

# Workplace Ostracism and Employee Performance: The Interactive Roles of Leader-Member Exchange and Gender

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## Abstract

**Purpose:** This study investigates the impact of workplace ostracism on employee performance, focusing on the role of Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) as a moderator and the influence of gender as a sub-moderator.

**Research Methodology:** Using a quantitative explanatory design, this study surveyed 384 frontline employees from the retail, education, healthcare, hospitality and restaurant, finance, and public service sectors in Indonesia to test the hypotheses. Questionnaire data were analyzed using Hayes' PROCESS macro model 3.

**Results:** The findings show that workplace ostracism has a significant negative impact on employee performance. Additionally, the quality of the leader-member exchange relationship serves as a protective mechanism that reduces the negative effects of social exclusion, with a stronger influence on female employees. Gender has been shown to play an important role in moderating the relationship between leader-member exchange and workplace ostracism on performance.

**Conclusions:** This study concludes that the leader-member exchange relationship can reduce the negative impact of workplace ostracism, with gender playing a significant role in strengthening or mitigating this impact.

**Limitations:** This study is limited to the service sector in Indonesia; future research can expand to other sectors and include additional variables to enrich the findings.

**Contributions:** This study provides valuable insights for organizations in creating healthy relationships between supervisors and subordinates and considering gender factors when designing more effective employee management policies, particularly in the service sector, which demands intensive social interaction. This study also opens avenues for further research in various sectors and cultural contexts.

**Keywords:** *Employee Performance, Gender, Leader-Member Exchange, Service Sector, Workplace Ostracism*

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## 1. Introduction

In service industries such as hospitality, retail, and customer service, frontline workers rely heavily on social interactions to perform their daily tasks. The nature of these jobs requires intense collaboration, good coordination, and quick and accurate information exchange. From the perspective of Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, employees depend on social resources such as support, information, and recognition to maintain their psychological well-being and work effectiveness (Hobfoll, 1989). However, this environment makes workers more vulnerable to workplace ostracism, which is the feeling of being ignored, excluded, or not involved by one's coworkers (Harvey, Moeller, Kiessling, &

[Dabic, 2019](#)). This form of social exclusion can hinder communication, reduce team coordination effectiveness, and ultimately affect employees' ability to provide optimal services ([Paşamehmetoğlu, Guzzo, & Guchait, 2022](#)). In the context of service sectors with high service pressures, social exclusion adds psychological burdens that may worsen work-related stress, making it crucial to understand the mechanisms that can reduce these negative impacts.

Workplace ostracism represents a loss of valuable social resources because employees are excluded from communication and collaboration networks in the workplace. According to COR theory, the loss of these resources can create psychological strain and reduce employees' ability to maintain their motivation and work engagement. Consequently, employees may experience decreased task performance and lower participation in extra-role behaviors ([Huertas-Valdivia, Braojos, & Lloréns-Montes, 2019](#)). Similar findings in the hospitality sector show that ostracism reduces the perception of meaningful work while also lowering employees' task performance ([Rabiul, Karim, & Ahmed, 2023](#)). However, studies examining how Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) can serve as an alternative resource to buffer the negative effects of workplace ostracism remain limited, particularly in the Indonesian service sector.

Workplace ostracism occurs when employees feel ignored, not communicated with, or excluded from work activities by colleagues ([Xu, Kwan, & Li, 2020](#)). This experience causes employees to feel unappreciated, disconnected, and cut off from important information that is usually obtained through daily interactions. The emotional impact of ostracism includes feelings of sadness, shame, or stress, which can further reduce motivation and energy at work ([Uslu, 2021](#)). This decline in motivation impacts performance, as employees no longer have the drive or social support necessary to complete tasks well ([Prawira, Viola, Inka, & Sekar, 2021](#)).

Various cross-context studies have shown that social ostracism negatively correlates with different performance outcomes, including task, contextual, and service performance. [Paşamehmetoğlu et al. \(2022\)](#) found that ostracized employees lose access to social capital and organizational trust, reducing service recovery performance due to a lack of relational support to solve customer problems. Similar psychological effects were noted by [Sarwar, Ibrahim Abdullah, Sarfraz, and Kashif Imran \(2019\)](#), where ostracism increased work stress, especially for employees with low self-efficacy, which lowered performance as their psychological resources diminished. [Gaur and Chatterjee \(2024\)](#) confirmed that social ostracism correlates negatively with performance, especially when organizational support is perceived as low. [Li, Xu, and Kwan \(2021\)](#) showed that workplace ostracism significantly undermines employees' psychological well-being and job performance. [Mattar, Haddad, and Haddad \(2022\)](#) also showed that ostracism directly reduces service performance, such as through increased work tensions that ultimately lower service performance. Meanwhile, [Widiyawati, Prima, and Zamralita \(2025\)](#) highlighted increased work stress as the main pathway explaining the effect of ostracism on performance decline.

LMX support is not only in the form of work guidance but also recognition, rewards, and a sense of security due to the presence of an authority figure who cares. This allows ostracized employees to maintain motivation and self-confidence to complete their tasks, so the negative impact of ostracism on performance does not become too significant ([Nelson, 2017](#)). However, LMX also has a paradoxical side, as very close relationships with supervisors can generate jealousy or perceptions of unfairness among coworkers, which can ultimately worsen the situation for the ostracized individual ([Wang & Li, 2018](#)).

