Competent Subordinates and Managers’ Perception: A Threat or an Asset - An Empirical Evidence from the Higher Education Sector of Pakistan

Abstract

Introduction: Workforce, by becoming more acquainted and versed in recent times proposes a predicament for managers who have years of experience at hand. Managers who have been part of an organization for a long term expect to have a steadfast position but get insecure in presence of competent and proficient subordinates, hence the dilemma has its toll on both workforce and organization. The germination of hostile behavior in response to insecurity, considered as workplace ostracism is a contaminant for the physical and mental well-being of the victim and thus has adverse outcomes in the form of emotional exhaustion.

Objectives: This paper aimed at studying the impact of managers’ feeling of insecurity on emotional exhaustion of employees, through mediating effect of managers’ perception of competent subordinates and subordinates’ feeling of ostracism. In fact, an effort was made to examine the complexities of competent workforce behavior and response of managers towards their competent subordinates.

Method: In current experiential research, hypotheses were developed and a structured questionnaire, comprising part A (for HODs and Professors) & part
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B (for all other faculty members), was used to conduct research survey, adopting convenient sampling technique. A sample of 180 respondents was chosen for statistical analysis of the data. The data were treated using statistical tools including Cronbach’s Alpha, Chi square, Regression analysis, CFA, and Process Hayes, with help of software SPSS version 23.

Findings: The findings of the study support all hypotheses and manager’s feeling of insecurity has been observed to translate into behavior that is conceived ostracism by the subordinate. Managers’ insecurity is also a potential cause of ostracism and emotional exhaustion. When managers are insecure, they perceive competent subordinates as challengers, rather than colleagues.

Significance: The study has the potential to be quite useful for the management of higher education sector / public sector Universities in order to develop a conducive environment and induce healthy relationships amongst leaders and subordinates. It is equally beneficial for the researchers and academicians and other public and private educational institutions as it adds to various theoretical and practical settings of the domain.

**Key Words:** Manager’s feeling of insecurity, Subordinate’s feeling of ostracism, Manager’s perception of competent subordinate, Core self-evaluation, Emotional exhaustion.

1. **Introduction:**

Relationship between Human Resource Management (HRM) and performance of an organization has been explored, with concern for employee well-being as a central idea (Guest, 2017). The nature and context of work has altered tremendously in past years, providing support for scrutinizing attention on workers’ well-being and work-related stress. Well-being is a combination of both mental, emotional, and physical prospects of human health. Employees stress at workplace has evolved, and it is growing concern for managers (Avey, Luthans, & Jensen, 2009).

The stress management needs to inspect employees' occupational and experiential behavior, which in an emerging area of organizational behavior (Avey, Luthans, & Jensen,
Moreover, employees’ experience of emotional predicament at work has paramount outcomes, which umbrella over work life (Ashkanasy & Dorris, 2017). Organizational workforces spend significant amount of time with each other, proving social context a vital locus which impacts attitudes and performance of organizational workforce (Chung Y. W., 2018). Cultivating knowledge relevant to human behavior in the workplace has become significantly necessary as it transcends into emotional and physical well-being of employees. Workplace relationships are constituted by the organization in which one operates and thus outline the interactions co-workers exchange with each other (Zagenczyk, Powell, & Scott, 2020). Many of these social relationships encompass trade opposite and negative emotions (Chiaburu & Harrison, 2008). To address this exchange of emotions, conducted study explores various emotional aspects human resource of an organization is bound to experience. Empirical evidence gathered in recent years stipulates that work-related stress costs almost as high as $23 billion yearly (Hassard, Teah, Visockaite, Dewe, & Cox, 2018). Emotional exhaustion makes a hefty contribution to this cost due to destructive mental and physiological concerns it presents (Zagenczyk et al., 2020).

Emotional exhaustion, experienced by an employee in an organization and defined as ‘a chronic state of physical and emotional depletion’, emerges because of feeling of insecurity persistent in managers, which implant feeling of ostracism in subordinates (Chang, Kuo, Quinton, Lee, Cheng, & Huang, 2019). Literature suggests that employees who have to face interactions emotionally demanding in nature and experience emotional exhaustion will deviate in employees individually. This action cements the feelings of insecurity in managers, and thus fabricates actions of ignorance and negligence towards their subordinates which, for subordinates, transcends into feelings of being ostracized by the manager (Chang et al. 2019). Studying feelings of insecurity ascertaining in managers, which transpire from comparing themselves to their subordinates, still has immense room for curiosity. The magnitude of experiencing emotional exhaustion is dependent on distinctive traits of every individual, such as personality (Anasori, Bayighomog, & Tenova, 2019).

Anad and Mishra (2019) argue that personality factors are significant facets of workplace behavior, and that conspicuous dearth of explorations address commodious personality variables;’ contribution to workplace stressors, Core Self-Evaluation (CSE) is introduced. CSE has been acknowledged as a well-grounded construct in organizational sciences (Chang, Ferris,
Johnson, Rosen, & Tan, 2012), and is synonymous with ability to self-evaluate oneself as well as control one possess over their lives (Anand & Mishra, 2019). Therefore, the focus of this work is on different factors of human behavior related to managers and subordinates.

Human resource is considered an organization’s most precious asset. In an idyllic scenario, workforce in an organization functions hand in hand towards a common target, with mutual understanding and cooperation and are expected to work as functional teams and elevate inventiveness (Weber & Achtenhagen, 2019). But just having a functional workforce is simply not enough; succoring commodities such as aptitude, competence, dexterity and skillfulness must exist. Having a workforce which comprise of competent employees could be seen as a competitive edge for an organization (Wulansari & Rahmi, 2018). Research argues that such HRM instruments need to be deployed to stimulate employee competence and maximise workplace performance (Kruyen & Genugten, 2020).

Considering fundamental economic perspectives, pay and compensation manipulate employee attitude to prevail over uncertainty and create motivation to develop desirable organizational behavior (Nyberg, Pieper, & Trevor, 2013).

Despite showcasing proficiency at the workplace, few individuals might not be included by their colleagues, and some individuals may ignore and disregard the others (Chang et al. 2019). This phenomenon originates workplace ostracism, which is expressed as one person neglecting to engage with another member or colleague of workplace when it would be expected and fitting to do so and hence it results in a number of negative outcomes (Chung Y. W., 2015).

Concept of ostracism has been studied with its impact on organization as well as on employees; there is a lack of pragmatic verification which can provide more insight as to what makes subordinates endure ostracism by their managers and as a consequence how they act in response to it in an institute (Chang, Kuo, Quinton, Lee, Cheng, & Huang, 2019). In addition, a gap in research exists where ostracism is linked with stress and emotional exhaustion (Chung Y. W., 2018). Although concept of ostracism is not so alien but studying it with lens of subordinates’ perspective is still a viable option (Wu, Ferris, Kwan, Chiang, Sanpe, & H. Liang, 2015).

