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The Impact of Workplace Ostracism on Knowledge Sabotage: The Mediating role of Job Induced Tension and Moderating role of Psychological Hardiness

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Chronicle

Abstract

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The purpose of this research study is to examine the impact of workplace ostracism (WO) on job induced tension and knowledge sabotage (KS). Job induced tension (JIT) act as the mediator in the relationships between workplace ostracism (WO) and knowledge sabotage (KS). Furthermore, psychological hardiness (PH) moderate the relationship between workplace ostracism (WO) and negative employee outcomes i.e., knowledge sabotage (KS) indirectly via job induced tension (JIT). The study data was collected via adopted questionnaires from the employees working in health sector (i.e., MTI HMC, MTI KTH, MTI LRH) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. A random sampling technique was used to collect data. The effects of direct, mediated, moderated, and mediated moderated variables were analyzed using Model 14 of the Hayes PROCESS macro. The findings indicate that workplace ostracism (WO) contributes to increased occurrences of job induced tension (JIT) and knowledge sabotage (KS). The relationship between workplace ostracism (WO) and negative outcomes (i.e., job induced tension (JIT) and knowledge sabotage (KS)) were positive and significant. Moreover, job induced tension (JIT) significantly mediates the relationship between workplace ostracism (WO) and negative outcome (i.e., knowledge sabotage (KS)). The study's findings suggest that psychological hardiness (PH) serve as a buffering factor, mitigating the impact of job induced tension (JIT) on knowledge sabotage. Furthermore, psychological hardiness (PH) significantly moderates the indirect effect of workplace ostracism (WO) and negative outcomes via job induced tension (JIT). Based on social cognitive theory (SCT) which was used to examine the study model, this research study significance lies in uncovering how workplace ostracism (WO) relates to negative employee outcomes such as job induced tension (JIT) and knowledge sabotage (KS). It also emphasizes the crucial role of Psychological hardiness in understanding and mitigating these consequences, offering valuable insights to further explore these dimensions in a more detailed investigation and explanation at workplace.

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Keywords: workplace ostracism, job induced tension, knowledge sabotage, psychological hardiness, social cognitive theory, medical teaching institutes, hayatabad medical complex, khyber teaching hospital and lady reading hospital.

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INTRODUCTION

As contemporary organizations have become more knowledge driven, it is for this reason that there is a growing research studies pertaining to various knowledge sharing practices. Evidence suggests that employees often engage in various counterproductive knowledge behavior such as disengagement from knowledge sharing (Ford et al., 2015). The notion of workplace sabotage is as old as management literature itself (Taylor, 1911; Williams, 1921; Mathewson, 1931). Knowledge sabotage represents the most extreme form of counterproductive knowledge behavior and

judging by its malicious intent and attendant negative aftermaths (Serenko, 2019). Considering the importance of knowledge, the application of incorrect knowledge or the failure to utilize the necessary knowledge may result in severe detrimental consequences for the victim, organization, and other stakeholders (Serenko, 2019, 2020). Ostracized personnel are more likely to engage in knowledge sabotage (Chi, Tsai & Tseng, 2013; Wang, Liao, Zhan & Shi, 2011). Employees who experience ostracism may retaliate by engaging in knowledge sabotage, thereby deliberately withholding or providing misleading information to colleagues (Serenko, 2020). The most prevalent form of employee's mistreatment is workplace ostracism (Fox & Stallworth, 2005). It is a type of interpersonal mistreatment which erodes employees' psychological and mental health (Williams, 2007). Workplace ostracism is not enacted by only one group; an individual may be exposed to ostracism by colleagues, subordinates, supervisors or customers (Yao, Liu, et al, 2022). Studies suggest that workplace ostracism triggers emotional exhaustion, leading to increased workplace stress and job dissatisfaction (Ferris et al., 2008).

According to Wu et al., (2012), it is crucial to study the link between workplace ostracism and outcomes associated with stress. Lim, S.; Lee, A (2011) asserted that, mistreatment at workplace influences an individual's feelings of stress. Job-induced tension refers to the psychological and physiological stress encountered by employees due to work-related factors, such as excessive workload, role ambiguity, lack of control, interpersonal conflicts and it can lead to severe adverse outcomes, including reduced job satisfaction, burnout, and health problems (Kahn et al., 1964). Job induced tension is the result of an employee's general feeling of anxiety or apprehension about their work which manifests in the form of poor physical health and well-being (Speilberger, Gorsuch, Lushene, Vagg, & Jacobs, 1983).

Psychological hardiness also contributes to maintaining a high level of ability to cope with unexpected, challenging situations (Bartone et al., 2012). It is linked to integrity and ethical behavior, discouraging actions that could harm the organization, such as misinformation or knowledge hiding (Maddi, 2002). It consists of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral features and describes the capability of individuals to maintain a healthy status during turbulent times (Bartone 2012). Employees with high hardiness cope better with job pressures and are less likely to retaliate through knowledge sabotage (Eschleman et al., 2010). Research on exploring the effect of workplace ostracism on job induced tension and knowledge sabotage is very limited. Further, the role of job induced tension as a mediator and psychological hardiness as a moderator have not been explored. Hence significant research gap exist in the literature.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Knowledge Sabotage

Various research studies have associated knowledge sabotage with a dimension of counterproductive behavior (Spector et al., 2006). According to Serenko, A. (2019), knowledge sabotage is an intentional act of misleading or withholding important with the intent to harm or obstruct their success. This involves the perpetration of sabotage attempts aimed at hampering the activities of colleagues and companies (Serenko, 2020). It creates a toxic work environment where employees feel insecure and distrustful. This lack of trust leads to reduced engagement, increased stress, lower job satisfaction (Serenko, A., & Bontis, N., 2016).

