

# A Phenomenological Study on the Antecedents and Consequences of Organizational Ostracism

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## To cite this article:

Tutar, H., Ozturk Baspinar, N. & Guler, S. (2021). A phenomenological study on the antecedents and consequences of organizational ostracism. *Journal of Qualitative Research in Education*, 28, 331-350. doi: 10.14689/enad.28.14

**Abstract:**Organizational environments are environments where conflicts of interest are intense due to business and human interactions. Various problems are experienced in these environments due to both business and human interaction and interpersonal relations. These problems cause various psychological and physical health problems in the employees and organizational health problems such as reduced job satisfaction and damage to work peace in organizations. This study examined the problem of "organizational ostracism," an example of negative behavior in organizations. The study discussed the causes of ostracism and its effects on the ostracized person. The study was designed according to the descriptive phenomenological pattern, one of the qualitative research designs. The sample of the study was determined according to the purposeful sampling technique. The study data were collected through in-depth interviews from 19 faculty members with different titles and positions working in various departments of public universities. The research results were presented and interpreted as "code," "sub-theme," and "main theme." At the end of the examination, organizational exclusion; It was understood that it was caused by jealousy, ethnic, political and trade union discrimination. The impact of organizational ostracism on the individual excluded; intention to quit, feeling of burnout, and psychosomatic disorders were grouped under the main themes. Findings showed that organizational ostracism harms organizational and individual performance. The research results show that ostracism is an important organizational behavior problem that disrupts organizational and individual health and job satisfaction.

**Keywords:** Organizational ostracism, Descriptive phenomenology, Intention to leave, Purposeful sampling, Loss of motivation

## Article Info

Received: 18 Jan. 2020

Revised: 19 Sept. 2021


Accepted: 23 Sept. 2021


## Article Type

Research

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Declaration of Conflicts of Interests: None

## Introduction

Regardless of the purpose, the success of management in all organizations is measured by the achievement of its goals. Unfortunately, problems such as bullying, organizational conflict, organizational silence, cynicism, and organizational ostracism can cause organizations to deviate from their goals. In addition to competitive pressures, these organizational behaviors that lead to conflict between employees are unproductive work behaviors. One of the unproductive work behaviors in organizations is organizational ostracism. Organizational ostracism, practiced in the form of neglect, abandonment, or deprivation, is a problematic organizational behavior that harms employees and the organization. Organizational ostracism leads to a decline in employee performance and a decline in organizational productivity. For this reason, it is important to study the phenomenon of organizational ostracism that has a negative impact on individual performance and organizational productivity.

The starting point of the concept of ostracism is the practice of "ostrakismos" in the Athens city-state. The first written examples of ostracism BC. 5. The voting made by Athenians by writing names on pottery pieces was called "ostrakismos." In this voting, the Athenians would decide whether the rulers, who were enriched with unfair gains, used manipulative techniques to achieve undeserved positions. The practice of ostrakismos was also used to decide whether rulers had made unfair gains by abusing their duties. Because of the voting, it was decided to either continue their duties or be exiled (Harvey et al., 2018: 2). Similar ostracism was held in Sicily in 454 BC., and voters voted for the person to be excluded by writing on olive leaves (Williams, 2007: 425). The first person who talked about ostracism was Lenoir, the Chirac government's state in France in the contemporary era. According to Sapancali (2005: 13), the minister who was responsible for the social affairs used the concept of ostracism to describe disadvantaged French citizens who could not benefit from the results of economic growth, and this concept was used by practitioners, bureaucrats, academics, and journalists to speak of the poor in that period.

In terms of organizational behavior, ostracism is that the organization's managers and the people around him cut the communication and interaction with the excluded person and subject him to isolation. Organizational ostracism is not just a matter of perception, and there are concrete indications such as being deprived of rights and opportunities, being ignored, not being invited to activities. Ostracism is the behavior of ignoring an employee and sometimes a group, preventing access to the ostracized rights, making harmful discrimination about them, and excluding them from organizational and social processes (Williams, 2007: 425). Ostracism may appear in many ways, such as ignorance, insensible and cold behaviors, avoidance, being unaware, and ostracism from the group, prompting loneliness, dismissal, and silencing (Yildirim & Akin, 2018: 428). Many people may be subject to organizational ostracism; in practice, it is usually the head of the organization or department who groans. However, the ostracized person is usually an individual who is weakened in the face of management's power and whose

dignity and reputation are under attack. In organizational ostracism, while the ostracized person is single, the ostracizer can usually be more than one person. In the incident of ostracism, the ostracized and the ostracizer sometimes switch places, the ostracized can be the ostracizer, and the ostracizer ones can be ostracized (Harding, 2013: 14). The responses to ostracism are shown in three ways. The first one is the negative response, the second is to remain silent, and the third is to react positively. Negative reactions can be experienced in the form of aggressive behaviors, dismissal, absence, or resignation. Ostracism, introversion can create an increase in the perception of loneliness and withdrawal. The third form of response may be in a way where the ostracized makes themselves more equipped in the presence of ostracism and victimization situations by utilizing their abilities more, acting more rationally. To demonstrate this latest attitude and behavior, the ostracized person should not internalize the current situation and not lose their self-esteem while being ostracized.