In this situation, LMX becomes important. Employees with high LMX tend to feel cared for, valued, and supported by their supervisors ([Bos-Nehles & Audenaert, 2019](#)). Thus, the quality of the relationship between supervisors and subordinates potentially becomes an essential mechanism for reducing the negative impact of ostracism on performance. This phenomenon is highly relevant to research exploring how LMX relationships can serve as a "protector" for ostracized employees.

LMX is a key element in understanding how workplace ostracism affects employees' psychological conditions and their performance. Consistent with the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, workplace ostracism reduces employees' access to important social resources, such as support, information, and a sense of value (Choi, 2019). In this context, high-quality leader-member exchange can serve as a substitute resource that helps employees preserve their psychological resources despite experiencing social exclusion. LMX provides not only emotional support but also work guidance, access to information, and goal clarity, which enable employees to perform their tasks more effectively despite negative social dynamics (Lim, Aggarwal, Singh, & Gopal, 2025).

Gender influences responses to ostracism and the effectiveness of LMX. Women are more sensitive to relational pressure, use LMX for emotional support, and show more significant reductions in distress (Hurst, Leberman, & Edwards, 2017; Rajchert, Bodecka-Zych, & Abramiuk, 2022; Volmer, Schulte, & Fritz, 2023). In contrast, men rely more on instrumental support and tend to focus on tasks; therefore, LMX is relatively less effective in reducing emotional pressure caused by ostracism (Brandts, Gërkhani, & Schram, 2020; Williams & Nida, 2022). This difference underscores that gender is an important factor in determining how strongly LMX functions as a protector against the effects of ostracism, both psychologically and in terms of performance.

Although many studies have shown a negative relationship between workplace ostracism and employee performance (Choi (2019); Huertas-Valdivia et al. (2019); Lim et al. (2025); Mattar et al. (2022); Wang and Li (2018)), research examining the role of leader–Member Exchange (LMX) as a protective mechanism and the moderating influence of gender remains limited, particularly in the context of the service sector. Existing studies generally focus on the direct effects of ostracism without considering how leadership relationships and gender differences interact to shape employees' responses to social exclusion (Choi, 2019; Huertas-Valdivia et al., 2019; Lim et al., 2025; Mattar et al., 2022; Rabiul et al., 2023; Wang & Li, 2018).

This gap is especially evident in the Indonesian service sector, where employees frequently operate in highly interactive environments characterized by intense customer interactions and teamwork. By integrating workplace ostracism, LMX, and gender within a single analytical framework, this study provides a comprehensive understanding of how leadership relationships and gender differences influence employee performance under conditions of social exclusion. Therefore, this study contributes to the organizational behavior literature by empirically examining the protective role of LMX and the moderating influence of gender on the relationship between workplace ostracism and employee performance, particularly in the Indonesian service sector.

This study investigates the impact of workplace ostracism on employee performance in the service sector, particularly among frontline workers in Indonesia. Given the nature of work that depends on social interaction and team coordination, this study explores how social exclusion can reduce performance. Furthermore, this study aims to understand how leader-member exchange can act as a protective mechanism against the impact of social ostracism. This study also considers gender differences in utilizing leader-member exchange to reduce the impact of ostracism on performance.

## **2. Literature Review and Hypothesis/es Development**

### ***2.1 The Impact of Workplace Ostracism on Employee Performance***

Workplace Ostracism refers to social exclusion in the workplace, where employees are ignored or not involved by their coworkers or superiors. According to the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, ostracism reduces psychological resources, such as social support, which negatively impacts psychological well-being and work motivation (Xu et al., 2020). Consequently, employees become more vulnerable to declines in task performance, extra-role behavior, and service performance.

According to Ferris, Chen, and Lim (2017), Workplace Ostracism is measured through four main dimensions that describe the forms of social exclusion experienced by employees. The first dimension, Social Neglect, measures the feeling of being ignored by coworkers. The second dimension, Exclusion from Communication, reflects the feeling of not being included in important conversations. The third

dimension, Social Isolation, measures the feeling of being isolated. The last dimension, Rejection by Coworkers, measures the feeling of being rejected. These four dimensions provide a comprehensive picture of the various forms of social exclusion in the workplace.

[Hsieh and Karatepe \(2019\)](#) measured the performance of frontline employees using dimensions related to customer service, including effectiveness/quality of outcomes, timeliness/responsiveness, behavior/interpersonal interactions, and reliability/consistency. These four dimensions are interconnected to form employee performance, which relies not only on the quantity of tasks but also on the quality of interactions in delivering customer satisfaction. Social exclusion can reduce the quality and quantity of performance by disrupting social interactions, which in turn increases stress and work tension, as found by [Mattar et al. \(2022\)](#) and [Huertas-Valdivia et al. \(2019\)](#), who stated that this directly impacts task and service performance.

Workplace ostracism tends to be more relevant in collectivist cultures that emphasize interpersonal harmony and a sense of belonging to a group. Indonesia is widely recognized as a society with collectivist values, where social relationships, group cohesion, and mutual support play important roles in organizational interactions, including in the workplace ([Artina, Desnasari, Fitriyah, & Rizkita, 2020](#)). In this context, being ignored or excluded by coworkers may pose a stronger threat to employees' sense of belonging and social identity than ostracism. Consistent with this view, cross-cultural research suggests that workplace ostracism may produce stronger emotional and behavioral consequences in collectivist cultures than in individualist cultures. Therefore, in the Indonesian context, workplace ostracism has the potential to further impair employees' psychological functioning and reduce their performance.

