

Workplace Ostracism and Emotional Labour as Predictors of Employee Psychological Withdrawal

Dapo Adeniyi, PhD

HCPC Practitioner (UK), Principal Consultant, and Director of Counseling, Phenopatmos Global Consulting, Nigeria

Abstract - This study examined the predictive roles of workplace ostracism and emotional labour on employee psychological withdrawal among 300 employees in organizational settings. Descriptive analyses indicated a moderately diverse sample in terms of gender, age, marital status, and educational attainment. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation revealed significant positive relationships between workplace ostracism and psychological withdrawal ($r = .46, p < .05$) and between emotional labour and psychological withdrawal ($r = .39, p < .05$). Multiple regression analyses demonstrated that workplace ostracism and emotional labour jointly accounted for 33% of the variance in psychological withdrawal ($R^2 = .33, F(2, 297) = 72.41, p < .05$). Independent contributions were also significant, with workplace ostracism ($\beta = .41, t = 7.86, p < .05$) exerting a stronger effect than emotional labour ($\beta = .29, t = 5.42, p < .05$). These findings support the Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory and the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model, suggesting that social exclusion and sustained emotional regulation function as critical psychosocial stressors that contribute to employee withdrawal. Implications for organizational policy, practice, and employee well-being are discussed.

Keywords: workplace ostracism, emotional labour, psychological withdrawal, COR theory, JD-R model.

I. INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

In contemporary organisational settings, employee experiences extend beyond task performance to encompass complex socio-psychological interactions. Among these, workplace ostracism the experience of being ignored, excluded, or socially rejected by colleagues or supervisors has emerged as a significant stressor that adversely affects employee well-being, satisfaction, and organisational commitment (Ferris *et al.*, 2008; Wu *et al.*, 2021). Similarly, emotional labour, defined as the regulation of emotional expressions to meet organisational display rules, is a pervasive requirement in many service-oriented and interpersonal work roles (Hochschild, 2012; Lee & Chelladurai, 2018). While employees routinely manage their emotional expressions in

the workplace, sustained emotional regulation may lead to strain, exhaustion, and disengagement when not adequately supported.

Psychological withdrawal refers to behaviours and attitudes that reflect an individual's cognitive and emotional disengagement from work, such as reduced attention, detachment, and diminished enthusiasm (Blau, 2017). Psychological withdrawal is distinct from physical absence; it reflects an inward disengagement that undermines performance, creativity, and organisational citizenship (Saks, 2021). Employees who experience interpersonal workplace stressors or emotional strain are more likely to withdraw psychologically as a coping strategy or defence mechanism (Lam *et al.*, 2020). However, empirical evidence on how workplace ostracism and emotional labour jointly influence psychological withdrawal remains limited, particularly within the Nigerian organisational context.

Existing research indicates that ostracism at work can lead to feelings of insecurity, loss of belonging, and reduced self-worth, which in turn contribute to disengagement and withdrawal behaviours (Robinson *et al.*, 2013; Ng *et al.*, 2020). Similarly, emotional labour especially when it involves surface acting, where employees fake or suppress emotions has been linked with emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and job dissatisfaction (Grandey *et al.*, 2015; Lee *et al.*, 2019). Despite these indications, few studies have systematically explored the interplay between these interpersonal stressors and employee psychological withdrawal in sub-Saharan Africa, where socio-cultural values and workplace norms may influence both emotional expression and social inclusion.

In Nigeria, organisational environments are often characterised by hierarchical structures, collectivist cultural orientations, and expectations for harmonious relationships among workers (Adewale, 2019). Experiences of ostracism within such settings may carry profound psychosocial consequences, as they conflict with cultural norms of solidarity and collective identity (Onyeizugbe & Uche, 2022). Likewise, the requirement for emotional regulation whether in customer-facing roles or leadership positions can strain employees' psychological resources when support mechanisms are lacking. Thus, a contextualised investigation

into how workplace ostracism and emotional labour predict psychological withdrawal among Nigerian employees is needed, both to inform theory and to guide organisational policies that foster employee well-being and productivity.

In view of these gaps, the present study examines workplace ostracism and emotional labour as predictors of employee psychological withdrawal, with the aim of generating empirical evidence that is relevant to contemporary organisational dynamics in Nigeria. Findings from the study are expected to contribute to the understanding of employee psychological processes and to inform interventions aimed at enhancing workplace inclusion and emotional support systems.

Statement of the Problem

In contemporary organisations, employee effectiveness increasingly depends on healthy interpersonal relationships and emotional well-being. However, many workplaces are characterised by subtle yet damaging social stressors, such as workplace ostracism, alongside increasing demands for emotional labour. Workplace ostracism manifested through exclusion, neglect, or social invisibility undermines employees' sense of belonging and psychological safety. At the same time, emotional labour requires employees to regulate or suppress genuine emotions to conform to organisational display rules, particularly in service-oriented and relational roles.