The theoretical framework of this study has been based on "social pain theory." As it is known, the social pain theory developed by MacDonald and Leary (2005: 211) focuses on sensation and affect. The social pain theory focuses on ostracism's psychosomatic consequences on the ostracized individuals from their immediate surroundings. While "pain sensation" in theory focuses on "physical pain" experienced by the ostracized individual, the second component of the theory as "pain effect" focuses on the "psychological" and "emotional situations" experienced by the ostracized individuals (MacDonald & Leary, 2005: 207; Price, 2000: 1771). The sense of pain in the social pain theory explains the individual's responses to the threat of ostracism. Social pain theory suggests that if the individual feels a sense of victimization due to ostracism, he will experience the negative consequences in their work life and social life.

## **Conceptual Framework**

Ostracism is a state where one cannot find the opportunity to engage in a social relationship or social interaction consciously and is deliberately deprived of the processes to be involved (Harvey et al., 2018: 2). Organizational ostracism is an isolated situation resulting from all kinds of maltreatment carried out systematically intended for the hurting, frightening, intimidating, and suspending the ostracized individual by harassing them (Williams & Gerber, 2004: 359). Organizational ostracism is a process of alienation by preventing individuals from accessing their rights, sometimes depriving them of organizational opportunities by discriminating, prompting them into loneliness, which damages other people who want to establish relationships ostracized ones (Twenge et al., 2001: 1058). In the process of ostracism, people are on the side of the ostracizer who is more powerful without taking into account that they may be subjected to the same treatment over time, and they present explicitly or implicitly that the ostracized individual is not liked, unwanted, or even communicating with him/her is an undesired situation (Twenge et al., 2001: 1059). The ostracized individual can benefit from the organizational opportunities at the minimum level by being kept away from all kinds of opportunities and is forced to do the most challenging and

unpleasant tasks. Employees of the organization avoid individual and social relationships with the ostracized individual (Robinson et al., 2013: 203) or communicate reluctantly. It is felt in organizations that being close to the ostracizing person will give employees of the organization strength and reputation, and being close to the ostracized person will make them weak, and this is projected even to the best friends of these employees (Hitlan et al., 2006: 217). Other people who do not have any problems with the ostracized one try to increase their reputation by taking the side with the ostracizing, which they consider more important in terms of relative power and authority. This situation is a cause of psychological pain that is difficult to endure for the ostracized. For the individual who has lost contact with his superiors and people in equal positions or sometimes even with his subordinates, the workplace turns into a semi-open prison, and they are condemned to a form of civil death in terms of his/her rights and relations.

Organizational ostracism is also called passive aggression or cold violence since it is not directly noticeable and is presented by the ostracizers but is not clearly shown (Liu & Xia, 2016: 198; Zhao et al., 2013: 220). Organizational ostracism is manifested as being disregarded by others in the workplace (Leung et al., 2011: 837) being ignored by other employees (Celik & Kosar, 2015: 47; Zhao et al., 2013: 220) being alienated from organizational social relations (Ferris et al., 2008: 1348), limitation of the utilization of all the rights of the person including even their rights, and the avoidance of communication and interaction with the ostracized one. In the case of ostracism, which is also called social and civil death (Williams, 2007: 236), the ostracized person is treated as if they are absent (Chung, 2015: 368). Even the ostracized person's closest friends want to feel safe by paying attention not to be seen together with the ostracized in the ostracism process. This situation works only for the ostracizer; when they are ostracized in the future, they will be deprived of their friends to establish a relationship as well as they will be weak against the ostracized.

Organizational ostracism can occur by combining multiple causes, and its effect on the ostracized individual may be different. As a matter of course, the effect of ostracism applied by one person and one cause on the employee may be more delicate than the perception of organizational ostracism applied by a group with multiple reasons (Pelit, 2008: 11). Whether ostracism is a "perception" or a "phenomenon" is unnecessary in the subject's research. Ostracism is not a felt or perceived situation, but a reality experienced and exists (Leung et al., 2011: 837; Tutar, 2014: 238). Behind the case of ostracism, there may be situations caused by the ostracized jealousy or the effect of having a superior or a weak character of the individual (Robinson et al., 2013: 210-211). Regardless of the reason and the consequences, organizational ostracism is a situation that is always related to the lack of recognition of desired behavior and the occurrence of undesirable behaviors and decisions. Ostracism threatens an individual's self-esteem, belonging, self-control, self-perception, and psychological well-being. In the process of ostracism of the ostracized individuals, respect, appreciation or acceptance, belonging, identity, and security needs are ignored. The individual is deprived of social support and loses organizational trust (Birch, 1998: 159). MacDonald and Leary (2005: 203) identify the possible forms of behaviors in the process of

