

Review

Workplace ostracism research: a bibliometric review and research trend analysis

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Abstract: Workplace ostracism has become a prominent topic in the examination of organizational behavior and employee psychology. Despite the expanding corpus of literature, few studies have comprehensively analyzed the conceptual framework and developmental trends of workplace ostracism research. This study provides a comprehensive bibliometric review and analysis of workplace ostracism studies published from 2015 to 2025. Through the PRISMA framework, 274 peer-reviewed journal articles were retrieved from the Scopus database and evaluated using VOS viewer. The study examined publication trends, bibliographic coupling, co-authorship, international collaboration, and patterns of keyword co-occurrence. The research on workplace ostracism has significantly broadened over the past decade, focusing on critical aspects such as emotional exhaustion, job performance, stress, turnover intention, and organizational citizenship behavior. Emerging subjects such as creativity, emotional intelligence, and knowledge concealment reflect an increasing emphasis on complex psychological and organizational processes. The results demonstrate an increasing research output from Asian countries, particularly China and Pakistan, underscoring the growing globalization of workplace ostracism research.

Keywords: workplace ostracism; bibliometric analysis; PRISMA; VOS viewer

1. Introduction

Workplace ostracism has emerged as a significant subject in organizational behavior and employee psychology literature because of its detrimental effects on employee well-being and organizational results. Ferris [1] characterized workplace ostracism as employees' experiences of being disregarded, excluded, or rejected by others in organizational contexts [1]. In contrast to explicit workplace hostility or bullying, workplace ostracism is frequently nuanced and quiet, complicating its identification and management inside companies. Prior research indicates that workplace ostracism can adversely impact employees' emotional well-being, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and workplace conduct [2,3].

As interest in workplace ostracism has expanded, previous studies have increasingly investigated its origins, psychological processes, and organizational ramifications. Recent study has examined emotional exhaustion, turnover intention, information concealment, employee inventiveness, and workplace stress. Moreover, research on workplace ostracism has progressively broadened to encompass wider organizational and psychological viewpoints, including workplace abuse, interpersonal dynamics, and employee well-being.

Notwithstanding the increasing volume of studies, current research on workplace ostracism remains fragmented across several disciplines of organizational behavior, psychology, and management. Most previous studies predominantly concentrate on the origins and repercussions of workplace ostracism, however little emphasis has

been directed on the comprehensive intellectual framework, theme progression, and nascent research trends within the discipline. Moreover, extensive bibliometric and systematic literature surveys on workplace ostracism are still rather few, especially for research partnership patterns, theme evolution, and developing research trajectories.

A rigorous literature evaluation and bibliometric analysis are essential to elucidate the evolution and research trends in workplace ostracism literature. This study intends to provide a bibliometric assessment of workplace ostracism studies published from 2015 to 2025 utilizing the Scopus database. This study uses the PRISMA framework and VOSviewer analysis to discern publishing patterns, prominent journals and authors, cooperation networks, principal research topics, and nascent research initiatives in the field of workplace ostracism research.

Based on these objectives, the study addresses the following research questions:

- a. What are the contemporary trends and advancements in workplace ostracism research?
- b. Which studies on workplace ostracism are the most influential and highly cited?
- c. Which authors and countries contribute most significantly to workplace ostracism research?
- d. What are the major research themes and emerging directions within workplace ostracism literature?

2. Literature review

2.1. Concept and definition of workplace ostracism

Following the creation of the Workplace Ostracism Scale by Ferris [1], workplace ostracism has emerged as a significant subject in the fields of organizational behavior and employee psychology study [1]. Recent research have shown that workplace ostracism might jeopardize employees' psychological safety and social belonging, especially in hybrid and digitally mediated work situations [4]. As focus on employee well-being and psychological safety intensifies, workplace ostracism has increasingly become a critical concern in organizational and human resource management studies.

2.2. Antecedents of workplace ostracism

Existing studies suggest that workplace ostracism is shaped by multiple antecedents at the individual, interpersonal, and organizational levels. At the individual level, demographic and dispositional factors such as gender, age, and tenure may influence how employees perceive and respond to exclusion. For example, female employees may experience stronger psychological distress following ostracism due to heightened relational sensitivity [5].

At the interpersonal level, supervisor-subordinate relationships and coworker interactions play a crucial role. Research increasingly distinguishes between supervisor ostracism and coworker ostracism, as both may trigger different psychological and behavioral consequences [6,7]. At the organizational level, workplace incivility, abusive supervision, competitive climates, and low interpersonal trust have been identified as major contextual predictors of ostracism. In highly competitive environments, employees may intentionally restrict communication and withhold social support, thereby fostering exclusionary dynamics [8].

2.3. Theoretical perspectives and psychological consequences

A significant amount of study has investigated the psychological and behavioral

effects of workplace ostracism, with Conservation of Resources (COR) theory becoming a prominent theoretical framework. The COR hypothesis posits that individuals endeavor to obtain, safeguard, and preserve valued resources, including emotional energy, social support, self-esteem, and psychological resilience. When these resources are endangered or exhausted, individuals encounter stress and psychological distress.

COR theory is especially pertinent to workplace ostracism as social exclusion directly jeopardizes employees' relational and emotional resources. Experiencing neglect or exclusion indicates a decline in social support and a sense of belonging, which hastens resource depletion and may initiate a downward cycle. This theoretical framework elucidates the constant correlation between workplace ostracism and emotional exhaustion, stress, burnout, and reduced job performance [9–11].

Although COR theory possesses significant explanatory benefits, its predominance also engenders certain theoretical constraints. COR theory predominantly focuses on resource depletion and stress mechanisms, perhaps causing researchers to overly highlight adverse psychological effects while insufficiently investigating relational reciprocity and social exchange dynamics. Not all employees react to workplace ostracism only by depleting resources; some may respond with disengagement, diminished organizational citizenship behavior, defensive silence, or harmful job actions.

Consequently, forthcoming study may gain from the incorporation of Social Exchange Theory (SET) in conjunction with Conservation of Resources theory. COR theory elucidates the depletion of employees' psychological resources due to workplace ostracism, while SET enhances this approach by emphasizing reciprocal relational dynamics. In professional environments, individuals who perceive inequitable treatment or social ostracism may deliberately reduce collaboration, withhold discretionary effort, or participate in retaliatory actions. Integrating COR theory with SET may therefore yield a more thorough elucidation of the psychological and behavioral ramifications of workplace ostracism.