Although organisations often prioritise productivity and emotional composure, insufficient attention is given to the cumulative psychological costs of social exclusion and sustained emotional regulation. Empirical evidence suggests that these experiences may prompt psychological withdrawal, a covert form of disengagement characterised by emotional detachment, reduced concentration, and diminished work involvement. Psychological withdrawal is particularly problematic because it often precedes more visible outcomes such as absenteeism and turnover, yet remains difficult for organisations to detect.

Despite growing international research on workplace ostracism and emotional labour, empirical studies examining their combined influence on psychological withdrawal remain limited, especially within the Nigerian context. Cultural norms emphasising respect, collectivism, and emotional restraint may intensify the effects of ostracism and emotional labour on Nigerian employees, yet this contextual dynamic is under-researched. Consequently, organisations lack evidence-based insights to design interventions that address hidden disengagement and preserve employee well-being. This study therefore seeks to address this gap by examining workplace

ostracism and emotional labour as predictors of employee psychological withdrawal.

Research Objectives

The main objective of this study is to examine workplace ostracism and emotional labour as predictors of employee psychological withdrawal.

The specific objectives are to:

1. Examine the relationship between workplace ostracism and employee psychological withdrawal.
2. Determine the relationship between emotional labour and employee psychological withdrawal.
3. Assess the joint contribution of workplace ostracism and emotional labour to psychological withdrawal.
4. Examine the relative (independent) contributions of workplace ostracism and emotional labour to psychological withdrawal.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant at theoretical, empirical, organisational, and societal levels. Theoretically, it extends existing organisational psychology literature by integrating workplace ostracism and emotional labour within a single explanatory framework for understanding psychological withdrawal, thereby enriching models of employee disengagement.

Empirically, the study provides context-specific evidence from Nigeria, addressing the scarcity of indigenous research on subtle workplace stressors and their psychological consequences. The findings will contribute data that reflect socio-cultural realities of Nigerian organisations, enhancing the generalisability of existing theories beyond Western contexts.

Practically, the study offers valuable insights for organisational leaders, human resource practitioners, and policymakers by highlighting hidden predictors of disengagement that may undermine productivity and employee well-being. Understanding these dynamics can inform the development of inclusive workplace policies, emotional support systems, and intervention strategies aimed at reducing withdrawal behaviours.

Finally, the study is relevant to employees, as it promotes awareness of psychosocial risks in the workplace and underscores the importance of supportive organisational climates that foster inclusion, emotional authenticity, and sustained engagement.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

This study is underpinned by the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989, 2001) and the Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) model (Demerouti *et al.*, 2001; Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). These frameworks are widely applied in industrial and organisational psychology to explain stress-related outcomes and employee disengagement, particularly within demanding work environments characteristic of many developing and emerging economies. Their integration provides a coherent explanatory lens for understanding how workplace ostracism and emotional labour contribute to employee psychological withdrawal.

Conservation of Resources Theory

Conservation of Resources theory posits that individuals are motivated to acquire, maintain, and safeguard resources they perceive as valuable, and that stress arises when these resources are threatened, depleted, or insufficiently restored following sustained investment (Hobfoll, 1989). Resources encompass material assets, social and occupational conditions, personal capacities, and energy-related elements such as emotional stamina and time.

Within the present study, workplace ostracism is conceptualised as a significant threat to employees' social and psychological resources, including interpersonal connectedness, social recognition, and perceived organisational inclusion. In work contexts where relational harmony and collective interaction are salient, repeated experiences of exclusion may accelerate resource loss, heightening psychological vulnerability and reducing employees' capacity for adaptive engagement (Hobfoll, 2001).

Similarly, emotional labour involves continuous regulation of emotional expression in line with organisational expectations. This sustained emotional effort draws heavily on employees' energy resources and may lead to emotional depletion, particularly in environments where emotional demands are not offset by adequate recovery opportunities or supportive work structures. Over time, persistent emotional resource depletion may increase the likelihood of disengagement responses.

From a COR perspective, psychological withdrawal reflects a self-protective strategy aimed at limiting further resource loss when ongoing work involvement becomes psychologically taxing. Employees may reduce emotional and cognitive investment in their roles as a means of preserving remaining resources, thereby explaining the association

between chronic workplace stressors and withdrawal behaviours.

Job Demands–Resources Model

The Job Demands–Resources model provides a complementary framework for understanding how work characteristics influence employee well-being and disengagement. The model differentiates between job demands, which require sustained effort and are associated with physiological or psychological costs, and job resources, which facilitate goal attainment, mitigate job demands, and promote motivation and well-being (Demerouti *et al.*, 2001).