Job Induced Tension

Job induced tension is the stress arising from work-related experiences (Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, & Snoek, 1964). Factors causing stress include character, complexity of the role and role conflicts (Luthans, 1994). Stress is generally defined as a measure of pressure, suffering, or physiological hardships that arise when demanding events or conditions, otherwise known as stressors, negatively affect one's facility to manage a situation (Cooper & Dewe, 2004). Evidence supports the notion anxiety and discomfort in the workplace can be blamed for job induced tension (Jones, Flynn, and Kelloway (1995)

Workplace Ostracism

Ostracism originates from the attention to interpersonal negative treatment and became an increasingly research hotspot in organizational field (Wu et al., 2012). Ferris et al. (2008), defined it as the extent to which an individual perceives that he or she is ignored or excluded by others in workplace. Addressing workplace ostracism requires proactive measures as it depletes an individual's psychological resources, leading to stress and burnout (Hobfoll, 1989). Employees who encounter workplace ostracism may face social isolation, lack of support, and exclusion from important work-related interactions (Wu et al., 2016).

Psychological Hardiness

The term hardiness was first used by Kobasa (1979). It is defined as the ability to understand the external conditions accurately and to make a desirable decision about oneself (Khaledian, Hasanvand & Hassanpour, 2013). It is the way individuals view themselves and their surroundings (Bartone et al., 2013). Maddi and Kobasa (1984), expanded his work by exploring hardiness as a buffer against stress-related illnesses which reinterpret stress as a challenge rather than a threat. Eschleman et al. (2010), found that hardiness was a strong predictor of lower depression and anxiety levels in workplace settings. Furthermore, Psychological hardiness has three dimensions: commitment, control, challenge (Qaddumi, 2011).

HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Linking Workplace Ostracism with Job Induced Tension and Knowledge Sabotage

According to Wu et al., (2012), it is crucial to study the link between ostracism and outcomes associated with stress. When employees faces circumstances due to mistreatment, they become emotionally uncomfortable accompanied by physiological and behavioral changes (Baum, 1990). Such experience of undermining leads to the feeling of injustice and interpersonal aggression, and depression (Duffy, M.K, 2006). Knowledge sabotage on the other hand refers to intentional actions taken by individuals or groups to undermine the sharing, transfer, or utilization of knowledge within the organization (Crino, 1994; Serenko, 2020). When employees come across verbal abuse, rude or indecorous behavior, or discriminatory burden in the workplace, mistreatment arises (Abubakar et al., 2018).

Workplace ostracism leads to negative emotions such as frustration, stress, and resentment (Balliet & Ferris, 2013), so employees who experience ostracism may retaliate by engaging in knowledge sabotage, thereby deliberately withholding or providing misleading information to colleagues (Serenko, 2020). Workplace Ostracism diminishes perceived self-efficacy, leading to reduced prosocial behavior such as

knowledge sharing (Bandura, A., 1986). Ostracized employees may become detached from the organization and retaliate by withholding or distorting knowledge (Serenko, A., 2019). Hence, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H₁. There is a positive relationship between Workplace Ostracism and Job Induced Tension.

H₂. There is a positive relationship between Workplace Ostracism and Knowledge Sabotage.

Mediating Role of Job Induced Tension

Knowledge Saboteurs generally act against their organizations, customers or employees by subverting organizational processes or harming others at work and at the same time, pursuing their personal, ego-driven goals (Crino, 1994). According to Mohsin, M. et al. (2022), a stressful atmosphere at the workplace raises job tensions that interfere with individuals' ability to perform their duties and fulfill their organizations' expectations. Job tension has been linked empirically with a number of negative outcomes including dissatisfaction, depression, somatic disorders, sabotage and turnover intent (Frone, 1990). Experiencing high levels of stress and pressure in the work environment may resort to maladaptive coping mechanisms to alleviate discomfort. (Serenko, A. and Abubakar, A.M. (2022). Mohsin, M. et al. (2022), asserted that the pervasive nature of workplace ostracism may negatively impact an organization's performance as it can stop people from helping in the workplace and promote counterproductive work behavior i.e. knowledge sabotage.

The ostracized personnel are deprived of important social resources that are important for well-being and successful completion of job duties (Imran et al., 2019). Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986), asserted the interplay between personal, behavioral, and environmental factors. Chung (2018), asserted that we believe workplace ostracism might exacerbate stress, and the negative influence of this stress may result in declined performance and non-facilitating conducts. When employees come across abuse, rude or indecorous behavior, or discriminatory behavior in the workplace, mistreatment arises (Abubakar et al 2018). While there might not be direct studies that specifically examine this relationship in the literature, we can draw upon existing research on related constructs to shed light on potential connections or the relationship. Hence, we proposed the following hypotheses:

H₃: There is positive relationship between Job Induced Tension and Knowledge Sabotage.

H₄: Job Induced Tension positively and significantly mediates the relationship between Workplace Ostracism and Knowledge Sabotage.

