


The Role of Psychological Capital in Moderating the Influence of Workplace Ostracism on Counterproductive Work Behaviors Through Organizational Cynicism

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| Article Info | ABSTRACT |
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| <p>Article history: Received 15 July 2025 Revised 18 July 2025 Accepted 20 July 2025</p> <p>Keywords: The concepts of workplace ostracism, organizational cynicism, psychological capital, and counterproductive work behavior are interconnected.</p> | <p>This study aims to investigate the relationship between workplace ostracism, organizational cynicism, psychological capital, and counterproductive work behavior (CWB). Data were collected through questionnaires distributed to 120 members of the New Indonesian Expedition Cooperative in Wonosobo, Central Java. The study shows that workplace ostracism has a significant negative impact on counterproductive work behavior. Organizational cynicism serves as a significant mediator in the relationship between workplace ostracism and counterproductive work behavior. However, psychological capital does not show a significant moderating role in weakening the impact of organizational cynicism on counterproductive work behavior. The results of this study emphasize the importance of management efforts in addressing workplace ostracism and reducing organizational cynicism to mitigate counterproductive work behavior.</p> |
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1. Introduction

In the context of the work environment, counterproductive work behavior (CWB) is a serious concern for organizations, as it can harm productivity and employee well-being, as well as cause significant financial losses (Saif et al., 2021). One of the factors identified as a cause of CWB is work ostracism, or exclusionary treatment in the workplace (Shattla et al., 2025). Work ostracism is the subjective experience of individuals feeling ignored, avoided, or excluded by coworkers or supervisors in a work context (Robinson et al., 2013). According

Journal homepage: <http://www.jurnal.stmikiba.ac.id/index.php/jiem>

to the JD-R theory, when job demands are high and job resources are low, employees are more likely to experience stress, burnout, and job dissatisfaction. This can also increase the likelihood of CWB. Conversely, when job demands are low and job resources are high, employees are more likely to experience positive health and well-being and have lower turnover intentions.

This situation is currently being experienced by the New Indonesian Expedition Cooperative, established in 2022, which still faces various challenges as a new institution. Some of the main issues include standard operating procedures (SOPs), where employees feel marginalized and lose trust in the company, resulting in counterproductive behavior in the workplace. Factors such as lack of clarity in operational procedures, heavy workloads, inadequate compensation, and improper placement of employees based on their capabilities are the primary causes of this distrust, thereby increasing stress levels among cooperative members. This situation creates uncertainty among team members and negatively impacts the overall performance of the company. Meanwhile, the Minister of Cooperatives and Small and Medium Enterprises Regulation Number 8 of 2021 on Multi-Party Cooperative Models does not provide adequate guidelines, making it difficult to develop an effective system in the company.

Based on the Social Exchange Theory (SET) introduced by Blau (1964), the relationship between employees and organizations is grounded in the principle of reciprocity, where employees expect fair treatment in return for their contributions. In organizational contexts, perceptions of fairness play a crucial role in shaping employee satisfaction and commitment. When employees perceive unfair treatment, they may respond with negative attitudes and behaviors, including feelings of exclusion (work ostracism), heightened organizational cynicism, and a greater tendency to engage in counterproductive work behavior (CWB). Work ostracism, as a form of social exclusion, can weaken an employee's sense of belonging and reduce their engagement with the organization. Over time, such experiences may give rise to organizational cynicism, which reflects negative attitudes characterized by distrust, disappointment, and skepticism toward the organization. However, individuals do not respond to negative experiences in the same way. Psychological capital, which consists of hope, self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism, serves as an internal resource that helps employees cope with workplace adversity. This positive psychological state is expected to moderate the relationship between organizational cynicism and counterproductive work behavior by reducing the likelihood of negative behavioral outcomes.

This study aims to examine the effect of work ostracism on counterproductive work behavior among employees of the Ekspedisi Indonesia Baru Cooperative. It specifically investigates the mediating role of organizational cynicism in the relationship between workplace exclusion and deviant behavior, and it explores the moderating role of psychological capital in mitigating the negative influence of cynicism on behavioral outcomes. The results of this study are expected to provide both theoretical contributions and practical implications for

understanding the psychological mechanisms underlying counterproductive behavior in the workplace, particularly within cooperative organizations.