In this study, workplace ostracism and emotional labour are conceptualised as key job demands. Workplace ostracism increases emotional strain by reducing access to social support and collaborative interactions, while emotional labour heightens psychological effort through continuous emotional regulation. According to the JD–R model, when such demands are high and job resources such as supervisory support, autonomy, and collegial cooperation are insufficient, a health-impairment process may emerge, leading to exhaustion, disengagement, and psychological withdrawal (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017).

Within this framework, psychological withdrawal is viewed as an outcome of prolonged exposure to excessive job demands in the absence of adequate resources. Reduced involvement and emotional distancing may function as coping responses that allow employees to maintain basic functioning in demanding work environments.

The combined application of COR theory and the JD–R model enables a nuanced understanding of employee psychological withdrawal as both a resource-preservation response and a stress-related occupational outcome. While COR theory highlights the motivational importance of resource loss and conservation, the JD–R model situates these processes within the broader context of job demands and organisational support structures.

This integrated framework is particularly relevant for industrial and organisational psychology research in emerging economy contexts, where employees frequently encounter high work demands alongside limited organisational resources. Together, these theories provide a robust conceptual foundation for examining how workplace ostracism and emotional labour independently and jointly predict psychological withdrawal among employees.

Empirical Review

Employee psychological withdrawal has emerged as a critical outcome variable in organizational psychology, reflecting employees' emotional detachment, reduced cognitive engagement, and diminished psychological presence at work (Kahn, 1990). Contemporary research increasingly identifies workplace ostracism and emotional labour as salient psychosocial stressors that contribute to withdrawal-related outcomes. This review synthesizes empirical evidence examining (a) the relationship between workplace ostracism and psychological withdrawal, (b) the association between emotional labour and psychological withdrawal, and (c) the joint and relative contributions of both predictors.

Workplace ostracism refers to employees' perceptions of being ignored, excluded, or socially marginalized in the workplace (Ferris *et al.*, 2008). Empirical research consistently demonstrates that ostracism undermines employees' fundamental need for belonging, resulting in adverse psychological and behavioural outcomes. Studies across diverse organizational contexts indicate that ostracised employees are more likely to disengage emotionally and cognitively from their work roles as a defensive coping mechanism (Wu *et al.*, 2012).

Longitudinal and cross-sectional findings show that workplace ostracism is positively associated with psychological withdrawal behaviours, including reduced work involvement and emotional detachment (O'Reilly *et al.*, 2015). Ferris *et al.* (2015) further established that ostracism predicts withdrawal even after controlling for traditional job stressors, underscoring its unique psychological impact. Evidence from non-Western contexts supports these findings, with studies among Nigerian employees revealing that perceived exclusion significantly predicts withdrawal tendencies, particularly in collectivist cultures where social inclusion is highly valued (Abubakar *et al.*, 2018). Collectively, these studies suggest that workplace ostracism is a robust predictor of employee psychological withdrawal.

Emotional labour involves the regulation of emotional expressions to conform to organizational display rules (Hochschild, 1983). While emotional labour is inherent in many service and interpersonal roles, sustained emotional regulation—especially surface acting—has been linked to adverse psychological outcomes. Empirical evidence indicates that emotional labour contributes to emotional strain, which often manifests as withdrawal from work roles (Brotheridge & Lee, 2002).

Meta-analytic findings by Hülsheger and Schewe (2011) demonstrate that surface acting is positively associated with emotional exhaustion and withdrawal-related outcomes,

whereas deep acting shows weaker or non-significant associations. Recent studies further indicate that prolonged emotional labour depletes emotional resources, prompting employees to disengage psychologically as a means of self-preservation (Kim *et al.*, 2020). Research in African organizational settings corroborates these findings, showing that high emotional labour demands predict psychological withdrawal, particularly in contexts characterised by limited organizational support (Akinwale & George, 2021). These findings position emotional labour as a significant antecedent of employee withdrawal.

Emerging empirical evidence suggests that workplace ostracism and emotional labour may exert a cumulative effect on psychological withdrawal. Employees exposed to both social exclusion and high emotional regulation demands are likely to experience intensified psychological strain due to compounded resource depletion. Jahanzeb *et al.* (2019) found that emotional labour exacerbated the negative effects of ostracism on work engagement, leading to increased withdrawal tendencies.

Similarly, Zhou *et al.* (2021) reported that employees facing simultaneous interpersonal exclusion and emotional labour demands exhibited significantly higher psychological withdrawal than those exposed to either stressor independently. These findings align with cumulative stress perspectives, which posit that multiple psychosocial demands interact to amplify adverse psychological outcomes. The joint predictive effect of workplace ostracism and emotional labour highlights the necessity of examining these variables concurrently in models of employee withdrawal.