ostracism as follows: The ostracized individual cannot access the information they need; therefore, the individual lacks the informational support. On the other hand, since the ostracizers avoid listening to, understanding, and empathizing with the ostracized person, they are deprived of emotional support. The individual is deprived of all kinds of material and moral opportunities and receiving instrumental support. The need for appreciation of the ostracized person is not met by not giving feedback and not appreciating the success. Therefore, when an individual cannot receive support from the psychological environment in which they are, even when they are ostracized, the ostracized is forced to suffer from social pain or social sorrow. Ostracism threatens the individuals' sense of belonging; they are forced to move away from the group and organization (Ferris et al., 2008: 1349). In any case, the individual is forced to persuade the people around them that he is innocent and has done nothing wrong.

Ostracism causes negative emotions such as loneliness, sadness, jealousy, shame, guilt, or social anxiety. To a reasonable extent, people need to know what their presence means to other people around them. However, during organizational ostracism, the individual is ignored and treated as if they are not there. It is not easy to be in a state of psychological well-being, feel safe, and fulfill the need for belonging when a person is physically there but treated as if they are the need for belonging when a person is physically there but treated as forgotten or treated as forgotten or as a civil dead. At the same time, they are alive. O'Reilly et al. (2014: 774) found a negative relationship between ostracism and the sense of belonging, self-esteem, emotional participation, and psychological introversion. According to Liu and Xia (2016: 197), organizational ostracism leads to some results such as emotional exhaustion, high tension in the workplace, depression, and low job satisfaction. Emotional exhaustion is one of the important results of ostracism in this study. According to the research done by Wu et al. (2015: 1), it is understood that employees who are highly ostracized in organizations have relatively low levels of organizational identification and are less willing about organizational citizenship behaviors.

The ostracized person should maintain self-control and not lose self-esteem in the process of ostracism without presenting signs of shame, guilt, or weakness (MacDonald & Leary, 2005). In this process, the individual needs to empower himself by showing psychological endurance. The ostracized individual needs to try to maintain self-control without losing their social support. The damage of the misconduct behaviors in this process is more significant than the usual processes. For this reason, it is important that the ostracized individual compromise with his environment rather than contradict it by organizational ostracism. Neither fear nor aggressive behavior is appropriate for the ostracized individual during the ostracization process.

On the contrary, the excluded individual should continue his normal life by showing that he does not care about ostracism. He should even try to increase his psychological resilience by pursuing creative innovations (Ferris et al., 2008: 1349; Wu et al., 2012: 178). Ostracism cannot be overcome by showing excessive anxiety and neurotic behaviors and being isolated by getting away from social processes in the process of

ostracism (Chen, et.al., 2012: 1030; Miller et al., 2014: 8; Wu et al., 2011: 24). Changing organizations or moving away from the environment may be a temporary solution. Still, changing organizations in every case of ostracism can lead to the individual's "unsteady" image (Haq, 2014: 1309; Lichtenberger& Jagacinski, 2010: 283). It is possible to have psychological stability without reducing job satisfaction, falling into despair (Leung et al., 2011: 836; Ramsey& Jones, 2015: 25), without losing self-esteem, moving away from goals and objectives, without losing performance instead of by working more, experiencing "happiness of success." In cases where ostracism's uncertainty is high, the ostracized individuals can increase their social support by showing more devoting behaviors towards the ostracizing group or people to regain a group member's status.

Because organizational ostracism is not a simple and insignificant lack of communication and interaction, organizational ostracism causes the employee to be unable to establish a healthy relationship with his social environment, feel a sense of belonging to the organization, and lose control over his environment. Therefore, it has been demonstrated by various studies that organizational ostracism has a high cost not only for the ostracized individual but also for the organization (Hitlan et al., 2015: 2). According to the studies examining the results of organizational ostracism; it reduces the perception of organizational justice (Izci, 2018; Poon& Chen, 2014), weakens the perception of organizational support (Turunc& Avci, 2015: 57), reduces organizational productivity, disrupts organizational climate and increases employee turnover rate (Soybali & Pelit, 2018). Ostracism can harm individuals physiologically, emotionally and cognitively, and discourage people from working, and as Eickholt and Goodboy (2017:139) note, it has a negative impact on organizational productivity. As a social and psychological being, individuals also need to feel they belong and build relationships, eat, drink and have a roof over their heads. Ostracism leaves individuals with the negative feelings that their above needs are not being met.