Moderating role of Psychological Hardiness

Psychological hardiness consists of the three interconnected dimensions of commitment, control, and challenge (Ramanaiah, Sharpe, & Byravan, 1999). These three interrelated psychological hardiness components are believed to influence the individual's perception, evaluation, and coping in stressful situations (Cole, Feild, & Harris, 2004). Research studies in a variety of occupational groups have found that hardiness operates as a significant moderator or buffer of stress (Bartone, Paul T., et al., 2012). job-induced tension refers to the stress and pressure experienced by employees due to various job-related factors such as workload, role ambiguity, and interpersonal conflicts (Kahn et al., 1964), Whereas Knowledge sabotage involves

intentionally withholding or manipulating information, expertise, or resources that are crucial for the organization's success (Serenko, A., & Bontis, N., 2016). Similarly, MS Cole, HS Feild, SG Harris, (2004) asserted that psychological hardiness construct has emerged as a buffer in the relationship between stressors and illness and has been shown to enhance performance, conduct, and morale. It instigates positive attitudes and behaviors among the individuals (Kash et. al., 2000). Psychological hardiness is some patterns of higher-order thinking such as critical, creative, inductive, positive, and rational thinking as it enables individuals to feel committed, to have a greater sense of emotional control under stressful situation (Maddi, 2006). Moreover, Psychological hardiness enhances resiliency in response to the ongoing demands and pressures of everyday life (Maddi, 2005). It is a personality construct that comprises an idea of devotion, perception of authority, and being resistant (Kobasa, 1979 |). Hence, we proposed the following hypotheses: H₅: Psychological Hardiness positively and significantly moderates the relationship between Job Induced Tension and Knowledge Sabotage.

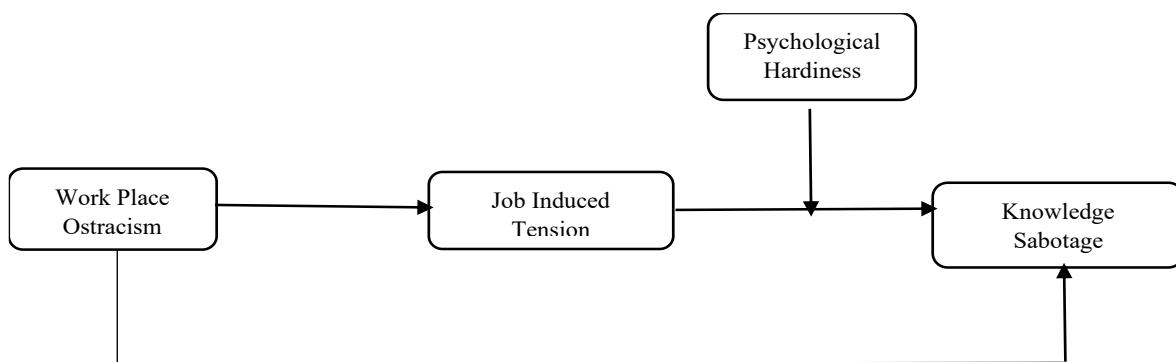


Figure 1.
Hypothesize Research Model

METHODOLOGY

Data Collection and Sample Demographics

This research study adopts a positivist philosophy, emphasizing the use of quantifiable and verifiable data to evaluate hypotheses and formulate theories. Statistical techniques like regression and correlation were used to generalize findings across the community. A quantitative research design was employed to explore relationships among variables using standardized methods. Data was collected via structured questionnaires from staff, including both doctors and non-doctors of MTI HMC, MTI KTH, and MTI LRH in Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The study is explanatory in nature, aiming to clarify causal links between workplace ostracism, job induced tension and their negative outcomes. Field research was conducted through structured and closed-ended questionnaires at the respondents' workplaces in their respective MTIs, which allows for authentic data collection thereby enhancing objectivity and comparability across participants and settings. Employees of the selected medical teaching institutes (MTIs) served as the unit of analysis. A cross-sectional approach was adopted, collecting data at one point in time to efficiently capture a wide range of information. Due to constraints, a representative sample of 375 employees was selected using Simple Random Sampling. The HR departments of the respective MTIs facilitated the distribution of surveys, considering ethical standards, ensuring

confidentiality, and voluntary participation. This methodological framework supports a robust analysis of variable interrelationships within Pakistan's healthcare sector.

Table 1.

Measurement of Scales

S.NO	Variables	Items	Source
1	Workplace Ostracism	10	Ferris et al. (2008)
2	Job Induced Tension	6	House and Rizzo's (1972).
3	Psychological Hardiness	6	Bartone et al. (1989) and Maddi et al. (1999)
4	Knowledge Sabotage	4	Serenko & Choo (2020)

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Demographic Statistic

Table 02 shows the demographic analysis of the 375 surveyed respondents reveals a slightly higher representation of males (54.9%) than females (45.1%). Among the age groups, the largest age group was 31–40 years (45.9%), followed by 41–50 years (22.7%), while the smallest group was aged 61–70 (2.9%). An equal number of participants (33.3%) were selected from three institutions: MTI KTH, MTI HMC, and MTI LRH showing equal representation. As for as the job nature of the respondents, 62.4% were doctors and 37.6% were non-doctors. Regarding experience, the most represented experience category was 6–10 years (38.4%), and the least was 31–35 years (2.9%). In terms of Qualification, 40.8% held an MCPS, followed by 31.5% with a Master's degree; the smallest group had FCPS (0.5%). Income wise, 45.3% earned above Rs. 151,000, while only 4.8% earned Rs. 0–50,000, indicating a higher-income majority in the sample.

Table 2.