While both workplace ostracism and emotional labour independently predict psychological withdrawal, empirical studies suggest variability in their relative predictive strength. Several studies report that workplace ostracism exerts a stronger influence on withdrawal outcomes due to its direct threat to employees' social identity and sense of belonging (Ferris *et al.*, 2015). Liu *et al.* (2022) demonstrated that ostracism explained unique variance in psychological withdrawal beyond emotional labour and workload.

Nonetheless, emotional labour remains a significant independent predictor in many empirical models. Hur *et al.* (2015) showed that emotional labour predicted withdrawal-related outcomes even after accounting for interpersonal stressors. These mixed findings underscore the importance of examining both predictors simultaneously to determine their relative and joint contributions to psychological withdrawal.

Overall, empirical evidence consistently supports workplace ostracism and emotional labour as significant predictors of employee psychological withdrawal. Workplace

ostracism appears to exert a particularly strong influence due to its social and relational implications, while emotional labour contributes through sustained emotional resource depletion. The convergence of these stressors amplifies withdrawal tendencies, underscoring the need for organizational interventions that address both interpersonal dynamics and emotional demands at work.

III. METHOD

Participants

The study involved 300 employees from diverse organizational settings. Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure representation across gender, age, marital status, and educational attainment. The sample included 162 males (54%) and 138 females (46%), with ages ranging from 20 to 59 years ($M = 34.9$, $SD = 8.1$). Marital status comprised 109 single (36.3%) and 191 married (63.7%) respondents, while educational qualifications ranged from OND/NCE (19.3%), HND/BSc (55.7%), to postgraduate degrees (25.0%).

Design

A cross-sectional, correlational design was adopted to examine the predictive and relational effects of workplace ostracism and emotional labour on psychological withdrawal. This design enables the assessment of relationships and joint contributions of independent variables without manipulating the study environment.

Measures

- Workplace Ostracism: Assessed using the 10-item Workplace Ostracism Scale (Ferris et al., 2008), rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = never, 5 = always). Cronbach's alpha in the current study was .88.
- Emotional Labour: Measured using the Emotional Labour Scale (Brotheridge & Lee, 2003), consisting of 12 items assessing surface and deep acting, rated on a 5-point Likert scale. Cronbach's alpha was .85.
- Psychological Withdrawal: Measured with a 12-item Psychological Withdrawal Scale (Hanisch & Hulin, 1990), rated on a 5-point Likert scale, with higher scores indicating greater withdrawal. Cronbach's alpha was .87.

Procedure

Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant institutional review board. Participants were approached through organizational management and informed about the study's purpose, ensuring voluntary participation and confidentiality. Data were collected via self-administered

questionnaires, with instructions clarifying that responses were anonymous and used solely for research purposes.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS Version 27. Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, frequencies, and percentages) summarized demographic characteristics. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation assessed relationships between variables, while multiple regression analyses evaluated both joint and independent contributions of workplace ostracism and emotional labour to psychological withdrawal. Statistical significance was set at $p < .05$.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to the APA ethical guidelines for human research. Participation was voluntary, with informed consent obtained from all respondents. Confidentiality was maintained, and no identifying information was collected.

IV. RESULTS

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Before testing the hypotheses, respondents' socio-demographic characteristics were analysed to provide contextual understanding of the sample.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 300)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	162	54.0
	Female	138	46.0
Age	20–29 years	84	28.0
	30–39 years	121	40.3
	40 years and above	95	31.7
Marital Status	Single	109	36.3
	Married	191	63.7
Educational Level	OND/NCE	58	19.3
	HND/BSc	167	55.7
	Postgraduate	75	25.0

The demographic distribution indicates that the sample was moderately diverse in terms of gender, age, marital status, and educational attainment. This diversity enhances the generalizability of the findings across different employee categories.

Test of Research Hypotheses

All hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance using Pearson Product–Moment Correlation and Multiple Regression Analysis with the aid of SPSS.

Hypothesis One:

Workplace ostracism is significantly related to employee psychological withdrawal.

Table 2: Means, Standard Deviations, and Pearson Correlation between Workplace Ostracism and Psychological Withdrawal

Variables	M	SD	1	2
1. Workplace Ostracism	27.84	6.31	—	
2. Psychological Withdrawal	24.17	5.89	.46**	—

Note: N = 300. **p < .05.

Interpretation

Table 2 shows a moderate, positive, and statistically significant relationship between workplace ostracism and employee psychological withdrawal ($r = .46, p < .05$). This implies that employees who experience higher levels of exclusion or neglect in the workplace are more likely to disengage psychologically from their jobs.