While these theoretical views offer significant insights, previous studies are fragmented in elucidating the processes by which workplace ostracism affects employee outcomes. The correlation between workplace ostracism and emotional exhaustion is well-documented; however, the mediating mechanisms (such as defensive silence, psychological empowerment, and organizational identification) and boundary conditions (including resilience, leadership support, and organizational climate) are inconsistently addressed across various studies. This fragmentation underscores the necessity for a bibliometric study to carefully delineate the intellectual framework, prevailing theoretical viewpoints, and nascent research concerns within the literature on workplace ostracism.

2.4. Emerging themes and research gaps

Despite significant advancements in workplace ostracism research in recent years, numerous critical study gaps persist. Current research has predominantly concentrated on conventional office environments, with comparatively less emphasis placed to workplace ostracism in hybrid and digitally mediated work contexts. Moreover, cross-cultural comparative research remains inadequate, even though cultural disparities may affect employees' perceptions and reactions to workplace exclusion.

Many current studies predominantly utilize cross-sectional study methods, which constrains the comprehension of long-term causal links and the dynamic evolution of

workplace ostracism over time. Moreover, little focus has been directed on supportive organizational policies, employee resilience, and intervention strategies that might mitigate the adverse impacts of workplace ostracism. Consequently, further study is required to investigate workplace ostracism in various organizational and cultural settings.

3. Research methodology

3.1. Research design

This study employed a comprehensive literature review and bibliometric analysis to investigate the progression, research trends, and thematic evolution of workplace ostracism research. A systematic review method was utilized to identify, screen, and assess pertinent studies in a structured and transparent fashion, while bibliometric analysis was employed to illustrate publication trends, collaboration networks, keyword co-occurrence, and significant research themes within the domain.

The study adhered to the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses methodology established by Moher [12] to guarantee methodological rigor and transparency. The PRISMA framework established systematic protocols for article identification, screening, eligibility evaluation, and final inclusion.

Furthermore, bibliometric mapping strategies were employed using VOSviewer software to examine co-authorship networks, keyword associations, citation frameworks, and international research connections. This integrated methodological approach facilitated a thorough comprehension of the philosophical framework and nascent research trajectories in workplace ostracism studies.

3.2. Database and search strategy

The Scopus database was selected as the sole data source for this study because of its broad coverage of peer-reviewed academic literature across organizational behavior, psychology, business, and management. Scopus is widely used in bibliometric research because it provides standardized citation data, author information, institutional affiliations, keywords, and publication metadata suitable for bibliometric mapping and visualization.

The search strategy used the exact phrase “workplace ostracism” as the primary search term. This decision was made because the study specifically aimed to examine the intellectual structure and thematic evolution of workplace ostracism as a clearly established research construct. Since the development of the Workplace Ostracism Scale by Ferris, “workplace ostracism” has become the most widely recognized term in this research area. Using the exact phrase helped ensure conceptual consistency and reduce the inclusion of studies on broader forms of social exclusion that may not be situated in organizational or employment contexts.

Although related terms such as “workplace exclusion,” “social ostracism,” and “social exclusion” are conceptually relevant, they were not used as independent search terms in the final bibliometric dataset. This was because these broader terms may retrieve studies from non-workplace contexts, including education, healthcare, social psychology, or general interpersonal exclusion, which could reduce the conceptual precision of the dataset. However, during the screening process, articles were carefully assessed to ensure that studies directly focusing on workplace ostracism or ostracism in organizational settings were retained.

The search was conducted in April 2026 and focused on articles published from 2015 to 2025. To ensure the quality and consistency of the dataset, only English-

language, peer-reviewed journal articles at the final publication stage were included. Conference papers, book chapters, duplicate records, non-English publications, and non-peer-reviewed materials were excluded. The search was initially conducted using the “All Fields” function to capture a broad pool of potentially relevant studies, and the results were subsequently refined to Article Title, Abstract, and Keywords to improve relevance and accuracy.

It should be acknowledged that relying exclusively on Scopus represents a methodological limitation. Relevant articles indexed only in Web of Science or other specialized databases may not have been captured. Therefore, the findings of this study should be interpreted as reflecting the structure and trends of workplace ostracism literature indexed in Scopus rather than the entire universe of workplace ostracism research. Nevertheless, Scopus was considered appropriate for this study because of its extensive multidisciplinary coverage and compatibility with bibliometric analysis tools such as VOSviewer.

3.3. Screening and selection process

The screening and selection approach adhered to the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) methodology to guarantee methodological transparency and methodical article selection. The screening and selection process followed the four PRISMA stages: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion.

