evidences on ostracism acts events to explain the distinct WO experience distinguished from other mistreatments (e.g., bullying, harassments). For instance, recent researchers found that, when the individuals are perceived as they are treated fairly, respectfully and outcomes are distributed equally (e.i., organizational justice), they are more likely feel inclusion at their workplaces (Stark, 2020). Importantly, the justice climate of the organization increases employees“ expectations on the organization and its members in avoiding harmful and manipulative behaviors, following organizational rules, helping others, arranging equal treatment to all. It implies the organizational justice or fair treatments inside the organizations play major role in perceived inclusion by every member, which in turn widened the conceptualization of workplace inclusion beyond its previous focus (e.i., individuals“ fulfillment of belongingness and uniqueness needs) (Stark, 2020). In simple, inclusion is not just satisfying the need of belongingness and unique identity expect by the members from the others in the organization. In this backdrop, being on the victim“s perspective, individuals“ exposure to overt or explicit unfair practices done by the perpetrator with a harmful intention also can trigger the ostracism experience perceived by the victims since those acts were threatened the norm of inclusion (e.g., false accusation, rabble-rousing, gossiping and rumoring, imposing unbearable work

stressors, manipulating, not accepted the victim's reasonable job-related request) individuals expect from the organization. This notion has been confirmed in the present study under the selection of participants through the purposive sampling technique. In particular, violation of social norms (e.g., justice, respect, belongingness have already reflected the inclusion) is an important eligible criterion for collecting WO experiences from the participants (Robinson et al., 2013). With this mind all the collected data to the present study reflect unique experiences of WO of victims were not overlap with other mistreatments (e.g., harassments, bullying). In addition to the above, relevant to the specific triggering acts and events further interpretations are mentioned below.

First, it was discussed, the victims exposed to perpetrator exclusionary acts as a trigger of ostracism. When considering exclusion it is an inherent behavior of ostracism included in defining ostracism as well. If so, victims' evidence in exposure to the exclusionary acts as a trigger of ostracism is not a matter to surprise. With this mind, it was considered two forms of exclusionary acts (Zhao et al., 2019) mentioned in the existing literature as social exclusionary acts (i.e., others fail to include the victim when the victim expects to include) and work-related exclusionary acts (i.e., keeping the victim outside from the social fellowship in the workplace). Moreover, the exclusion is a more subtle form of ostracism primarily consisted of many silent treatments (e.g., through avoiding direct eye contact with the target and the absence of verbal communication) directed the victim (Williams & Nida, 2017). On the other hand, as aforementioned, exclusion as a polar opposite form of inclusion justified unfair treatments that participants exposed under exclusionary acts (e.g., not accepted the reasonable job related request of the victim). To this end, exposed to the perpetrator exclusionary acts and events consisted of unique results to this study which were emerged from the ground of inclusion violated the norm of fairness.

Second, as a unique finding, the study examined that victims exposed to the perpetrator's aggressive ironical signs were also made ambiguity within the target regarding ostracism while making the ground for ostracism. This can be justified with the support of previous findings on two styles of ostracism as silence treatments or quiet silence treatments (e.g., avoiding eye contacts) and noisy silence treatments (e.i., shows silence treatments through noticeable gestures or verbal verifications) of



the perpetrator (Williams & Nida, 2017). Simply under noisy silence, the perpetrator ironically or indirectly makes the noise to the target to show that they ostracize the target and it is somewhat explicit than quiet silence (Williams & Nida, 2017). However, this is so intentional or purposeful act of the perpetrator as same as silence treatments. Since the purposeful ostracism (Robinson et al., 2013) emerged with the harmful motive of the perpetrator, these aggressive, indirect gestures and verbal noises also trigger the ostracism to the target (e.g., perpetrator indirectly stated the target to leave through some verbal expressions) while creating the ambiguity within targets' mind (Williams & Nida, 2017).