Subordinates sometimes fail to understand that the ostracism they experience in the workplace is a result of their higher level of competence (Chang et al., 2019). This confusion can result in subordinate’s false perception of being not good enough causing feeling of loneliness and emotional exhaustion. To perk up this understanding, guidance is obtained from leader-member
exchange (LMX) theory (Anand & Mishra, 2019). Employees undergoing this state are more likely to involve in embracing encounters that are emotionally demanding and will manifest emotional exhaustion in a rather unique manner. The degree to which a person undergoes emotional exhaustion depends on unique personality traits of that person (Anasori, Bayighomog, & Tenova, 2019). Availability of research is at hand regarding personality’s impact on feeling lonely at workplace, but scant literature is available as to what role broad personality dimensions, such as Core Self-Evaluation (CSE), play in workplace context (Anand & Mishra, 2019). Feeling ostracism at the hands of managers, and as a result feeling emotionally exhausted seem rather inevitable, but introducing CSE as a moderating personality trait, serves the purpose of rightful inquisitiveness, as individuals owning elevated CSE echelons could be seen as circumventing the problem of emotional exhaustion. To substantiate the debate empirically, a current study introduced core self-evaluations (CSE) as a moderating construct among ostracism and emotional exhaustion. As research recommends, individuals with a sturdy core self-evaluation (CSE), are quick to respond to encouraging stipulations (Kacmar, Collins, Harris, & Judge, 2009). Individuals who could be ranked high on a meter measuring CSE, are expected to put high value on themselves and assess their skills and capabilities favorably (Hu, Wang, Kwan, & Yi, 2019).

This path responded to the most intuitively appealing question of whether high CSE of an employee can significantly mitigate the adversarial impact of ostracism on employee and can it impede ostracism to be translated into emotional exhaustion of an employee?

The problem addressed in this study is about perception of manager concerning the subordinate to be more competent, cultivated due to feeling of insecurity existent in managers (Chang et al. 2019). To address this aperture, a comprehensive study is devised to investigate the impact of manager insecurity on the emotional state of an employee and how employee responds (emotional exhaustion).

This study sheds light on insecure managers, who perceive competent subordinates as a threat, and in response ostracize that niche of subordinates, causing emotional exhaustion. Research is broadened by introducing Core-Self Evaluation (CSE) as a moderator, to see its impact as a personality trait and coping mechanism from ostracism. Following are the objectives of this study:
• To understand how manager’s perception of competent subordinate mediates the relationship between manager’s feelings of insecurity and subordinate’s feeling of ostracism.
• To understand the circumstances when a manager perceives its subordinates to be more competent.
• To examine whether a manager’s observation of competent subordinate and subordinate’s feeling of ostracism sequentially mediates the relationship between manager’s feeling of insecurity and emotional exhaustion (subordinate).
• To investigate whether core self-evaluation helps subordinates in circumventing the feelings of ostracism which may lead to emotional exhaustion.

2. Literature Review:

Earlier researchers have focused more on the importance of human capital as the pillar for organizational success. Once this is realized, managers and researchers focused on theorizing the importance of Human Resource Management. Ever since formal study started of Human Resource Management (HRM) in early seventies, various phenomena have unfolded in this cosmic turf. Researchers and organizational leaders are constantly working with combined forces to increase performance and productivity of their organizations. One major factor which has gained much attention in relatively recent times is employee well-being and ill-treatment or abuse of employees in workplace (Shin & Hur, 2019). This concern goes hand in hand for both managers and subordinates.

As workplace is a unit that host social gathering, thus powerful and long-lasting socialization impacts are expected to turn out on individuals operating in that setting (Lapointe & Vandenberghe, 2016). In an organization operational unit, comprising of managers and subordinates, operate with interdependence. Individuals cannot function on their own, especially in a collectivist culture like that of many developing countries (Anand & Mishra, 2019). ‘Mutual Gains’ standpoint deems that both employee well-being and organizational performance gain benefit from HR management (Huetterman & Bruch, 2019).

One construct which has gained much attention is that of ostracism and is worth investigating on its own (Qian et al, 2017). Ostracism, synonymous to social isolation (Rook1984), social exclusion (DeWall, Twenge, Gitter, & Bauunister, 2009), peer dismissal (Prinstein & Aikins, 2004), being “out of the loop” (Jones & Kelly, 2010), and desertion (Baumeister, Wotman, &
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Stillwell, 1993) is a familiar yet excruciating occurrence (Eisenberger & Lieberman, 2004) linked with an array of detrimental physical, psychological, and work-related outcomes, ranging from hostile attitudes to lowering in self-esteem as well as loss of resources (Twenge, Baumeister, Tice, M., & Stucke, 2001). When ostracized in workplace, an employee tends to feel lonely and isolated, which generates emotional exhaustion in employees (Anand & Mishra, 2019). But what triggers this ostracism? To answer the question, this study proposes that some managers who feel insecure in presence of a subordinate, who they perceive more competent and capable, which thereafter transforms into intent for ostracizing their competent subordinates.

2.1 Managers’ Feeling of Insecurity, Manager’s Perception of Competent Subordinates and Subordinate’s Feeling of Ostracism:

States of organizations, the institutional configuration of employment and workers’ experience are intimately coupled with what people do and how they do it (Barley, Bechky, & Milliken, 2017). Despite more and more focus on emotional and social perspective of organizations, not much is known about how organizations’ systematic configuration of interpersonal relations and communal interfaces contour the experience of shared emotional domains among employees. According to Arts et al., (2017), the organization can be thought of as present, not in the front-line rather in background, and that the employing firm must accept a piece of anything worker and the supervisor produce with collaborative efforts. Worldwide, economic, political, and social forces have rallied to make work more insecure and precarious. By “precarious work,” it means that employment is tentative, volatile, and risky from a worker’s viewpoint. All these ambiguous and intense work situations result in distress, is a reminder of precocity (Robert L. Dipboye, 2018).

Considerable amount of time is exchanged among organizational members at the job, due to which social context has developed into an imperative organizational aspect which can immensely impact work attitudes and behaviors of employees (Chung Y. W., 2015). The nature of relationships, either positive or negative, reciprocates into similar outcomes. Being at the workplace together, manager’s feeling or emotions translate into subordinate’s emotional state in one form or the other. Need for social ties can be satisfied when individual sense acknowledgment and acceptance by others, but in contrary case, need for social bonding will remain unsatisfied (Jahanzeb & Fatima, 2018). Such case advocates workplace ostracism,
which is defined as an individual or set of people, ignoring to behave in a manner that engages another member of the organization when it would be considered a norm to do so (Robinson, O'Riley, & Wang, 2012).

Omission from social setting is detrimental as it aggravates needs for being in the right place, self-esteem, command, and significant existence, in employees and consequently emotions and cognitive well-being of the employees is compromised (Williams, 2007). Chang et al. (2019) pointed out that there is a gain identifying what makes individuals to ostracize one another; it is theorized that managers, who possess feeling of insecurity, compare themselves to their competent subordinates, which causes them to ostracize such subordinates.