A systematic review by [Sharma and Dhar \(2022\)](#) also showed that workplace ostracism is consistently associated with negative effects on employees' attitudes, psychological conditions, and behaviors across sectors. Further empirical studies indicate that ostracism is particularly salient in service industries, where social interaction is essential for supporting performance, as highlighted by [Ali, Usman, Pham, Agyemang-Mintah, and Akhtar \(2020\)](#) and [Zhao, Xia, He, Sheard, and Wan \(2016\)](#), and is associated with lower task performance, reduced service recovery performance, and increased stress and exhaustion ([Gaur & Chatterjee, 2024](#); [Paşamehmetoğlu et al., 2022](#); [Rabiul et al., 2023](#)). However, in the Indonesian context, [Widiyawati et al. \(2025\)](#) found that workplace ostracism contributes to work stress among Generation Z employees, indicating that this phenomenon is relevant to employee well-being and performance in Indonesia.

*H<sub>1</sub>*: Workplace ostracism negatively affects employee performance, including a decrease in performance level

## ***2.2 Leader-Member Exchange Moderates the Impact of Workplace Ostracism on Employee Performance***

leader-member exchange theory focuses on the quality of the relationship between leaders and employees. High-quality leader-member exchange creates strong, supportive relationships based on trust and recognition. Leaders who build in-group relationships with employees provide emotional support, direction, and recognition, which helps employees cope with challenges such as social ostracism at the workplace ([Bos-Nehles & Audenaert, 2019](#)). High-quality relationships between leaders and team members offer more social resources to cope with social exclusion and enhance employee performance and job satisfaction.

The main dimensions of Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) include trust (reliable and fair leaders), reciprocal respect (mutual respect based on competence and contribution), social support and exchange (leaders provide resources and information, while members reciprocate with loyalty and high performance), and affection or emotional attachment (emotional closeness and feeling valued). All these dimensions help employees feel valued, safe, and supported in remaining productive, even when facing social exclusion.

[Choi \(2019\)](#) and [Nelson \(2017\)](#) show that a good relationship between leaders and employees can reduce the negative impact of workplace ostracism on employees' performance. Leaders who provide emotional support, attention, and trust help employees stay motivated and productive despite exclusion. leader-member exchange functions as a moderating mechanism that reduces the impact of social exclusion on employee performance by creating social resources that reduce stress and enhance psychological well-being. Employees with high leader-member exchange tend to feel valued and supported, which in turn enhances their task and service performance.

*H<sub>2</sub>*: leader-member exchange moderates the impact of workplace ostracism on employee performance, where higher leader-member exchange can reduce the negative effects of exclusion on performance

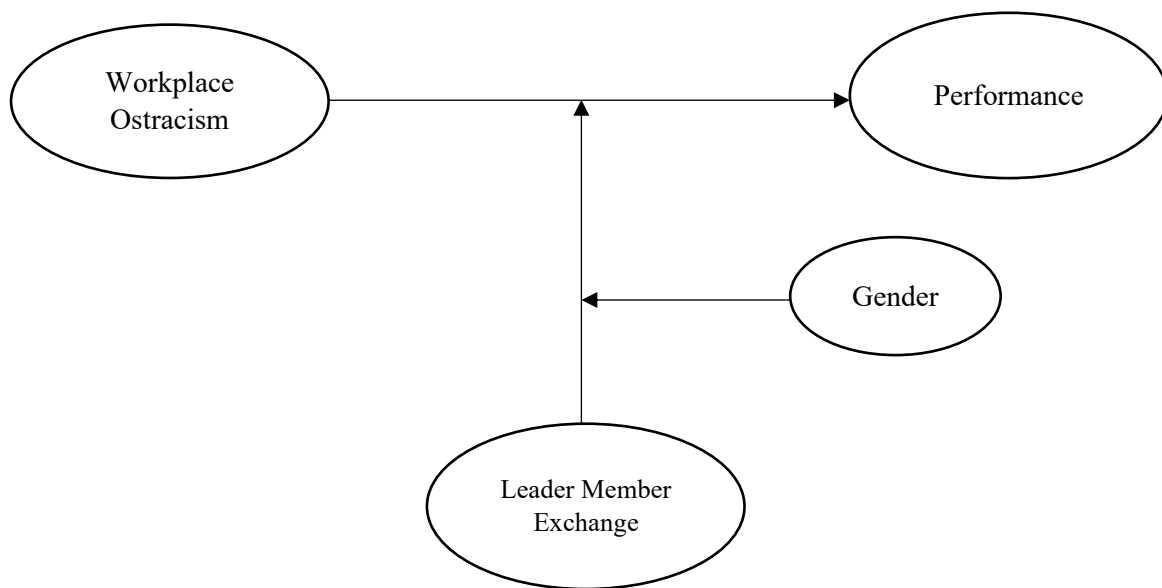
### ***2.3 Gender as a Sub-Moderator in Leader-Member Exchange Moderating the Impact of Workplace Ostracism on Employee Performance***

Gender may shape how employees interpret workplace ostracism and how effectively they benefit from Leader-Member Exchange (LMX). Workplace ostracism is inherently a relational stressor because it signals exclusion, loss of belonging, and reduced social acceptance at the workplace. From the perspective of Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, such exclusion depletes the relational and psychological resources that employees need to maintain motivation and performance. High-quality LMX may help restore these lost resources by providing trust, recognition, emotional reassurance, and social support from the leaders. However, the buffering value of these relational resources may differ depending on gender, as men and women tend to cope with social stressors differently.