Third, the study found that exposure to the perpetrator undermining is also a trigger of ostracism. Recent researches demonstrated that when the perpetrator act as belittling or manipulating ones' professional position or their identity caused in threatened the victim's need for belongingness and which in turn caused for the ostracism experience within the victim (Zhao et al., 2019). On the other hand, as aforementioned, undermining violates the norm of justice expectation of victims included in the inclusion. To this end, any behavior related to devalue the victim's ability and negatively manipulate their positions can be taken into consideration under the trigger of undermining associated to ostracism which is highlighted as a unique finding to this study.

Fourth, it was found that exposed to the perpetrator's unbearable work stressors is also a trigger to the experience of ostracism. As per the existing literature, grounded on Conservation of Resource Theory, workplace ostracism identified as an organizational stressor (e.g., high workload, tight deadlines), since it caused to deplete the victim's resources like personal resources (e.g., self-esteem, time, personal ability), job resources (e.g., physical, psychological and social aspects of the job) in the organization (Zhu et al., 2017; Robinson et al., 2013). For instance, it is important to note that, as an organizational stressor WO involves making unfair treatment to the victim through violating the norm of fairness under inclusion. To this end, exposed to the perpetrator's unbearable work stressor is a unique finding to this study.

Fifth, it was also found that rabble-raising as a unique finding to this study as a trigger of the experience of WO. Here the perpetrator represented the role of a rabble-

rouser. As a result of the rabble-raising, the present study found that there were organizational members who supported the perpetrator. Those perpetrators' supporters indicated in the previous studies as excluder alliance (Mao et al., 2018). Through excluder alliance, both the parties trigger the ostracism experience to the victims violating the inclusion expectation of the individuals.

Sixth, trigger was exposed to the perpetrator gossiping and rumoring. In particular, unlike the visible acts, rumor spreading is an invisible act shared among the organizational members to harm the target intentionally. Particularly, it is important to note that, people are motivated to spread rumors to fulfill their self-interests like discouraging potential competitors (Bordia et al., 2014). On the other hand, gossiping also trigger the ostracism experience. This has been confirmed by the previous studies through developing a form of ostracism as gossiping (Sanderson, 2017). As aforementioned, both the acts of gossiping and rumoring breach the fairness inside the inclusion which made the conditions for experience of ostracism (Kuo et al., 2018; Stark, 2020). Taken together, rumoring and gossiping both used as equipment of social control by the individuals whereas reflect punitive approach of the ostracism (Williams & Nida, 2017). In sum, the interpretation of the act of rumor spreading added the act of gossiping mentioned in the existing literature.

Seventh, when discussing about the victim's exposure to the perpetrator's false accusation, it is a unique finding under the trigger of ostracism experience, which was investigated related to the workplace violence. Perpetrator uses this to showcase the extreme aggression towards the victim (Neuman & Baron, 1998; Cvenkel, 2020). Since the purposeful workplace ostracism is particularly involved in showcasing the perpetrator's aggressive goal to hurt the target (Robinson et al., 2013), false accusations over victim also can be a trigger for ostracism experience.

Eighth, victims exposed to perpetrator knowledge hiding also a trigger to the experience of WO considered as a unique finding to this study. In particular, the target of the knowledge hiding perceived knowledge hiding behavior as a rejection since it damages the existing interpersonal relationship among others (Connelly & Zweig, 2015). Also, based on justice-inclusion relationship knowledge hiding can breach the

interactional justice inside inclusion. To this end, knowledge hiding is a trigger of ostracism experience.

All in all, inherently ambiguous, more subtle to overt, ostracism acts and events trigger the experience of ostracism to the individuals.

