Practical implications of workplace ostracism: a systematic literature review

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Abstract

Purpose – This review analyzes data from research articles published from 2010 to 2022 related to workplace ostracism which include theoretical or empirical practical implications. The primary motive of this review is to identify main themes of practical implications relevant to workplace ostracism.

Design/methodology/approach – In total, 86 research articles published in 56 journals were retrieved from six well-known management science databases, namely, Science Direct, Emerald Online, Springer Link, Taylor and Francis, Wiley and Sage. The affinity diagram was utilized to organize the practical implications of the studies into meaningful themes. Moreover, in order to prioritize the main themes, the Pareto diagram was utilized.

Findings – Eleven themes have been used to categorize the practical implications of the reviewed articles, demonstrating various human resource (HR) interventions for avoiding or limiting the feelings of ostracism at work. Specifically, they focus on training and development, culture, formal and informal meetings, interpersonal relationships, task interdependence, monitoring, trust and transparency, proper channel, job autonomy and individual characteristics.

Originality/value – While many systematic and traditional literature reviews have been undertaken in an attempt to thoroughly organize extant literature on various aspects of workplace ostracism, no study has addressed the main themes of practical implications *vis-à-vis* employees experiencing workplace ostracism. Moreover, the majority of them are apparently out of date (prior to 2019), and there is just one study undertaken up to 2020.

Keywords Workplace ostracism, Practical implications, Systematic literature review

Paper type Literature review

Introduction

Ostracism is defined as a scenario in which someone is purposefully ignored or excluded by others (Williams, 2007). Referred to as an employees' sense of isolation and exclusion from co-workers (Ferris, Brown, Berry, & Lian, 2008; O'Reilly *et al.*, 2015), ostracism as a serious phenomenon and a widespread concern with multiple manifestations in workplace settings is well documented in literature (see for example, Fox & Stallworth, 2005; Hsieh & Karatepe, 2019; Liu, Kwan, Lee, & Hui, 2013). Workplace ostracism may take many forms such as avoiding eye contact or conversation, silent treatment, giving cold shoulder and concealing critical information (Williams & Zadro, 2001). Ostracism, as a distinct and prominent phenomenon (Zheng, Yang, Ngo, Liu, & Jiao, 2016), leads persons who believe they have been ostracized by their coworkers to experience feelings of social suffering that resembles to physical pain (Eisenberger, Lieberman, & Williams, 2003). Based on early social rejection studies, workplace ostracism is also characterized as social isolation, peer rejection, abandonment, being out of the loop and social exclusion (O'Reilly, Robinson, Berdahl, &

Banki, 2015). Referring to a recent survey conducted by Utah State University on workplace ostracism, Parker (2019) cited that a majority of the employees (66% of them) were found to have experienced different forms of workplace ostracism. Likewise, findings of study involving 262 full time employees indicates that 66% of the respondents experienced workplace ostracism in the form of silent treatment during the course of five years, while 28.7% stated that coworkers deliberately left the workplace after they arrived (Fox & Stallworth, 2005).

Although workplace ostracism can take different forms, researchers (see for example, Williams & Zadro, 2001; Anjum, Liang, Durrani, & Ahmed, 2019), however, cite three features common to it. First, the impact of workplace ostracism is determined by the target's subjective perception, i.e. the target's subjective explanation. Second, it is subtle and concealed. It involves silent avoidance or neglect between the target and the perpetrators. Third, establishing whether workplace ostracism is intentional or unintentional can be challenging. Intentional ostracism such as ignoring someone after a disagreement might help people avoid social discomfort and negative feelings (Robinson, O'Reilly, & Wang, 2013). When actors fail to realize that their actions promote exclusion, or when they misinterpret the social norms of a situation, unintentional ostracism occurs (Robinson *et al.*, 2013). Most empirical investigations show workplace ostracism as unidimensional structure (Ferris *et al.*, 2008). Contrarily, exclusion at workplace can originate from a variety of sources, including supervisors and coworkers. It might be difficult to completely understand workplace ostracism if this aspect is overlooked. As a result, Hitlan and Noel (2009) classified workplace ostracism into two types: supervisor ostracism and coworker ostracism. Supervisor ostracism occurs when an employee believes his or her supervisor is ignoring or excluding him or her, whereas, co-worker ostracism occurs when colleagues are the source of exclusion. Supervisors have a substantial effect on employee promotions, wage raises and resource distributions since they hold authority in the organization. Consequently, ostracism by a supervisor may be more detrimental than ostracism by coworkers (Hitlan & Noel, 2009; Scott, 2007).