Gender differences affect how employees respond to social exclusion in the workplace and how they perceive and utilize the support provided by their leaders. According to [Rajchert et al. \(2022\)](#), women tend to be more sensitive to social relationships and rely more on emotional support to cope with social exclusion than men. In contrast, men tend to rely more on instrumental support, such as task assistance and access to resources. [Choi \(2021\)](#) also found that women are more motivated and feel valued when they receive emotional support from leaders, particularly in situations involving social exclusion.

[Rajchert et al. \(2022\)](#) suggest that men, even when experiencing high-quality leader-member exchange, may not experience the same level of positive influence from leader relationships because they rely less on emotional support and more on instrumental forms of assistance. Consequently, the relational resources embedded in LMX may be more effective in helping women cope with workplace ostracism than men. This suggests that gender may condition the moderating role of LMX in the relationship between workplace ostracism and employee performance, such that the buffering effect of LMX is stronger for women than for men

*H<sub>3</sub>*: Gender acts as a sub-moderator of Leader-Member, moderating the impact of workplace ostracism on employee performance



Figur 1. Reseach paradigm

### 3. Methodology

This study uses a quantitative design with an explanatory research approach to examine the impact of workplace ostracism on employee performance, with Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) as a moderating variable and gender as a sub-moderator in the relationship between LMX and workplace ostracism, as well as employee performance. This design aims to understand how workplace ostracism can affect employee performance and how LMX can act as a protector against its negative effects, considering the role of gender as a factor that modifies this relationship. This study also explores the interaction between social exclusion and the quality of leader-member relationships in the context of service jobs, which require social interaction, communication, and intensive coordination among employees. Employees in sectors such as hospitality, retail, restaurants, logistics services, and customer service are more susceptible to exclusion in the form of neglect, being left out of communication, or not being involved in the work process ([Ali et al., 2020](#); [Hsieh & Karatepe, 2019](#); [Zhao et al., 2016](#)).

The population of this study consisted of frontline employees in Indonesia. Given the uncertain population size, this study used purposive sampling, which involves selecting samples based on specific criteria ([Hair Jr, Page, Brunsveld, Cleton, & Merkle, 2023](#)). The criteria included employees who had experienced workplace ostracism or interacted with their leaders through leader-member exchange. The sample size was determined using the Lemeshow formula proposed by [Lemeshow, Hosmer, Klar, and Lwanga \(1991\)](#), which is appropriate for populations of unknown sizes. The calculation indicated that the minimum required sample size was 384 respondents, with a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error. This approach is efficient for calculating the sample size in large or unknown populations.

A purposive sampling technique was applied by selecting respondents who met specific criteria relevant to the research objectives. The respondents were frontline employees working in service-oriented sectors in Indonesia, such as retail, education, healthcare, hospitality and restaurants, finance, public service, and customer service. These sectors were selected because they involve intensive interpersonal interactions and coordination among employees, which increases the likelihood of experiencing workplace ostracism. Respondents were required to have at least six months of work experience and regular interaction with supervisors to ensure that they had sufficient experience to evaluate workplace ostracism and the quality of leader-member exchange relationships.

The questionnaire was distributed offline and online using a structured survey. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed that their responses would remain anonymous and used only for research purposes. Data were collected using a questionnaire distributed to 384 respondents selected through purposive sampling. This questionnaire measures respondents' perceptions of their experience

with workplace ostracism, the quality of their relationship with their leaders, and their demonstrated performance.

Exploratory Data Analysis (EDA) was used to obtain an initial overview of the data characteristics and distribution patterns of the research variables before conducting inferential analysis. In this study, EDA was applied to evaluate respondents' perceptions of workplace ostracism, leader-member exchange relationship quality, and employee performance. This analysis included key descriptive statistics, such as frequencies, mean values, medians, standard deviations, and data distribution checks for each indicator measured by the questionnaire, ensuring data quality and suitability for further analysis. This study uses an explanatory analysis approach to examine the relationships between variables and to confirm the proposed hypotheses. Data analysis was performed using multiple linear regression based on Ordinary Least Squares (OLS). This approach was used to assess the direct effect of workplace ostracism on employee performance, as well as to evaluate the moderating role of Leader–Member Exchange (LMX) and the sub-moderating role of gender in this relationship

Data analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics with the PROCESS macro developed by (Hayes, Montoya, & Rockwood, 2017). The PROCESS macro is widely used to test moderation and conditional process models based on Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression. In this study, PROCESS Model 1 was employed to examine the moderating effect of LMX on the relationship between workplace ostracism and employee performance, while PROCESS Model 3 was used to test the moderated moderation model in which gender acted as a sub-moderator in the relationship between workplace ostracism, LMX, and employee performance. To ensure the robustness of the estimates, a bootstrap procedure with 5,000 resamples and a 95% confidence interval was used to assess the significance of interaction effects.

Based on the theoretical foundation and conceptual framework developed, this study proposes three hypotheses. First, workplace ostracism is assumed to negatively impact employee performance. Second, leader-member exchange is predicted to moderate the relationship between workplace ostracism and employee performance, such that the quality of the leader-subordinate relationship may either strengthen or weaken the impact of workplace ostracism on performance. Third, gender is positioned as a sub-moderator that differentiates the pattern of leader-member exchange moderation in the relationship between workplace ostracism and employee performance.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1 Research Findings

Based on the research conducted on 384 respondents, the data obtained provide a deeper insight into the demographic profile of the workforce across various industry sectors.