2. Literature Review

Workplace Ostracism and Counterproductive Work Behavior (CWB)

In the context of the relationship between Workplace Ostracism and Counterproductive Work Behavior (CWB), the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory proposed by Hobfoll (1989) offers a useful perspective. COR theory posits that individuals strive to acquire, maintain, and protect resources they consider valuable. When these resources are threatened or lost, individuals tend to experience stress and may behave defensively or counterproductively to cope with the loss. Workplace ostracism can be seen as a significant threat to employees' psychological resources, such as self-esteem, social support, and emotional well-being. To address workplace ostracism, experts like M. Liu (2024) propose several strategies.

They emphasize the importance of management interventions to create an inclusive and supportive work environment. When employees feel isolated or unfairly treated at work, they may experience a loss of these resources, increasing their stress and reducing their psychological well-being. Therefore, based on COR Theory, it can be hypothesized that workplace ostracism leads to the loss of psychological resources, which in turn increases the likelihood of CWB as a response to stress. CWB can include various forms of behavior such as theft, sabotage, absenteeism, aggression, and actions that hinder organizational performance (Robinson & Bennett, 2000). This study aims to explain that the relationship between workplace ostracism and CWB is mediated by the loss of psychological resources, where ostracism causes stress and dissatisfaction, which then triggers counterproductive behavior as an effort to maintain or restore the balance of lost resources.

H1: Workplace ostracism positively influences counterproductive work behavior (CWB).

Workplace Ostracism and Organizational Cynicism

Workplace ostracism can be seen as a significant threat to employees' psychological and social resources, such as social support, self-esteem, and a sense of connectedness with the organization. When employees feel ostracized, they may lose these resources, which increases stress and triggers negative attitudes towards the organization. Cynical attitudes can emerge as a defense mechanism to cope with this resource loss (Hobfoll, 1989). Organizational cynicism (OCY) refers to a pessimistic attitude individuals develop toward their organization due to disappointing work experiences. It is influenced by unmet expectations, stress, poor communication, lack of recognition and support, and unequal power distribution. (Commer et al., 2021), organizational cynicism encompasses three dimensions: negative beliefs about the integrity of the organization (cognitive cynicism), negative emotions towards the organization (affective cynicism), and negative actions

towards the organization (behavioral cynicism). When employees feel ignored or unfairly treated through ostracism, they may develop beliefs that their organization is dishonest, unjust, and untrustworthy. Furthermore, Saeed Nasr Mohamed (2022) states that cynicism is a strategy to cope with stress resulting from injustice and disappointment at work. This aligns with findings from Eisenberger et al. (2016), which suggest that perceptions of organizational injustice can increase employee cynicism. Based on this explanation, the hypothesis proposed is that workplace ostracism positively influences organizational cynicism.

H2: Workplace ostracism positively influences organizational cynicism.

Organizational Cynicism on Counterproductive Work Behavior

The relationship between organizational cynicism and counterproductive work behavior (CWB) can be explained through Social Exchange Theory (SET) and the understanding of counterproductive work behavior. Social Exchange Theory, proposed by Blau (1964), states that social relationships are based on the principle of reciprocity, where individuals expect appropriate rewards for their contributions. When employees feel that their organization does not meet their expectations or treats them unfairly, they may respond with counterproductive behavior as a form of negative reciprocity (Elliethey et al., 2024). Additionally, Aquino (2009) studied structural and individual factors determining victimization in the workplace, indicating that an unjust and stressful work environment can increase the risk of CWB. Organizational cynicism, which reflects negative beliefs, negative emotions, and negative actions towards the organization, can trigger CWB as a way to rebalance relationships perceived as unfair (Blau, 1964).

H3: Organizational cynicism positively influences counterproductive work behavior.

Workplace Ostracism and Counterproductive Work Behavior: The Mediating Role of Organizational Cynicism

In the context of the relationship between workplace ostracism, counterproductive work behavior (CWB), and organizational cynicism, social exchange theory provides a relevant framework for understanding these dynamics. According to Social Exchange Theory, individuals tend to act in accordance with the expected rewards they receive from social interactions (Blau, 1964). According to Dean & Dharwadkar (1998), there are three levels of organizational cynicism: cognitive cynicism (beliefs), affective cynicism (affect), and behavioral cynicism (behavior). From this perspective, organizational cynicism emerges as a reaction to injustice in the workplace, where individuals begin to view the organization with a negative attitude (Abraham, 2000). In relation to CWB, individuals who feel marginalized or perceive injustice may tend to exhibit behavior that is contradictory or counterproductive as a response to these negative feelings (Abraham, 2000).