1. What kind of ostracism have you experienced in your professional life, and who were the parties to this event?
2. What are the reasons for the ostracism you experienced?
3. What was the impact of ostracism on your health?
4. What was the impact of ostracism on your attitude and performance towards the organization?

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

This study has been designed as qualitative research since it is more appropriate for understanding the facts in their context. "Descriptive phenomenologic design" among qualitative research patterns was chosen in the study since it is more convenient to see what meanings the participants have attributed to their experiences and how they reflect these experiences (Creswell, 1998: 51; Merriam, 2013: 21; Patton, 2014: 104).



Another reason for choosing this pattern is that the phenomenological pattern is suitable for projecting "human experiences in the natural environment realistically and holistically. Another reason for this pattern's preference is that the subjects covered by this pattern are suitable for understanding the implied information related to the individual experiences (Miles & Huberman, 2015: 11; Moustakas, 1994; Reiners, 2012: 2; Van Manen, 2014: 27). Additionally, considering the research's aim, fiction, and questions, it has been decided that the descriptive phenomenological pattern was appropriate.

## Study Group

As the study group in phenomenological studies should consist of individuals and groups who have 'experience' of the focused topic of the study and can reflect their experiences (Creswell, 2012; Smith & Eatough, 2007: 35; Tutar & Erdem, 2020: 469), the individuals in this study group, consisting of 19 people, were selected from people working at different universities and found through sympathetic contacts to have 'experience of organizational exclusion'. In determining the study group, the criterion-based sampling technique was preferred, one of the techniques commonly used in qualitative research. In this preference, it is convenient to collect in-depth information from the data sources as well as being appropriate of the criterion sampling for the researcher to act from their observations and being suitable for the research problem (Charmaz, 2011: 359; Maxwell, 1996: 43; Neuman, 2012: 320; Patton, 1990). In determining the criteria, experiencing the research phenomenon (ostracism) (Miles & Huberman, 2015: 11) is required. The study participants are coded as P1, P2, P3, and Pn and shown in Table 1.

**Table 1.**

*Demographic Properties of the Participants*

Participants Code	Title	Marital Status	Age	Gender	Term of Office
P1	Prof.Dr.	Married	56	Female	30
P2	Assoc. Prof. Dr.	Married	49	Male	20
P3	Dr.	Single	50	Female	10
P4	Prof.Dr.	Married	53	Male	25
P5	Prof.Dr.	Married	30	Female	23
P6	Assoc. Prof. Dr.	Married	41	Male	14
P7	Dr.	Single	61	Female	29
P8	Prof.Dr.	Single	50	Male	25
P9	Assoc. Prof. Dr.	Married	46	Male	18
P10	Dr.	Married	32	Female	11
P11	Prof.Dr.	Single	28	Female	26
P12	Assoc. Prof. Dr.	Single	36	Male	22
P13	Prof.Dr.	Married	32	Male	28
P14	Dr.	Single	28	Male	14
P15	Prof.Dr.	Single	26	Male	22
P16	Assoc. Prof. Dr.	Single	28	Female	14
P17	Prof.Dr.	Single	30	Female	27
P18	Prof.Dr.	Married	54	Male	30
P19	Prof.Dr.	Married	47	Male	23

## Data Collection and Procedure

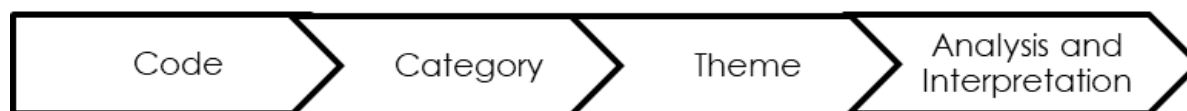
Since the qualitative research data units are words, the descriptive phenomenological design was preferred to decipher the participants' experiences related to the research subject. For this purpose, the data obtained from the participants were recorded as interview notes. In this way, to enable participants to convey their experiences from their perspectives was prioritized (Bryman, 2004; Cohen et al., 2007; Merriam, 2013: 83). The interview technique (Greasley & Ashworth, 2007: 821; Smith & Eatough, 2007: 35) was preferred in the research since it allows participants to reflect how they attribute meaning to the reality (phenomenon) in their own words.