Indeed, ostracism at work has a consistent negative impact on employees' behaviors and feelings, leading to a variety of self-defeating behaviors (Haldorai, Kim, Phetvaroon, & Li, 2020). As a form of "social death" (Sommer, Williams, Ciarocco, & Baumeister, 2001) ostracism at work has been linked to a range of negative behaviors, including counterproductive work behavior (Hitlan & Noel, 2009; Zhao, Peng, & Sheard, 2013) and workplace deviance (Chung, 2015). Moreover, being prominent workplace stressor, workplace ostracism has a range of negative consequences on behavioral, attitudinal and psychological outcomes of the target employee (O'Reilly *et al.*, 2015; Zimmerman, Carter-Sowell, & Xu, 2016). Likewise, ostracism can degrade a sense of self-esteem leading to low levels of belongingness in employees (Fuller *et al.*, 2006; Tyler & Blader, 2003; Wu, Liu, Kwan, & Lee, 2016). Furthermore, in today's business world, where firms must evolve rapidly, workplace ostracism might impede an organization's ability to learn. For example, Imran, Fatima, Sarwar, and Iqbal (2021) found that organizational learning negatively influences ostracism at work by prompting target employees to remain silent on organizational matters. Workplace ostracism has also been referred to as a type of social exploitation which tends to have negative consequences from staff and workers perspective, such as, increased turnover intention, reduced job satisfaction (Ferris *et al.*, 2008) and reduced individual well-being in terms of mental agony (Ferris *et al.*, 2008; Wu, Yim, Kwan, & Zhang, 2011), emotional exhaustion (Wu, Qu, Zhang, Hao, Tang, Zhao, & Si, 2018; Wu, Wang, & Lu, 2018) and sleep quality (Chen & Li, 2019), that have a potential to result in high organizational costs. Employee turnover, for example, is shown to cause replacement expenses, training costs and output loss until new employees are hired to replace the outgoing ones (Ferris *et al.*, 2008;

Tziner & Birati, 1996). Meanwhile, workplace deviance, has long been projected to cost companies anywhere between $6 to $200 billion each year (Ferris *et al.*, 2008; Murphy, 1993).

While many systematic (Bedi, 2021; Kaushal, Kaushik, & Sivathanu, 2021; Mao, Liu, Jiang, & Zhang, 2017; Sharma & Dhar, 2021) and traditional (Robinson *et al.*, 2013) literature reviews have been undertaken in an attempt to thoroughly organize extant literature on various aspects of workplace ostracism, no study has addressed the main themes of practical implications vis-à-vis employees experiencing workplace ostracism. Moreover, majority of them are apparently out of date (prior to 2019), and there is just one study undertaken up to 2020 (Sharma & Dhar, 2021). Given the increased interest in workplace ostracism among scholars in recent years (Sharma & Dhar, 2021), a literature review on the subject is necessary. Apart from that, ostracism is a common problem in the workplace, with the majority of employees having experienced it in some way (Ferris *et al.*, 2008; Fox & Stallworth, 2005; O' Reilly *et al.*, 2015). Moreover, given the ubiquity and costs of workplace ostracism, a comprehensive review of the practical implications is necessary to improve practitioners' understanding of human resource (HR) interventions to avoid or reduce its negative consequences. While extant research has recommended the adoption of necessary HR policies and procedures to limit or mitigate the feelings of ostracism among employees, but these are not easily accessible to policy makers and practitioners which limit their usefulness. The purpose of the review was to identify, retrieve and read the literature on workplace ostracism in order to offer practitioners with relevant insights into the practical implications of workplace ostracism studies that are available in multiple databases and journals. Thus, the study intends to address the following research question:

RQ. What are the main themes of practical implications related to workplace ostracism?

The systematic literature review (SLR) was used in this study for the following reasons: To begin, unlike traditional reviews, a systematic literature review evaluates and analyzes the literature in a more replicable, transparent and scientific manner (Tranfield, Denyer, & Smart, 2003). Second, it offers researchers clear instructions on how to approach a literature review and present their findings, as well as providing a more detailed description of how to analyze the literature (Hu, Mason, Williams, & Found, 2015). Finally, by providing high-quality evidence as well as an audit record of the reviewers' judgments, methods and conclusions, it minimizes bias and mistakes (Tranfield *et al.*, 2003).

The rest of the paper is divided into four sections. The next section outlines the approach taken to conduct the systematic review. The findings of SLR are presented and discussed in the third section. The fourth section focuses on the main themes of the practical implications. The fifth section throws light on the study's limitations and future research directions.

Methodology
In the current study, the systematic review methodology suggested by Tranfield *et al.* (2003) was used. There are three steps to this methodology: Planning, Conducting and Reporting.

Stage 1
Planning the review
After determining the need for conducting literature review, planning and developing the review procedure is a critical component of this stage (Tranfield *et al.*, 2003). Consequently, the authors devised a review protocol to guide the review process during their first meeting. Authors identified the research topic as well as the research boundaries while evaluating the study's scope. The authors also designed a search strategy to gather relevant information. The duration, type of information , databases utilized for SLR searches, search strings and

article type were all addressed. The criteria for including and excluding studies, as well as the procedure for assessing its quality, were debated at this time (Tranfield *et al.*, 2003). The review was confined to studies that were published between 2010 and 2022, as the quantity of research papers related to workplace ostracism surged dramatically during this period (Sharma & Dhar, 2021). Furthermore, reviewing recent studies also serves to maintain the SLR conclusions relevant and useful (Bouranta, Psomas, & Antony, 2021).