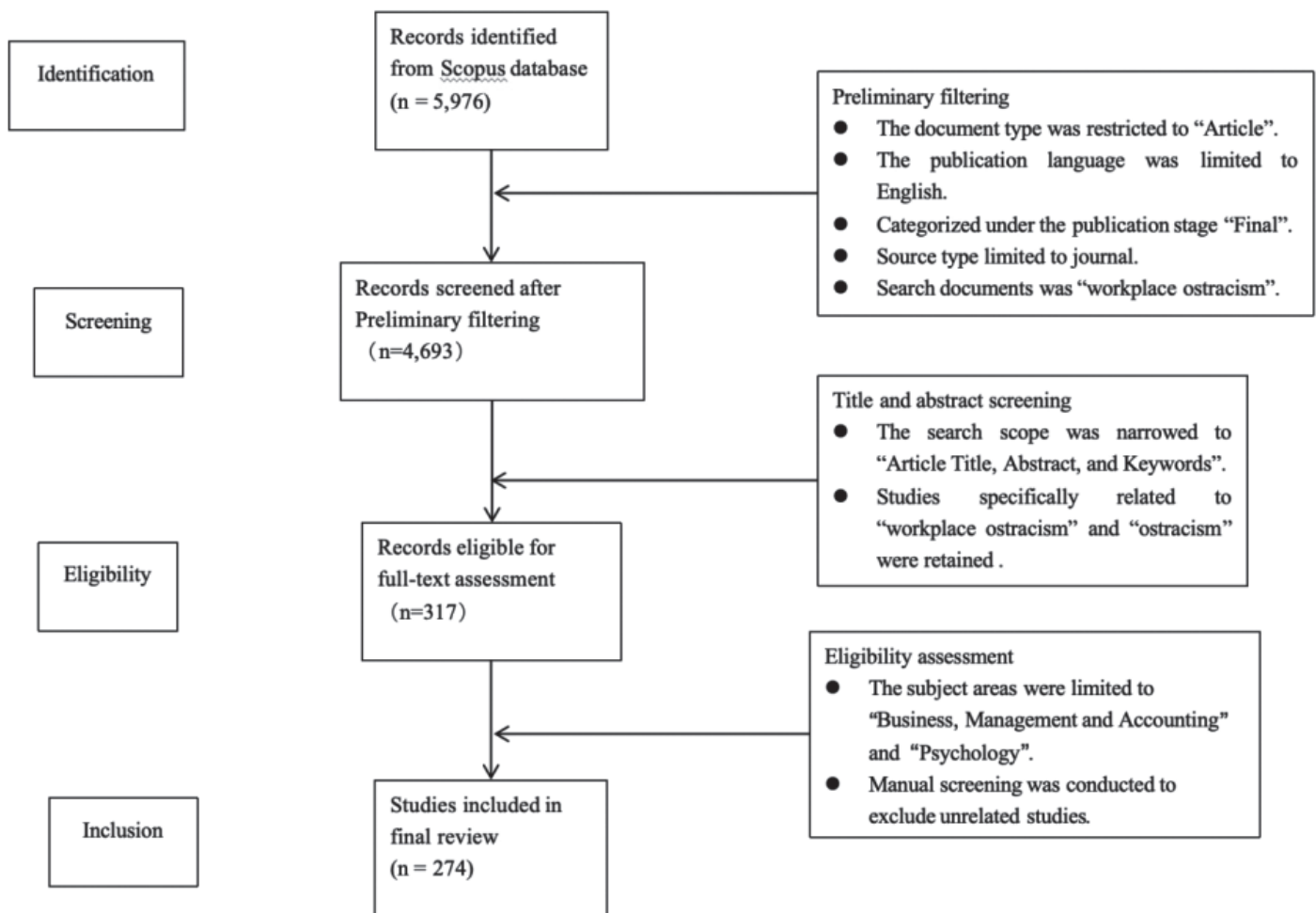


Figure 1. PRISMA flow diagram.

The literature screening method was carefully executed utilizing the Scopus database to discover pertinent papers about workplace ostracism.

A thorough search was conducted utilizing the phrase “workplace ostracism” in the Scopus database inside the “All Fields” category. No limitations were established for document type, publication year, language, or topic area at this phase to guarantee a comprehensive and inclusive compilation of possibly pertinent research. A total of 5,976 documents were initially retrieved.

During the second step, many filtering criteria were implemented to enhance the relevance and quality of the acquired literature. The document type was confined to “Article,” the publishing language was restricted to English, and only studies classified as “Final” in the publication stage were included to guarantee the consideration of fully published peer-reviewed publications. The search parameters were refined to include simply “Article Title, Abstract, and Keywords” to improve retrieval accuracy and eliminate studies where the term was mentioned only peripherally. Upon applying these criteria, the document count was reduced from 5,976 to 4,693 items.

Following the restriction of the search to English peer-reviewed journal articles and the narrowing of the search parameters to Article Title, Abstract, and Keywords, the dataset underwent additional refinement using thematic relevance screening. At this juncture, only papers in which “workplace ostracism” or “ostracism” was a primary study focus were kept. Articles in which the term occurred only incidentally or was irrelevant to organizational behavior, employee psychology, workplace interaction, or management settings were eliminated.

Furthermore, throughout the screening process, research pertaining to non-workplace situations, social exclusion beyond organizational environments, medical or educational ostracism not linked to employee conduct, and redundant or conceptually irrelevant studies were excluded. After the thematic relevance evaluation of titles, abstracts, and keywords, the dataset was condensed from 4,693 to 317 entries.

A comprehensive eligibility evaluation and manual screening were performed to evaluate the relevance and quality of the selected studies. Only publications directly pertaining to workplace ostracism in the domains of Business, Management and Accounting, and Psychology were preserved. A total of 43 articles were excluded at the eligibility stage due to conceptual irrelevance, duplicate thematic overlap, or insufficient focus on workplace ostracism. Consequently, 274 articles were incorporated into the final bibliometric study.

3.4. Data analysis and bibliometric tools

A bibliometric study was performed to ascertain the conceptual framework, predominant research themes, publishing trends, and collaboration patterns in workplace ostracism research. The bibliometric data obtained from the Scopus database were evaluated utilizing VOSviewer version 1.6.20, a program esteemed for its efficacy in scientific mapping and bibliometric visualization.

VOSviewer was chosen for its capability to visualize intricate bibliometric networks, encompassing co-authorship ties, keyword co-occurrence patterns, citation structures, and international collaboration networks. In contrast to conventional descriptive review techniques, bibliometric visualization offers a more systematic and objective comprehension of the progression and theme growth of workplace ostracism research.

This research included many bibliometric methodologies.

A co-authorship study was performed to investigate collaborative links among writers and to identify prominent scholars in the field of workplace ostracism research. The investigation elucidated the framework of academic collaboration networks and principal research contributors.

Secondly, a keyword co-occurrence analysis was conducted utilizing author keywords and indexed terms to discern principal research topics, conceptual interrelations, and future directions. VOSviewer categorized frequently occurring terms with substantial connection strength into theme groups. Various colors in the network image denote unique thematic groupings, and node size reflects the frequency of keyword occurrences.

Third, citation analysis was utilized to locate significant articles and investigate the intellectual underpinnings of workplace ostracism research. An analysis of highly referenced publications was conducted to identify the most significant research and prevailing theoretical viewpoints within the area.

A country collaboration study was performed to examine international research cooperation and the geographical distribution of papers on workplace ostracism. The cooperation network demonstrates the degree of research interconnections among nations and emphasizes significant contributing areas in the study of workplace ostracism.

4. Results

4.1. Descriptive bibliometric analysis

4.1.1. Publication trend analysis

A significant increase in publication output began in 2019, with the total number of publications reaching 26 articles. A slight decline was observed in 2020. While this fluctuation may partially reflect broader disruptions in global research and publication activities during the COVID-19 period, no direct causal relationship can be established from the bibliometric data alone. Publication output recovered in 2021 and continued to grow steadily from 2022 to 2024.