Table 1. Demographic profile of respondents

Category	Distribution (%)	Nominal (Amaunt)
Age		
18-35 years	60	230
36-45 years	30	115
Job Tenure		
1-6 years	50	192
More than 6 years	50	192
Position		
Frontliner	89	341
Supervisor	10	38
Industry Sector		
Retail & Hospitality	40	153
Other Services	60	231

Java	80	307
Outside Java	20	77

Table 1 shows majority of respondents fall within the productive age group (26-45 years) and have work experience ranging from 1 to 6 years, reflecting a balance between more experienced employees and those who have recently joined. Only 10% of respondents had been employed for more than 10 years, indicating a healthy workforce turnover. A total of 89% of respondents work as frontliners, interacting directly with customers, making their role crucial for smooth operations and customer satisfaction. However, this role also makes them more vulnerable to workplace ostracism because of the higher intensity of interactions with both customers and coworkers.

Ten% of respondents work as supervisors, focusing on operational oversight, while only 1% hold managerial positions, reflecting a distribution of positions that is more operational than managerial in this organization. The sectors with the highest representation of respondents were retail (22%), followed by education (16%) and healthcare (15%), all of which have a direct impact on social interactions and employee performance. The hospitality and restaurant sector (18%) is also significant, reflecting the importance of this sector in the economy and the direct interactions between employees and customers. The majority of respondents (80%) worked in Java, in line with the high concentration of economic activities on the island. A small proportion of the workforce works in other regions, such as Sumatra (7%) and Nusa Dua (7%), showing a distribution of the workforce outside Java. Kalimantan (2%) and Sulawesi (4%) had smaller contributions, illustrating the growing diversity of work locations in Indonesia.

Based on research conducted on 384 respondents, the data obtained revealed various perceptions regarding workplace ostracism, leader-member exchange relationships, and employee performance in the service sector. This study analyzes the impact of social exclusion, quality of leader-subordinate relationships, and gender factors on the performance of frontline workers. The descriptive analysis results indicate that the majority of respondents feel involved in social exclusion at work but also feel supported by their leaders. Additionally, employee performance, particularly in terms of outcome quality and timeliness, is rated highly. The findings of this study provide a better understanding of workplace social dynamics and the critical role of leaders in supporting employees in maintaining performance despite facing challenges from social ostracism.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics based on indicators

Variables	Dimension	Mean	Std Dev
Workplace Ostracism	Social Neglect	3.89	1.96
	Exclusion in Communication	4.03	2.01
	Social Isolation	3.96	2.02
	Rejection by Coworkers	4.00	2.01
Leader-Member Exchange	Trust	3.98	2.03
	Reciprocal Respect	4.05	2.01
	Social Support and Exchange	3.96	2.00
	Emotional Attachment	4.05	2.04
Frontline Employee Performance	Effectiveness/Quality of Outcomes	6.03	1.74
	Timelines and Responsiveness	6.04	1.72
	Behavior and Interpersonal Interactions	6.07	1.70
	Reliability and Consistency	6.03	1.76
Gender	Male (151)	39,3%	-
	Female (233)	60,7%	-

Table 2 shows descriptive analysis showed that the levels of workplace ostracism and leader-member exchange fell within the moderate category, whereas frontline employee performance was in the high

category. The average workplace ostracism across all dimensions ranged from 3.89 to 4.03, with exclusion in communication and rejection by coworkers being the most prominent dimensions. The relatively high standard deviation across all dimensions of workplace ostracism and leader–member exchange (approximately 2.00) indicates considerable variation in experiences among respondents. For the member exchange variable, the dimensions of reciprocal respect and emotional attachment had the highest average scores (both 4.05), while social support and exchange showed relatively lower scores, suggesting that the quality of leader-subordinate relationships tends to be stronger in the affective aspects than in the functional support aspects.

On the other hand, all employee performance dimensions show high average scores, ranging from 6.03 to 6.07, with lower standard deviations than other variables, indicating relatively consistent performance perceptions among respondents. The dimensions of behavior and interpersonal interactions recorded the highest average score, followed by timeliness and responsiveness. In terms of respondent characteristics, the sample was predominantly female (60.7%) compared to male (39.3%), which is an important context when interpreting the role of gender as a sub-moderator in further analyses.

Table 3. Results of moderation and interaction regression

Variables	Coeff	p
Constant	76.8934	0.0000
Workplace Ostracism	-0.1899	0.0000
Leader Member Exchange	0.1725	0.0002
Workplace Ostracism × Leader Member Exchange	0.0031	0.4868
Gender	-6.6407	0.0000
Workplace Ostracism × Gender	-.1297	0.0159
Leader Member Exchange × Gender	0.0991	0.0862
Workplace Ostracism × Leader Member Exchange × Gender	0.0171	0.0110
<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>	0.7599	

The results of the moderation and interaction regression in Table 3 show that Workplace Ostracism has a significant negative association with the dependent variable (coeff = -0.1899; p = 0.0000), whereas leader–member exchange has a significant positive association (coeff = 0.1725; p = 0.0002). Gender also had a significant negative coefficient (coeff = -6.6407; p = 0.0000), indicating a difference in the average level of the dependent variable across gender categories, although the direction of this difference depended on how gender was coded.