Six internationally recognized management databases namely, Science Direct, Emerald Online, Springer Link, Taylor & Francis, Wiley and Sage were selected. Owing to limited access to additional databases, article search was limited to these electronic databases. Moreover, past SLR studies in workplace ostracism have included same approximate list of publishers (see for example, Kaushal *et al.*, 2021; Sharma & Dhar, 2021). The study only included papers from the above-mentioned databases that were published in international peer-reviewed journals. Books, grey literature and web articles were not included. The sample included all types of articles, including articles on literature review, conceptual and empirical articles. These decisions served as the criteria for including and excluding studies from the review (Table 1).

Search strings based on keywords were developed to identify related articles. Keywords were combination of the words "workplace," "employee," "manager," followed by "ostracism," "exclusion," and "rejection". The articles selected for the review were retrieved from indexed journals, ensuring the high-quality research.

Stage 2
Conducting the review
The authors then searched the six databases that had been chosen in the first step using the search strings. This preliminary search yielded a large number of relevant data. Studies were then screened for compatibility to the objectives of the review, concentrating on the title, keywords and abstract. Articles published before 2010 and books, grey literature, non-English language studies, or articles that were not completely accessible were manually excluded as per the stated inclusion and exclusion criteria. Each reviewer kept track of the articles that were rejected, and finally 34 articles were agreed to be removed. Those which met the inclusion requirements were chosen for further research and content assessment. The searches were confined to articles published in the ostracism literature with a specific focus on the workplace. Consequently, a total of 95 articles were taken for the final sample. 9 duplicates were also removed, leaving 86 articles for further investigation. Following the SLR proceedings (Bouranta *et al.*, 2021; Mohammad, Nazir, & Mufti, 2023; Tranfield *et al.*, 2003) the year of publication, the authors' surnames, the title of the study, the

Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Articles published during 2010–2022	Articles published before 2010 and after 2022
Academic journals	Books, web articles and grey literature (doctoral dissertations, textbooks, conferences papers, etc.)
Articles published in Springer Link, Science Direct, Taylor & Francis, Emerald Online, Sage and Wiley	Articles which are not published in these databases
Articles which are fully accessible	Articles not fully accessible
Articles written in English	Articles written in languages other than English
Source(s): Authors	

Table 1.
Criteria for inclusion and exclusion

publisher, name of the journal, the type of paper, the database and name of the region where study was conducted were all recorded in an Excel spreadsheet. Furthermore, both the authors read the papers under review in their entirety. Each author retrieved, and saved important qualitative data on the practical implications of the sample studies in a separate excel spreadsheet. Authors then categorized practical implications into distinct groups, seeking for similarities among them. An affinity diagram was utilized to organize the mixed practical implications into clusters of important topics. Based on their affinity or intrinsic resemblance, the statements were categorized into themes. The key component highlighted in each of them served as basis for grouping the practical implications. The groups were labeled with a phrase or word that summarized the practical implications which lead to identification of themes. These themes offered a framework that was representative of a large quantity of selected data as well as a more concise approach of summarizing the literature. Taking cue from Bouranta *et al.* (2021), a Pareto diagram was developed using Microsoft Excel considering the number of references in terms of practical implications supporting each theme. This was done in order to see if the Pareto principle of 80/20 holds which separates the few "vital" themes from the many "useful" ones.

Stage 3
Reporting and dissemination
The basic information of the reviewed papers is presented through graphs and charts based on the Excel spreadsheet generated in prior stage, providing a clear picture of the workplace ostracism research and its publishing trends. Additionally, themes related to practical implications of workplace ostracism are summarized based on their resemblances.

Results
Descriptive analysis of the reviewed articles
The basic characteristics of the studies under review are discussed in this section. The first step was to determine how articles were distributed by publisher and journal. Specifically, the results reveal that 86 articles were published in 56 journals from six selected databases (Table 2). Majority of these journals (39.28%) are published by Emerald, and one-third of the published papers (33.72%) are also included in this publisher's database. Only one article from the sample was published in nearly two-thirds of the journals (67.85%). Evidently, a small number of journals published more than one-fourth of the articles under review. In other words, 22 (25.58%) out of the 86 sample articles were published in 5 (8.92%) of the 56 journals (Table 3). Precisely, *International Journal of Hospitality Management* takes lead with 9 articles, followed by *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management* (4 articles), *European Journal of Management & Business Economics* (3 articles), *Personnel Review* (3 articles), and *European Journal of Work & Organizational Psychology* (3 articles). The remaining 64 articles were distributed across the other 51 journals. Thus, it is evident that these five journals are the most prominent in the area of workplace ostracism. As a result, authors interested in conducting future literature reviews in this area should begin with these journals. A total of 233 authors were found to have contributed to the articles under review which demonstrates that workplace ostracism is attracting sound scholarly attention (Figure 1). The majority of papers were co-authored by two authors (29.06%), followed by those published under the co-authorship of four and three authors (24.41% and 20.93%, respectively). 15.12% of articles had just one author. Additionally, co-authorship involving more than five authors was infrequent (8.13%). The articles by Chang *et al.* (2021) and Ferris *et al.* (2019), both empirical papers, had the most authors (6) contributing to one article. Figure 2 depicts the number of studies on workplace ostracism that have been published in the last twelve years. As per the