The feeling of insecurity and ostracism could be activated by observing oneself to be defenseless, exposed, or mediocre. Ostracism might also be subliminal, conceptual, and undeserved, by means such as exclusion from invitations of meetings or social events, ignoring views, or excluding interactions in a team, or even seeing people go quiet when trying to get involved in conversation. Citation (2015). Personal insecurity is a phenomenon pragmatic in context because an experience of insecurity in early years of one’s life can direct arousal of resentful feelings in later years of life Chris P. Long, (2016). As an expansion to this, it is plausible that personal insecurity plunges due to willfulness of surpassing others in competition and a conviction of social seclusion (Chistopher et al. 2006).

This social seclusion translates into avoidance and ignorance towards subordinates, by their supervisors, and is considered as ostracism by the subordinates. Existing research shows supervisor ostracism as the level to which supervisors disregard them from their work activities, escape eye contact or overlook employees’ opinions (Jahanzeb, Fatima, & Malik, 2018). Supervisor ostracism is harmful and more frequent than the co-worker’s ostracism. Social rejection of this kind makes employees certain that they have scant administrative backing as well as capability to carry out work related responsibilities and accomplish job apprehensions (Chung Y. W., 2018).

Ostracized employees react with negative effects and develop severe levels of non-adaptive behaviors and depression when they are neglected or isolated. They feel a lack of control in comparison to their co-workers. It is explained that ostracism in collectivist culture is expected to have unusual thinking and emotional meanings than in cultures that are not so
collectivist (Jahanzeb & Fatima, 2018). Thus, a manager who is insecure may ostracize his/her subordinates and so it is proposed:

H1: Manager’s feeling of insecurity has a positive impact on subordinate’s feeling of ostracism.

2.2 Relationship between Manager’s feeling of Insecurity and Manager’s Perception of Competent Subordinates:

It has been widely acknowledged within the human resource management (HRM) literature that employees’ capabilities, broadly understood as work-related abilities, attitudes and skills, are key to understanding task performance of individuals (Kruyen & Genugten, 2020). The insecurity feeling is perception and evaluation of unease experienced by individuals which might be a result of identifying yourself to be helpless, inferior or unsafe and this can demoralize one’s image about him/herself and self-confidence (Hayes, M.J. and Reckers, P.M.J., 2023). Managers, who are at a higher level in the management hierarchy, naturally consider themselves more competent and their position in the workforce gives logical support to their feelings. It is believed that capable subordinates might be sensed by their supervisors as owning the same or advanced occupational skills as their managers. Managers, who are insecure, have a higher probability of viewing their competent subordinates as prospective players in the promotion game race, who will excel in their career and their overall success. Such superiors may consider their subordinates as probable opponents, giving boost to existing sense of insecurity about their personal role in organization and career development (Chang, Kuo, Quinton, Lee, Cheng, & Huang, 2019). Thus proposed.

H2: Manager’s feeling of insecurity has a positive impact on manager’s perception of competent subordinates.

2.3 Managers’ Perception of Competent Subordinates, Subordinates’ Feeling of Ostracism and Emotional Exhaustion:

A manager is crucial for organizational performance, and the path which leads to success is paved with abundant trials and complications, and so a manager may not always express emotions in ideal way (Wang, Restubog, Shao, Lu, & Kleef, 2018). “Emotions as Social Information” theory (Van Kleef, 2009, 2016) proposes that way of how emotions are expressed put forth interpersonal influence. Employees undergo many obnoxious workplace events that can negatively disturb their emotional and physical well-being and job performance. While
being in the same social situations, reaction of every individual varies (Jahanzeb, Fatima, & Malik, 2018).

From the manager’s perspective, if working with a competent subordinate is disagreeable, redrafting the problem might aid in reducing the feelings related to insecurity. They can develop school of thought which affirms their position as in charge (e.g. I hold the authority to manage the subordinates, thus they are beneath me) and assures the belief that able subordinates are just working under their supervision (e.g. to preserve sense of dominance). Managers adopt re-framing strategy to balance any unpleasant feeling as they cannot change the existence of competent subordinates, and to do that they adopt avoidance strategy, which translates into feeling of ostracism in subordinates, and to do that they adopt avoidance strategy, which translates into feeling of ostracism in subordinates. Research still possesses a gap when explaining as to how subordinates respond when they feel ostracized by their managers. Conservation of Resources theory (COR) is introduced to address the gap. COR explains that people are prone to acquire and preserve resources, including conditions (e.g. feeling supported and accepted by the cohabitants), physical goods (e.g. food, housing) and energies (e.g. knowledge, time).

Managers regard competence of subordinates as a challenge rather than an asset (Chang et al. 2019) Thus, a manager who is insecure may perceive his subordinates more competent than themselves, as they might feel intimidated and uneasy. Hence, the research hypothesis follows: Hypothesis 3 \((H_3)\): Manager’s perception of competent subordinates has a positive impact on subordinate’s feeling of ostracism.

2.4 Relationship between Subordinate’s Feeling of Ostracism and Emotional Exhaustion:

Workplace ostracism is a common dilemma present in the complex and hustling environment of the workplace. Study conducted by Fox and Stallworth (2005), revealed that 95% of members who took part in the study had sustained ostracism at workplace (Qian et al, 2017). Ostracism has the potential to threaten four elementary needs of an individual concurrently; the need to fit in, need for self-esteem, the need for meaningful existence and the need to control, thus producing detrimental outcomes (Chung Y. W., 2018). Interaction and no interaction with a specific person, is one way to discriminate ostracism from various other types of workplace mistreatment (Ferris et al, 2015).
Individuals who are ostracized and thus feel left out and lonely at workplace, have a higher chance of going through emotional suffering (Anand & Mishra, 2019). Ashkanasy & Dorris, 2017, explain observation made regarding emotions that, one can view emotions as an agglomeration of responses to explicit environmental contingencies that draw from our evolutionary roots. Work of O’Reilly et al. (2014) signifies that ostracism is a communication for an individual's sense of belonging and sequentially imperiled sense of belonging is an imperative interceding construct between employee’s well-being and ostracism as well as approach corresponding to work. Thus, resilience rationale is available to validate that ostracism is a detrimental experience in organizations. In presence of hostile parasite such as ostracism, emotions of subordinates brace substantial ramification, which leads the way to emotional exhaustion (Anand & Mishra, 2019). Feelings of ostracism which transcends from supervisor's negative attitude towards competent subordinates, is a testimony of studies which state that unsupported supervisors have negative effects on employees (Liang, Hanig, Evans, Brown, & Lian, 2017). Using LMX theory as a guiding paradigm, which states that leaders treat all their followers individually, and so elevation of relationship among leader and his/her adherent will be peculiar (Dienesch & Liden, 1986). Subordinates who will be part of the in-group would have better relationship with their manager and so will not feel ostracized, but contrary case is bound to feel left out and ostracized by their leader (Anand & Mishra, 2019).