## Data Analysis

In the analysis of the data; a process consisting of defining the phenomenon, arranging the data collection tool, collecting the data, interpreting the data after being analyzed, and its reflection on the report was followed (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Mayring, 2011: 112; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010: 368). The data analysis process is shown in fig.1. Coding following the notions obtained from the data" approach proposed by Strauss and Corbin (1998) was preferred in coding in the analysis. This preference is based on the idea that referring to the participant himself rather than the researcher's statement is more effective in revealing the participant's mind map. Participants' interview notes were categorized into participant number, frequency, code, subtopic, and major themes according to content analysis. Sub-themes were obtained by grouping the code among themselves by the meaning similarities and a particular pattern (Cozby, 1989: 28; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010: 368; Neuman, 2012: 668), and "main themes" have been reached by considering the meaning content of sub-themes.

**Figure 1.**

Data Analysis Process



Since descriptive phenomenological data analysis is generally based on the description of experiences by transforming them into main themes (Ersoy, 2016: 53), the objective evaluation as a result of the content analysis of the research and revealing the hidden (implied) information rather than the content that appears at first glance are tried to be performed (Creswell, 2003: 190; Sommer & Sommer, 1986: 152). Finally, research data is reported through an unenjoyable analysis plan appropriate for its purpose and a general approach.



## Results

The participants' opinions about the reasons and results of organizational ostracism collected through the interview form are shown in the following tables in the forms of descriptive contents code, sub-themes, and main themes. The first sub-question of the research has been asked as in the following form what kind of ostracism you have encountered so far in your professional life, and by whom is this ostracism made. This question's main purpose is to determine what kind of ostracism the participant is exposed to, and by whom it is made, and the consequences of the ostracism. Analysis of Table 2 shows that the opinions of the excluded are grouped under the sub-themes of 'exclusion, disability and neglect' and 'various business and workplace problems', and under the 'main theme' of 'incarceration and organizational conflict'. When the codes and sub-themes are evaluated altogether, it is understood that the participants agree on the common opinion that the phenomenon of ostracism originates from their superiors.

The second sub-question of the research was, "In your opinion, what are the reasons for the ostracism you experienced?" This question's main purpose is to determine whether the ostracized individual thinks him/herself responsible for the event of ostracism. Besides, it was also tried to determine whether there is a common belief among ostracized individuals. The descriptive expressions related to this question are shown in Table 2. It can be seen that the participants' opinions on this question are grouped under the sub-themes "jealousy, envy, interference in private life, fidelity to principle" and "discrimination based on ethnic, political and trade union affiliation" and the main theme "jealousy, ethnic, political and trade union discrimination". It is seen that the participants agree that jealousy and discrimination play an important role in organizational ostracism.

**Table 2.**

*Participant Opinions on the Types and Agents of Ostracism and Reasons of Ostracism*

Contents	Code	Sub-themes	Main Themes
Other faculty members obstructed my academic studies. They kept on being together in various projects by not letting me in. P7	Obstructions	Being ostracized	Detention and organizational conflict
I was having trouble on official leave time. P8	Ignorance	Hindrance	
They ignored me at work. They did not invite me to their table. When I went to their tables, they did not chat with me. P9 As I was advancing in my career, I was frequently ostracized, neglected, and postponed acquiring my rights. P11	Not greeting Career barrier	And Neglecting	

<p>I was forced to sit in the same room with the people I did not want. My place of duty was changed. I was sent from the faculty to the Lessons that I was not qualified for were assigned to me. I had to wait two years for my staff to be assigned. P12</p>		
<p>Sniping, sarcasm or just the opposite, ignoring. P14</p>	<p>Force to work in an environment where one is not wanted</p>	<p>Various business and workplace problems</p>
<p>Some people among my colleagues thought that I was useless, unneeded, and jealous of me. P15</p>		
<p>I was admonished among people. I was slandered that I was not competent in my duty. P16</p>	<p>Change in the place of duty</p>	
<p>My managers ostracised me. I was relegated from the faculty to a vocational college outside the city. I was not invited to the meetings in my science department. I did not get lessons from the faculty. No courses were given at the institute. Thesis counselling was not provided. Restrictions on my participation in scientific meetings abroad were imposed. P17</p>	<p>Slander</p>	
<p>Since the executives did not like their subordinates, who were more qualified than themselves, I was ostracised. The fear of losing their power caused me to be ostracised. P3</p>		
<p>I was ostracised because I was transferred from an official post to become an instructor. My private life interfered, and I was also ostracised since I got divorced. P5</p>	<p>Jealousy</p>	<p>Jealousy, envy, interference in private life, being principled</p>
<p>I completed an MBA program in the USA. They envied me, and I was ostracised. P12</p>	<p>Envy</p>	
	<p>Not to become a man for all seasons</p>	
<p>I am a constantly producing person; I have many international works and have partnerships in international projects. My financial situation is good. For these reasons, they envied me, and I was ostracised. P13</p>	<p>Interference in private life</p>	
<p>I stood out because I was a member of the Purple Roof 'Women's Shelter Foundation. P9</p>		
<p>There was but one reason for my ostracism. That a relative of mine was a rival to the present manager. I was ostracised because my relative applied for the administration. P7</p>	<p>Being ostracised due to some other people, Clicking in the workplace</p>	<p>Discrimination due to ethnic</p>
<p>I was observing that there were various clicks in the unit where I work. These clicks ostracised me. I did not care, so I stopped communicating with them. P10</p>		
<p>I was ostracised for reasons related to trade unions and politics. Not being a member of the trade union of which the manager was a member caused me to be ostracised. P6</p>	<p>Political and trade union discrimination</p>	<p>Politics and trade union</p>
<p>I was ostracised because of not being a man of every season, not being a member of their union, their prejudices. P4</p>	<p>Ethical discrimination</p>	
<p>I think I was ostracised because of my ethnicity. There were people favored because of their ethnic origin. P2</p>		