Publisher- journal	Number of articles	Percent %
Emerald	*28*	*32.6%*
Journal of Workplace Learning	1	1.6
Baltic Journal of Management	1	1.6
European Journal of Management & Business Economics	3	3.5
International Journal of Conflict Management	1	1.6
Internet Research	1	1.6
Journal of Applied Research in Higher Education	1	1.6
Journal of Managerial Psychology	2	2.3
Journal of Organizational Change Management	1	1.6
South Asian Journal of Business Studies	1	1.6
Management Decision	2	2.3
Personnel Review	3	3.5
Asia Pacific Journal of Business Administration	1	1.6
International Journal of Organizational Analysis	1	1.6
International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management	1	1.6
Management Research Review	1	1.6
Industrial & Commercial Training	1	1.6
Journal of Asia Business Studies	1	1.6
Chinese Management	2	2.3
Leadership & Organization Development Journal	1	1.6
Mistreatment in Organization	1	1.6
Journal of Modelling in Management	1	1.6
Nankai Business Review International	1	1.6
Elsevier	*20*	*23.2%*
Personality & Individual Differences	2	2.3
International Journal of Hospitality Management	9	10.5
Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management	4	4.6
Tourism Management Perspectives	1	1.6
Heliyon	1	1.6
Human Resource Management Review	1	1.6
Current Opinion in Psychology	1	1.6
Organization Behavior and Human Decision Process	1	1.6
Taylor & Francis	*13*	*15.1%*
The Journal of General Psychology	1	1.6
The Journal of Social Psychology	2	2.3
Behavior & Information Technology	1	1.6
American Journal of Mathematical & Management Sciences	1	1.6
International Journal of Human Resource Management	2	2.3
Anxiety Stress & Coping	1	1.6
International Journal of Public Administration	1	1.6
Human Performance	1	1.6
European Journal of Work & Organizational Psychology	3	3.5
Springer	*10*	*11.6%*
Current Psychology	2	2.3
Journal of Business & Psychology	1	1.6
Journal of Business Ethics	2	2.3
Asia Pacific Journal of Management	2	2.3
Journal of Academy of Marketing Science	1	1.6
Frontiers of Business Research in China	2	2.3
Wiley	*10*	*11.6%*
Human Resource Management Journal	2	2.3
Journal of Management	1	1.6
Journal of Occupational & Organizational Health & Psychology	1	1.6
Journal of Organizational Behavior	1	1.6

Table 2.
List of journals
considered in the study

(*continued*)

Publisher- journal	Number of articles	Percent %
Journal of Advanced Nursing	2	2.3
Personnel Psychology	1	1.6
Applied Psychology	2	2.3
Sage	*5*	*5.8%*
Journal of Management	1	1.6
Personality & Social Psychology Bulletin	1	1.6
Psychology Reports	1	1.6
Australian Journal of Management	1	1.6
Journal of Management	1	1.6
Source(s): Summarized by authors		

Table 2.

Geographic research areas	Number of studies	Percentage (%)
Asia	66	83.54
North and South America	7	8.86
Eurasia	3	3.79
Europe	2	2.53
Africa	1	1.26
Total	79	100
Source(s): Summarized by authors		

Table 3.
Geographic
research areas
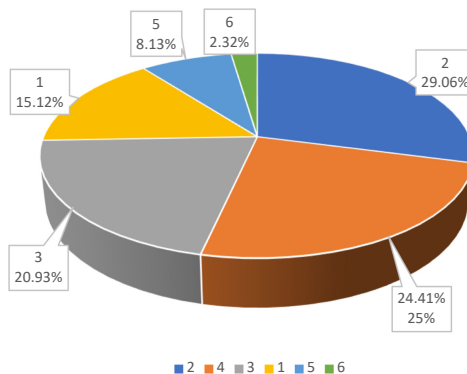
Source(s): Created by authors

Figure 1.
Authorships of the
sample articles

trend, the growth in workplace ostracism publication is diachronic and steady. The graph shows a significant increase in researchers' interest from 2014, with growth more than double in 2016. Notably, during the last five years of the review period, i.e. 2018 to 2022, 62.8% of the reviewed papers were published. As publishing work is expected to be in progress, not many publications have been identified during 2022.