Hypothesis Two:

Emotional labour is significantly related to employee psychological withdrawal.

Table 3: Means, Standard Deviations, and Pearson Correlation between Emotional Labour and Psychological Withdrawal

Variables	M	SD	1	2
1. Emotional Labour	29.36	6.74	—	
2. Psychological Withdrawal	24.17	5.89	.39**	—

Note: N = 300. **p < .05.

Interpretation

As presented in Table 3, emotional labour is positively and significantly associated with psychological withdrawal ($r = .39, p < .05$). This suggests that employees who constantly regulate or suppress emotions as part of their job demands tend to exhibit higher withdrawal tendencies.

Hypothesis Three:

Workplace ostracism and emotional labour jointly predict employee psychological withdrawal.

Table 4: Multiple Regression Analysis Showing Joint Prediction of Psychological Withdrawal

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	F	Sig.
1	.57	.33	.32	72.41	.000

Note: Dependent Variable: Psychological Withdrawal.

Interpretation

Table 4 indicates that workplace ostracism and emotional labour jointly predicted employee psychological withdrawal, accounting for 33% of the variance in psychological withdrawal ($R^2 = .33, F(2, 297) = 72.41, p < .05$). This demonstrates that both interpersonal exclusion and emotional demands collectively play a substantial role in explaining withdrawal behaviours.

Hypothesis Four:

Workplace ostracism independently predicts employee psychological withdrawal.

Table 5: Independent Contribution of Workplace Ostracism to Psychological Withdrawal

Predictor	B	SE B	β	t	Sig.
Workplace Ostracism	0.48	0.06	.41	7.86	.000

Note: Dependent Variable: Psychological Withdrawal.

Interpretation

The result in Table 5 reveals that workplace ostracism made a significant independent contribution to psychological withdrawal ($\beta = .41, t = 7.86, p < .05$). This indicates that workplace ostracism uniquely predicts withdrawal even after controlling for emotional labour.

Decision:

Hypothesis Four is **accepted**.

Hypothesis Five:

Emotional labour independently predicts employee psychological withdrawal.

Table 6: Independent Contribution of Emotional Labour to Psychological Withdrawal

Predictor	B	SE B	β	T	Sig.
Emotional Labour	0.31	0.06	.29	5.42	.000

Note: Dependent Variable: Psychological Withdrawal.

Interpretation

As shown in Table 6, emotional labour also exerted a **significant independent influence** on psychological withdrawal ($\beta = .29$, $t = 5.42$, $p < .05$). This suggests that emotional labour remains a meaningful predictor of withdrawal behaviour beyond the effects of workplace ostracism.

V. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This chapter interprets the findings of the study in relation to the research hypotheses, extant literature, and relevant theoretical frameworks, including **Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory** (Hobfoll, 1989, 2001; Hobfoll *et al.*, 2018) and the **Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) Model** (Demerouti *et al.*, 2001; Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). The discussion situates the results within the broader context of organisational psychology, occupational stress, and employee mental health.

The sample demonstrated variability across age, gender, marital status, and educational attainment, reflecting a diverse employee population. Such heterogeneity enhances the generalisability of the findings to organisational contexts with mixed demographic compositions. Although demographic variables were not primary predictors, previous research indicates that age, gender, and tenure may moderate responses to workplace stressors and emotional demands (McLean *et al.*, 2019; Ogunyemi *et al.*, 2022). In this study, demographics provided contextual depth, highlighting the nuanced ways in which employees experience ostracism and emotional labour.

Hypothesis one tested the relationship between workplace ostracism and psychological withdrawal. The results revealed a moderate positive correlation ($r = .46$, $p < .05$), indicating that employees experiencing higher levels of perceived exclusion are more likely to disengage cognitively and emotionally.

This finding aligns with **COR Theory**, which posits that threats to social and psychological resources trigger protective responses such as withdrawal (Hobfoll *et al.*, 2018). Ostracism undermines critical resources such as belonging, social support, and recognition, potentially initiating resource loss spirals that heighten disengagement (Ferris *et al.*, 2008; Wu *et al.*, 2021). Empirical studies across diverse organisational settings have similarly linked ostracism to reduced work engagement, decreased job performance, and heightened withdrawal behaviours (Robinson *et al.*, 2013; Williams, 2020). These findings underscore the continued salience of interpersonal inclusion in maintaining employee psychological well-being.

Hypothesis Two examined the relationship between emotional labour and psychological withdrawal. A significant positive relationship was observed ($r = .39$, $p < .05$), indicating that employees required to regulate their emotions continually are more prone to disengagement.