H4: Organizational cynicism mediates the relationship between workplace ostracism and counterproductive work behavior (CWB).

Psychological capital moderates organizational cynicism and counterproductive work behavior (CWB).

The role of psychological capital in moderating the relationship between organizational cynicism and counterproductive work behavior (CWB) can be explained using the job demands-resources (JD-R) theory. The JD-R theory proposed by Demerouti et al. (2001) identifies that work consists of two main elements: job demands and job resources. Job demands are aspects of the job that require significant physical or psychological effort, while job resources help to reduce these demands and support individual growth and development.

Psychological Capital (PsyCap), introduced by Luthans et al. (2007), consists of four main components: self-efficacy, optimism, resilience, and hope. PsyCap is considered a crucial psychological resource in the workplace context. Each component of PsyCap helps employees manage job demands and enhance their well-being. In the context of organizational cynicism, employees with high psychological capital are better able to cope with negative feelings towards the organization and tend to respond more constructively. According to the JD-R theory, organizational cynicism can arise from high job demands and low resources, which then lead to counterproductive work behavior. However, high psychological capital can weaken the relationship between organizational cynicism and CWB, as psychological capital serves as a buffer that helps employees manage stress and remain productive.

H5: Psychological capital moderates the relationship between organizational cynicism and counterproductive work behavior (CWB).

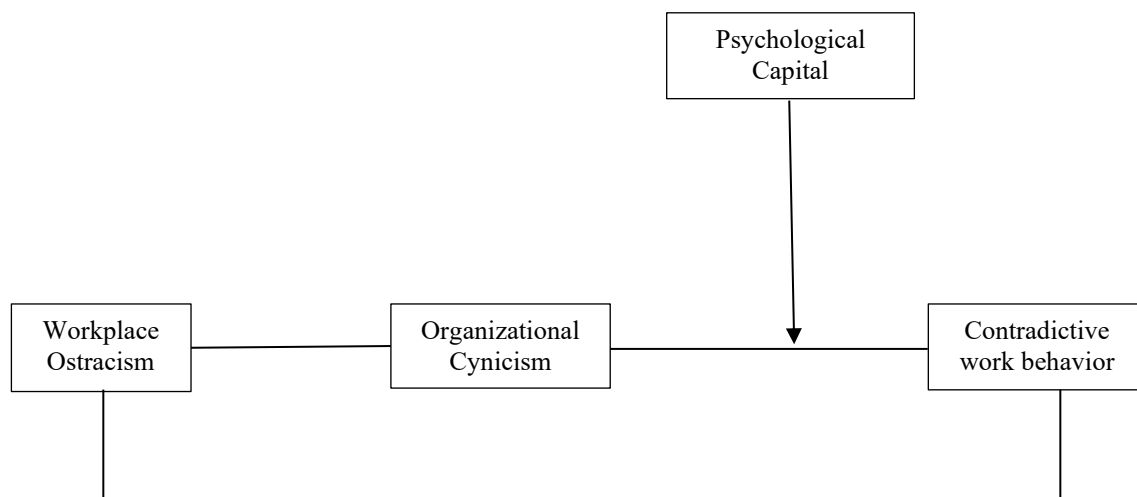


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

3. Methodology

Sample and Procedure

This study employs a quantitative research design with a descriptive approach. Data collection was conducted using a survey method. The subjects of this study were members of the New Indonesian Expedition Cooperative located in Wonosobo, Central Java, including all members as the population. The research sample was also drawn from members of the New Indonesian Expedition Cooperative. According to M. Sugiyono (2008), a sample is a portion of the population whose characteristics are to be studied and considered representative of that population. In determining the sample size for this study, the calculation formula cited from Hair Jr., Joseph, et al. (2010) was used, where the research sample size is five times the total number of indicators used.

Formula N: $k * a$

Explanation:

n: Minimum sample size

k: Number of indicators in the study

a: Constant value, recommended range between 5 and 10

Therefore, $15 * 5 = 75$, resulting in a sample size of 75 members of the New Indonesian Expedition Cooperative in Wonosobo.