Research suggests that emotional exhaustion also transpires at times when individuals speculate that the resources to perform the tasks required of them are deficient and thus end up feeling emotionally strained and exhausted (Chen, Richard, Boncoeur, & Ford Jr., 2020). COR theory insinuates that a motivational oomph that is seen paramount in people is to procure and secure the resources available to them. Individuals do get vulnerable and assimilate exhaustion in scenarios such as thought of falling short of resources, at the genuine loss of resources, and at the inadequacy to bag desirable resources after expending other resources (Brotheridge & Lee, 2002). When employees are ostracized by their manager, they are deprived of resources such as information and knowledge shared within organization (Zhang et al, 2019), thus basing our argument on COR theory, we propose that ostracism causes dispossession of resources which paraphrases into emotional exhaustion of employees. Hence the research hypothesis is proposed:
Hypothesis 4 ($H_4$): Subordinate’s feeling of ostracism has a positive impact on emotional exhaustion of employees.

2.5 Subordinate’s Feeling of Ostracism, Core-Self Evaluation and Emotional Exhaustion

Feeling ostracism and emotional exhaustion are corollary components of an individual’s experience in the workplace. In context of an organization, supervisors and co-workers prorate socio-emotional means that comply with a person’s needs for apprehension, social acception, attachment, and esteem (Cropanzano, Rupp, & Byrne, 2003). Research signifies that when supervisors support their subordinates, they devour approbatory consequences, cognates of which include reduction in stress related to work and accentuated work accomplishments (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Dichotomy of this is silent treatment from supervisor which jeopardizes employees’ idiosyncratic proficiency, which not only threatens their positive attitude but also enervates their self-esteem (Jahanzeb, Fatima, & Malik, 2018). An Individual is unique from others and has idiomatic personality (Ashkanasy & Dorris, 2017).

Personality impacts how a person would react to a certain stimulus, but lack of research exists, which explores repercussions of extensive personality aspects, such as CSE, in the environment of workplace (Anand & Mishra, 2019). Core self-evaluation is described as an advanced concept, which symbolizes the primary evaluations that people make about themselves and their implementation in the environment they operate in. Individuals, who hold optimistic core self-evaluations, appreciate themselves in a constantly positive style under any circumstances; individuals of this trait perceive themselves as skillful, praiseworthy, and in control of their lives (Judge, Locke, & Durham, 1997).

CSE is a main attribute that imprisons the basic assessment of an individual forms about his/her environment and thus, distinguishes individuals from one another (Judge, T. A., Locke, E. A., & Durham, 1997). High core self-evaluators are amenable to appraise their merit, dexterity, and proficiency felicitously (Hu at al., 2019). Individuals having high CSE perceive that they are optimistic, self-assured, and confident (Judge, Erez, Bono, & Thoresen, 2002), and have better life event command. In addition, such individuals are strong (Bono & Colbert, 2005) and normally are content with their life (Judge et al., 2002).

CSE is a construct proffered to deduce the repercussion of dispositional fragments on demeanor related to job (Chang et al, 2012). Out of the four dimensions of CSE, self-esteem is the elementary appeasement a person concocts regarding him/herself and self-efficacy is the trait
which implies that one is capable of unraveling their subjective enigmas (Judge, Locke, Durham, & Kluger, 1998). For this reason, individuals in possession of high CSE attributes conjugate positively to the approach temperament (Ferris, Rosen, Jhonson, Brown, Risavay, & Heller, 2011; Judge, et al, 1997) and skeptically to the avoidance temperament and as a consequence, such individuals valuate their workplaces with gratification and show transcendent coping mechanism in regard to outer stipulations and hence sustain better attitudes and sentiments.

Thus, it is predicted that CSE, as personality trait, can mitigate the negative effect of ostracism on emotional exhaustion of a subordinate, which generates following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 5 (H5): Core-Self Evaluation positively moderates the relationship between subordinate’s feeling of ostracism and emotional exhaustion of the subordinate.**

### 2.6 Mediating Role of Subordinate’s Feeling of Ostracism between Manager’s Feeling of Insecurity and Emotional Exhaustion

Personal insecurity in an individual is defined as suspicion as to whether one can hold on to a worldview or not (Christopher, Drummon, Jones, Marek, & Therriault, 2006). This insecurity could have sprung from a variety of roots such as economic instability or interpersonal issues. It is argued by researchers that one cause of insecurity in an individual could be emanating from a stress to excel and because experiencing feeling of isolation from others (Khan, Moss, Quratulain, and Hameed (Citation 2016). My interest for this particular study is to investigate the path which starts at the feeling of insecurity in manager’s and ends at emotional exhaustion of subordinates.

Organizations represent a unique relationship between the managers and competent subordinates in social and work context. It is a known fact that individuals crave social connections (Walton, Cohen, Cwir, & Spencer, 2012) (Lee & Gillath, 2016). Social connections can provide various roles, some of which include social influence and comparison. Social connections also have the potential to fulfill various needs, relevant to emotional support and have numerous beneficial outcomes, such as enhanced physical and mental health (Lee & Gillath, 2016).

The magnitude of being insecure at job is triggered by some crucial previous circumstances. Firstly, the reconstruction and change in the work environment can boost the feelings of
insecurity in a manager. This feeling of insecurity and exhaustion increases in some individuals but in others it varies drastically. Insecure managers have a higher probability of viewing their competent subordinates as forthcoming opponents for promotion opportunities, excel in career and their overall success. These supervisors may consider their subordinates as latent opponents, giving boost to existing sense of insecurity about their own role in organization and career progress (Chang et al., 2019). The job of manager is expected as a player coach who must perform and oversee the work in overfull and complex situations. This insecurity arises with the control stretch of their ability to become aware of any competent individual employee. The insecure managers, when meet subordinates, who they perceive more competent than themselves, they develop hostile feelings towards them (Chang et al. 2019) and engage in uncivil behavior towards their subordinates (Shin & Hur, 2019). This uncivil behavior includes sarcasm, impolite comments, antagonistic stares and ignoring the subordinate in question (Reio, 2011). This hostile and uncivil behavior by managers and supervisors has been uncovered as to destabilize employee output by inducing nonconstructive emotions such as feeling of ostracism (Kabat-Farr, Cortina, & Marchiondo, 2018).

Ostracism is analogous with feeling lonely at workplace, being ignored and social isolation, is correlated with an array of damaging physical, psychological, and occupational consequences (Ferris et al. 2008), ranging from hostile attitudes to lowering in self-esteem as well as loss of resources (Twenge et al., 2001).

We examine the extent to which Manager’s insight of competent subordinates may influence emotional exhaustion of subordinates by drawing upon conservation of resources theory. The theory states that people seek to obtain, retain, and protect valued resources (i.e., any physical, psychological, and/or social factors that people value) to attain goals (Hobfoll, Halbesleben, Neveu, & Westman, 2018), framework of the COR theory suggests that ostracism is a mechanism which exhausts the staff of its psychological resources and manipulates employees’ feelings of emotional exhaustion.

Insecurity which origins feeling of unease among managers can be regarded as seed for developing avoidance towards subordinates (Ballesteros & Whitlock, 2009). Managers may reduce physical interaction with subordinates they perceive more competent, as to only communicate via emails or text messages. Taking this logic into consideration, it is concluded
that a manager feeling insecure is likely to repeat the isolating-behavior and undervaluing toward their able subordinates (Chang et al., 2019).