Frequency Distribution

Measure	Item	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Gender	Male	206	54.9	54.9	54.9
	Female	169	45.1	45.1	100.0
	Total	375	100.0	100.0	
Age group	20-30	60	16	16	16
	31-40	172	45.9	45.9	61.9
	41-50	85	22.7	22.7	84.5
	51-60	47	12.5	12.5	97.1
	61-70	11	2.9	2.9	100
	Total	375	100	100	
Organization	MTI KTH	125	33.3	33.3	33.3
	MTIHMC	125	33.3	33.3	66.7
	MTI LRH	125	33.3	33.3	100.0
	Total	375	100.0	100.0	
Job Nature	Doctor	234	62.4	62.4	62.4
	Non-Doctor	141	37.6	37.6	100.0
	Total	375	100.0	100.0	
Years of experience	0-5 Years	97	25.9	25.9	25.9
	6-10	144	38.4	38.4	64.3
	11-15	63	16.8	16.8	81.1
	16-20	16	4.3	4.3	85.3
	21-25	25	6.7	6.7	92.0
	26-30	19	5.1	5.1	97.1
	31-35	11	2.9	2.9	100.0
	Total	375	100.0	100.0	
Qualification	SSC	36	9.6	9.6	9.6
	HSSC	14	3.7	3.7	13.3
	Bachelor	52	13.9	13.9	27.2

Monthly Income	Master	118	31.5	31.5	58.7
	MCPS	153	40.8	40.8	99.5
	FCPS	2	.5	.5	100.0
	Total	375	100.0	100.0	
	0-50000	18	4.8	4.8	4.8
	51000-100000	92	24.5	24.5	29.3
	101000-150000	95	25.3	25.3	54.7
	151000-Above	170	45.3	45.3	100.0
	Total	375	100.0	100.0	

Notes: SSC (Secondary School Certificate); HSSC (Higher Secondary School Certificate); MCPS (Member of college of physician and surgeon); FCPS (Fellow of the college of physician and surgeon)

Descriptive statistics

Table 03 shows the distribution of key variables for the study, with a total of 375 participants. For WO scores range from 10 to 50, with a mean of 30.77 and a standard deviation of 12.034, indicating moderate levels of WO and a fair amount of variation in participants' experiences. JIT has scores ranging from 7 to 30, with a mean of 27.01 and a lower standard deviation of 4.343, suggesting that most participants experience high levels of JIT with relatively little variation. KS ranges from 4 to 28, with a mean of 15.10 and a standard deviation of 4.843, indicating moderate levels of KS, with some variation in responses. Lastly, for PH scores range from 6 to 42, with a mean of 24.70 and a standard deviation of 10.440, reflecting moderate levels of psychological resilience among participants, with notable variability in their responses.

Table 3.
Descriptive Statistics

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
WO	10	50	30.77	12.034
JIT	7	30	27.01	4.343
KS	4	28	15.10	4.843
PS	6	42	24.70	10.440

Test of Normality

The skewness statistic value of -0.172 indicates that the distribution is almost symmetrical, and the value for the kurtosis statistic of -1.197 shows the distribution to be platykurtic, i.e., the distribution is somewhat flatter than the normal distribution with the points being more dispersed. JIT has a skewness of -1.708, showing a negative skew, which means most participants report lower levels of JIT, with fewer individuals reporting very high tension. The kurtosis value of 2.794 indicates a leptokurtic distribution, meaning that the data is more concentrated around the mean with fewer extreme values. KS has a skewness of 0.140, which is nearly symmetrical, and a kurtosis of -0.164, indicating a platykurtic distribution, like the previous variables. Finally, PH has a skewness of -0.032, which is very close to zero, indicating a symmetrical distribution, and a kurtosis of -1.214, suggesting a flatter distribution.

Table 4.
Test of Normality for the study Variables

	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
WO	-.172	.126	-1.197	.251

Impact of Workplace Ostracism on Knowledge Sabotage				Raza, R, et al. (2025)
JIT	-1.708	.126	2.794	.251
KS	.140	.126	-.164	.251
PH	-.032	.126	-1.214	.251

Reliability Analysis

The acceptable value or the threshold for reliability is set at 0.7(indicated by the red dashed line). WO (0.799) exhibits strong reliability, which indicates a high level of internal consistency among their items. Similarly, JIT (0.749) also meets the acceptable threshold, showing moderate reliability. PH (0.839) suggesting a very strong internal consistency as it has the highest reliability. KS (0.781) also shows good reliability, confirming the consistency of the scale items. Since the Cronbach's Alpha values of all the variables are above 0.7 which shows the appropriateness of using these scales for further statistical analysis.