Measurement

In this study, several variables were examined using established measurement tools. Work ostracism was assessed using a 12-item questionnaire developed by Bass, Cascio, and O'Connor (1974). Organizational cynicism was measured with 7 statement items derived from studies by Tesluk et al. (1995), Wanous et al. (2000), and Wilkerson (2002). Psychological Capital, comprising 12 statement items, was evaluated based on research by Luthans et al. (2007). Counterproductive Work Behavior, adapted from Spector (2006), was assessed using a subset of 10 items selected for this study. Each variable was rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree, ensuring comprehensive data collection and analysis using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) techniques.

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4. Result

Sample Description

This study involved 120 members of the New Indonesian Expedition Cooperative in Wonosobo. An online questionnaire was distributed via Google Forms during the period of June 7-15, 2024, and all 120 collected questionnaires met the research criteria. The respondents consisted of 54.5% females and 45.5% males. This analysis evaluated how gender influences perceptions of injustice, job dissatisfaction, workplace ostracism, organizational cynicism, and counterproductive work behavior (CWB). These data are instrumental in formulating strategies to address workplace issues. Respondents were predominantly aged between 20 and 25 years, actively developing their skills and careers. This age analysis provides insights into how perceptions of injustice, dissatisfaction, and responses to workplace ostracism vary among different age groups.

Validity and Reliability Test

Based on Table 1, it can be seen that all indicators of the Workplace Ostracism (X) variable in this study exhibit convergent validity values exceeding 0.70, indicating good validity. Furthermore, the Organizational Cynicism (mediator) variable also shows convergent validity above 0.70, suggesting good validity across all its indicators. The Counterproductive Work Behavior (Y) variable in this study also demonstrates convergent validity values exceeding 0.70; thus, all its indicators can be considered to have good validity. Lastly, the Psychological Capital (moderator) variable also displays convergent validity values above 0.70, confirming that all its indicators have good validity. Therefore, it can be concluded that all indicators in this study have excellent validity.

In Table 2, reliability testing is conducted using Cronbach's alpha parameter. A variable is considered reliable if it has a Cronbach's alpha value greater than 0.7 and a composite reliability also greater than 0.7 (Latan & Ghazali, 2017).

Table 1. Validity test using loading factor

| Variabel | Statement Item | Loading Factor |
|-----------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Contradictory Work Behavior | CWB 1 | 0.783 |
| | CWB 2 | 0.708 |
| | CWB 3 | 0.845 |
| | CWB 4 | 0.734 |
| | CWB 5 | 0.850 |
| | CWB 6 | 0.841 |
| | CWB 7 | 0.739 |
| | CWB 8 | 0.799 |
| | CWB 9 | 0.773 |
| Organizational Cynicism | OC 1 | 0.928 |
| | OC 2 | 0.933 |
| | OC 3 | 0.961 |

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------|-------|
| | OC 4 | 0.949 |
| | OC 5 | 0.724 |
| | OC 6 | 0.735 |
| Psychological Capital | PC 1 | 0.895 |
| | PC 2 | 0.893 |
| | PC 3 | 0.842 |
| | PC 4 | 0.835 |
| | PC 5 | 0.714 |
| | PC 6 | 0.818 |
| | PC 7 | 0.829 |
| | PC 8 | 0.799 |
| | PC 9 | 0.857 |
| | PC 10 | 0.893 |
| | PC 11 | 0.850 |
| Work Ostracism | WO 1 | 0.913 |
| | WO 2 | 0.900 |
| | WO 3 | 0.756 |
| | WO 4 | 0.788 |
| | WO 5 | 0.899 |
| | WO 6 | 0.856 |
| | WO 7 | 0.900 |
| | WO 8 | 0.836 |
| | WO 9 | 0.743 |
| | WO 10 | 0.825 |
| | WO 11 | 0.914 |
| | WO 12 | 0.848 |
| | WO 13 | 0.760 |

Table 2. Reliability Test Using Cronbach's Alpha

| Variabel Abusive | Cronbach's alpha |
|-----------------------------------|------------------|
| Contradictive Work Behavior (CWB) | 0.922 |
| Organizational Cynicism (OC) | 0.938 |
| Psychological Capital (PC) | 0.952 |
| Work Ostracism (WO) | 0.966 |

Statistical Analysis

The Counterproductive Work Behavior (CWB) variable has an R-squared value of 0.550, indicating that approximately 55% of the variation in CWB can be explained by the model used, including independent variables such as workplace ostracism, organizational cynicism, and psychological capital. The R-squared adjusted value of 0.538 suggests that after adjusting for the number of predictors in the model, around 53.8% of the variation in CWB can still be explained. On the other hand, the Organizational Cynicism (OC) variable has an R-squared value of 0.074, indicating that approximately 7.4% of the variation in OC can be explained by the model. The R-squared adjusted value of 0.058 indicates that after

adjustment, about 5.8% of the variation in OC can be explained by the model, suggesting that other factors not included in the model may have a greater influence on OC.