The majority of sample articles are empirical papers (91.8%), while the remaining articles present literature reviews (5.8%) and conceptual studies (2.32%) (Figure 3). In 79 empirical studies, sample sizes ranging from 30 to above 1,000 were employed. Specifically, 32.91% of studies had samples between 201 and 300 respondents, 17.72% had samples between 301 and

Source(s): Created by authors

Source(s): Created by authors
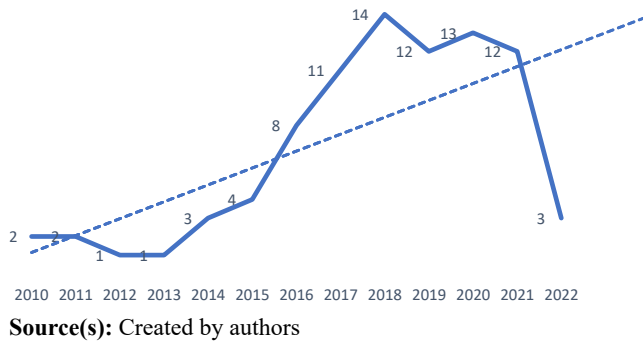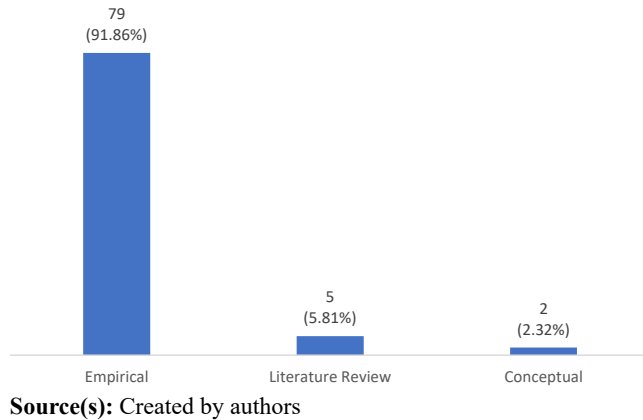
400, 16.45% of studies a sample of more than 101 and less than 200 respondents. Additionally, 7.59% of studies had a sample size of less than 100. The sample size ranged from 501 to 1,000 in 6.32% of the studies, and 1.26% of studies had sample size of more than 1,000.

Table 3 categorizes the 79 empirical articles by the geographical location from where they originated, revealing which places are more interested in research on workplace ostracism. The empirical studies were carried out in over 16 countries across four continents, demonstrating a wide geographic spread. There were 66 studies conducted in Asia, 7 in North and South America, 3 in Eurasia, 2 in Europe and 1 in Africa. Majority of the empirical studies were conducted in China (35), Pakistan (10), Korea (8), the USA (7) and India, Turkey and Taiwan with 3 studies each. Cyprus and Thailand are the countries of origin of two studies each, followed by Singapore, Malaysia, Iran, Nigeria, Bangladesh and Hong Kong, with one article each.

Themes of practical implications
Table 4 illustrates 138 practical implications related to workplace ostracism categorized into relevant themes. The affinity diagram was used to organize the practical implications highlighted by the 86 reviewed articles into 11 themes. Subsequently, each theme is supported by relevant references. Apparently, 11 themes clearly demonstrated a variety of