Then the victim involved in making the attributions on triggers of ostracism they exposed. In particular, making attribution is a cognitive process that individuals giving causal explanations of the exposed situations that were new and negative (i.e., ambiguous) to them (Weiner, 1985). With this mind, since ostracism inherently ambiguous in nature (Robinson et al., 2013), victims involved in making attribution to the ostracism acts and events they exposed. For instance, victims asked the question on the act or event as, “why such an event or act occurred?” Consequently, the victim makes internal attributions to the events through self-blaming (Kelley & Michela, 1980). For example, participant #2 in this study blame himself in terms of his performance due to the trigger of ostracism that he exposed as imposing unbearable work stressors by perpetrator. As such, the victims internalized all the negative acts and events they exposed due to its ambiguous nature or uncertainty. Other than the victim’s perspective, recalling the trigger from the third parties’ perspective reduces the uncertainties on events that are exposed (Gamianwilk & Madejabien, 2018). This was the reason for getting third party evaluation to the acts and events exposed by the victim.

Under the third phase, victims came to conclusion or perceived that he or she ostracized by another party. According to the integrated mistreatment process (Olsonbuchanan & Boswell, 2008), based on the severity or intensity of the event, individuals concluded the mistreatment in this stage. The intensity of ostracism (e.g., high or low intense ostracism) described by the researchers based on whether the event of ostracism directly targeted to the particular individuals or it is common to all (Robinson et al., 2013). In this way, it can be justified the participants’ answers on concluding the experience of ostracism as high intense or low intense experience. Moreover, concluding the ostracism experience as purposeful or non-purposeful also can be justified. In particular, as discussed by the previous researchers, rather than discussing the harming intention (e.g., purposeful harming intention or non-

purposeful harming intention) of the perpetrator from the perpetrator perspective (Robinson et al., 2013), here the participants concluding their ostracism experience from victim's perspective (i.e., perceived intent of harming the victim). Consequently, victims in the present study were perceived as they ostracized purposefully by the perpetrator according to the victim's perceived harming intent of the actor. As such, adding the perceptual component to conclude the ostracism experience increases the value of the present study on subjective investigation of the WO as perceived by the victim, which has not been emphasized in the previous studies.

In sum, aligned with the intergrade mistreatment process, victims perceived as they were ostracized by others and thereafter they take reaction over the ostracism experience they felt. The reactions of victims have been discussed under the third research question of the present study.

### **Victim's reactions to the experience of workplace ostracism**

Concerning the final phase, the findings indicated that, victim's reactions to the experience of WO. Without using commonly applied models (Richman & Leary, 2009) the present researcher separately demonstrated psychological, physiological, and behavioral reactions after experiencing WO by the victims which are rare to find as a product of a single research attempt to date. Also, this has been justified by the integrated process of mistreatments (Olsonbuchanan & Boswell, 2008) since it is separately addressed the reactions of WO from the experience phase.

First, when moving to discuss on psychological reactions, since the social connection is a primarily psychological need of the individual, being denied from social connection through ostracism, created wide of negative psychological effects on individuals (Nezlek et al., 2012). There is a notion that psychological reactions of individuals coupled with the emotions and both shaped the work attitudes of individuals in response to any mistreatments (Olsonbuchanan & Boswell, 2008). With this mind, the present study revealed all negative psychological reactions as high negative (i.e., moods negatively experienced at the high end) and low negative reactions (e.g., moods negatively experienced at the low end) based on the structure for affects developed by previous researchers (Robbins & Judge, 2017). Accordingly,

results of sadness, shame, anger, anxiety, depression, disappointment, helplessness were emotions discussed in the previous studies (Robinson et al., 2013; Williams, 2009) as same as the present study. In addition to that, this study also revealed the findings on the depletion of fundamental psychological needs (e.g., belongingness, feeling worthless), to the experience of workplace ostracism investigated by previous researchers as particular basic requirements to generate ostracism experience within the individual (Williams, 2007). Taken together, all the psychological reactions can be justified as reactions to the WO with previous findings. As mentioned earlier, there were negative work-related attitudes within the individuals shaped by psychological reactions stated in the recent meta-analysis. Some of those were an increase of job dissatisfaction, turnover intention, and decrease the work motivation and enthusiasm (Bedi, 2019). Moreover, as per the existing literature, rumination is a negative psychological effect due to the ambiguous nature of ostracism experienced by victims and also it is a fuel for further negative many effects like sleep disturbances and anger (Robinson et al., 2013).