Table 5 analysis reveals the following: Organizational Cynicism (OC) significantly influences Counterproductive Work Behavior (CWB) with an f^2 of 1.053, indicating a strong predictive impact. Psychological Capital (PC) moderately affects CWB with an f^2 of 0.153, suggesting a meaningful role in reducing such behaviors compared to OC. PC shows minimal influence on OC ($f^2 = 0.005$), implying limited ability to predict or reduce organizational cynicism. Workplace Ostracism (WO) has a small effect on CWB ($f^2 = 0.099$), indicating a modest impact on workplace misconduct. WO also shows a slight effect on OC ($f^2 = 0.048$), suggesting a minor role in predicting or increasing organizational cynicism.

Table 3. R-Square (R^2)

| Variabel | R-square | Adjusted R square |
|-----------------------------------|----------|-------------------|
| Contradictive Work Behavior (CWB) | 0.550 | 0.538 |
| Organizational Cynicism (OC) | 0.074 | 0.058 |

Table 4. F-Square (F^2)

| | CWB | OC | PC | WO |
|-----|-------|-------|----|----|
| CWB | | | | |
| OC | 1.053 | | | |
| PC | 0.153 | 0.005 | | |
| WO | 0.099 | 0.048 | | |

Hypothesis Testing

Based on Table 4.5 of the path coefficients test results, the hypothesis results in this study are as follows: 1) Hypothesis 1: Workplace ostracism has a significant negative effect on counterproductive work behavior. The T-statistic value of 3.184, which is greater than 1.96, and the P-value of 0.001, which is less than 0.05, indicate that this **H1 is accepted**. This means that the higher the level of workplace ostracism, the lower the occurrence of counterproductive work behavior. 2) Hypothesis 2: Workplace ostracism has a significant positive effect on organizational cynicism. The T-statistic value of 1.776, which is close to 1.96, and the P-value of 0.038, which is less than 0.05, indicate that this **H2 is accepted**. This shows that an increase in workplace ostracism is associated with an increase in organizational cynicism. 3) Hypothesis 3: Organizational cynicism has a highly significant positive effect on counterproductive work behavior. The very high T-statistic value of 11.328 and the P-value of 0.000 indicate that this **H3 is accepted** with a very high level of significance. This means that higher levels of organizational cynicism are associated with increased counterproductive work behavior. 4) Hypothesis 4: Workplace ostracism, through organizational cynicism, has a significant effect on counterproductive work behavior. The T-statistic value of 1.680, which is close to 1.96, and the P-value of 0.047, which is slightly less than 0.05, indicate that this **H4 is accepted**. This shows that organizational cynicism

significantly mediates the relationship between workplace ostracism and counterproductive work behavior. 5) Hypothesis 5: Psychological capital does not moderate the relationship between organizational cynicism and counterproductive work behavior. The T-statistic value of 0.496, which is less than 1.96, and the P-value of 0.310, which is greater than 0.05, indicate that this **H5 is rejected**. This means that psychological capital does not affect the strength of the relationship between organizational cynicism and counterproductive work behavior.

Table 5. Hypothesis Test Results Using Path Coefficients

| Hypothesis | Original Sample (O) | Average sample (M) | Standard deviation (STDEV) | T Statistics (O/STDEV) | P-values |
|-----------------|---------------------|--------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|----------|
| WO -> CWB | -0.238 | -0.242 | 0.075 | 3.184 | 0.001 |
| WO -> OC | 0.232 | 0.228 | 0.131 | 1.776 | 0.038 |
| OC -> CWB | 0.175 | 0.717 | 0.063 | 11.328 | 0.000 |
| WO -> OC -> CWB | 0.166 | 0.165 | 0.099 | 1.680 | 0.047 |
| PC x OC -> CWB | 0.053 | 0.043 | 0.106 | 0.496 | |