This result corroborates the **JD–R Model**, which identifies emotional labour as a job demand capable of depleting personal resources when not adequately supported (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Sustained emotional regulation, particularly surface acting, has been linked to emotional exhaustion and subsequent withdrawal (Grandey *et al.*, 2015; Lee *et al.*, 2019). The finding extends these insights to contemporary organisational settings, highlighting the psychological costs associated with managing affective expectations in the workplace (Brotheridge & Lee, 2018).

Hypothesis Three investigated whether workplace ostracism and emotional labour jointly predict psychological withdrawal. Regression analysis indicated that the two predictors collectively accounted for 33% of the variance in psychological withdrawal ($R^2 = .33$, $p < .05$). This demonstrates that the combination of social exclusion and emotional demands exerts a substantial influence on employee disengagement.

The finding supports integrated models of workplace stress that emphasise the multiplicative impact of social and task demands (Demerouti *et al.*, 2001). Employees concurrently experiencing ostracism and high emotional labour are more susceptible to psychological withdrawal, reflecting compounded resource depletion (Chen & Eyoum, 2021; Niranjan *et al.*, 2022). The joint effect aligns with recent studies showing that social and emotional stressors synergistically predict adverse occupational outcomes, including disengagement and burnout (Ogunyemi *et al.*, 2022).

Hypothesis Four examined the independent contribution of workplace ostracism to psychological withdrawal. Regression results indicated that ostracism uniquely predicted withdrawal even after controlling for emotional labour ($\beta = .41$, $p < .05$). This demonstrates that social exclusion independently drives disengagement irrespective of emotional job demands.

This observation is consistent with **Social Exchange Theory**, which posits that perceived inequity and unfair treatment reduce trust, commitment, and engagement, resulting in withdrawal behaviours (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Prior studies corroborate the independent role of ostracism in undermining workplace participation and psychological presence (Williams, 2020; Wu *et al.*, 2021). The

finding underscores ostracism as a distinct and potent predictor of employee psychological withdrawal.

Hypothesis Five assessed whether emotional labour independently predicts psychological withdrawal. Findings confirmed a significant effect ($\beta = .29, p < .05$), indicating that emotional labour contributes uniquely to disengagement beyond the effects of ostracism.

This outcome aligns with research demonstrating that sustained emotional regulation, particularly unrewarded or unsupported, directly increases withdrawal tendencies (Muraven *et al.*, 2020; Brotheridge & Lee, 2018). Emotional labour thus represents a core psychological stressor with distinct effects on employee disengagement, highlighting the importance of managing affective work demands.

Collectively, the findings indicate that both workplace ostracism and emotional labour significantly predict psychological withdrawal. Workplace ostracism emerged as the stronger independent predictor, suggesting that social exclusion has a more profound impact on disengagement than emotional regulation demands alone. Emotional labour, while significant, appears to operate through resource depletion mechanisms that increase susceptibility to withdrawal.

These outcomes are consistent with **COR Theory** and the **JD-R Model**, which together posit that multiple stressors social and emotional deplete psychological and energy resources, leading to disengagement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Hobfoll *et al.*, 2018). The findings affirm the necessity of addressing both relational and emotional demands in contemporary organisations to mitigate psychological withdrawal and enhance employee well-being.

The study's findings have important **theoretical, practical, and policy implications**. Organisations should implement strategies to foster inclusive workplace cultures, promote social support networks, and reduce ostracism. Interventions targeting emotional labour, including emotion regulation training, workload management, and supportive supervision, may alleviate psychological strain. By addressing both social and emotional job demands, organisations can reduce withdrawal behaviours, enhance employee engagement, and promote overall psychological health.

Implications of Findings

Theoretically, this study extends the literature on workplace stress by integrating the Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory (Hobfoll, 1989, 2001; Hobfoll *et al.*, 2018) and the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model (Demerouti *et al.*, 2001; Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Findings indicate that both workplace ostracism and emotional labour independently and

jointly predict employee psychological withdrawal, with ostracism exerting the stronger effect. This underscores the critical role of social belonging and interpersonal inclusion as core psychological resources in organizational contexts, empirically validating ostracism as a distinct and potent stressor beyond conventional workload or emotional demands.

Practically and clinically, the results highlight the need for organizations to proactively address both social exclusion and emotional labour demands. Interventions may include fostering inclusive workplace cultures, peer support, respectful interpersonal interactions, and emotion regulation training to reduce withdrawal tendencies. At a policy level, organizations should implement anti-ostracism policies, psychosocial risk assessments, and leadership accountability mechanisms. Clinically, assessments of ostracism and emotional labour can inform counseling, stress management, and resilience-building programs to protect employees' psychological well-being and sustain engagement (Brotheridge & Lee, 2018; Muraven *et al.*, 2020; Wu *et al.*, 2021).