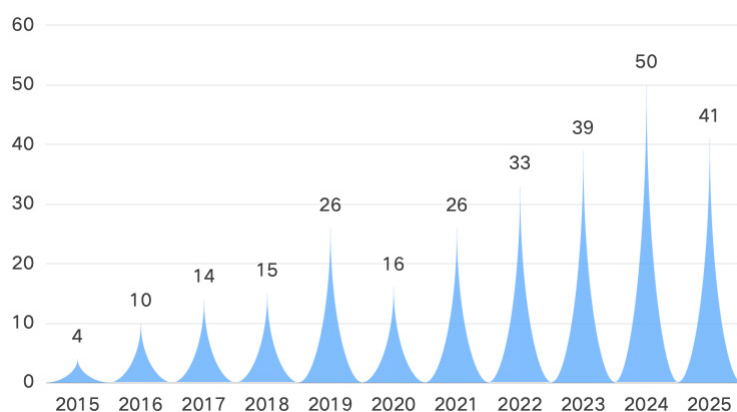


Figure 2. Annual publication trend of workplace ostracism research(2015–2025)

The highest publication volume was recorded in 2024, with 50 articles, signifying that workplace ostracism has emerged as a critical subject in organizational behavior, workplace psychology, and employee management research. This growth may reflect rising scholarly attention to employee mental health, psychological safety, hybrid work environments and digitally mediated workplace interactions.

A decrease in publishing production was noted in 2025, however this trend

warrants careful interpretation. The reduced publishing count may indicate several things, such as database update intervals, indexing lags, or inherent yearly variations in publication trends. Consequently, the noted drop should not be construed as definitive proof of diminished academic interest in workplace ostracism.

4.1.2. Most productive journals

Table 1 presents the most productive journals in workplace ostracism research. The journal distribution indicates that workplace ostracism research is not only rooted in psychology and organizational behavior but is also increasingly applied in industry-specific contexts. Although *Frontiers in Psychology* published the highest number of articles, the exceptionally high citation count of the *Journal of Applied Psychology* suggests that foundational theoretical and scale-development studies continue to shape the intellectual core of the field. Meanwhile, the notable presence of hospitality and service-related journals, such as the *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, indicates growing scholarly interest in understanding workplace ostracism within customer-facing and emotionally demanding industries, where interpersonal interactions play a particularly critical role.

Table 1. Most productive journals.

Rank	Journal	Publications	Citations
1	Frontiers in Psychology	14	433
2	Current Psychology	10	90
3	Journal of Applied Psychology	8	794
4	International Journal of Hospitality Management	7	703
5	Cogent Business and Management	6	57
6	Personality and Individual Differences	6	83
7	Acta Psychologica	5	52
8	Behavioral Sciences	5	10
9	Journal of Managerial Psychology	5	78
10	Journal of Social Psychology	5	154
11	Management Decision	5	261
12	Personnel Review	5	194
13	Psychology Research and Behavior Management	5	173

4.1.3. Most influential articles

As shown in **Table 2**, a synthesis of the most influential articles reveals three major commonalities. First, highly cited studies consistently emphasize the detrimental effects of workplace ostracism on employee well-being and organizational outcomes, particularly emotional exhaustion, job performance, and turnover-related behaviors. Second, many of these influential studies adopt Conservation of Resources theory, highlighting resource depletion as a dominant explanatory mechanism through which ostracism affects employee attitudes and behaviors. Third, the literature increasingly recognizes that workplace ostracism influences not only individual psychological outcomes but also broader relational and organizational processes, such

as knowledge sharing, organizational citizenship behavior, and workplace deviance. These patterns suggest that the intellectual foundation of workplace ostracism research has evolved from documenting negative consequences toward explaining the underlying mechanisms and contextual conditions of these effects.

Table 2. Most influential articles in workplace ostracism research.

Rank	Authors	Year	Title	Citations	Contribution
1	Zhao H.; Xia Q; He P.; Sheard G.; Wan P. [13]	2016	Workplace ostracism and knowledge hiding in service organizations	335	It demonstrated that ostracism can reduce employees' willingness to share knowledge and highlighted the negative impact of exclusion on organizational communication and collaboration.
2	Wu C.-H.; Liu J.; Kwan H.K.; Lee C. [14]	2016	Why and when workplace ostracism inhibits organizational citizenship behaviors: An organizational identification perspective	248	The findings emphasized the mediating role of organizational identification and explained when employees are less likely to engage in extra-role behaviors after experiencing ostracism.
3	O'Reilly J.; Robinson S.L.; Berdahl J.L.; Banki S. [15]	2015	Is negative attention better than no attention? The comparative effects of ostracism and harassment at work	245	The study contributed to understanding the unique emotional consequences of workplace ostracism.
4	Jahanzeb S.; Fatima T. [16]	2018	How Workplace Ostracism Influences Interpersonal Deviance: The Mediating Role of Defensive Silence and Emotional Exhaustion	184	It identified defensive silence and emotional exhaustion as important mediating factors, contributing to the understanding of employees' negative behavioral responses to exclusion.
5	Yang J.; Treadway D.C. [17]	2018	A Social Influence Interpretation of Workplace Ostracism and Counterproductive Work Behavior	157	The findings highlighted the role of workplace social dynamics in shaping deviant employee behaviors.
6	Zhu H.; Lyu Y.; Deng X.; Ye Y. [11]	2017	Workplace ostracism and proactive customer service performance: A conservation of resources perspective	139	It demonstrated that ostracism depletes employees' psychological resources and reduces service-related initiative.
7	Kwan H.K.; Zhang X.; Liu J.; Lee C. [18]	2018	Workplace ostracism and employee creativity: An integrative approach incorporating pragmatic and engagement roles	135	The findings suggested that ostracism can reduce employee engagement and subsequently hinder creative performance within organizations.
8	Thompson M.J.; Carlson D.S.; Kacmar K.M.; Vogel R.M. [19]	2020	The cost of being ignored: Emotional exhaustion in the work and family domains.	129	The study emphasized the spillover effects of workplace ostracism.

Continuation Table:

Rank	Authors	Year	Title	Citations	Contribution
9	Ng T.W.H. [20]	2017	Can idiosyncratic deals promote perceptions of competitive climate, felt ostracism, and turnover?	127	The findings contributed to understanding organizational practices that may indirectly trigger ostracism perceptions.
10	Xia A.; Wang B.; Song B.; Zhang W.; Qian J. [21]	2019	How and when workplace ostracism influences task performance: Through the lens of conservation of resource theory	111	The study highlighted the conditional mechanisms explaining when the negative effects of workplace ostracism become stronger or weaker.

4.2. Bibliographic coupling analysis

A bibliographic coupling analysis was conducted with VOSviewer to clarify the conceptual framework and significant studies in workplace ostracism research. Bibliographic coupling evaluates the similarity of research by analyzing the degree to which they share common citations. Research with more robust coupling ties is deemed to possess closer thematic and theoretical connections.

Figure 3 illustrates that several significant research have become pivotal nodes within the bibliographic coupling network. Bedi [22], Zhao [23], Chung [24], and Jahanzeb [16] demonstrated substantial node sizes and robust network connections, signifying their considerable impact on the intellectual advancement of workplace ostracism research.