Aligning with the above evidence, when concerning the physical outcomes of workplace ostracism, having sleep disturbance or damage to the sleep quality of the victim was revealed by the present study as well as previous studies. Indeed, individuals can experiences sleep disturbance after experiencing ostracism since ostracism is the major stressor on frequent interpersonal relationships at the workplace (Chang et al., 2019).

When moving to discuss behavioral reactions, although this has been previously investigated through different theoretical backgrounds, going a step further, the present researcher identified some new behavioral reactions, standing on the victims' position. For instance, after experiencing ostracism, ostracized individuals show poor abilities in fulfilling job demands. Indeed, they had done lots of work mistakes, and they lose the job responsibilities in their job roles due to unstable mental conditions affected by ostracism.

In addition to that, there were two contradict reactions to the experience of workplace ostracism denoted by victims in the present study as being vocalized and being silenced. For instance, previous researchers investigated that, victims being silenced

when they wanted to withdraw from the situation. In particular, they behave as withholding their ideas, information, and opinions important to others for organizational works (Saqib & Arif, 2017). Regarding the behavior of vocalizing, it was mentioned that the victim's voice over WO increases as a reaction mostly to coworker workplace ostracism (Li et al., 2016).

Moreover, the self-isolation strategy which alternatively termed as seeking solitude in previous studies as a behavioral response to the WO. In explaining, it was mentioned that individuals' desire to solitude has increased after experiencing WO to protect from further pain generated from ostracism (Ren et al., 2016).

In addition to the above, turned the experience into a lesson, using positional wisdom, and react as same as the perpetrator was identified as a unique finding generated from the present study.

Furthermore, the present study is evident that seeking social support from others (e.g., close people at the society and workplace including the emphatic leader) is a way of reacting to the ostracism by the victims to reduce the pain from ostracism. This has been mentioned in the previous studies as, social companionship (e.g., company with family members, friends) which is a type of social support (Teng & Chen, 2012). To this end, social support received from close others help in reacting to the workplace ostracism.

Taken together, the final result of the experience of WO discussed with victims' perceived reasons phase, the experience phase, and the reactions phase is a totally novel finding of the present study.

#### **4.4 Chapter summary**

All in all, the chapter explains the analysis and discussion of the findings generated by interviewing the professionals who ostracized in their organizations. In analyzing the content analysis has been employed concerning the three research questions explained by three phases as mentioned above. Then the researcher discussed the unique findings of the present study compared with the existing knowledge regarding each research question. Next, the present study moved the attention to conclusion, theoretical and management implications, limitations, and future directions to the present study.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **CONCLUSION**

#### **5.1 Introduction to the chapter**

This chapter aimed to conclude the overall findings of the present study and giving the implications to the theory and practice. Also, the chapter provides future directions to the researchers who are interested in this field.

#### **5.2 Conclusion**

Along with the three phases (i.e., victims' perceived reasons, the experience of WO and victims' reactions) the study developed model for the experience of WO. Firstly, the study examined several individual and organizational reasons as victim's perceived reasons for the experience of workplace ostracism. Specifically, it was revealed that victim's perceived reasons related to the perpetrator as well as related to the victims. Perpetrator related reasons consisted of perpetrator misperception, perpetrator's work-related attitudes, perpetrator's prejudices, domineering role of the perpetrator, and perpetrator's psychological issues. Then, the findings on victims' perceived reasons related to the victim concluded that victim's competencies, ego, and personal issues as reasons for the ostracism experience.