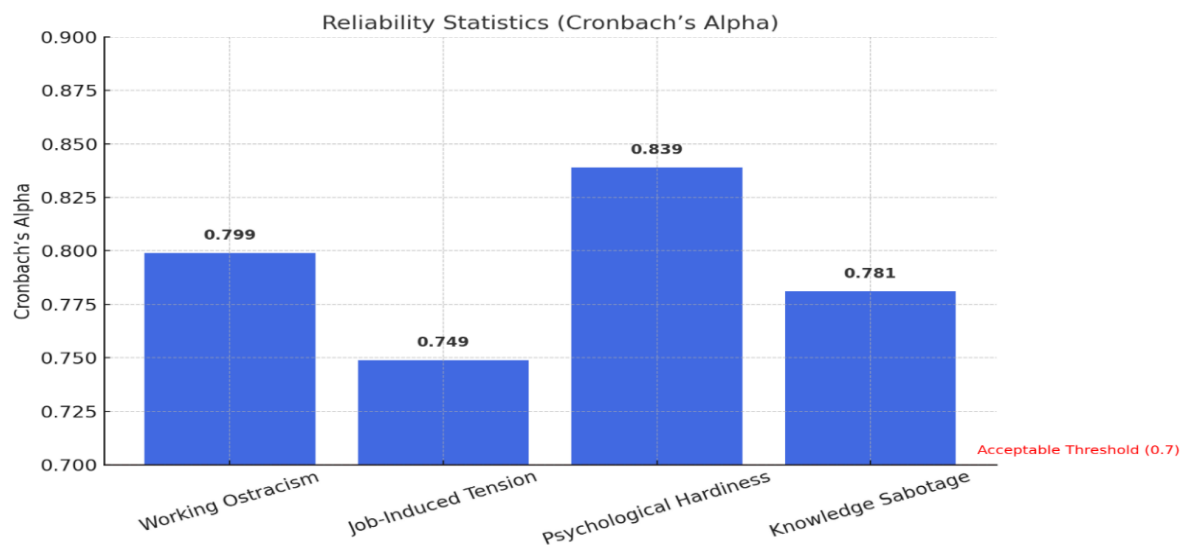


Figure 2.
Reliability Statistics (Cronbach's Alpha) for Study Variables

Correlation Analysis

The correlation matrix shows several significant relationships among the study variables. WO and JIT exhibit a strong positive correlation ($r = .571, p < .01$), suggesting that employees who experience WO tend to report higher levels of stress and JIT. Similarly, JIT and KS are positively correlated ($r = .573, p < .01$), suggesting a strong positive correlation exists between JIT and KS, indicating that higher levels of workplace stress or JIT leads to increased engagement in KS behaviors. PH has a significant negative correlation with KS ($r = -0.310, p < 0.01$), implying that individuals with higher psychological resilience are less likely to engage in KS. The correlation analysis supports our study's hypotheses: WO is significantly associated with JIT and KS. JIT strongly correlates with KS, reinforcing its role as a mediator. PH negatively correlates with KS, suggesting a buffering effect against destructive behaviors.

Table 5.
Correlation Matrix of Study Variables

	1	2	3	4	5
1. WO	1				
2. JIT	0.571**	1			
3. KS	0.490**	0.427**	1		
4. PH	0.054	0.076	0.084	1	
				-0.310**	1

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Regression Analysis

R-value (0.761) shows a strong positive correlation between the independent variable and KS. Similarly, R^2 (0.579) is suggesting a strong relationship which Shows that 57.9% of the variance in KS is explained by WO, JIT, and PH. This means that the model explains a substantial proportion of variance in the dependent variable. Adjusted R^2 (0.575) shows for the number of predictors in the model which is slightly lower than R^2 but still confirms a good model fit. Standard Error of the Estimate having a value of (3.159) represents the average deviation of the actual values from the predicted values while a lower standard error represents a better model fit. R^2 Change (0.579) and F Change (127.283, $p < 0.001$) reflects that the model as a whole is highly significant, which means that the independent variables significantly contribute to dependent or predicting KS.

Table 6.
Model Summary of Regression Analysis

Model R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Std. Error Estimate	of R^2 Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. Change	F
1	0.761	0.579	0.575	3.159	0.579	127.283	4	370	0.000

ANOVA Table Interpretation

Regression Sum of Squares (5079.990) represents that the variance in KS is explained by the predictors (WO, JIT, PH). Residual Sum of Squares (3691.764) demonstrates the unexplained variance in KS and the total Sum of Squares (8771.754) reflects the total variance in the dependent variable. Mean Square is the sum of squares divided by the degrees of freedom (df). F-Statistic (127.283, $p < 0.001$) represents that the overall regression model is highly significant, which means that the independent variables collectively have a strong effect on KS. The p-value is (0.000) and since $p < 0.05$, therefore we reject the null hypothesis, which confirms that at least one of the predictors significantly influences KS. The ANOVA results reveal that the regression model is statistically significant ($F(4,370) = 127.283$, $p < 0.001$), which means that the predictors collectively contributes to the KS. This supports the inclusion of WO, JIT and PH as meaningful predictors.

Table 7.
ANOVA Results for Regression Model

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F-value	Sig.
Regression	5079.990	4	1269.998	127.283	0.000
Residual	3691.764	370	9.978	—	—
Total	8771.754	374	—	—	—

Regression Coefficients Interpretation

The table 8 shows that WO ($B = 0.164$, $p < 0.001$) which means that a one unit increase in WO increases KS by 0.164 units. The relationship between them is strong ($\beta = 0.407$) and highly significant ($p < 0.001$). This supports the hypothesis (there is positive relationship between WO and KS). JIT ($B = 0.209$, $p < 0.001$) which reflects that a one-unit increase in JIT increases KS by 0.209 units. The effect is moderate ($\beta = 0.188$) and also statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). This supports the hypothesis (There is a positive relationship between JIT and KS). PH ($B = -0.174$, $p < 0.001$) which denotes that a one unit increase in PH decreases KS by 0.174 units. The negative coefficient ($\beta = -0.375$) shows that individuals with higher PH are less engaged in KS which suggests a protective role of PH. In the collinearity diagnostics, tolerance values where (all > 0.1) and VIF values (all < 10) reflects that multicollinearity is not a concern in this model.