Theme	Supporting references
Training and development (38)	Ma, Liu, Bao, and Gu (2022), Leung, Wu, Chen, and Young (2011), Haldorai, Kim, and Li (2022), Gürlek (2021), Hsieh and Karatepe (2019), Sharma and Dhar (2021), Zhao et al. (2013, 2016), Ferris et al. (2019), Chung and Yang (2017), Bilal, Fatima, Imran, and Iqbal (2020), Fatima, Bilal, Imran, and Sarwar (2021), Zhao and Xia (2017), Abu Bakar et al. (2018), De Clercq et al. (2019), Jiang, Jiang, Sun, and Li (2021), Al-Atwi, Cai, and Amankwah-Amoah (2020), Kanwal, Lodhi, and Kashif (2019), Chenji and Sode (2019), Anjum and Ming (2018), Jahanzeb and Fatima (2018), Wan, Chan, and Chen (2016), Yang and Treadway (2018), Wu et al. (2011), Wang, Mu, Li, Gu, and Duan (2020), Jahanzeb, Bouckenooghe, and Mushtaq (2021), Li and Tian (2016), Chung (2018), Jahanzeb, Fatima, and Malik (2018), Wu, Yim, Kwan, and Zhang (2012), Peng and Zeng (2016), Qi, Cai, Liu, and Feng (2020), Gkorezis, Panagiotou, and Theodorou (2016), Cullen, Fan, and Liu (2014), Erkutlu and Chafra (2016), Zhang (2019), Hu, Chen, and Ye (2021), Zhang and Shi (2017)
Culture (19)	Ma et al. (2022), Hsieh and Karatepe (2019), Karim, Abdul Majid, Omar, and Aburumman, 2021, Zhao et al. (2013), Takhsha, Barahimi, Adelpanah, and Salehzadeh (2020), Chung and Yang (2017), Choi (2020), Xu, Kwan, and Li (2020), Bilal, Fatima, and Imran (2019), Choi (2019), Hu et al. (2021), Wang, Chen, Qian, Teng, and Zhang (2021), Wu et al. (2011), Li and Tian (2016), Eickholt and Goodboy (2017), Liu et al. (2013), Wu et al. (2012), Gkorezis et al. (2016), Xia, Wang, Song, Zhang, and Qian (2019)
Formal and informal meetings (15)	Leung et al. (2011), Singh and Srivastava (2021), Takhsha et al. (2020), Bilal et al. (2020), Erkutlu and Chafra (2016), Xu et al. (2020), Zhang and Shi (2017), Bilal et al. (2019), Haldorai et al. (2020), Jahanzeb and Fatima (2018), Wang et al. (2021), Chen, Poon, DeWall, and Jiang (2020), Sharma and Dhar (2021), Chung and Kim (2017), Fiset and Boies (2018)
Recruitment and Selection (14)	Haldorai et al. (2022), Ali, Usman, Pham, Agyemang-Mintah and Akhtar (2020), Sharma and Dhar (2021), Singh and Srivastava (2021), Zhao et al. (2013), Balliet and Ferris (2013), Zhao et al. (2016), Zhang and Shi (2017), Hu et al. (2021), Qian, Yang, Wang, Huang, and Song (2019), Liu et al. (2013), Qi et al. (2020), Gkorezis et al. (2016), Chen et al. (2020)
Interpersonal relationship (13)	Chung and Yang (2017), Fatima et al. (2021), Jiang et al. (2021), Chenji and Sode (2019), Yang and Treadway (2018), Mao, He and Yang (2021), Jahanzeb et al. (2021), Chung (2018), Zhang, Yang, Kwan, and Wu (2022), Chen et al. (2020), Chung and Kim (2017), Zhu, Lyu, Deng, and Ye (2017), Lyu and Zhu (2019)
Task interdependence (10)	Haldorai et al. (2022), Han and Hwang (2021), Zhu et al. (2017), Bilal et al. (2020), Xu et al. (2020), Zhang and Shi (2017), Haldorai et al. (2020), Jahanzeb and Fatima (2018), Lyu and Zhu (2019), Chen et al. (2020)
Monitoring (9)	Zhao and Xia (2017), De Clercq et al. (2019), Haldorai et al. (2020), Wu, Qu et al. (2018), Wu et al. (2018), Lyu and Zhu (2019), Wang et al. (2020), Li and Tian (2016), Xia et al. (2019)
Trust and transparency (7)	Al-Atwi (2017), Chung (2015), Zhao and Xia (2017), Wu, Qu et al. (2018), Wu, Wang et al. (2018), Zhang (2019), Qi et al. (2020)
Proper channel (5)	Koay (2018), Al-Atwi et al. (2020), Yang and Wei (2018), Lyu and Zhu (2019), Chang et al. (2021)
Job autonomy (4)	Al-Atwi (2017), Qian et al. (2019), Jahanzeb et al. (2018), Sharma and Dhar (2021)
Individual characteristics (4)	Liu, Liu, Zhang, and Ma (2019), Zhu et al. (2017), Ferris et al. (2019), Wu et al. (2012)

Source(s): Summarized by authors

HR interventions to deal with workplace ostracism. Specifically, they concern Training and development, Culture, Formal and informal meetings, Recruitment and selection, Task interdependence, Interpersonal relationship, Monitoring, Job autonomy, Proper channel, Trust and transparency and Individual characteristics.

The current SLR revealed that the theme of Training and development has the most practical implications (38 findings). Researchers highlight that employees need regular personal development seminars, training and workshops programs which will assist them in handling and regulating stressful events. The findings supported that organizations should provide training and development programs to enhance employee resilience for minimizing workplace ostracism which will lead to improved employee performance. The role of supportive culture is also significant in the prevention of workplace ostracism. The theme of culture emphasizing zero tolerance culture encouraging fair and transparent competition, is highlighted in 19 findings. The third identified theme focuses formal and informal meetings (15 findings). Formal meetings and informal interactions like get togethers, fun programs etc. seem to have important role in minimizing instances of workplace ostracism. As, workplace ostracism is bound to be experienced in today's organizations, the fourth theme, namely recruitment and selection, suggesting that organizations should recruit and select those candidates for employment who have less chances of falling victim to workplace ostracism (14 findings). The fifth theme, namely interpersonal relationship underlines the importance of organizations and managers providing a social setting that prioritizes strong interpersonal relationships among organizational members (13 findings). Managers should foster friendly and interactive corporate culture to lessen the likelihood of employees feeling isolated and experiencing unbearable loneliness. The task interdependence (10 findings) emphasizes that businesses may increase interdependence and task complexity to encourage employee cooperation. To emphasize the advantages of teamwork and reduce workplace rejection, they might also design reward systems that are more team-focused than individual-focused. The Monitoring theme thrusts upon that organizations should use surveys and other methods to keep an eye on and manage workplace ostracism levels (9 findings). The Trust and transparency theme (7 findings) reinforces that managers must prevent ostracism within their teams by establishing practices that promote trust and openness and avoid using exclusion as a punishment. Avoiding prejudices against coworkers is essential since the way a manager interacts with members of their in-group and out-group might cause them to feel excluded and alienated. The next theme highlights the importance of allocating a proper communication route for employees who are subjected to workplace ostracism (5 findings). Another theme namely individual characteristic stresses that managers should consider the influence of individual characteristics on perceptions of workplace ostracism (4 findings). Finally, the job autonomy (4 findings) refers that managers should make an attempt to increase the degree of self-determination and autonomy in employee's job. Table 5 provides theme-based examples of practical implications. A Pareto diagram was utilized to further examine and prioritize the revealed themes, taking into account the number of practical implications per theme (Figure 4). According to the Pareto diagram, 63% of the practical implications in the area of workplace ostracism come from four of the eleven themes (36.4%) while 37.6% of the total findings emerge from the remaining seven topics (63.6%). The Pareto principle of 80/20 does not seem to apply, since neither "vital few" nor "useful many" themes can be found. Nevertheless, four themes of Training and Development, Culture, Informal & Informal Meetings and Recruitment and Selection, might be regarded "vital" since they encompass most of the practical implications (63%). As a result, the remaining seven themes may be classified as "useful", as they account for 37% of total practical implications.