At the two-way interaction level, the interaction between Workplace Ostracism and leader–member exchange was not significant (coeff = 0.0031; p = 0.4868). This suggests that when gender is not considered, there is no overall evidence that Member Exchange alters the relationship between Workplace Ostracism and the dependent variable. In other words, the buffering or amplifying role of Member Exchange does not appear to operate uniformly across the full sample. One possible explanation is that the moderating effect of Member Exchange varies across subgroups, so the overall two-way interaction becomes statistically non-significant when these differences are combined in a single estimate.

In contrast, the interaction between Workplace Ostracism and Gender was significant (coeff = -0.1297; p = 0.0159), indicating that the effect of Workplace Ostracism on the dependent variable differed between gender categories. The interaction between leader–member exchange and gender is not significant at the 5% level (coeff = 0.0991; p = 0.0862), suggesting that gender differences in the effect of Leader–Member Exchange are not strongly supported when considered independently.

Importantly, the three-way interaction among Workplace Ostracism, leader–member exchange, and Gender was significant and positive (coeff = 0.0171; p = 0.0110). This finding clarifies why the two-

way Workplace Ostracism  $\times$  Member Exchange interaction is non-significant: the moderating role of Member Exchange is conditional on gender rather than consistent across all respondents. Thus, the effect of Workplace Ostracism on the dependent variable is not moderated by Member Exchange in a general sense, but it is moderated differently across gender groups. Accordingly, the non-significant two-way interaction should not be interpreted as evidence that Member Exchange has no moderating role; rather, its moderating influence emerges only within the gender-specific context captured by the three-way interaction. Overall, the model had high explanatory power ( $R^2 = 0.7599$ ), indicating that a substantial proportion of the variance in the dependent variable was explained by the main effects and interaction terms included in the model.

Table 4. Conditional interaction test

Gender	Interaction Effect (WO $\times$ LMX)	F	df	p
Male (0)	0,003	0,48	(1, 376)	0,487
Female (1)	0,020	16,05	(1, 376)	< 0,001

Table 4 show results of the conditional interaction test show that the role of leader-member exchange moderation is gender-specific. The interaction between WO  $\times$  LMX is not significant for male employees ( $F = 0.48$ ;  $p = 0.487$ ), but significant for female employees ( $F = 16.05$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ), indicating that the protective effect of leader-member exchange is stronger for women than for men. This suggests that the quality of the supervisor-subordinate relationship plays a greater role in reducing the negative impact of workplace exclusion for women, whereas for men, the effect is more limited.

Table 5. Conditional effect

Tingkat LMX	Gender	Effect	SE	t	p
Low	Male	-0,212	0,063	-3,39	0,001
Low	Female	-0,465	0,041	-11,48	< 0,001
Average	Male	-0,190	0,041	-4,63	< 0,001
Average	Female	-0,320	0,035	-9,27	< 0,001
High	Male	-0,168	0,038	-4,36	< 0,001
High	Female	-0,174	0,058	-3,00	0,003

The results of the conditional effects analysis show that workplace ostracism has a significant negative impact on employee performance across all levels of leader-member exchange and both gender groups, but with varying intensity. In the case of low leader-member exchange, the negative impact of ostracism is strongest among female employees ( $b = -0.465$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ) compared to male employees ( $b = -0.212$ ;  $p = 0.001$ ), and a similar pattern is observed at the average level of leader-member exchange. When leader-member exchange is high, the negative impact of ostracism on performance weakens for both genders, with the difference becoming relatively small. Overall, these findings confirm that leader-member exchange acts as a protective factor that reduces the negative impact of workplace ostracism on performance, with a more pronounced effect on female employees, indicating a gender-based conditional moderating mechanism.

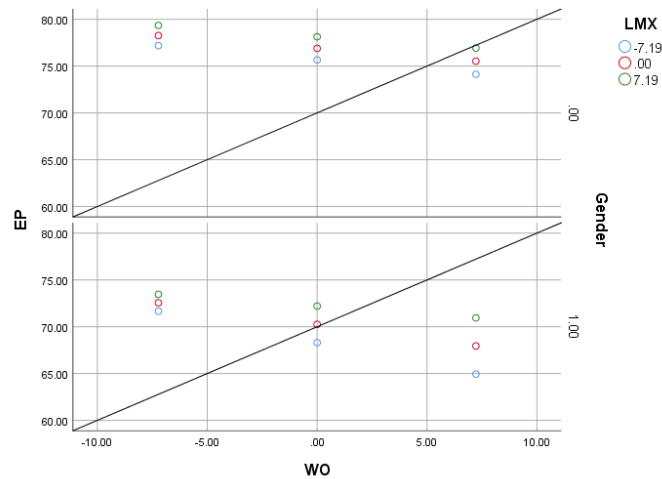


Figure 2. Interaction plot

Figure 2 visualizes the relationship between Workplace Ostracism and Employee Performance, separated into two panels based on gender (the top panel for category 0 and the bottom panel for category 1). In both panels, the prediction lines show that Employee Performance tends to increase as the level of Workplace Ostracism rises within the displayed range. However, the pattern of this increase is not identical across the two groups: the slope of the line in the Gender category 0 panel appears steeper than that in the Gender category 1 panel, suggesting that changes in Employee Performance due to changes in Workplace Ostracism are more pronounced in the Gender category 0 group than in the Gender category 1 group. The difference in slope between the panels underscores that the relationship between Workplace Ostracism and Employee Performance differs by gender, as the rate of change in performance shown by the prediction lines is not the same for both categories.