Next, several organizational aspects also made reasons for victim's experience of ostracism. For instance, the analysis resulted, informal cliques, competitive work setting, organization culture, organizational structure, and weak organizational processes and practices are caused to make the ostracism experience within the individuals. Then the findings to the second phase of ostracism concluded three sequential stages to the experience of workplace ostracism; triggering ostracism acts and events, making attributions to ostracism acts and events, and concluding or perceiving the ostracism experience. Triggering ostracism acts and events revealed that, victim's exposure on more subtle to overt ambiguous ostracism acts and events which have enabled with creating conditions for making ostracism experience. In particular, it was evident that exposed to perpetrator exclusionary acts, perpetrator aggressive ironical signs, perpetrator undermining, perpetrator unbearable work stressors, perpetrator rabble-raising, perpetrator gossiping and rumoring, perpetrator false accusation, and perpetrator knowledge hiding were some of the ostracism triggers. Then, the victims involved in making attributions to ostracism acts and events, due to its inherent ambiguity. For instance, it was found that internalization and then getting third party evaluation on acts and events were two of the cognitive activities done by the ostracized participants to resolve the ambiguity inherent with the ostracism triggers. This is the process explained as victims making attributions to the ostracism acts and events. Next, the victims concluded or perceived the ostracism experience based on his or her perceived harmful intent as a purposeful experience as well as based on the intensity concluded the ostracism experience as, low and high-intensity experience. Then, related to the victim's reactions phase, the analysis ends with some bitter outcomes to the experience of ostracism. It included some negative psychological reactions (e.g., crying, worry, hate, extreme sadness, stress, frustration, Shame, guilt consciousness), negative physical reactions (e.g., eating more and sleep disturbances), and negative behavioral reactions (e.g., declining performance, low individual productivity, resigned from the job) with the reactions strategically taken by the victims to the experience of ostracism (e.g., avoiding reconnections, vocalize to the perpetrator, being silent, moving away responses, using positional wisdom, self-management strategies). Moreover, the findings were evident that victims behaved to the experience of ostracism with the support getting from the empathic leaders and close people. Taken together, all three phases were important in getting a

comprehensive idea of the experience of workplace ostracism from the victim's perspective.

### **5.3 Implications of the research**

#### **5.3.1 Theoretical implications**

This study has extended the knowledge on the experience of workplace ostracism (Sanderson, 2017; Waldeck et al., 2015) by providing a holistic view to the experience of WO from the victim's perspective consisted of three phases (i.e., victim's perceived reasons to the WO experience, victim's WO experience and victim's reactions to the WO experience) of the model that has developed based on content analysis. Beyond that, it has moved with the recent focus on victim's perceived reasons for the experience of WO (Bilal et al., 2020), brought separate theoretical understanding on the experience of WO perceived by the victim and victim's reactions (i.e., psychological, physical, behavioral and other) to the experience of WO which are rare in previous investigations specific to the separate three research questions.

In addition to the above, this study affirmed the subjective understanding of workplace ostracism which has limited to date through a qualitative inquiry while fulfilling the existing methodological scarcity (Waldeck et al., 2015).

Moreover, since this study is a novel endeavor to the Sri Lankan context, the study has contributed to expanding the organizational literature in Sri Lanka by providing a comprehensive understanding regarding the experience of WO.

#### **5.3.2 Practical implications**

The study offers important implications to the practitioners in organizations. First and foremost, since this study is mainly focused on the most serious cost of inclusion as workplace ostracism (Chen & Tang, 2018), the organizational administration should develop the policies for valuing the inclusive practices while discouraging the workplace ostracism inside the organization. Second, since the organizational culture is a significant matter for the experience of workplace ostracism of individuals (Robinson et al., 2013), organizational management should develop the non-

discriminatory culture by increasing the focus on formal and informal relationships among members. For example, the management can arrange office rooms ease in disclosure movements among members. Third, to the present research context, organizational politics is a more common phenomenon in organizational settings which influences many counterproductive work behaviors as workplace ostracism (Cohen & Diamant, 2019). Therefore, practitioners can create a proper mechanism for neglecting the organizational politics while reducing the unfair practices inside the organization. Fourth, the practitioners should exert the effort to increase corporative goal attainments rather than competitive goal attainments in the organization since the competition is a significant matter for the experience of workplace ostracism (Ferris et al., 2017) identified in the present research context. Fifth, the practitioners should establish HR strategies when selecting and recruiting the members to the organization who do not have harmful personality traits leading to ostracism. For example, individuals with serious personality disorders which can make disturbances on others.