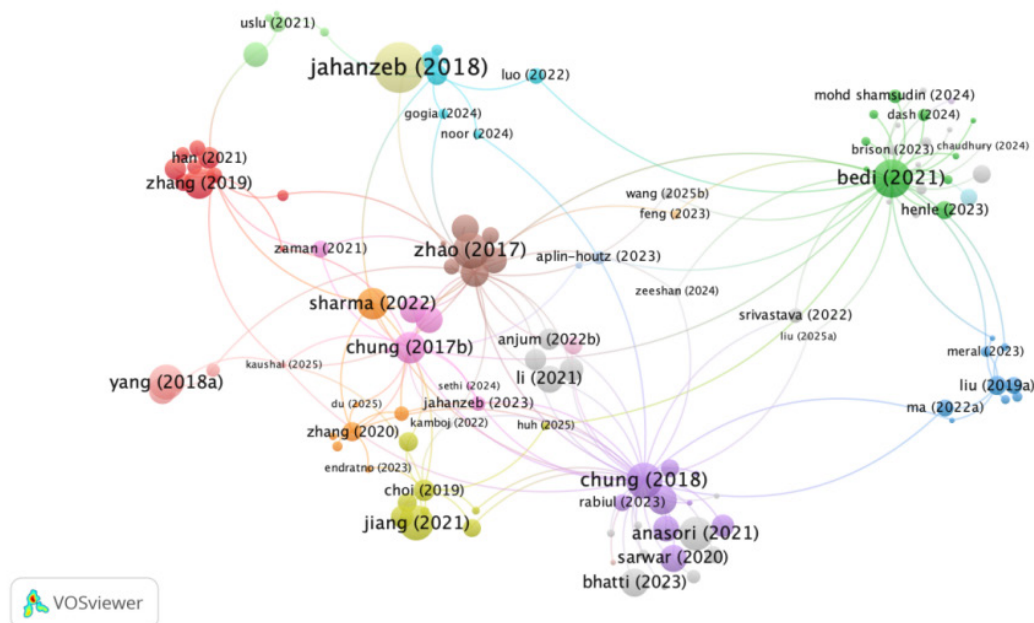


Figure 3. Bibliographic coupling network.

The network visualization further uncovers three key conceptual groupings. The green cluster, designated “Workplace Mistreatment and Resource Depletion,” largely addresses workplace maltreatment and its organizational repercussions, encompassing abusive supervision, workplace incivility, emotional exhaustion, and job-related stress. This cluster signifies a robust conceptual connection between workplace

ostracism and the extensive literature on workplace abuse.

The purple cluster, titled “Service-Sector Emotional Labor,” emphasizes research focused on hospitality and service-oriented contexts, including investigations into emotional exhaustion, turnover intention, and employee well-being in emotionally taxing service situations.

The red cluster, designated “Culturally Embedded Interpersonal Dynamics,” primarily encapsulates workplace ostracism research undertaken in Asian contexts, especially China, emphasizing interpersonal relationships, organizational interactions, and employee psychological responses influenced by cultural norms.

Collectively, these clusters suggest that bibliographic coupling in workplace ostracism research is organized into three principal domains: workplace maltreatment, emotional labor in the service sector, and culturally ingrained interpersonal dynamics.

4.3. Co-authorship analysis

A co-authorship analysis was performed using VOSviewer to investigate collaboration patterns among researchers in workplace ostracism studies, based on the chosen literature collection. The visualization network illustrates the collaborative connections among writers in the domain of workplace ostracism research.

Figures 4 and 5 demonstrate that the co-authorship network is notably fractured, suggesting that research collaboration in the domain of workplace ostracism is constrained. Most authors are affiliated with small research clusters, but extensive international collaboration networks are rather rare.