Additionally, the colored dots represent different levels of leader member exchange, illustrating how variations in leader member exchange are associated with Employee Performance levels at the same Workplace Ostracism values. Visually, for many of the same Workplace Ostracism values, dots with higher leader member exchange tend to show higher Employee Performance values than dots with lower leader member exchange. This suggests a difference in performance levels according to the quality of the leader-member relationship. However, the distance between the dots at the three levels of Leader Member Exchange is not always the same for each Workplace Ostracism value or within each gender category, meaning that this pattern should be interpreted as conditional. The effect of variations in leader member exchange on employee performance appears to shift based on the combination of gender and Workplace Ostracism. Therefore, this figure shows that the relationship among these three variables is not uniform but exhibits different patterns when compared across gender categories and Leader Member Exchange levels.

## 4.2 Discussions

### 4.2.1 The Impact of Workplace Ostracism on Employee Performance

This study reveals the significant negative effect of workplace ostracism on employee performance. The observed decline in performance indicates that social exclusion in the workplace can reduce employee motivation and increase stress, directly affecting productivity. [Hobfoll \(1989\)](#) Conservation of Resources (COR) theory explains that the loss of psychological resources, such as social support and a sense of belonging, can affect work performance. When employees experience workplace ostracism, they lose these resources, leading to stress and a decline in performance.

This finding is consistent with the research by [Gaur and Chatterjee \(2024\)](#), who found that workplace ostracism lowers employee performance, particularly in the service sectors. Social exclusion reduces social support and trust in the organization, hindering employees' access to the support they need to maintain their performance. [Mattar et al. \(2022\)](#) also support this finding by showing that social

exclusion directly impacts service performance, especially when employees feel they have lost access to critical information and social support.

[Sarwar et al. \(2019\)](#) also noted that social exclusion can increase work-related stress, which in turn reduces employee performance due to the depletion of psychological resources needed to work effectively. [Ferris et al. \(2017\)](#) emphasized that social exclusion reduces work engagement and increases anxiety, leading to a decline in performance. Social exclusion undermines psychological well-being, motivation, and work energy ([Uslu, 2021](#); [Xu et al., 2020](#)). The experience of exclusion leads to the loss of important social resources, such as social support, which hinders employees' ability to work optimally ([Prawira et al., 2021](#)). Overall, these findings suggest that workplace ostracism undermines employees' psychological resources, ultimately impeding their ability to work effectively.

#### *4.2.2 The Role of Leader-Member Exchange as a Moderator*

The findings indicate that Leader–Member Exchange (LMX) should not be interpreted as a universally effective moderator of the relationship between workplace ostracism and employee performance. Although LMX is theoretically expected to buffer the harmful consequences of ostracism by providing emotional support, recognition, and access to supervisory guidance, the nonsignificant overall interaction suggests that this protective role does not operate consistently across all employees. One possible explanation is that the effects of workplace ostracism are not entirely neutralized by the supervisor–subordinate relationship. Ostracism threatens employees' sense of belonging, self-worth, and psychological safety, and these broader social and emotional consequences may persist even when employees report high-quality exchanges with their supervisors. In this sense, LMX may serve as a helpful resource, but it is not always sufficient.

Another plausible explanation is that the effectiveness of LMX depends on contextual and individual differences. As [Petrilli, Giunchi, and Vonthron \(2024\)](#) suggested, high-quality leader–member relationships provide important psychological and social resources; however, their benefits may vary depending on employees' needs and the specific workplace context. [Choi \(2021\)](#) similarly argued that LMX can act as a protective mechanism against the negative consequences of social exclusion; however, the present findings suggest that this buffering effect may be conditional rather than universal. This interpretation is also consistent with [Volmer et al. \(2023\)](#), who noted that high-quality LMX may sometimes generate coworker jealousy or perceptions of unfairness, thereby intensifying exclusionary dynamics rather than alleviating them.

The gender-based results further explain the non-significant overall interaction. When gender was incorporated as a sub-moderator, LMX was found to be less effective for men, whereas women appeared to benefit more from LMX in reducing the impact of ostracism. This pattern may reflect differences in employees' use of relational resources. Prior research suggests that females tend to rely more on emotional support and positive interpersonal relationships to cope with workplace stress, whereas males are more likely to rely on instrumental forms of support, such as task assistance or tangible resources ([Choi, 2021](#)). Because workplace ostracism is inherently relational and emotional, emotional support from supervisors may be more effective in helping female employees cope with its negative consequences. In contrast, instrumental support alone may be less capable of addressing the psychological harm caused by exclusion. As a result, the moderating role of LMX may be diluted in the aggregate model, producing a non-significant overall interaction.

These findings both support and refine the prior literature. [Lim et al. \(2025\)](#) emphasized that high LMX can function as a protective mechanism by providing emotional support, guidance, and recognition that help employees maintain their motivation despite social exclusion. The present study partially supports this view but also demonstrates that such protection is not equally experienced by all employees. Therefore, the nonsignificant overall result should not be interpreted as evidence that LMX is unimportant; rather, it indicates that the buffering effect of LMX is contingent on subgroup characteristics and relational context.