Jealousy, ethnic, political and trade union discrimination

When Table 2 is examined, what kind of ostracism have you experienced in your professional life? Who were the parties to the ostracism? What do you think were the reasons for the ostracism? In their answers to their questions, it was understood that managers generally initiated the ostracism situation and people from their close circle joined it. Others are the reasons people participate in ostracism; jealousy was understood to be the manager's desire to take advantage of the authority, position, and resource allocation power. Participants stated that ostracism was sometimes because of being principled, sometimes not having the same political and ideological views, and sometimes they were ostracized because they were more qualified than their superiors, and executives perceived these participants as threats. Participants expressed their opinions on the sub-problem of the research with the following descriptive statements:

My colleagues ostracised me due to my academic studies. P7

As I was advancing in my career, acquiring my rights was always restrained or postponed. P11

People who envied me among my colleagues presented this envy by ostracising me. P15

Executives saw me as a rival, and their fear of losing power caused me to be ostracised. P3

I am a constantly producing person; I have many international works and have partnerships in international projects. My financial situation is good. For these reasons, they envied me, and I was ostracised. P13

I was observing that there were various clicks in the unit where I work. These clicks ostracised me. I did not care, so I stopped communicating with them. P10

I was ostracised due to ethnicity and preferences related to trade unions and politics. Not being a member of the trade union of which the executive was a member caused me to be ostracised P6, P2

I was ostracised because of not being a man of every season and a member of their trade union P4

The third sub-question of the research was: What was ostracism's effect on your physical, mental, and psychological health? This question's main purpose is to determine whether they experience the sensational pain and emotional pain that constitute the social pain on which this research's theoretical basis is based. It is understood from the answers that the participants experienced both "sensational" and "emotional" pain as expressed in social pain theory. Descriptive statements obtained related to this question are given in Table 3. It is seen that the views of the participants on this question are collected under the sub-themes of "Various injustices" and "loss of morale and motivation," and "deterioration of physical health," and the main theme of psychosomatic disorders. The participants stated that ostracism made them miserable both physically and psychologically and caused various psychosomatic disorders.

The fourth sub-question of the study was ostracism's effect on organizational commitment, sense of organizational belonging, intention to quit, performance, and productivity. The main purpose of asking this question is to reveal the individual and

organizational cost of organizational ostracism. Regarding this question, descriptive statements obtained from the participants are shown in Table 3. As it can be understood from the descriptive statements, organizational ostracism had physical and psychological (psychosomatic) effects on the participants. It can be seen that the participants' opinions on this question are collected under the subthemes "Intention to quit" and "Intimidation, loss of confidence and feeling burnt out" as well as under the main theme "Intention to quit with feeling burnt out".

**Table 3.**

*Individual and Organizational Effects of Ostracism: Content, Code, Sub-themes and Main Themes*

Contents	Code	Sub-themes	Main Themes
I felt I was aggrieved. I got into the psychology of resentment and saturninity. This situation lasted for almost three years. P2			
My psychological health deteriorated. I have made numerous complaints to every authority I can reach. But I did not obtain any results for my complaints. P3	Injustice		
There were times when I felt very lonely and very worthless because of ostracism. It had negative effects on my psychological health. I had to get psychological support from time to time. I even had to go to a psychiatrist and used antidepressants for a long time. The deterioration of my psychological health also affected my physical health. I had constant back pain. I was diagnosed as psychosomatic. P4	Psychological health Feeling of unworthiness Antidepressants Silence	Injustice Deterioration of Psychological Health	
My colleagues avoided me not being caught by the manager. I retired into my shell. I became an introverted and quiet person. P7	Introversion		
I got affected psychologically. I was afraid to talk with the fear of being attacked that I would be attacked and ostracised with various reactions if I talked. P8			
I constantly feel sick because of depression. I have aches all over my body. Even though I am fine until I get to the campus gate, I get in a bad mood when I enter the door and get sick. I sometimes have a tachycardia problem. My hands are shaking. P10	Depression and decrease in motivation Loneliness		
The feeling of loneliness is deteriorating my psychological health. I am eating alone. I go to events such as congresses and symposiums abroad alone. I try to avoid my loneliness by working harder, producing more. P14	Isolation Physical problems	Depression and decrease in motivation Physical problems	
My physical health deteriorated due to the depression through being ostracised. I have had back and lumbar pain; I even had a sore back. According to doctors, this is due to a lack of emotional support. I used muscle relaxant needles because of	Emotional Support Muscle Relaxant		Psychosomatic Disorders