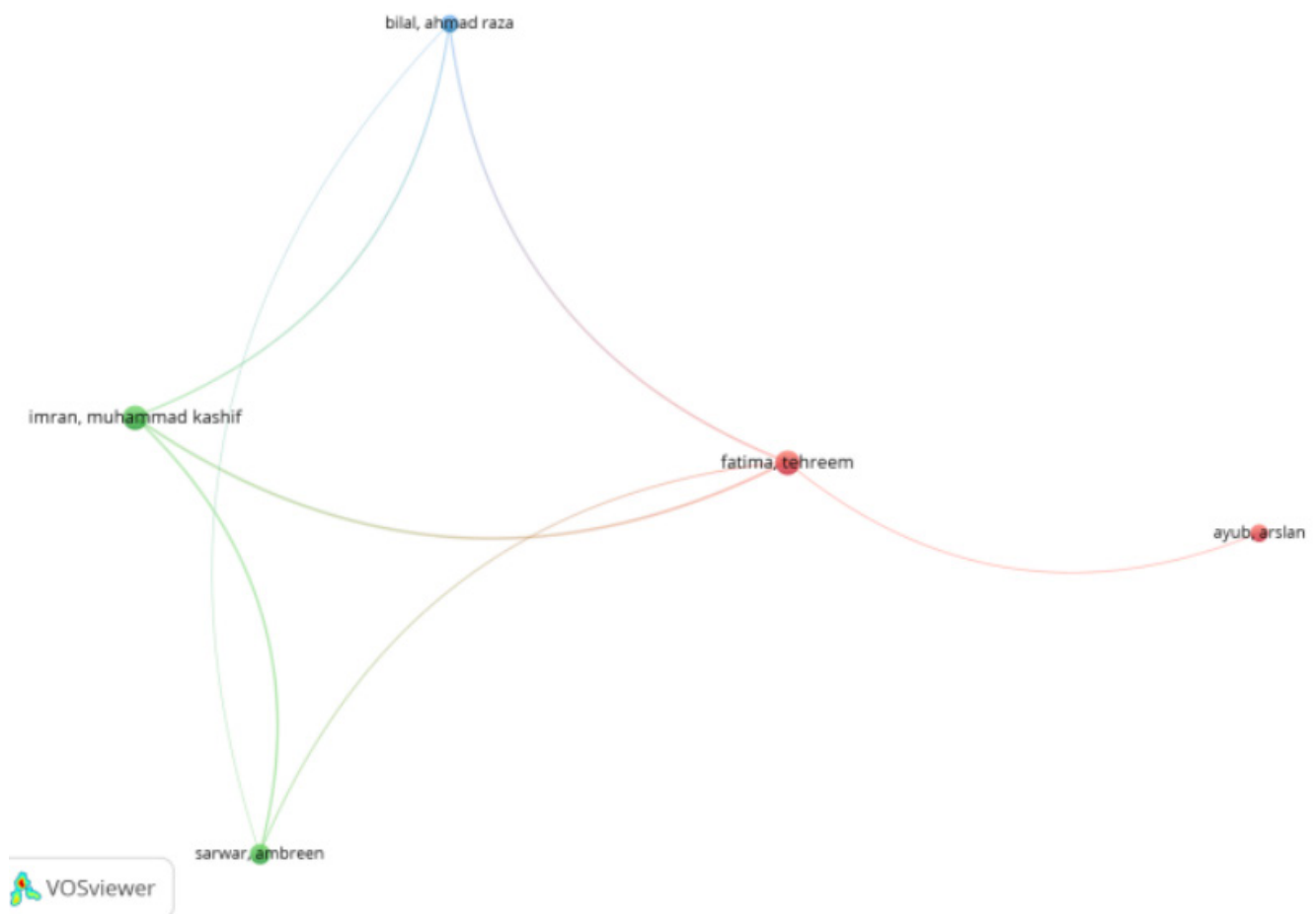


Figure 4. Core author collaboration.

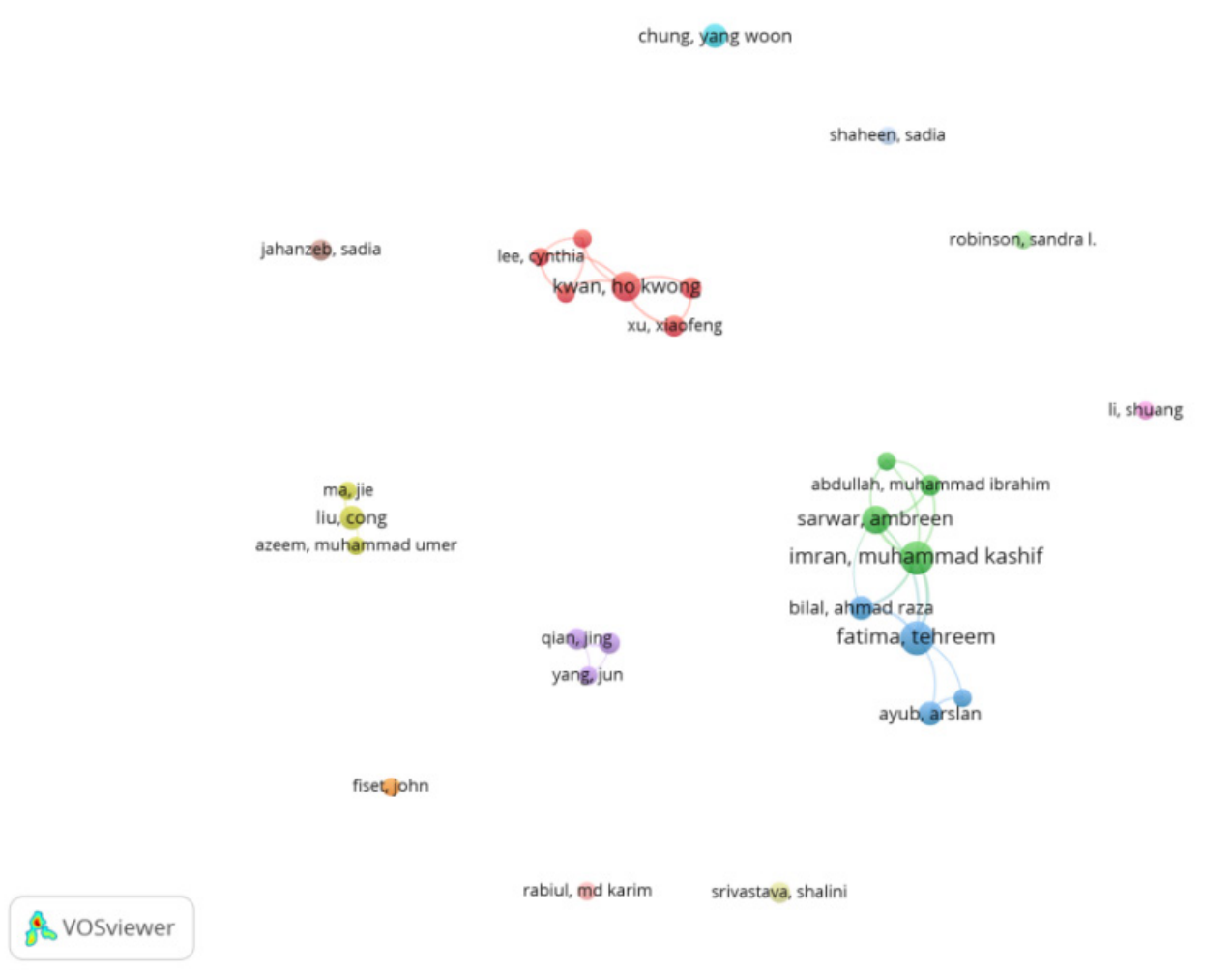


Figure 5. Author co-authorship.

Nonetheless, several primary author groupings may be recognized. A notable cluster comprises Kwan Ho Kwong, Cynthia Lee, and Xu Xiaofeng, who exhibit robust collaboration links and significant effect in the field of workplace ostracism research. Another active cluster comprises Sarwar Ambreen and Imran Muhammad Kashif, whose research primarily examines employee behavior, organizational results, and workplace stress.

The graphic demonstrates a rising involvement of Asian academics, especially those from China, Pakistan, and South Korea. This indicates that research on workplace ostracism has progressively broadened outside Western organizational settings and is receiving increasing attention in Asian academic contexts.

The co-authorship analysis reveals that, while workplace ostracism research has established few stable research groups, the overall cooperation network is predominantly fragmented. This discovery suggests potential for further international cooperation and multidisciplinary integration in forthcoming studies on workplace ostracism.

4.4. Country collaboration analysis

A country collaboration analysis was conducted using VOSviewer to investigate international research collaboration in workplace ostracism studies. The visualization network illustrates the cooperation links across nations involved in workplace ostracism research, whilst the study of publication frequency highlights the primary

contributing countries.

Figure 6 illustrates the collaborative network among the 10 most prolific nations in workplace ostracism research. China emerged as the most prolific and central nation within the collaborative network, with 108 articles. China exhibited significant collaboration with nations including the United States, Pakistan, India, and the United Kingdom, underscoring its preeminent position in the investigation of workplace ostracism. Pakistan secured the second position with 49 publications, closely trailing the United States, which had 47 publications. India had significant scientific activity with 29 publications. Other active contributing countries included Canada, the United Kingdom, Turkey, South Korea, Hong Kong, and Australia.