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of this study contribute to the understanding that Workplace Ostracism (WO) significantly influences Counterproductive Work Behavior (CWB), or Hypothesis 1 is accepted. According to Conservation of Resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989), individuals strive to acquire, maintain, and protect their resources, which include emotional and social resources. Workplace ostracism, by threatening these resources, induces stress and may lead employees to adopt defensive behaviors or counterproductive work behaviors (CWB). Previous research by Rabiul et al. (2023) supports this notion, suggesting that high workplace stress can manifest in counterproductive behaviors as a form of self-protection. However, our findings indicate that rather than engaging in counterproductive behaviors directly, individuals experiencing ostracism may withdraw from work tasks to conserve their remaining resources. Shattla et al. (2025). Thus, while workplace ostracism is detrimental, its impact on CWB is mediated by resource conservation strategies. Hypothesis 2 is accepted. The positive and significant relationship found between workplace ostracism and organizational cynicism (OC) aligns with COR theory's framework. COR theory posits that individuals react defensively to protect their perceived valuable resources, including emotional support and recognition (Hobfoll, 1989). In the context of this study, employees feeling ignored or excluded tend to develop cynical attitudes towards the organization. This cynicism arises from the perception that the organization fails to provide adequate social resources and recognition, corroborating prior findings (Kulsoom Rizvi & Ahmed Siddiqui, Associate Professors, 2024). The manifestation of organizational cynicism due to workplace ostracism underscores the importance of organizational inclusivity and recognition in

mitigating negative perceptions among employees. Hypothesis 3 is accepted. The significant positive influence of organizational cynicism on counterproductive work behavior (CWB) emphasizes the detrimental effects of negative organizational perceptions. According to COR theory, individuals facing resource depletion due to perceived organizational injustice or neglect may resort to counterproductive actions as a coping mechanism (Hobfoll, 1989). This aligns with research demonstrating that employees with high cynicism levels are more likely to engage in counterproductive behaviors as a response to perceived unfair treatment (Commer et al., 2021). Additionally, Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964) supports these findings, suggesting that individuals reciprocate perceived organizational injustices with counterproductive behaviors, thereby maintaining a balance in social exchange relationships (Johnson & O’Leary-Kelly, 2003). Hypothesis 4 is accepted. Organizational cynicism significantly mediates the relationship between workplace ostracism and counterproductive work behavior. This mediation underscores the intermediary role cynicism plays in translating perceived ostracism into detrimental work behaviors. Drawing on Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), workplace ostracism creates an imbalance in social exchanges by depriving employees of expected social resources and recognition. Consequently, employees may develop cynicism towards the organization, which in turn fosters counterproductive behaviors as a means of coping with perceived injustices (Johnson & O’Leary-Kelly, 2003). Hypothesis 5 is rejected. Despite the potential role of Psychological Capital (PsyCap) in mitigating negative workplace experiences, our study found no significant moderation effect on the relationship between Organizational Cynicism and CWB. While PsyCap encompasses positive psychological resources like efficacy, hope, resilience, and optimism (Luthans, 2002), its capacity to buffer the impact of cynicism on counterproductive behaviors appears limited in highly cynical organizational climates. This aligns with previous research indicating that while PsyCap enhances individual well-being and positive work behaviors, its efficacy may diminish in the face of pervasive organizational cynicism (Avey, Luthans, & Jensen, 2009).

Theoretical Implications

The findings underscore the applicability of COR and social exchange theories in understanding the dynamics between workplace ostracism, organizational cynicism, and CWB. COR theory elucidates how individuals respond to perceived resource threats, while social exchange theory illuminates the reciprocal nature of workplace interactions, wherein perceived injustices prompt counterproductive responses.

Practical Implications

Practically, organizations should prioritize transparent communication, inclusive practices, and equitable recognition to mitigate workplace ostracism and organizational cynicism. While enhancing psychological capital is beneficial, our findings suggest it may not suffice to alleviate the negative impacts of cynicism on employee behavior. Therefore, interventions addressing organizational justice and promoting a positive work culture are crucial for reducing counterproductive behaviors.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

This study acknowledges several limitations. Firstly, future research could explore additional moderator variables such as coping strategies and social support systems to further elucidate the complex relationships among workplace ostracism, organizational cynicism, and CWB. Secondly, employing longitudinal research designs would provide insights into the temporal dynamics of these relationships over time. Lastly, expanding the study to diverse industry contexts and larger sample sizes would enhance the generalizability of findings and enrich understanding across different organizational settings.

This detailed discussion and conclusion provide a comprehensive synthesis of the study's findings within the frameworks of COR theory, social exchange theory, and previous research, offering insights into theoretical implications, practical applications, and avenues for future research.

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