Exhaustion refers to the physical feeling of being exhausted and emotionally depleted at work. Emotional exhaustion could not be categorized as a private dilemma due to its consequential corporeal and psychological well-being, but it is a quandary for organizations as well (Anasori, Bayighomog, & Tenova, 2019). Emotionally exhausted individuals are dispossessed off of their personal resources, when they experience disruption in social relationships (Lapointe & Vandenberghe, 2016). Insecure managers become a source of such disruption, by showing hostile and ostracizing behavior.

Organizational leaders and researchers both are constantly working with united forces to increase performance and productivity of their organizations by overcoming the problems between managers’ and subordinate’s feelings of exhaustion (Anand & Mishra, 2019). To facilitate this quest, we also ponder over the phenomenon which suggests that insecure managers incite feelings of emotional exhaustion in their subordinates. Thus, literature helps in proposing the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 6 (H₆):** Subordinate’s feeling of ostracism positively mediates the relationship between manager’s feeling of insecurity and emotional exhaustion.

### 2.7 Mediating role of subordinate’s feeling of ostracism between manager’s perception of competent subordinates and emotional exhaustion:

Workplace ostracism acts as a social irritant that threatens cognitive, emotional, and psychological resources. It alters employee sense of control, purpose, belonging and self-worth and, in response, it tests employee’s skills to handle possible non-receptive conditions (Kish-Gephart et al., 2009). Employees involve in intellectual avoidant coping behavior to release the troublesome linked with threatening situations and people.

In an organizational environment, supervisor and co-workers offer socio-emotional resources that manage individual needs for recognition, belonging, social approval and respect. Relating to these two sources, supervisors represent organizational power and direct, oversee as well as appreciate the struggles, contribution, and work efforts of their subordinates. Research shows that when supervisors support their subordinates, they enjoy positive results such as improved performance and decreased work stress (N. Kumari, 2011). On the other hand, social rejection
from supervisor hinders employees’ own mastery, which not only jeopardizes their optimism but also lessens their confidence (Jahanzeb, Fatima, & Malik, 2018). Ostracism studied with perspective of subordinates still has room for exploration. This study focuses on subordinates, who are unable to understand that the ostracism they experience in the workplace is result of their higher level of competence (Chang et al., 2019). This confusion can result in subordinate’s false perception of not being good enough and they may try becoming part of the group by overachieving, which could form a downward spiral. Employees who feel ostracized are likely to feel out of place in an organization causing a feeling of loneliness and emotional exhaustion. The mediating role of a subordinate’s feeling of ostracism is one of the significant enduring managerial issues faced by the individual. This issue increases with ostracism in highly demanding jobs. Having a workforce which is comprised of competent employees could be seen as a competitive edge for an organization. Competence and performance of employees in a workplace has been solemn linked to both wages and work practices, but little attention is paid on how others respond to those competent employees in workplace (Artz, Goodall, & Oswald, 2017).

Emotionally exhausted employees have reduced cognitive, psychological, and emotional resources, which makes it difficult for them to manage interpersonal and work demands. For instance, they may make an intentional effort to slow down their pace of work, to damage company property, to tarnish their reputations, to incur financial costs, and to share confidential company information. Such employees use an avoidance coping approach to distance themselves from job demands and engage in deviant behavior.

The emotional exhaustion and ostracism in an organization context involves the behavior that can disconnect a subordinate from an interpersonal work relationship.

Hypothesis 7 (H7): Subordinate’s feeling of ostracism positively mediates the relationship between manager’s perception of competent subordinate and emotional exhaustion.

2.8 The Sequential Mediation:

One of the reasons behind a manager’s insecurity is expansion of workload, this burdens an individual’s work life. Another reason for insecurity in managers, as explained earlier by Luthar (2003), it might come into existence due to pressure of surpassing others and from being isolated by others. Thus, when already insecure managers come in contact with subordinates who they
perceive to be more competent, their urge to surpass others gets heightened, and thus the feeling of insecurity shines brighter in them. These insecure managers when realize that subordinates who are working for them has capabilities equal to them, they get driven to evaluate themselves by building comparison to subordinates who could be ranked at the same scale as themselves (Festinger, 1954). As the picture gets clearer to managers, and subordinates capabilities feel equivalent to their own, the feeling of insecurity enhances as they start to feel irreplaceable (Richter & Naswall, 2019).

Proposed that insecurity highlights manager’s perception of competent subordinates, thus when subordinates are perceived to be more competent, managers may reduce physical interaction with them as to only communicate via emails or text messages (Chang et al. 2019). HRM literature has prominent defense for the importance of employee competencies, which can be described as an amalgam of skills, abilities, and attitudes relevant to work (Kruyen & Genugten, 2020). As these competencies are important for organization’s performance, boosting practices are expected to be observed as to enhance these competencies, rather than suppress them (Jiang, Lepak, Hu, & Baer, 2012).

Subordinates containing competencies should be considered as valuable assets for the organization, as it is believed that institutes must identify capacities that they regard as their chief assets which, moreover, cannot be replicated by other organizations with much ease. If nurtured appropriately, these high-end capacities, labeled as ‘core competencies’ could result into a strong competitive advantage (Kruyen & Genugten, 2020). Instead, when insecure managers perceive these competent subordinates as a threat rather than an asset (Chang et al, 2019), they engage in ostracizing behavior (Jahanzeb, Fatima, & Malik, 2018).

As stated by Ferris et al. (2008), ostracism involves the omission of behavior, or directing no behavior toward the target. Ostracism results into unwanted outcomes, with assortments of lowering in self-esteem and loss of resources (Bashir & Nadeem, 2019). As COR theory’s central tenet proposes that individuals are always enthusiastic to guard their existing resources along acquisition of novel ones, this also suggests that loss of expected or existing resources is menacing for individuals (Halbesleben, Neveu, Paustian-Underdahl, & Westman, 2014). This loss in resource, which is depicted in form of social isolation or ostracism, causes individuals to get emotionally exhausted, as by definition, emotional exhaustion is deprivation of physical and emotional resources (Lapointe & Vandenberghhe, 2016).
Employees often need resources from others to be effective and successful in their jobs (Lim, Tai, Baberger, & Morrison, 2020). Following this logic, when subordinates feel ostracized by their managers (e.g. When managers do not support subordinates and ignore their needs or when managers do not share knowledge with subordinates), subordinates may feel avoided and loss of resources in form of information and social interaction; and, following the presence of avoidance, literature suggests that subordinates are likely to feel emotionally exhausted in workplace (Anand & Mishra, 2019). Thus hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 8 (H₈): Manager’s feeling of insecurity has positive impact on emotional exhaustion with positive mediating effect of manager’s perception of competent subordinates and subordinate’s feeling of ostracism.