### **5.3.3 Limitations**

The study consisted of some inherent limitations. First, although a violation of perceived social norms is an inevitable requirement for occurring the experience of ostracism perceived by the victims (Robinson et al., 2013), the present researcher has unable to investigate the violated social norms subjectively from the victim or another organizational party accurately, for cross confirming the existence of the norms in the organizational context or its common acceptance inside the organization. The limitation can be overcome by using a mixed-method approach when collecting information (e.g., collecting information on social norms from the internal ethical manuals published by the organization or from the statements provided by internal members). Second, although the victims experienced ostracism in the purposeful or non-purposeful ways (Robinson et al., 2013), the present researcher unable to covered non-purposeful ostracism experiences from the participants who perceived based on their perceived harming intention on the perpetrator. This shortcoming can be overcome through expanding the respondent base to the research context or established criteria for the perceived harming intention of the perpetrator when employing a purposive sampling strategy.

### **5.3.4 Future directions**

In the future, researchers can focus on the following areas. First, since this study has conducted based on the victim's perspective, future researchers can conduct their studies based on the perpetrator's perspective or third party perspective. Second, future researchers also can use qualitative or any other alternative methodology for studying workplace ostracism rather than limiting the common research methods (e.g., quantitative) in the field of workplace ostracism. Third, future researchers can divert the analytical procedure from content analysis to another qualitative analytical procedure (e.g., thematic, phenomenology) aligning with the appropriate theoretical perspective (e.g., theory of victimization) suitable for reaching to the purpose of the study (Aquino & Lamertz, 2004). Fourth, since this is the very first study conducted in the Sri Lankan context, the knowledge generated from the present study is so important and valuable to the novice researchers who are interested in doing studies on workplace ostracism. Therefore future researchers can conduct this study in another research context as well for ensuring the transferability of the knowledge generated from the present study.

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## APPENDIXECES

### Appendix A: Primary survey- Scenarios based document

#### Preliminary Interviews

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am K.D.S.W Gunasekara, an undergraduate of the Department of Business Management, Faculty of Management Studies, Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka. At present, a study in year IV semester I. As a part of my degree Programme I'm in the process of investigating,

**How do professionals' experience workplace ostracism in the Sri Lankan Context?** (The meaning of this will be clarified to you in necessary place).

I assure you that the collected data will only be used for the research purpose and will not be disclosed to any other party. Your valued support in this regard is highly appreciated and it will enable me to conduct this research successfully.

#### Workplace Ostracism

- The individual perceives that he or she is being ignored or excluded by others (Work colleague / Leader) in the workplace.

#### Example Scenarios

1. "I am an assistant accountant at my company. When I am in the workplace, I feel, my work colleagues are silent, when I wanted to communicate with them".
2. "I am an HR assistant in my department. Although the head of the HR department, socially dealing with my friends, he doesn't socially engage with me"
3. "I am a brand manager in the marketing department. I felt, when I enter the group in conversation, the members in the group change the subject with my arrival"

If you have some experience like the above (not should be exactly similar), could you please spare your valuable time to share it with me. I do not need any names or personal details. Only the details of the experience I need.



## Appendix B: Interview Guide

Date: ..... Interview Code: .....

Location: ..... Time: From:..... To:.....

Interview Comments:.....

### Research Questions

- What are the perceived reasons behind the workplace ostracism experienced by professionals in the SL context?
- What ostracism experiences/s encountered by those professionals at the workplace in the SL context?
- What are the professionals' reactions to ostracism experience at the workplace in the SL context?

In response to research questions, research objectives are as follows

- To explore the perceived reasons behind the workplace ostracism experienced by professionals in SL context
- To explore the ostracism experience/s encountered by the professionals at the workplaces in SL context
- To explore the professionals' reactions to ostracism experience at the workplace in SL context

### Basic question

Do you think any norm has violated in your experience (perceived norm or generally accepted norm in the organization?)