The highest VIF (2.418 for JIT) is still within the acceptable range, which confirms that the predictors are independent. Furthermore, all the independent variables significantly predict KS ($p < 0.001$). wherein, the WO ($\beta = 0.407$) is the strongest predictors while PH ($\beta = -0.375$) negatively signifies KS, suggesting it reduces its impact. All the hypotheses are supported

Table 8.**Regression Coefficients for Predicting Knowledge Sabotage**

Predictor Variables	B	Std. Error	Beta (β)	t-value	p-value	95% Confidence Interval	Tolerance	VIF
Constant	4.098	1.112	—	3.685	0.000	(1.911, 6.284)	—	—
Workplace Ostracism	0.164	0.018	0.407	8.976	0.000	(0.128, 0.200)	0.554	1.806
Job-Induced Tension	0.209	0.058	0.188	3.577	0.000	(0.094, 0.324)	0.414	2.418
Psychological Hardiness	-0.174	0.016	-0.375	-11.077	0.000	(-0.205, -0.143)	0.991	1.009

Regression Results for Direct Effects

The results reveal significant positive relationships wherein WO ($B = 0.2062$, $p < 0.001$) is positively associated with JIT, indicating that increased ostracism leads to higher JIT. WO ($B = 0.0860$, $p < 0.001$) also significantly contribute to KS. JIT ($B = 0.3292$, $p < 0.001$) shows a strong positive relationship with KS, further emphasizing that higher JIT directly leads to increased KS behaviors.

Table 9.**Regression Results for Direct Effects**

Predictor	Outcome	B	SE	T	P	LLCI	ULCI
WO	JIT	0.2062	0.0153	13.4434	.000	0.1760	0.2363
WO	KS	0.0860	0.0179	4.8130	.000	0.0508	0.1211
JIT	KS	0.3292	0.0823	3.9984	.000	0.1673	0.4911

Regression Results for Job induce Tension

Table 10 provides information on how WO impact JIT, with the constant term and the predictor variable's effects shown. The constant term ($B = 20.6634$, $p < 0.001$) represents the baseline level of JIT when WO is at zero. This indicates that even in the absence of WO, there is a significant amount of JIT present, with a value of approximately 20.66. The effect of WO on JIT is 0.2062 ($p < 0.001$), indicating a significant positive relationship. Specifically, for every one-unit increase in WO, JIT by 0.2062. The t-value (13.4434) is high, confirming the strength of this relationship, while the confidence interval (LLCI = 0.1760, ULCI = 0.2363) does not contain zero, confirming that the relationship is statistically significant.

Table 10.**Regression Results for Job induce Tension**

Predictor	Outcome	B	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	JIT	20.6634	0.5066	40.7915	.000	19.6674	21.6595
WO	JIT	0.2062	0.0153	13.4434	.000	0.1760	0.2363

Regression Results for KS

The constant term ($B = 7.7539$, $p = 0.0004$) indicates that, even in the absence of the predictor variables, the baseline level of KS is approximately 7.75. This value is statistically significant, as indicated by the p-value and the t-value (3.5760). The effect of WO on knowledge sabotage is 0.0860 ($p = 0.000$), meaning that as WO increases, KS also increases. The t-value (4.8130) indicates that this effect is statistically significant, and the confidence interval (LLCI = 0.0508, ULCI = 0.1211) does not contain zero. The effect of JIT on KS is 0.3292 ($p = 0.0001$), indicating a strong positive relationship. The t-

value (3.9984) and the confidence interval (LLCI = 0.1673, ULCI = 0.4911) support the significance of this effect, reinforcing that heightened JIT contributes to KS. The effect of PH on KS is 0.0190 ($p = 0.000$), suggesting that higher levels of PH slightly reduce the likelihood of KS. This effect is statistically significant (t -value = 6.3030), and the confidence interval (LLCI = 0.0131, ULCI = 0.0249) confirms that PH is a protective factor. The interaction term between JIT and PH ($JIT_1 \times PH$) is negative ($B = -0.0005$, $p = 0.0000$), indicating that PH moderates the relationship between JIT and KS. The negative coefficient (t -value = -5.0435) and the confidence interval (LLCI = -0.0007, ULCI = -0.0003) confirm the statistical significance of this moderation effect.

Table 11.**Regression Results for KS**

Predictor	Outcome	B	SE	T	p	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	KS	7.7539	2.1683	3.5760	.0004	3.4901	12.0177
WO	KS	0.0860	0.0179	4.8130	.000	0.0508	0.1211
JIT	KS	0.3292	0.0823	3.9984	.0001	0.1673	0.4911
PH	KS	0.0190	0.0030	6.3030	.0000	0.0131	0.0249
JIT $\times$ PH (Interaction Term)	KS	-0.0005	0.0001	-5.0435	.0000	-0.0007	-0.0003

Mediation Analysis (Bootstrapped Indirect Effects)

Table 12 represents the results of the mediation analysis, focusing on the bootstrapped indirect effects of the predictors on KS through JIT. The indirect effect of WO ($WO \rightarrow JIT \rightarrow KS$) is 0.1210 (BootSE = 0.0140, BootLLCI = 0.0943, BootULCI = 0.1495) which indicates that WO significantly affects KS indirectly through JIT. The confidence interval (BootLLCI = 0.0943, BootULCI = 0.1495) does not contain zero, confirming the significance of the mediation effect.

Table 12.**Mediation Analysis (Bootstrapped Indirect Effects)**

Predictor	Indirect Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
WO $\rightarrow$ JIT $\rightarrow$ KS	0.1210	0.0140	0.0943	0.1495

Mediation Analysis

The indirect effects reflect the mediated relationship through JIT at low, medium, and high levels of psychological hardiness. At low level of PH, the indirect effect of WO on KS through JIT is 0.2369 (BootSE = 0.0279), with a 95% confidence interval ranging from 0.1833 to 0.2925. This indicates a strong and significant mediated effect, meaning that WO has a substantial indirect impact on KS through JIT in employees with low PH. At medium levels of PH, the indirect effect is 0.1749 (BootSE = 0.0183), with a 95% confidence interval ranging from 0.1406 to 0.2115. While still significant, this effect is weaker than at the low level of PH, indicating that employees with medium PH experience a reduced impact of WO on KS through JIT. At high levels of PH, the indirect effect is 0.1210 (BootSE = 0.0139), with a 95% confidence interval ranging from 0.0943 to 0.1485 which suggest that employees with high PH experience the least mediation of WO on KS through JIT.