The implications of this nonsignificant result are important. First, organizations should not assume that improving supervisor–subordinate relationships alone will automatically protect employees from the harmful effects of workplace ostracism in the long run. Although strengthening LMX remains beneficial, it should be accompanied by broader organizational efforts to reduce exclusionary behavior, improve coworker relationships, and promote an inclusive work climate that values diversity. Second, the findings highlight the need to consider gender and other individual differences when evaluating the effectiveness of relational resources at the workplace. A uniform managerial approach may overlook the fact that employees differ in the type of support they need to cope with workplace ostracism. Overall, this study contributes to Leader–Member Exchange theory by showing that LMX remains an important workplace resource, but its moderating effect is conditional, context-dependent, and not universally applicable across all employees

#### *4.2.3 The Role of Gender in Moderating LMX*

This study confirms that gender plays a role as a sub-moderator in the relationship between leader-member exchange and the effect of workplace ostracism on employee performance. Females rely more on the emotional support provided by their supervisors than males, who tend to rely more on instrumental support, such as task assistance or resources. This finding is supported by [Rajchert et al. \(2022\)](#), who found that men are more likely to rely on instrumental support to cope with ostracism, which may not be sufficient to reduce the psychological impact of exclusion. In contrast, females who rely more on emotional support experience greater negative effects when it is unavailable, making high LMX more effective for them. [Volmer et al. \(2023\)](#) also showed that jealousy or perceptions of unfairness in leader-member exchange relationships can worsen social exclusion in the workplace; however, this is more relevant for males who rely more on instrumental support than females.

This study aligns with the Social Role Theory proposed by [Eagly \(2013\)](#), which states that females and males may respond to social exclusion differently based on their social roles. [Rife, Kerns, and Updegraff \(2017\)](#) found that females are more likely to rely on social relationships and emotional support, whereas males rely on instrumental support to complete their tasks. [Choi \(2021\)](#) also indicated that although there are differences in how females and males respond to supervisor support, these differences can be smaller in some organizational contexts than others.

The finding that LMX is more effective in reducing the impact of social exclusion for females has important implications for organizations. Organizations should understand that females and males respond differently to supervisor roles, meaning that policies or programs for developing leader-member relationships need to be tailored based on gender differences. Training leaders to enhance emotional support and recognition for female employees can maximize LMX effectiveness in reducing the impact of social exclusion. This is because the quality of the leader-subordinate relationship mitigates the negative effects of exclusion ([Bos-Nehles & Audenaert, 2019](#); [Nelson, 2017](#)). Conversely, organizations may need to emphasize providing instrumental support, such as work direction and resources, to address social exclusion ([Rajchert et al., 2022](#)).

Organizations should also introduce policies that encourage open communication and social engagement to prevent social exclusion while monitoring potential issues early, considering the detrimental impact of exclusion on employee performance ([Ferris et al., 2017](#); [Huertas-Valdivia et al., 2019](#)). Additionally, psychological well-being programs offering emotional and professional support to employees experiencing exclusion should be strengthened, as this can help reduce stress and maintain performance ([Mattar et al., 2022](#)).

Organizations should also prioritize performance evaluations that include social and emotional aspects so that employees facing social challenges can still demonstrate optimal performance ([Lim et al., 2025](#)). With this approach, organizations can create a more inclusive work environment where positive relationships with supervisors serve as a key protector for employees facing social exclusion and work-related stress while enhancing both individual and team performance ([Choi, 2019](#); [Wang & Li, 2018](#)).

## 5. Conclusions

### 5.1 Conclusion

This study investigates the impact of workplace ostracism on employee performance in the service sector, focusing on the moderating role of Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) and the sub-moderating role of gender. The study found that social exclusion in the workplace has a significantly negative effect on employee performance. Additionally, LMX serves as a protective mechanism that mitigates the negative impact of ostracism on performance, with a stronger effect on female employees than on male employees. Gender plays an important role in moderating the relationship between LMX and the impact of social exclusion on performance, with females benefiting more from high-quality relationships with their supervisors. These findings contribute significantly to a deeper understanding of the social and psychological dynamics in the workplace, particularly in the service sector, which relies on intense social interactions

### 5.2 Research Limitations

Although the findings of this study are significant, several limitations must be considered. The sample of the study is limited to frontline employees in the service sector in Indonesia; therefore, the results may not fully represent other sectors or countries with different workplace dynamics. Additionally, this study relied on self-reported data from questionnaires filled out by respondents, which may have introduced biases in their perceptions and recollections. The study also did not explore other factors that could affect employee performance, such as organizational culture or job-specific variables, which could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between social exclusion and employee performance. Future research could expand the sample to include other sectors and investigate additional factors to provide a broader and more in-depth analysis.

### 5.3 Suggestions and Directions for Future Research

Future research should involve a broader range of sectors and regions to examine whether these findings apply universally. A mixed-methods approach (qualitative and quantitative) could also be used to gain a deeper understanding of this topic. Future studies should consider other factors, such as organizational culture and leadership styles. Longitudinal studies would also be valuable in assessing the long-term impact of social exclusion and LMX on employee performance.

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## Author Contributions

ES Responsible for the research design, field data collection, data analysis, and research results. Additionally, he made significant contributions to the writing of the Methodology and Discussion sections. RMP Collected data, managed data processing, and contributed to the interpretation of the research results. RMP also played a role in writing the theoretical framework and literature review related to the research topic. NS Contributed to writing the background and literature review, data collection, and provided input in analyzing the research results and conclusions. SS Drafted the final article, made revisions based on feedback from co-authors, and ensured that all parts of the research aligned with applicable academic standards.

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