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. The **cross-sectional design** limits the ability to make causal inferences, and reliance on **self-report measures** may introduce common method bias. Future research could employ longitudinal or mixed-method designs to capture temporal dynamics and causal pathways. Additionally, exploring potential **moderators**, such as resilience, organizational support, leadership style, or psychological capital, may elucidate mechanisms that buffer the adverse effects of ostracism and emotional labour on psychological withdrawal. Expanding samples across industries and cultural contexts would further enhance generalizability.

VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, workplace ostracism and emotional labour are significant predictors of employee psychological withdrawal, with ostracism exerting a stronger independent influence. These findings highlight the importance of addressing both interpersonal and emotional demands in organizational settings.

Recommendations include:

1. Fostering inclusive workplace cultures that discourage social exclusion.
2. Implementing psychosocial support systems and counselling services.
3. Providing targeted training on emotion regulation, boundary management, and coping strategies.

By prioritizing social and emotional resource management, organizations can reduce withdrawal behaviours, enhance employee engagement, and support psychological well-being, thereby improving overall organizational performance (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Hobfoll *et al.*, 2018; Wu *et al.*, 2021).

REFERENCES

- [1] Abubakar, A. M., Yazdian, T. F., & Behraves, E. (2018). A riposte to ostracism and tolerance to workplace incivility: A generational perspective. *Personnel Review*, 47(2), 441–457. <https://doi.org/10.1108/PR-07-2016-0153>
- [2] Adewale, A. S. (2019). Cultural values and workplace behaviour in Nigeria. *Journal of African Business*, 20(3), 305–321. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15228916.2019.1601023>
- [3] Akinwale, O. E., & George, O. J. (2021). Emotional labour and employee outcomes in Nigerian service organisations. *African Journal of Economic and Management Studies*, 12(3), 453–469.
- [4] Bakker, A. B., & Demerouti, E. (2017). Job demands–resources theory: Taking stock and looking forward. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 22(3), 273–285. <https://doi.org/10.1037/ocp0000056>
- [5] Blau, G. (2017). Employee withdrawal and engagement: Clarifying the link. *Journal of Organizational Behaviour*, 38(10), 1395–1408. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.2201>
- [6] Brotheridge, C. M., & Lee, R. T. (2002). Testing a conservation of resources model of emotional labor. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 7(1), 57–67.
- [7] Brotheridge, C. M., & Lee, R. T. (2018). Emotional labour and employee well-being: Recent advances and future directions. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 21, 29–34. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2017.08.004>
- [8] Chen, H., & Eyou, K. (2021). Social and emotional stressors in the workplace: Effects on burnout and withdrawal. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 126, 103545. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2021.103545>
- [9] Cropanzano, R., & Mitchell, M. S. (2005). Social exchange theory: An interdisciplinary review. *Journal of Management*, 31(6), 874–900. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206305279602>
- [10] Demerouti, E., Bakker, A. B., Nachreiner, F., & Schaufeli, W. B. (2001). The job demands–resources model of burnout. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 86(3), 499–512. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.86.3.499>
- [11] Ferris, D. L., Brown, D. J., Berry, J. W., & Lian, H. (2008). The development and validation of the Workplace Ostracism Scale. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 93(6), 1348–1366. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0012694>
- [12] Ferris, D. L., Yan, M., Lim, V. K. G., Chen, Y., & Fatimah, S. (2015). An approach–avoidance framework of workplace ostracism. *Journal of Management*, 41(6), 1632–1658.
- [13] Grandey, A. A., Foo, S. C., Groth, M., & Goodwin, R. E. (2015). Free to be you and me: Emotional labour, authenticity, and well-being. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 20(3), 348–358. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0039006>
- [14] Grandey, A., Foo, S. C., Groth, M., & Goodwin, R. E. (2015). Free to be you and me: A climate of authenticity alleviates burnout from emotional labour. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 20(1), 47–58. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0037982>
- [15] Hobfoll, S. E. (1989). Conservation of resources: A new attempt at conceptualising stress. *American Psychologist*, 44(3), 513–524. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.44.3.513>
- [16] Hobfoll, S. E. (2001). The influence of culture, community, and the nested-self in the stress process: Advancing conservation of resources theory. *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, 50(3), 337–421. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1464-0597.00062>
- [17] Hobfoll, S. E., Halbesleben, J., Neveu, J.-P., & Westman, M. (2018). Conservation of resources in the organizational context: The reality of resources and their consequences. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, 5, 103–128. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-032117-104640>
- [18] Hochschild, A. R. (1983). The managed heart: Commercialization of human feeling. *University of California Press*.
- [19] Hochschild, A. R. (2012). The managed heart: Commercialization of human feeling (3rd ed.). *University of California Press*.
- [20] Hülshager, U. R., & Schewe, A. F. (2011). On the costs and benefits of emotional labor. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 16(3), 361–389.
- [21] Hur, W. M., Moon, T. W., & Jun, J. K. (2015). The role of perceived organizational support on emotional labor and job-related outcomes. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 29(1), 1–12.
- [22] Kim, H., Hur, W. M., Moon, T. W., & Jun, J. K. (2020). Is all emotional labor bad? *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 89, 102578.
- [23] Lam, L. W., Xu, H., & Liang, Y. (2020). Workplace ostracism and employee withdrawal: The mediating role of psychological disengagement. *Human*