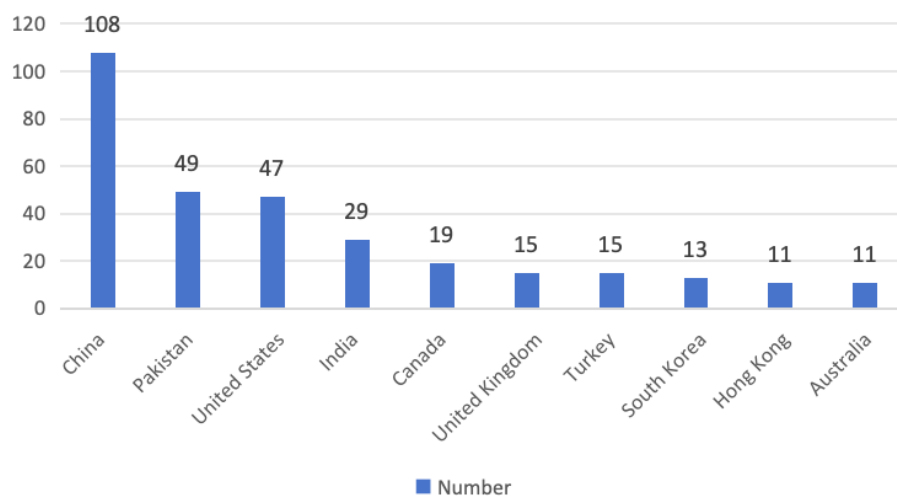


Figure 6. Top 10 contributing countries in workplace ostracism research.

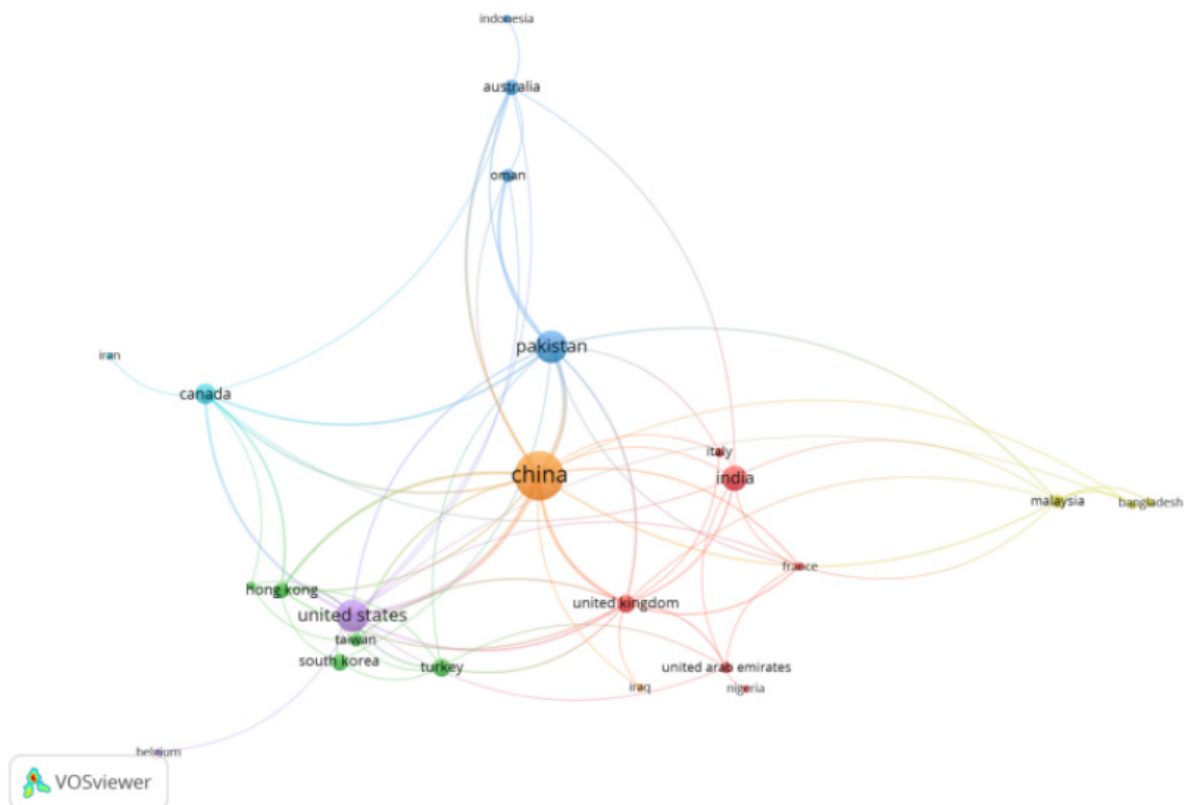


Figure 7. Country collaboration network.

5. Discussion

This study employed bibliometric analysis to examine the intellectual structure, thematic evolution, and emerging research trends in workplace ostracism literature based on 274 articles indexed in Scopus. Rather than merely identifying publication trends, the findings reveal important shifts in research focus, collaboration patterns, and theoretical development within the field of workplace ostracism. Three major insights emerge from the analysis.

5.1. From behavioral outcomes to psychological dynamics

One of the most important findings of this study is the clear evolution of workplace ostracism research over the past decade. Initial research predominantly concentrated on the immediate behavioral repercussions of ostracism, including diminished job performance, decreased organizational citizenship activity, knowledge concealment, and intentions to leave the organization. This research primarily highlighted measurable organizational results and identified workplace ostracism as a notable source of workplace stress.

Recent studies show a significant shift toward more intricate psychological and interpersonal factors. Keyword co-occurrence analysis indicated a growing focus on concepts such as emotional intelligence, mindfulness, creativity, resilience, and psychological safety. This indicates that the discipline is evolving from a basic cause-and-effect viewpoint to a more sophisticated comprehension of the mechanisms and reasons behind the impact of workplace ostracism on employees.

Various reasons may elucidate this transition. Methodological advancements have allowed researchers to investigate the fundamental psychological mechanisms of workplace ostracism more efficiently, while enhanced interdisciplinary collaboration among organizational behavior, psychology, and human resource management has expanded the theoretical frameworks utilized in this area. Furthermore, evolving organizational dynamics, such as hybrid work environments and an increasing focus on employee well-being and psychological safety, have prompted researchers to explore workplace ostracism in increasingly intricate organizational settings.

Taken together, these developments indicate that workplace ostracism is increasingly viewed not merely as a direct predictor of negative behavioral outcomes, but as a dynamic interpersonal phenomenon whose effects unfold through psychological, relational, and contextual processes. This evolution reflects the increasing theoretical maturity of the field and provides a foundation for more integrative future research.