**Then,**

- What was your experience?
  - How was the experience started?
  - How was the experience continued?
  - What other things happened in between?
  - How long did you experience this?
- What were the reasons behind the experience as you perceived?
- What were your reactions to the ostracism experience?

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any doubt about the above questions.

My phone no:

Email address:

## Appendix C: Transcription

Participant #1 - Lead associate of the team

Date: 05.04.2020

Time: 1hr

Location: BPO Company

**Interviewer:-** Hello sir, I'm Sanduni, I'm an undergraduate of department BM in SUSL. I'm doing my research to explore the professionals' experience of workplace ostracism [explaining the concept, purpose of the research, and verifying the norm violation in the experience].

**Interviewer:-** First, may I know sir, what was your experience, and how was it started?

**Interviewee:-** Ok...actually as you explained, the experience what I have not relates to my present situation...It related to the commencing period of the works in this company.... I joined this company after 6 years of working experience at audit firms....as I remember...at the beginning only I had that issue...Now I don't have such issues...because now the company has controlled those issues through a proper mechanism that was company recently introduced policy for controlling some ethical matters.....mmmmm....when I entered this company I have already 6 years of audit firm experience and I have partly completed professional qualification...actually...we are doing here finance and accounting works related to clients in the insurance field.

The team which I joined has 50 members and that large team has sub-teams. I joined the team which is for reimbursement works. That team was a small team. It consisted of 4 members including myself. My position was as a lead associate. I reported to the deputy leader and two members worked for the associate and senior associate levels which were two levels below to me. Before joining that team [reimbursements team], there was a strong bond among existing team members for some reason that I didn't know at the beginning. Therefore, although I didn't have an intention to intervene in that relationship, they didn't like to include me. Both of them were university degree holders...But I didn't have a degree instead I had firm experience....so, in the beginning, I felt they had small fear towards me since I have 6 years of firm experience...they thought their positions were threatened because of me...I understood it...because I saw...both of them talked to each other while I was addressing them. They didn't listen to me. Internal politics were everywhere. However, previously I didn't see this kind of thing when I was worked in the audit firms....I can remember one day.... because of a certain incident, I cried inside the transport vehicle they provided me..... I didn't have anything to do at that time unless crying...I felt I am a worthless person to this company...so why I came to this company ...why I left from the previously worked audit firm ...

**Interviewer:-** Ok sir...Can you tell me your first experience with this regard?

**Interviewee:-** From the very beginning, I didn't have this experience...But later I felt my trainer was reluctant to share his knowledge with me... I thought it was because

of his ego level. Although he was my trainer, I worked for a higher position than him from the beginning. On the other hand, he was a degree holder from a state university, but I didn't have a degree qualification instead I had firm experience and partial professional qualification. That's why he had that ego-mind according to my view...not only that person another colleague also did the same things to me with him... I felt both of them have the same problem over me...However, my manager was very close to them than me. There was another problem...the sub-team where I worked was isolated from the whole group....indeed, there are conflicts between my manager and the group manager. Therefore, before I join the team, those three people had very close relationships among others and they do not keep relationships with other teams..... a few times ago, I got to know that...Since I have moved a lot with the other teams without knowing this reason, my manager had inner anger about me and therefore he ignored me

**Interviewer:-** How did you get to know about this thing?

**Interviewee:-** Yes, sister...one day he arranged an outing. I also participated there, at that time my manager said to me, "ahaa...this is the time you came back from darkness to light". There I understood....he had misunderstood about me as I support other teams and keep relationships with them likewise....However, now he realized that was not....That was the reason the manager treated me as such...when considering colleagues, they had another problem with me as I said earlier...they perceived me as a threat to them...