my frequent sore back problems. My cigarette consumption increased considerably. P15	Lose interest in the job		
My psychological and physical health deteriorated due to ostracism. P17			
My performance and motivation have decreased. I quit my academic studies. P6			
I thought this punishment that I did not deserve would end one day. My performance decreased, and the delay for the staff I deserved was very effective on this. P1			
I intend to leave the workplace if not work itself.P2	Intention to leave work		
I have no intention of quitting, and I have an intention to retire. I plan to retire and be retired from the age margin at a private university. P5	Retirement thought		
I am sick and tired of being ostracised all the time. Now my only goal is to get my pension. I do not want to work one more day. I have already quit my academic studies. If I do not have a class, I even do not want to come to the workplace. I do not want to attend meetings at the institution. I do not want to see or meet anyone. P8	Intimidation Feeling alienated from work and workplace	Intention to leave work Intimidation,	
I did not get any results related to my complaints, so I changed my university. There is no such thing as organizational commitment and organizational belonging in such an environment. P9	Change of workplace		
Indeed, it is not something to be tolerated, but there is little time for me to be assigned for my new position, so I am not thinking of quitting.P10	Resistance and defiance		
I will not quit; I belong here; let those who do not belong here go. However, I lost my motivation due to ostracism. I am trying not to stop by my office apart from my class hours.P13	Feeling alienated from work	Intimidation	
I have had too much depression. It is hard for me to focus on myself, my classes and my students.P14	Loss of trust	Loss of trust	
My motivation has been decreasing. I feel bad. I feel less confident. I feel tired, exhausted and burned-out. P15	Feeling of burnout	Burnout	
Even though I was depressed, I continued my academic studies more ambitiously to stop these injustices one day. P17	Focusing more on the duties		

Intention to leave the work with the sense of burnout

When Table 3 was examined, it was seen that the answers they gave to the questions "What is the effect of ostracism on your physical and psychological health" and "What is the effect of ostracism on organizational commitment, intention to leave, and performance" were negative. It is understood from participant views that organizational ostracism causes various psychosomatic problems in individuals. Also, the participants claimed that ostracism caused decreased individual performance due to low morale and motivation. It has been stated that treatment expenses are an important problem to

be addressed in this context. Furthermore, it is believed to weaken employees' organizational commitment and sense of citizenship and strengthen their intention to quit feeling burnt out. Participants commented as follows on the impact of ostracism on individuals and organizations:

My performance decreased, and the delay in the assignment of the position I deserved was very effective. P1, P2

I'm sick and tired of being ostracised all the time. Now my only goal is to get the right for my pension. I do not want to work one more day. I have already given up my academic studies. If I did not have a class, I do not want to come to my place of duty. I do not want to attend the meetings at the institution. I do not want to see or meet anyone. P8

I have had too much depression. It is hard for me to focus on my classes and students. P14

My motivation has been decreasing. I feel bad. I have less confidence in myself. I feel tired, exhausted, and burned out. P15

It is also understood that some participants, on the other hand, consider the phenomenon of ostracism on a more rational basis, preserving their self-esteem and psychological substantiality, they make it a way of resisting ostracism, and even they make ostracism a means of benefiting more from their potential.

I will not quit. I belong here; let those who do not belong here go. However, I lost my motivation due to ostracism. I am trying not to stop by my office except for my class hours. P13

Even though I was depressed, I continued my academic studies more ambitiously to stop these injustices one day. P17

The participants' attitudes and behaviors towards ostracism expressed here are undoubtedly the healthiest coping methods. The fact that these two participants preferred the tactic of "fight" between the tactics of "fight" or "run" that people implemented in the face of psychological or physical attacks is an admirable situation, but the fact that those who escaped from the front line were injured more than the ones stayed in the front line should not be ignored.

