

Inspiring impression motivation and fostering knowledge sharing behavior: Role of inclusive leadership for ostracized employees

introduction:

Workplace ostracism is generally assumed to diminish employees' willingness to share knowledge, yet empirical findings remain inconclusive. Drawing on the two-component model of impression management, this research examines whether inclusive leadership influences ostracized employees' knowledge sharing behavior through impression motivation.

We conducted two scenario-based experiments (Study 1: hotel employees, N=211; Study 2: software employees, N=247) and a two-wave field survey (Study 3: full-time employees from various professions in China, N=221).

Results across the three studies consistently demonstrated that inclusive leadership moderates the relationship between workplace ostracism and knowledge sharing behavior. When inclusive leadership was low, workplace ostracism negatively affected impression motivation, which in turn reduced knowledge sharing. Conversely, when inclusive leadership was high, workplace ostracism positively influenced impression motivation, subsequently enhancing knowledge sharing behavior. Impression motivation mediated the interactive effect of workplace ostracism and inclusive leadership on knowledge sharing

These findings advance the workplace ostracism literature by identifying inclusive leadership as a critical boundary condition that can transform social exclusion into constructive behavioral outcomes. They also extend the two-component model to the domain of knowledge management and offer practical implications for leadership development in organizations.