2.9 Theoretical Model:

Considering proposed hypotheses, the following framework is developed.
3. Methodology:

3.1 Research Design Elements:
The current study is correlational; it allows for the statistical testing of the proposed relationship to know the extent to which these variables might be related. The type of inquiry to the variables under the study is quantitative since open-ended questions are not used and structured and unstructured interviews are carried out. And thus, the determination of the unit of analysis is done in both cases of the head of the department and the professors; and then, for the assistant professors and lecturers, it being one dyad set, as the method applies closer examination of the dynamics between managers and subordinates within the dyad and followed similar prior studies (e.g., Liu, Hui, Lee, & Chen, 2013). Only dyad sets with a longer working relationship of six months or above were recruited to ensure some ecological validity of data. In this regard, the managers and the corresponding subordinates worked together for six months or more by the time of collecting data. Complete consent of the dyad set was also made certain (i.e. Both manager and subordinate agree to participate in the study) (Chang at al., 2019). Time horizon is cross sectional i.e. data was collected at one point in time.

3.2 Population and Sample:
Target population for the study were professors and lecturers at the public sector universities of Pakistan. To conduct the survey convenience sampling was used. Questionnaires were made available online at Google forms and distributed through E-mail and were distributed among managers and 2 subordinates being one dyad set (i.e. head of department and professors, with corresponding assistant professors and lecturers), the head of departments, professors, and lecturers at government universities. Links were also shared through online message. To circumvent the issue of bias, respondents were guaranteed anonymity. Target sample size was 250, but due to COVID-19 pandemic, immense difficulty was faced for data collection and response assurance. Total response gathered in form of dyad sets was 250, but after filtering the incomplete and irrelevant response, we were left with 180 responses. Once data was collected, it was entered into software. IBM SPSS software and Process Hayes were the statistical tools used to process and inspect the data collected through questionnaires.

3.3 Measurement and Scales:
Two questionnaires were developed, one for Head of Departments and professors, and one to be distributed among lecturers. Both questionnaires were in English language and respondents were requested to respond according to the given scale ranging from (strongly disagree to strongly agree). Questionnaire A consisted of 13 items, while Questionnaire B consisted of 31 items. The items in questionnaire were measured through Likert Scale using five points with 1=strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree and 5= strongly agree.

Emotional Exhaustion was measured using 9-item Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). A sample item is ‘Working with people directly puts too much stress on me’ (Anand & Mishra, 2019).

Measures for manager’s feeling of insecurity and perception of competent subordinates are taken from, who in their study specify that the subordinates’ perceived competence was measured by having manager to evaluate his or her subordinate’s competence, via the employee competence and performance scale and employee performance scale. Sample items include: “Competent subordinate affects my significance to the workplace” and “my existing subordinate is superior in knowledge” (Chang et al, 2019).

Basic measurement scale to measure feeling of ostracism is taken from Chang et al, 2019, who revised the measurement scale developed by (Ferris et al, 2008). A sample item is: “Does not answer my greetings at work.”

CSE is measured using the 12-item higher-order dispositional framework scale developed by (Judge, Erez, Bono, & Thoresen, 2003). Sample items include: “I am confident, I get the success I deserve in life.”

4. Results:

4.1 Descriptive, correlations and reliability:

On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 strongly disagrees and 5 strongly agrees, a score above 2.5 shows that most of the respondents rated themselves more than the mean average. The reliability of the variable is calculated on the initiation of the statistical treatment of the raw data. Calculation for Cronbach Alpha measure’s reliability for all the variables. The above referenced reliability all has variables showing above their acceptable values.

Table 4.1: Correlation matrix and reliability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>


Competent Subordinates and Managers’ Perception:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>F1</th>
<th>F2</th>
<th>F3</th>
<th>F4</th>
<th>F5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Manager’s feeling of insecurity</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>(0.84)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Manager’s perception of competent subordinates</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.400***</td>
<td>(0.76)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Subordinate’s feeling of ostracism</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.154*</td>
<td>0.152*</td>
<td>(0.79)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Core-Self Evaluation</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.138*</td>
<td>0.095*</td>
<td>0.008*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Emotional Exhaustion</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.272*</td>
<td>0.110*</td>
<td>0.457**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Significant level at 5% or 0.05, **Significant level at 1 % or 0.01, ***Significant level at 0.1% or 0.001, n = 180

From the analysis, it is observed that the predictors, mediators, moderators, and outcomes do have significant relationships among themselves. More precisely, emotional exhaustion is positively related to the manager's feelings of insecurity ($r = 0.272, p < 0.05$). This means that an increase in managers’ feelings of insecurity predicts greater emotional exhaustion. Emotional exhaustion has a low but positive and significant relationship with Manager's Perception of Competent Subordinate ($r = 0.110, p < 0.05$). There is a high positive relationship with the Subordinate's Feeling of Ostracism ($r = 0.457, p < .001$), and at the same time, there is a high negative relationship with Core-Self Evaluation ($r = -0.352, p < 0.05$). Therefore, in using a correlation matrix, the result of this study shows that all the measured constructs are positively correlated with non-zero values that verify linearity and give initial support to all hypothesized statements. The summary of correlation matrix results is presented in table 4.1 below.

### 4.2 Confirmatory factor analysis and model fitness comparison:

Factor analysis verified the percentages of variance accounted for each factor conforming variables of the study. The factor loadings range from 0.06 to 0.09, that is within the acceptable value hence compels further analysis based on sufficient factorability.

**Table 4.2:** Confirmatory factor analysis
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>0.67</th>
<th>0.77</th>
<th>0.71</th>
<th>0.78</th>
<th>0.86</th>
<th>0.73</th>
<th>0.82</th>
<th>0.81</th>
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<td>Managers’ Perception of Competent Subordinate (MPCS)</td>
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<td>Subordinate Feelings of Ostracism (SFO)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Subordinates’ CSE (SCSE)</td>
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<td>SCSE_9</td>
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<td>SCSE_12</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4.3:** Confirmatory Factor Analysis Model Fitness Comparisons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>(\chi^2/df)</th>
<th>TLI</th>
<th>CFI</th>
<th>RMSE_A</th>
<th>SRM_R</th>
<th>SRMR_w</th>
<th>SRMR_b</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One Factor</td>
<td>3.39</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>0.223</td>
<td>0.079</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two Factor</td>
<td>2.69</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>0.251</td>
<td>0.027</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three Factor</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>0.263</td>
<td>0.037</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four Factor</td>
<td>1.78</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>0.179</td>
<td>0.004</td>
<td>0.137</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Model fitness was validated using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). To compare the comparative fitness, the hypothesized model Root Mean Square Error Approximation (RMSEA) with the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and Tucker Lewis Index (TLI). These indices have an accepted limit, including RMSEA and SRMR (within and between) to be ≤ 0.08 for RMSEA and SRMR within and between; and TLI, > 0.90 for TLI, and CF; and < 2 Chi-Square/degrees of freedom. Accordingly, the proposed (five factor model) exhibits superior fit indices over alternative models.

4.3 Regression Analysis:

The Macro Process of Hayes and regression methodology were adapted to analyze all hypothesized statements. Simple linear regression was conducted to analyze the direct relationship proposed as H₁, H₂, H₃ and H₄.