## **Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations**

As it can be understood from the participant statements above, although it is not clear, there are many causes of organizational ostracism, such as discrimination related to ethnicity, politics, trade union, jealousy, intimidation, and envy. Especially inadequate awareness related to the managers' justice, their competitive feelings, jealousy, their desire to control, personal arguments, communication problems, and ideological causes can lead to the emergence of the phenomenon of ostracism. Perhaps the most important of all these causes is the idea of trying to change the victim's behaviors and keeping them under control. Ostracizing person or groups: have a desire to punish the target whom they are uncomfortable with not accidentally, rather intentionally,



deliberately, and consciously. Nezlek et al. (2015: 439) found out that ostracism was performed to punish at the highest rate while the reason at the second rate was to be a protectionist/defender. An interesting result of the relevant study is that the self-esteem of those who perform ostracism behavior for punishment is higher than those who ostracize. In fact, in the study carried out by Wang (2014: 25), it was understood that the effect of five factors personality traits on ostracism, especially openness to experience and extroversion, significantly predict ostracism in the workplace. According to this, openness to experience predicts ostracism positively at work; meanwhile, extroversion predicts negative ostracism. According to another study (Adaman & Keyder, 2006: 25; Wu et al., 2011: 23), there was a negative relationship between ostracism and extraversion and conformist personality traits, and a positive relationship between ostracism and neurotic personality traits. All these results show that personal characteristics are an important cause of organizational ostracism.

**Theoretical implications.** Among the reasons for ostracism in this study, factors such as ethnicity, belief, cultural values, political opinion, being a member of a group that is seen as marginal in the community, and gender can cause ostracism. Erdemli and Kurum (2019: 18) established in the study that the causes of ostracism were that the incidents of ostracism in schools were mostly caused by trade union/political views. According to the studies carried out by Celik and Kosar (2015: 47), with academic and administrative staff in universities, men are subjected to ostracism more than women. Another study found out that female academicians are subjected to ostracism more than male academicians (Zimmerman et al., 2016: 1). According to the study of Hitlan et al. (2006: 217), ostracism's effect on business behavior and psychological health varies by gender. Accordingly, high levels of ostracism have a deeper negative impact on business manners and men's psychological health than women. Responses of people towards ostracism vary by gender. According to this, while women who have been ostracized can overcome this socially, ostracized men perform social loafing (Williams & Sommer, 1997: 693). Based on the findings and theoretical assumptions, it can be said that personality traits affect ostracism.

**Practical implications.** The hierarchical structure of organizations, which is one reason for organizational ostracism, also affects the workplace's ostracism behaviors. Strict and vertical hierarchy can control or suppress others' behavior by more powerful and empowered members in the organization. On the other hand, since the people working in a flat and horizontal structure have the same authority, they do not try to change or control each other's behaviors. (Robinson et al., 2013: 203). Organizational reasons of ostracism can include organizational culture and climate. There is a high probability of ostracism in a business environment where the organizational climate is tense and competitive organizational culture is dominant. According to the study by Celik and Kosar (2015: 47), it is understood that those who adopt the organizational culture, support organizational activities, and have positive feelings towards the organization are less ostracized in the workplace. Vega and Brennan (2000: 468) stated in their study on organizational isolation that factors such as organizational culture, external control, and integration with society, the significance of work, group norms, power level, group

values, and interaction of colleagues, authority, face-to-face interaction and significant feedback effect ostracism in organizations.

From the participants' statements, organizational ostracism destroys their reputation, their success is ignored by depriving them of their rights, their trust in colleagues, workplace and manager decreases, and they experience "sensory" and "emotional" pain in an anxious mood and under extreme stress. Along with the sense of isolation comes the realization that individuals must try harder than anyone else to be accepted in the workplace. The participants' psychosomatic disorders due to ostracism indicate that their work and private sensations are damaged by ostracism. Besides, as the research on the subject reveals, when ostracism increases, the individual's ability to regulate their behavior decreases, and he/she shows anti-productive behaviors through antagonistic feelings. Abasli (2018: 161) established through his study that as the level of organizational ostracism increased, the alienation level of teachers increased. In the research of Yilmaz and Akgun (2019: 1147) on organizational ostracism and organizational adjustment perceptions of teachers, it was found out that as the level of organizational ostracism decreased, their organizational adaptation level decreases. Wu et al. (2011: 23) found out that they conducted a negative relationship between organizational ostracism and employee performance. A similar study stated a negative relationship between organizational ostracism and individual performance, and the participation in ostracized individuals' work was low (Leung et al., 2011: 836). It is understood that organizational ostracism increases work stress, especially by reducing intrinsic motivation and strengthening the intention to quit.

**Limitations and suggestions for future studies.** This study was limited to universities, with a limited sample mass and participants subject to organizational ostracism through qualitative data. The research should be repeated in other institutions comparatively with quantitative, mixed, and meta-synthesis and meta-analysis research, and the results should be compared. Additionally, the study was limited to the ostracized assumption that the subordinates in the organizational hierarchy are usually the ones that are ostracized in the ostracism cases. It may be important to repeat the research on the ostracizers in terms of reaching a common opinion.

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