Table 13. Mediation Analysis (Bootstrapped Indirect Effects)

PH Level	Indirect Effect (WO $\rightarrow$ JIT $\rightarrow$ KS)	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
Low	0.2369	0.0279	0.1833	0.2925
Medium	0.1749	0.0183	0.1406	0.2115
High	0.1210	0.0139	0.0943	0.1485

Conditional Effects of Job-Induced Tension at Different Levels of Psychological Hardiness

Table 14 presents the conditional effects of JIT on KS at different levels of PH. At low levels of PH, the effect of JIT on KS is 1.2140 ($SE = 0.1087$, $t = 11.1677$, $p < 0.001$) which indicates a strong positive relationship, meaning that employees with low PH experience a higher likelihood of engaging in KS behaviors as JIT increases. The confidence interval ($LLCI = 1.0002$, $ULCI = 1.4278$) does not contain zero, confirming the statistical significance of this effect. At medium levels of PH, the effect of JIT on KS is 0.8955 ($SE = 0.0620$, $t = 14.4475$, $p < 0.001$). While still positive and significant, this effect is weaker than at low levels of PH, indicating that employees with medium PH are somewhat better equipped to handle JIT, leading to a lower likelihood of engaging in KS. The confidence interval ($LLCI = 0.7736$, $ULCI = 1.0173$) confirms the significance of this effect. At high levels of PH, the effect of JIT on KS is 0.6188 ($SE = 0.0518$, $t = 11.9359$, $p < 0.001$). This is the smallest effect of JIT on KS, indicating that employees with high PH are the least likely to engage in KS behaviors, even when experiencing high JIT. The confidence interval ($LLCI = 0.5168$, $ULCI = 0.7207$) also does not contain zero, confirming the statistical significance of this effect.

Table 14.

Conditional Effects of Job-Induced Tension at Different Levels of Psychological Hardiness

PH (Moderator Level)	Effect (JIT → KS)	SE	t	P	LLCI	ULCI
(Low)	1.2140	0.1087	11.1677	.0000	1.0002	1.4278
(Medium)	0.8955	0.0620	14.4475	.0000	0.7736	1.0173
(High PH)	0.6188	0.0518	11.9359	.0000	0.5168	0.7207

Moderation Analysis (Interaction Effects)

Table 15 shows the direct and interaction effects, with the interaction effect representing the moderation hypothesis. The direct effect of JIT on KS ($B = 0.3292$, $p < 0.001$) confirms that JIT is positively associated with KS. As JIT increases, employees are more likely to engage in KS behaviors. The coefficient is significant, and the confidence interval ($BootLLCI = 0.1673$, $BootULCI = 0.4911$) does not contain zero, indicating a robust relationship. The direct effect of PH on KS is also significant ($B = 0.0199$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that higher PH is associated with a lower likelihood of KS. The coefficient suggests that individuals with higher levels of PH are less likely to engage in KS, possibly due to their greater resilience and coping abilities in stressful work environments.

The confidence interval ($BootLLCI = 0.0140$, $BootULCI = 0.0258$) confirms the significance of this effect. The interaction effect between JIT and PH is negative ($B = -0.0006$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that PH moderates the relationship between JIT and KS. Specifically, higher levels of PH reduce the strength of the positive relationship between JIT and KS. This suggests that employees with greater PH are less likely to engage in KS, even when experiencing high levels of JIT. The negative coefficient is significant, and the confidence interval ($BootLLCI = -0.0008$, $BootULCI = -0.0004$) does not contain zero, confirming the moderation effect.

Table 15.

Moderation Analysis (Interaction Effects)

Predictor	Outcome	B	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
JIT	KS	0.3292	0.0823	3.9984	.000	0.1673	0.4911
PH	KS	0.0199	0.0030	6.6144	.000	0.0140	0.0258
JIT × PH	KS	-0.0006	0.0001	-5.3410	.000	-0.0008	-0.0004

Conditional Effects of Job-Induced Tension at Different Levels of Psychological Hardiness

Table 16 shows that at low levels of PH (PH = 20), the effect of JIT on KS is 1.1491 (SE = 0.1114, $t = 10.3109$, $p < 0.001$). This indicates a strong positive relationship between JIT and KS. Employees with low PH show the highest effect of JIT on KS, suggesting that JIT significantly leads to KS in less resilient employees. The confidence interval (LLCI = 0.9299, ULCI = 1.3682) does not contain zero, confirming that this effect is statistically significant. At medium levels of PH (PH = 30), the effect of JIT on KS is 0.8482 (SE = 0.0649, $t = 13.0708$, $p < 0.001$). This effect is still positive and significant, though weaker than at low levels of PH. The relationship between JIT and KS is still significant, but individuals with medium PH experience a reduced effect, as evidenced by the smaller coefficient. The confidence interval (LLCI = 0.7206, ULCI = 0.9759) confirms the significance of this effect. At high levels of PH (PH = 40), the effect of JIT on KS is 0.5869 (SE = 0.0535, $t = 10.9796$, $p < 0.001$). This is the smallest effect of JIT on KS, further supporting the idea that individuals with higher PH are better able to cope with stress and thus less likely to engage in KS. The confidence interval (LLCI = 0.4818, ULCI = 0.6920) again does not contain zero, confirming the statistical significance of this effect.

Table 16.