### 4.3.1 Managers’ Feeling of Insecurity, Managers’ Perception of Competent Subordinates, Subordinates’ Feeling of Ostracism and Emotional Exhaustion:

The following is cumulative data for Hypothesis testing of H₁, H₂, H₃ and H₄.

| Table 4.4: Regression Analysis Data for H₁, H₂, H₃ and H₄ |
|-----------------------------------------------|-------------|-----|-----|-----------------|
|      | Direct effects | Coefficient | P-value | R-Squared | 95% CL               |
| **H₁** | MFI → SFO | 0.111 | 0.022 | 0.036 | [0.036-0.209] |
| **H₂** | MFI → MPCS | 0.40 | *** | 0.160 | [0.506-0.579] |
| **H₃** | MPCS → SFO | 0.107 | 0.038 | 0.030 | [0.081-0.223] |
| **H₄** | SFO → EE | 0.601 | *** | 0.360 | [0.467-0.561] |

H₁: Manager’s feeling of insecurity has a positive impact on subordinate’s feeling of ostracism.
SFO has a positive and statistical relationship with MFI ($B = 0.111$, $p<0.05$), with the 95% confident interval showing $([LLCI = 0.036, ULCI = 0.209])$, and this indicates that an increase of one unit in MFI predicts an increase of 0.111 units in SFO. As for the confidence interval values, they are significantly different from zero, hence confirming significance in the relationship. Summarizing, the results note that moving higher on the MFI scale predicts a greater level of SFO, and vice versa. The R2 value of 0.036 shows that MFI alone explains 3.6% variance in SFO.

H2: Manager’s feeling of insecurity has a positive impact on manager’s perception of competent subordinates. MPCS shows a positive and statistically significant relationship with MFI ($B = 0.40$, $p<0.01$), with the 95% confidence interval of $([LLCI=0.506, ULCI=0.579])$, signifying that 0.40 units in MPCS is predicted with every one unit increase in MFI.

With a value of 0.160, the R2 simply indicates that MFI alone is able to explain only 16% variance in MPCS, while the confidence interval of more than zero gives proof of the hypothesized relationship.

H3: Managers’ perception of competent subordinates has a positive impact on subordinates’ feelings of ostracism.

This indicated the positive and significant relationship of SFO with MPCS ($\beta = 0.107$, $p < 0.05$), at a 95% confidence interval of $([LLCI = 0.081, ULCI = 0.223])$, which indicates that for

While on both sides of the confidence interval, the values are significantly different from zero, which therefore proves that the relationship is significant. The value of R2 being 0.030, it explains that MPCS alone contributes to the 3% variance of SFO, thus providing the proof of the hypothesis. H4: Subordinate’s feeling of ostracism has a positive impact on emotional exhaustion of employees. EE presented a positive and significant relationship with SFO ($\beta = 0.601$, $p < 0.01$) at 95% CI of $([LLCI = 0.467, ULCI = 0.561])$, showing that a one-unit change in SFO led to a one-unit change in EE. The values of the confidence interval are way different from zero; this confirms that the relationship is significant. The value of R2 of 0.360, on the other hand, showed that SFO alone explains 36% of the variance in SFO. Therefore, it proves the hypothesis.

4.3.2 Moderation of CSE on relation between SFO and EE:
CSE proves to be significant moderator in the relationship between SFO and EE (β, -0.219; p < .005). The beta sign depicts negative but statistically significant contribution of CSE towards SFO-EE relationship which means with the increases CSE, the relationship strength is weaken. The comparison between direct relations (SFO-EE, β, 0.413; p < .005) and interaction term (SFO*CSE-EE, β, -0.219; p < .005) shows that subordinates’ feeling of ostracism contributes 41.3% increase in his emotional exhaustion but if the subordinate evaluates himself high on higher order trait of CSE(self-efficacy, self-esteem, emotional stability and internal locus of control), the effect of his ostracism on emotional exhaustion is reduced to 21.9% and is statistically significant. So, here could be concluded that individuals with higher CSE are usually better able to cope with the feelings of ostracism and are less likely to experience emotional exhaustion for the specific sample under study.

**Table 4.5: Regression Analysis for H₅**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>Sig</th>
<th>LLCI</th>
<th>ULCI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SFO-&gt;EE</td>
<td>0.413</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.3019</td>
<td>.3288</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Moderation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>Sig</th>
<th>LLCI</th>
<th>ULCI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SFO*CSE-&gt;EE</td>
<td>-0.219</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>-.2943</td>
<td>-.3071</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.3.3 Mediating role of SFO between MFI and EE:

**Table 4.6: Regression Analysis for H₆**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>Sig</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>95% CL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

![Figure 4.1: Moderating role of CSE in SFO-EE relationship](image-url)
Subordinate’s feeling of ostracism, Manager’s feeling of insecurity and Emotional exhaustion:

To test the mediating effect of SFO in the MFI-EE relationship, I first try to test the significance of the independent variable on the mediator. Therefore, MFI shows positive and significant relationships with SFO ($B = 0.471$, $p < 0.01$) at a 95% confidence level [LLCI=1.227, ULCI=1.484]. Test of the significance of the mediator on the dependent variable. SFO shows a positive, significant relationship again with EE when controlled for MFI ($B = 0.488$, $p<0.01$) at 95% CI = [LLCI=0.364, ULCI=0.576]. Thirdly, the other important indirect effect supported by the data was the mediation effect of SFO on the relationship between MFI and EE ($0.563$, $p < 0.01$), with a confidence interval of 95% [LLCI = 0.051, ULCI=0.167]. Besides, after the mediator is controlled, the association between MFI-EE ($0.117$, $p < 0.01$) remained significant with a decreased beta value, which may indicate a partially mediating effect of SFO in the MFI-EE relationship.

$H_6$: Subordinate’s feeling of ostracism partially mediates the relationship between manager’s feeling of insecurity and emotional exhaustion.

4.3.4 Mediating role of Subordinate’s feeling of ostracism between manager’s perception of competent subordinates and emotional exhaustion:

Table 4.7: Regression Analysis for $H_7$

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>Sig</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>95% CL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MPCS-&gt;SFO</td>
<td>0.539</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.063</td>
<td>[0.127-1.531]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SFO-&gt;EE</td>
<td>0.442</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.055</td>
<td>[0.301-0.454]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPCS via SFO</td>
<td>0.593</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.023</td>
<td>[0.091-0.122]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPCS-&gt;EE</td>
<td>0.077</td>
<td>0.010</td>
<td>0.064</td>
<td>[0.203-0.334]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Managers’ perception of competent subordinates, subordinates’ feeling of ostracism, and emotional exhaustion are crucial in understanding workplace dynamics. To examine the
mediating effect of SFO in the MPCS-EE relationship, we first assessed the impact of the independent variable on the mediator. MPCS was found to have a positive and significant relationship with SFO (B = 0.539, p < 0.01), with a 95% confidence interval of [LLCI=0.127, ULCI=1.531]. Next, we evaluated the significance of the mediator on the dependent variable, revealing that SFO positively and significantly relates to EE when MPCS is controlled (B=0.442, p<0.01), within a 95% confidence interval of [LLCI=0.301, ULCI=0.454]. The significant indirect effect highlights SFO's mediating role in the MPCS-EE relationship (0.593, p < 0.01), with a 95% confidence interval of [LLCI=0.091, ULCI=0.122]. Moreover, after controlling for the mediator, the MPCS-EE association (0.077, p < 0.05) remained significant but with a decreased beta value, indicating a partial mediating effect of SFO.