5.2. Fragmented collaboration networks and methodological implications

A significant observation is the fragmented structure of co-authorship networks. Despite the identification of some stable research clusters, the total cooperation network is highly fragmented, exhibiting minimal inter-cluster and inter-regional collaboration.

This dispersion indicates that research on workplace ostracism may be increasingly confined to certain regions. Academics in China, Pakistan, South Korea, and Western nations frequently function within distinct academic clusters, likely influenced by variations in institutional networks, cultural settings, publication practices, and theoretical inclinations. The increasing involvement of Asian nations highlights the globalization of workplace ostracism research; nonetheless, insufficient international collaboration may hinder theoretical integration and methodological variety.

From a methodological standpoint, regional silos might result in recurring conceptual frameworks, constrained cross-cultural validation, and diminished comparability among investigations. Given that workplace ostracism is intrinsically shaped by cultural norms of social membership, hierarchy, and interpersonal dynamics, enhanced international collaboration is necessary. Future study would be enhanced by international datasets, cross-cultural comparative designs, and multidisciplinary collaboration among organizational behavior, psychology, and sociology. These initiatives might improve theoretical generalizability and methodological rigor.

5.3. The dominance and limitations of conservation of resources theory

The bibliometric findings reveal the clear theoretical dominance of Conservation of Resources theory in workplace ostracism research. Highly cited publications and keyword co-occurrence analysis consistently indicate that COR has become the primary framework for explaining the psychological and behavioral consequences of workplace ostracism. This finding suggests that resource depletion has become the dominant explanatory perspective within the field.

However, the strong dominance of COR theory also highlights a limitation in the current theoretical development of workplace ostracism research. The emphasis on resource loss has directed considerable attention toward outcomes such as emotional exhaustion, stress, and burnout, whereas interpersonal reciprocity, adaptive responses, and positive coping mechanisms have received comparatively less attention.

These findings imply that future research would benefit from greater theoretical integration rather than continued reliance on a single theoretical perspective. In particular, integrating Social Exchange Theory with COR theory may provide a more comprehensive framework for explaining not only how workplace ostracism depletes employees' psychological resources but also how employees subsequently respond through reciprocal workplace behaviors. Such an integrated perspective may guide future empirical research toward a more balanced understanding of the psychological, behavioral, and relational consequences of workplace ostracism across different organizational and cultural contexts.

5.4. Practical implications for human resource management

The results of this study have several practical implications for human resource management. Considering the increasing evidence that workplace ostracism adversely impacts employee well-being, knowledge sharing, and organizational efficacy, HR managers are essential in recognizing, avoiding, and alleviating exclusionary practices in the workplace.

Initially, HR managers must implement systems for the prompt identification of workplace ostracism. Due to the frequently subtle nature of ostracism, which is challenging to detect in contrast to overt disagreement or harassment, exclusionary acts may go unrecognized for extended durations. Organizations should adopt frequent employee climate surveys, anonymous feedback mechanisms, and psychological risk assessments to detect early warning indicators such as social disengagement, diminished collaboration, and avoidance of communication. This proactive monitoring is substantiated by studies indicating that workplace ostracism has substantial and pervasive effects on employee well-being, work attitudes, and organizational results [25].

Secondly, companies must advocate for inclusive leadership approaches. Given that supervisors profoundly impact team atmosphere and interpersonal dynamics,

leadership training programs ought to include inclusive communication, empathy, equitable treatment, and proactive support for team members. Managers who cultivate inclusive cultures can mitigate exclusionary behaviors and enhance workers' feeling of belonging.

Third, HR professionals can proactively foster psychological safety within teams to mitigate adverse consequences such as knowledge concealment and disengagement. Employees are more inclined to share expertise, express problems, and collaborate when they perceive no threat of social ostracism or interpersonal retribution. Organizations may improve psychological safety by promoting open communication, collaborative problem-solving, and a culture of polite criticism. Previous research has further shown that an inclusive organizational climate can buffer the negative effects of workplace ostracism by supporting employees' psychological needs and reducing dysfunctional workplace behaviors [26].

Ultimately, specialized intervention and support mechanisms must be established for individuals facing workplace ostracism. Human Resources departments may offer counseling services, mentorship programs, conflict resolution, and employee assistance programmes to support impacted individuals. Proactive intervention safeguards employee well-being and diminishes the long-term organizational expenses linked to emotional fatigue, decreased productivity, and attrition.

6. Conclusion

This research performed a bibliometric analysis of workplace ostracism literature utilizing 274 articles obtained from the Scopus database. The study utilized VOS viewer to analyze publishing trends, keyword co-occurrence, bibliographic coupling, co-authorship networks, and patterns of international collaboration.

The research on workplace ostracism has significantly broadened from 2015 to 2025, transforming into a multidisciplinary domain encompassing organizational behavior, psychology, workplace abuse, and employee well-being. Principal study issues encompass emotional exhaustion, stress, turnover intention, job performance, and organizational citizenship behavior, whereas nascent topics like creativity, emotional intelligence, mindfulness, and knowledge concealment indicate potential avenues for further investigation.

The primary conclusion from this study is that research on workplace ostracism has expanded beyond the investigation of immediate negative consequences. The research has progressively focused on comprehending the many psychological, interpersonal, and environmental mechanisms by which ostracism affects employee attitudes and actions. This transition emphasizes that workplace ostracism needs to be seen not just as an interpersonal concern, but as a strategic organizational challenge with considerable ramifications for employee well-being, knowledge sharing, and sustained organizational success.

Notwithstanding the swift expansion of the literature, the discipline continues to be conceptually fragmented and marked by insufficient cross-regional collaboration. Enhanced theoretical integration and robust cross-cultural research are essential to foster a more thorough comprehension of workplace ostracism.

This study enhances the literature by offering a contemporary bibliometric analysis of the conceptual framework and thematic progression of workplace ostracism research. Nonetheless, many limits must be recognized. The study was only based on the Scopus database, potentially excluding pertinent papers indexed in alternative databases like Web of Science, PubMed, or other specialized sources.

Secondly, the search approach employed the precise word “workplace ostracism” to guarantee conceptual accuracy, potentially excluding pertinent research utilizing different language. Subsequent study might mitigate these constraints by integrating various databases, employing expansive keyword methods, doing qualitative content analysis, and facilitating more profound cross-cultural comparisons to enhance the comprehension of workplace ostracism in more digitized and heterogeneous work environments.

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