Conditional Effects of Job-Induced Tension at Different Levels of Psychological Hardiness

PH (Moderator Level)	Effect (JIT → KS)	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
20(Low)	1.1491	0.1114	10.3109	.0000	0.9299	1.3682
30(Medium)	0.8482	0.0649	13.0708	.0000	0.7206	0.9759
40 (High)	0.5869	0.0535	10.9796	.0000	0.4818	0.6920

DISCUSSION

The study's findings supported the model, indicating that workplace ostracism tended to knowledge sabotage. The findings of this study reveal a significant relationship between workplace ostracism and knowledge sabotage, aligning with the premises of Social Cognitive Theory (SCT). In the context of this study, employees who experience ostracism may observe and internalize such exclusionary behaviors, leading them to engage in knowledge sabotage as a form of reciprocal action or self-preservation. The results confirm that negative organizational environments, marked by workplace ostracism contributes to increased job-induced tension, which subsequently leads to knowledge sabotage.

The mediating role of job-induced tension in the relationship between workplace ostracism and knowledge sabotage are significant. The mediation effect for workplace ostracism suggests that when employees experience workplace ostracism, they are more likely to develop job-induced tension, which then increases their likelihood of engaging in knowledge sabotage. Psychological hardiness buffers the negative effects of job-induced tension on knowledge sabotage. This research studies explores the moderating effect to better understand how resilient employees cope with stress and reduce detrimental behaviors.

The moderating role of psychological hardiness has significant negative effect which buffers the relationship between job-induced tension and knowledge sabotage. Employees who are high in psychological hardiness are better equipped to manage job induced tension without resorting to knowledge sabotage then those who are low in hardiness (Maddi, 2002).

Table 17.

Hypothesis/ statements status

H#	Statements/ Hypothesis	Status (Significant/ Insignificant)
H ₁	There is a positive relationship between workplace ostracism and Knowledge Sabotage.	Significant
H ₂	There is a positive relationship between workplace ostracism and job induced tension.	Significant
H ₃	Job induced tension positively and significantly mediates the relationship between workplace ostracism and knowledge sabotage.	Significant
H ₄	There is positive relationship between job induced tension and knowledge sabotage.	Significant
H ₅	Psychological hardiness positively and significantly moderates the relationship between job induced tension and knowledge sabotage.	Significant

THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

Our research study enhances the knowledge base surrounding workplace ostracism as it positively and significantly contributes to the knowledge sabotage. Our research shows that workplace ostracism is less likely to share their knowledge with coworkers, as some employees may go further by purposefully keeping information from their less-seasoned or less informed coworkers. This study investigates workplace ostracism leads to job induced tension. Our findings provide empirical evidence supporting the theory that employee with workplace ostracism experience higher levels of job induced tension. Similarly, employee encountering job induced tension is a psychological response to workplace stressors, including workplace ostracism. In line with theoretical expectations, job induced tension was a mediator in the relationships between workplace ostracism and knowledge sabotage. The findings support the hypothesis that psychological hardiness reduces the positive relationship between job induced tension and knowledge sabotage. Psychological hardiness are better equipped to manage job induced tension without resorting to knowledge sabotage, while those who are low in hardiness can engage in more counterproductive behaviors.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The results also imply that organizations should prioritize creating a supportive and inclusive workplace environment to reduce the negative effects of workplace ostracism. They should strive to maximize their skills and abilities to counter negative workplace environment. Organizations can enhance the knowledge sharing abilities by implementing training and learning programs that can help them to view their jobs as stepping stones. Organizations should prioritize strategies aimed at reducing job-induced tension to prevent knowledge sabotage. With additional autonomy at work, which can increasingly enhance output can help them proactively maximize their productivity. Individuals in organizational decision making boosted their self-esteem. Furthermore, modifying the organizational structure, improving interpersonal relationships, and fostering a positive and productive work environment, organizations can maximize their potential and overall productivity which ultimately discourages knowledge sabotage behavior. Moreover, creating a supportive environment and organizing various training sessions and workshops such as stress management training, support systems environment, and resilience-building workshops can enhance learning and development and help employees cope with tension in the

workplace. By socializing individuals and encouraging their peers to reach out to them for advice, help or mentoring in their areas of expertise, organizations can leverage their surplus skills for both personal and business growth. Employee support programs should be developed that encourage problem-focused coping styles along with the job customization through active task changes.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Our key findings indicates a positive relationship between workplace ostracism, job induced tension and knowledge sabotage. When an employee feels workplace ostracism, it leads to job induced tension, which in turn results in knowledge sabotage which negatively affect organizational environment and productivity. We examined that job induced tension which mediates the proposed hypotheses. Based upon the social cognitive theory, when an employee induces tension due to the job, they are more likely to engage in knowledge sabotage which results in negative workplace behavior. Furthermore, we investigated and examined the moderating role of psychological hardiness which moderates or weaken the direct link between job induced tension and knowledge sabotage, and indirectly effecting the workplace ostracism and knowledge sabotage. The future researchers ought to select larger sample size from different industries. Secondly, rather than cross-sectional studies, future researchers should emphasize on longitudinal or time lag studies to get more in-depth insight. Thirdly, the current study has focused on the health sector hence, it is recommended that the future research studies should conduct studies in other industries and other cultural settings. The current study employed quantitative research design, however, for more in-depth insight and understanding qualitative studies may also be conducted. Last not the least, the current research study has taken job induce tension and psychological hardiness as a mediating and moderating variables. It is recommended for the future research studies that several other intervening variables such as role conflict, burnout and ethical leadership may be considered for a more and better explanation and understanding of the phenomenon.

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