H7 posits that the subordinate’s feeling of ostracism positively mediates the relationship between the manager’s perception of competent subordinates and emotional exhaustion. Sequential mediation involves the manager’s perception of competent subordinates and the subordinate’s feelings of ostracism, affecting the link between the manager’s feeling of insecurity and emotional exhaustion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.8: Regression Analysis for H8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mediation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MFI-&gt;MPCS-&gt;SFO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPCS-&gt;SFO-&gt;EE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Serial Mediation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MFI-&gt;MPCS-&gt;SFO-&gt;EE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Managers’ feeling of insecurity, managers’ perception of competent subordinates, subordinates’ feeling of ostracism and emotional exhaustion:

The mediation analysis substantiated the statistically significant mediation effects of managers’ perception of competent subordinate in the relationship between managers’ feeling of insecurity and subordinates’ feeling of ostracism i.e., MFI->MPCS->SFO (β, 0.328; p <.01). Alike effects are observed for the mediation effects of subordinate feeling of ostracism in the relationship between managers’ perception of competent i.e., MPCS->SFO->EE (β, 0.477; p < .01). Serial mediation also proved to be significant i.e., MFI->MPCS->SFO->EE (β, 0.492; p <.01).
5. Discussion:

Purpose of the conducted research was to study the impact of manager’s feeling of insecurity on emotional exhaustion of employee, through mediating effect of manager’s perception of competent subordinates and subordinate’s feeling of ostracism. Core-Self Evaluation was introduced as a personality trait to study whether it positively moderates the relationship which exists between subordinate’s feeling of ostracism and emotional exhaustion. All the hypotheses were supported by providing the confirmation for statement that ‘manager’s feeling of insecurity is a potential cause of ostracism and emotional exhaustion (Chang et al, 2019). The design of the study is kept dichotomous, as to have two distinguishable irrespective of manager and subordinate. This was done for the ease of understanding the feelings and emotions of two parties individually. Following this pattern also helped in understanding the behavioral pattern.

Firstly, we find that manager’s feeling of insecurity, already existing as personality aspect in managers, translates into behavior that is conceived ostracism by the subordinate. Behavior which is categorized as ostracism by the subordinates include that manager did not respond to the morning greet, or left the area when subordinate entered the room. This results in subordinates feeling left out and ignored by the manager (Chang et al, 2019). Thus, the first hypothesis was supported by the response collected from subordinates.

Secondly, we studied the feeling of insecurity in managers and its impact on their perception of competent subordinates. It was proved from the collected data and results that when a manager is insecure, he/she perceives the competent subordinate as a challenger, rather than a colleague, as explained by social comparison theory. Manager’s insecurity results in demoralizing thinking pattern and they perceive their subordinate more competent, evident from positive responses to questions which asked that competent subordinate impacts their reputation in the workplace.

Then we studied the relationship which exists between manager’s perception of competent subordinates and subordinates feeling of ostracism. A positive relationship was observed as manager’s when interact with subordinates, they consider potential threat for their job or value in the workplace, they start avoiding such subordinates and ignore them in the workplace as to
maintain their self-worth. Being ignored by the manager is perceived as ostracism by the subordinates, thus resulting in feelings of ostracism.

Fourthly we studied the relationship which exists between subordinate’s feeling of ostracism and emotional exhaustion. As evident from the results, the positive impact was seen. An employee feeling ignored and avoided at workplace, which is a social setting in which he/she spends major part of the day, the feeling of being unwanted and being ignored puts immense stress on the employee. Thus, ostracized employees responded positively to question such as they feel used up at the end of the workday. Proving the proposed hypothesis.

For the fifth hypothesis we introduced Core-Self Evaluation as a personality trait, which states that individuals high at CSE see themselves as worthy or problem solving and amenable to appraise their merit, dexterity, and proficiency felicitously (Hu at al, 2019). Respondents who had feelings of ostracism existent in them did not come high on CSE and thus it did not mitigate the relationship between ostracism and emotional exhaustion.

The sixth hypothesis proposed that subordinate’s feeling of ostracism positively mediates the relationship between manager’s feeling of insecurity and emotional exhaustion. This was proved true as an insecure manager induces feelings of ostracism in an employee which results in emotional exhaustion of that employee, as seen by the responses such as I feel burned out of my work.

Seventh hypothesis, we find that in presence of feelings of ostracism the relationship between manager’s perception of competent subordinates and emotional exhaustion is positive. Manager’s perception of competent subordinate’s results into ostracizing behavior towards employees which make them feel emotionally exhausted in the work setting as they show signs of being unhappy and dissatisfied.

Lastly, we observed the sequential mediation of manager’s perception of competent subordinates and feelings of ostracism experienced by the employees, between managers’ feeling of insecurity and emotional exhaustion. Result indicates a positive path, which proved that when managers are insecure about their own abilities and position in the work place, they perceive competent subordinates as a threat and thus show ostracizing behavior towards them, which results into emotionally exhausting state of the employees.

6. Conclusion:
This study has confirmed that the manager’s feeling of insecurity cause managers to perceive their subordinates as prospective competitors, which in turn cause the ostracizing behavior from manager’s side towards their subordinates. The feeling of ostracism arises in subordinates which in turn produces emotional exhaustion in them. Introduction of strong personality trait, such as Core Self-evaluation was to test whether it mitigates the relationship between subordinate’s feelings of ostracism and emotional exhaustion.

7. Limitations and Directions:
First limitation of the study was to ensure honest responses from subordinates and managers which was one of the chief issues. To keep privacy of response among managers and subordinates, so as not taint the relationship in workplace, was another imperative concern. The biased response is the third limitation as majority of respondents from managerial position were reluctant to admit of having feelings of insecurity. As the study was conducted at the times COVID-19 Pandemic around the globe, data collection was one major concern and took more time than it would have in normal conditions. Pandemic conditions resulted in a much less than ideal response rate, which affected the legitimacy of the study. Seeking interest and attention of participants was also a trivial part of the hardship. Generalization of the study is also limited as its focal point is on educational institutes, and research is conducted in the Pakistani perspective, which has a cultural dynamic of collectivism.
To further this research, it is recommended to explore feelings of ostracism managers may experience from their subordinates in similar circumstances. Future research is advised to be conducted in a different cultural setting, providing further insight into perception of competent subordinates and feelings of ostracism with cultural dimensions such as, individualism–collectivism, power distance and masculinity–femininity. More dimensions of subordinates’ response to feelings of ostracism have scope of exploration, such as job burnout and emotional stability.

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