Discussion

As there is no comprehensive SLR study in the field of workplace ostracism that emphasizes its practical implication, we were motivated to conduct an SLR, setting objectives that differed significantly from those of the prior literature reviews studies on the subject. An "affinity diagram" was used to organize the diverse practical implications into clusters of important

Training and development
HR managers may provide training (such as resilience training) or interventions (such as mindfulness-based interventions) to help employees acquire or improve these traits or psychological states (Sharma & Dhar, 2021); it appears that frequent personal development seminars, workshops and training programs for employees are more important than ever before which will assist them in handling and regulating stressful events (Anasori, Bayighomog, De Vita, & Altinay, 2021); HR managers might organize an arrival orientation program to educate Syrian workers about the host country's living conditions and cultural values (Gürlek, 2021); HR practitioners can conduct training programs aimed at developing equality, positive interpersonal interactions, respect for diversity and psychological well-being (Fatima *et al.*, 2021); employee assistance programs that support employees in their attempts to properly handle challenging workplace relationships might also benefit organizations and their decision-makers (Hu *et al.*, 2021); employees with a high level of neuroticism and low in extraversion and agreeableness more likely feel ostracized. As a result, managers must pay more attention to these workers and offer them counselling, training and social assistance to help them avoid workplace ostracism (Wu, Kwan, Liu, & Lee, 2021); training in ostracism-interventionary behaviors may be included in leadership development and coaching programs. In order to effectively create and promote inclusive and fulfilling work environments, such training programs should be implemented at all organizational levels (Ma *et al.*, 2022)

Culture
Culture may help to build a culture of openness, transparency and fairness (Karim *et al.*, 2021); Businesses and managers should endeavor to create an inclusive work culture to minimize ostracism at work, which has a negative effect on well-being and proactive behaviors (Wang *et al.*, 2021); Businesses should promote an inclusive, socially engaged atmosphere to prevent ostracism, which impacts employees' basic requirements and hinders their job proactivity and wellbeing (Ma *et al.*, 2022); Supervisors should foster a friendly, interactive company culture to lessen the likelihood that workers believe they are being ostracized and, as a result, suffer painful loneliness (Hu *et al.*, 2021)

Formal and informal meetings
Creation of social networks that can assist employees in carrying out their given tasks without fear of being confronted by the perpetrators (Sharma & Dhar, 2021); HR managers may plan social interaction-based activities and events within different verticals to develop bonds, minimize negativity and lower the likelihood of employees leaving the company (Singh & Srivastava, 2021); Employees' spouses can be invited to engage in formal or informal team-building events on a regular basis, which can develop mutual understanding and boost spouses' willingness to assist them in their jobs (Wang *et al.*, 2021)

Recruitment and selection
During the selection process, HR professionals can pay close attention to prospects' intrinsic traits, abilities, skills, or psychological states, which can help them avoid ostracism or enable them to deal with it (Sharma & Dhar, 2021); When employing new workers, HR professionals should do a background check to identify personality traits and level of resilience (Singh & Srivastava, 2021); Hotels may hire employees high in NA as they are more tolerant of others and avoid circumstances that are characterized by interpersonal conflict (Haldorai *et al.*, 2022); Recruiting and employing highly conscientious workers may provide firms with additional indirect benefits (Hu *et al.*, 2021)

Interpersonal relationship
Organizational members should foster friendly relations with their coworkers and offer assistance if they are being discriminated unfairly (Fatima *et al.*, 2021); Through transformational leadership that prioritizes shared goals, rewards for team creative performance and teaching staff the necessary skills and methods to be creative, managers can pay attention to lowering interpersonal tension among team members as a result of creativity (Mao *et al.*, 2021); Managers might emphasize the significance of developing strong interpersonal relationships at the workplace and take ostracism with the same seriousness as other forms of workplace mistreatment (Zhang *et al.*, 2022)