- Relations, 73(11), 1586–1607. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726719880156>
- [24] Lee, R. T., & Chelladurai, P. (2018). Emotional labour: A conceptual integration and new directions. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 23(1), 3–19. <https://doi.org/10.1037/ocp0000081>
- [25] Lee, R. T., Brotheridge, C. M., & Lin, J. (2019). Surface acting and psychological outcomes: A meta-analysis. *International Journal of Stress Management*, 26(4), 391–408. <https://doi.org/10.1037/str0000123>
- [26] Lee, R. T., Brotheridge, C. M., & Park, J. (2019). Emotional labour and burnout: A meta-analysis of main and moderating effects. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 104(7), 925–940. <https://doi.org/10.1037/apl0000380>
- [27] Liu, J., Kwan, H. K., Lee, C., & Hui, C. (2022). Workplace ostracism and employee outcomes. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 27(2), 203–218.
- [28] McLean, L., Troup, C., & Fletcher, L. (2019). Demographic influences on occupational stress: Implications for organisational interventions. *Work & Stress*, 33(1), 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02678373.2018.1521937>
- [29] Muraven, M., Collins, R. L., & Shiffman, S. (2020). Emotional regulation and workplace outcomes: Empirical insights. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 41(6), 567–584. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.2434>
- [30] Ng, T. W. H., Feldman, D. C., & Lam, L. W. (2020). A meta-analysis of ostracism in the workplace. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 105(12), 1339–1361. <https://doi.org/10.1037/apl0000505>
- [31] Niranjana, S., Qureshi, I., & Patel, D. (2022). Interplay of emotional labour and workplace ostracism in predicting employee burnout. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 33(7), 1458–1477. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2021.1929986>
- [32] O'Reilly, J., Robinson, S. L., Berdahl, J. L., & Banki, S. (2015). Is negative attention better than no attention? *Organization Science*, 26(3), 774–793.
- [33] Ogunyemi, A. O., Adedoyin, R., & Oloyede, A. (2022). Demographic and psychosocial determinants of occupational stress in Nigerian organisations. *African Journal of Psychology*, 24(2), 101–118.
- [34] Onyeizugbe, C. C., & Uche, O. C. (2022). Cultural norms, workplace exclusion, and organisational behaviour in Nigeria. *African Journal of Management*, 8(2), 215–233.
- [35] Richardson, K. M., & Rothstein, H. R. (2008). Effects of occupational stress management programs: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 13(1), 69–93. <https://doi.org/10.1037/1076-8998.13.1.69>
- [36] Robinson, S. L., O'Reilly, J., & Wang, W. (2013). Invisible at work: An integrated model of workplace ostracism. *Journal of Management*, 39(1), 203–231. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206311419662>
- [37] Saks, A. M. (2021). The role of engagement and withdrawal in organisational outcomes. *Journal of Organizational Psychology*, 21(2), 21–34.
- [38] Williams, K. D. (2020). Ostracism and workplace behavior: Implications for employee engagement. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, 7, 245–269. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-012119-044841>
- [39] Wu, J., Kwan, H. K., & Zhang, X. (2021). Workplace ostracism and employee withdrawal: The role of resource depletion. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 127, 103557. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2021.103557>
- [40] Wu, L. Z., Yim, F. H. K., Kwan, H. K., & Zhang, X. (2012). Coping with workplace ostracism. *Journal of Management Studies*, 49(1), 178–199.
- [41] Wu, Y., Zhou, Z. E., & Parker, S. L. (2021). Workplace ostracism and employee outcomes: New insights and extensions. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 106(8), 1192–1205. <https://doi.org/10.1037/apl0000842>
- [42] Zhou, Z. E., Meier, L. L., & Spector, P. E. (2021). The spillover effects of coworker ostracism. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 106(4), 561–578.

Citation of this Article:

Adeniyi, A.O. (2026). Workplace Ostracism and Emotional Labour as Predictors of Employee Psychological Withdrawal. *International Research Journal of Innovations in Engineering and Technology - IRJIET*, 10(2), 71-80. Article DOI <https://doi.org/10.47001/IRJIET/2026.102011>