**Interviewer:-** Ok sir...did you have any other experiences than this?

**Interviewee:-** Well...earlier I said official experiences...Now I can say, my personal experiences. Normally we take lunch by getting together...therefore they invited me to take the lunch when one of them had hungriness .... Despite such a background, if I tell them, „I want to go for lunch, shall we go now? they didn't care about me. But if one of them says...he wants to go to lunch, all should have to ready to go to lunch without considering my hungriness at that moment...However...such a small thing I have tolerated calmly...Although I concerned those things as small incidences...problems directed by my manager were hurt to me...that was the situation I cried and mentally I felt down

**Interviewer:-** Can you remember those incidences, sir?

**Interviewee:-** Most of the time at the meetings he reluctant to pass his knowledge with me...Actually, it was like this....A manager is a person who knows the whole process entitled to our team. One of my colleagues knows a separate part...Another colleague knows the other part. Both of them also do not know the whole process of each other. Therefore the manager does not like to give his knowledge on the whole process since he wanted to be dominant there....However ...I was the person who doesn't know about anything...when they find new information on works, the manager asked the other two colleagues and tell them the process, he didn't invite me...one day I questioned, "why did you not invite me to know about that work?"... when over the limit of my toleration towards them.... I worry about the work I had done there...why did I leave from the audit firm...Also there was an experience that occurs due to the female manager...she didn't give me a day leave to look after my

newborn baby after her birth...although I requested she didn't give me it...It was also very painful

**Interviewer:-** How were your reactions to this?

**Interviewee:-** When they were disgraced, suddenly my mood gets changed like shame mood.... However, I tried my best to control my feelings...especially anger feelings through my gestures and postures...I stand there with a small smile and shaping mood... Now I feel...if there were proper mechanisms to handle these types of situations, it was really valuable to all members...That mechanism detected all unfair practices, mistreatments.

**Interviewer:-** anything further sir?

**Interviewee:-** Yes....I can remember.. There was a system, it was like...we identified any disagreements between policy for accommodation and the bills of payment they presented to claim...they already involved me to that process specified for other employees...not the directors. they didn't involve me to the system specified for director-level...at that time I feel they reluctant to participate me and giving me the knowledge...The main problem with the knowledge sharing...Because they know, if people had the knowledge they can be dominant there...Therefore they excluded me from such situations...They overlooked me a lot, when they arrange or go for outings...sometimes they discussed each other and arranged outings....All they gathered at a particular time... but not informed me that time...Sometime I got late. sometimes I went earlier...Others asked me "why did you come late" or " why did you come earlier",....one group manager asked me...where are your other team members?... I didn't know what to tell The other big issue was, although I had the authority to lead the team as a lead associate, the manager didn't give me the power and chance to do it...That was big deviance done by him...But I didn't raise my voice against him

**Interviewer:-** What were your reactions, sir?

**Interviewee:-** I raised my voice whenever it was possible.....but not at all...most of the time I kept silent and observed the situation... I didn't raise my voice within the first five months since the payments paid for the job were satisfied to me...then I questioned, "why didn't you inform this to me?", "Why didn't you clear this to me?"...likewise, I asked them...at that time I understood who am I, what was my purpose....I didn't threaten them...as I previously said you that was the time where he put the statement like ,,,"ahaa...this is the time you came back from darkness to light""

**Interviewer:-** Was there somebody with you to support to overcome the bad situation? Or did others also join with them?

**Interviewee:-** I didn't feel like any other support to the actor...however, there was a colleague who had the same experience as I ...he shared his experience with me....also he listened to my stories as well.

**Interviewer:-** How the experience psychologically affected you?

**Interviewee:-** I remembered the experiences when I came back to the home as well...I got stress...also especially I ate a lot to reduce my stress than normal days...my motivation level went to minus, ...due to that, I feel I couldn't give my total to the company...I couldn't use my talents on behalf of the company...now the company also cannot expect from me as they previously expect...actually, sister.....because of these issues, good performing people will lose to the company...on the other hand...because of these bad experiences. I get panic as a sudden reaction. Finally, however, I realized...every people behave not I expect...I tolerated five-six months since the job was highly valued me monetary.

**Interviewer:-** well sir...finally can you tell me, how long did you experience this sir?  
Around one year sister