Task interdependence
Task interdependence can be established, fostering a natural give-and-take among personnel (Haldorai *et al.*, 2022): Managers may create group objectives to foster group identity or improve rewards program based on team performance to reduce ostracism at work (Han & Hwang, 2021)

Monitoring
No empirical research in 2021 and 2022 in support of this theme

(continued)

Trust & Transparency
No empirical research in 2021 and 2022 in support of this theme

Proper channel
Managers are urged to perform self-reviews and participate in reflexive practices on a regular basis to assess if they feel threatened or even insecure by their capable subordinates (Chang *et al.*, 2021)

Individual characteristics
No empirical research in 2021 and 2022 in support of this theme

Job autonomy
HR managers can make it easier for workers to access work-related resources enabling the interchange of information and the establishment of social networks that can assist workers in carrying out their assigned tasks without fear of being confronted by the perpetrators (Sharma & Dhar, 2021)

Table 5.
Source(s): Summarized by authors
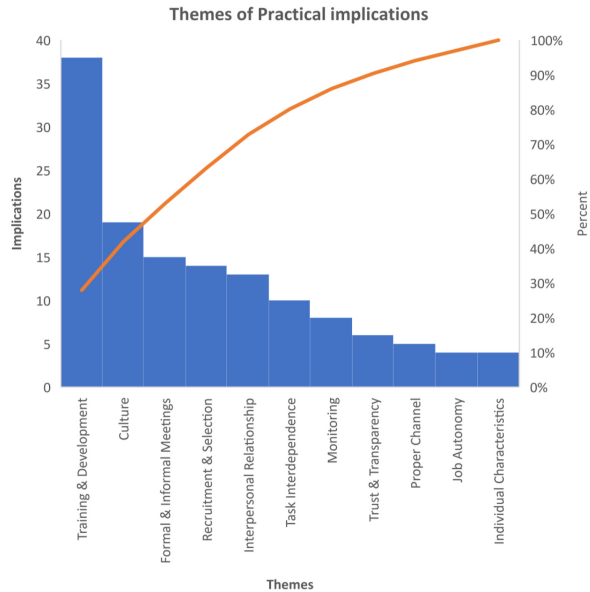
Figure 4.
Pareto diagram

Source(s): Created by authors

themes, rather than merely outlining numerous practical implications of the existing studies on workplace ostracism. Consequently, a summarized picture of the practical implications is presented supplemented by recent empirical findings related to the revealed themes (Table 5). All in all, the current SLR fills a gap in the literature and advances our knowledge by providing important and pertinent insights into workplace ostracism, from both academic and practical perspectives. Specifically, this study offers practitioners with a comprehensive review of the practical implications of workplace ostracism so that they can have a better understanding of the phenomenon and devise more effective response for limiting it.

In the field of workplace ostracism, the SLR reveals eleven key themes, namely Training and development, Culture, Monitoring, Formal and informal meetings, Recruitment and selection, Task interdependence, Interpersonal relationship, Trust and transparency, Job autonomy, Individual characteristics and Proper channel. The "vital" group of themes

includes training, culture, formal and informal meetings and recruitment and selection, which were distinguished from the 'useful' ones using the Pareto analysis. The SLR's 138 practical implications aim to understand the significance of HR practices in preventing ostracism at work. Some of the highlighted themes exclusively focus on the role of top management (Culture and Proper Channel), while some only on managers' role (Recruitment and selection, Monitoring, Job autonomy and Individual characteristics), but most of them on the role of managers as well as employees (Training and development, Formal and informal meetings, Interpersonal relationship, Task interdependence, Trust and transparency). This observation may emphasize the significance of managers' and employees' involvement in limiting the prevalence of workplace ostracism.

Limitations of the study and future research directions

There are limitations to all studies, including literature reviews, and this one is no exception. The drawback of the current SLR is the exclusion of books, internet sites and grey literature (e.g. doctoral dissertations, master's theses, conferences, working papers and textbooks). Scopus and Web of Science databases were excluded, which may be viewed as shortsighted approach. Furthermore, due to the authors' language restrictions, only English articles were included. In addition, the publications were evaluated only on the basis of their practical implications. Lastly, while applying the findings of this study, it is important to take into account the subjective categorization of practical implications.

Both researchers and practitioners can benefit from the findings of the current SLR. This study makes a significant contribution by presenting HR practices for reducing workplace ostracism in an organized manner. The researchers can use revealed themes as guidelines for their future studies. Furthermore, highlighted themes provide valuable information on the areas where associations, policymakers and businesses should concentrate their efforts in order to develop an industry-specific scale to measure workplace ostracism. Moreover, despite the increase in the research attention of workplace ostracism and being an organizationally relevant topic, it has not gained sufficient corporate attention; thus, this study is expected to enable formulation of anti-ostracism policies at corporate level. For practitioners, it is crucial to emphasize the "vital" themes of practical implications. To put it another way, practical implications highlighted in the "vital" few themes should be adopted to avoid ostracism at work.

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