Workplace ostracism in academia

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Ostracism in the academic workplace has not received attention commensurate with its frequency and seriousness. One of the more detailed models of workplace ostracism incorporates the organisational antecedents of ostracism, its pragmatic and psychological impact and behavioural outcomes. Using a detailed written account of experiences within an Australian university, the model is examined to determine its limitations and suggest extensions which may make it more applicable to academic environments. This paper advances a modified version of the model, tailored specifically to cater for ostracism within academia, by taking into consideration the nature of the academic workplace and the significance of scholarly reputation. Future research may identify additional extensions for academia as well as modifications to the original model to ensure its applicability to other specialised workplaces. This may also lead to better ways in which to anticipate and prevent the antecedents of workplace ostracism and ameliorate its consequences.

Keywords: ostracism, workplace bullying, academia, higher education, faculty members, mobbing, whistleblowing

Introduction

Bullying in the workplace has now been widely investigated. However researchers from academia have 'paid relatively little attention to bullying in their own backyards' (Keashly & Neuman, 2010, p. 48), although the number of studies is increasing. Academia may represent a somewhat distinctive context in which bullying may thrive and the rates may seem relatively high when compared to those in general organisations (Hollis, 2019; Keashly & Neuman, 2018).

A covert type of workplace bullying is ostracism. This has been defined as 'being ignored and excluded, and it often occurs without excessive explanation or explicit negative attention' (Williams, 2007, p. 429). Whilst overt bullying can be depicted as negative attention, the power of ostracism is embodied in the lack of any attention towards the target, either positive or negative; thus the person who is ostracised is deemed to be unworthy of any attention at all. The target of ostracism is treated as invisible and is excluded from work-related and social interaction and activities. The impact may be more harmful than overt bullying and is considered to be greater than the effects of sexual harassment on emotional exhaustion, cynicism and professional effectiveness (Robinson, O'Reilly, & Wang, 2013). Ostracism is noted to be a particularly toxic behaviour in organisations and a unique form of social mistreatment (Bedi, 2019; O'Reilly *et al.*, 2015). Within the academic environment it has only received limited attention (Bilal *et al.*, 2020; Zimmerman, Carter-Sowell, & Xu, 2016).

Based on and developed from a review of the research literature on ostracism within organisations, Robinson and colleagues (2013) have proposed a broad model of workplace ostracism. This model was selected as it applies a holistic theoretical framework to explain both the antecedents and consequences (Howard, Cogswell, & Smith, 2019). This model pertains to organisations in general. Educational organisations have some specific distinguishing aspects and these may increase the likelihood of hostile interpersonal behaviours (Keashly & Neuman, 2010). Based on a single case study (Tamara, 2012), I examine their model to demonstrate its limitations with regard to academic environments and suggest extensions which may make it more applicable to academia. This study, drawn from anonymous submissions to a parliamentary inquiry, relates specifically to academia, comprised substantial in-depth detail and is a first-person account. A single case methodology is ideal for investigating complex social processes and takes advantage of detailed access to a phenomenon that may not be easily observable by outsiders (Ozcan, Han, & Graebner, 2017).

Single case study

Tamara, with a doctorate from a world-renowned university, had been employed in a regional Australian university 'by the Speech Pathology discipline ...for nearly five years, in various positions as a researcher, lecturer and/or clinical educator on casual and fixed-term contracts' (Tamara, 2012). She was active in research, had a good record of publications and conference presentations and contributed to an inter-university research group and professional education. She discussed several academic staff misconduct issues with Jana, the head of discipline, believing Jana would be concerned. She also met with Human Resources but did not report any issues outside the university. Immediately after this meeting, she was told by Jana that her ongoing and already organised contracts would not be renewed. She was immediately physically and practically removed from her job, her office and contact with colleagues, with no warnings nor reasons for this, either prior, during or since. She has subsequently been ostracised by colleagues from the same discipline at other universities and her attendance at workshops and research meetings has been denied. Her applications for employment at other universities are 'not received'. Her complaint was dismissed as baseless by the university.

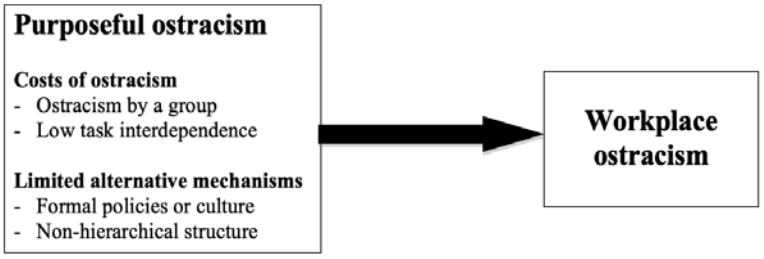

Fig. 1: Organisational antecedents' model (adapted from Robinson et al., 2013)

Model of workplace ostracism

Following the model's categorisation of motives, Tamara was subjected to purposeful ostracism; this occurs when the ostracism is intentional, either to hurt the target or help the perpetrator. Purposeful ostracism may occur to protect a person and/or a group, if it is feared that the ostracised person will disrupt the way the group functions. Tamara's disclosure of staff misconduct may have been interpreted as a threat to the staff's functioning and ultimately to the reputation of the university. Ostracism is effective in dealing with unwanted whistle-blowers and the most frequently used form of retaliation on them (Martin & Peña, 2012; Westhues, 2006).

Organisational antecedents

Robinson and colleagues (2013) contend that the two main organisational antecedents of purposeful ostracism (Figure 1) are the psychological costs associated with ostracism (ostracism by a group of co-workers and low task interdependence) and the limited alternative mechanisms (formal policies or culture and a non-hierarchical structure). Ostracism is less costly to the actor than other options as it is often invisible, subtle and ambiguous (Williams, 2007). Engaging in ostracism with one's co-workers can reduce the psychological cost to the actor and may also reduce the cost to the organisation by enhancing co-workers' sense of inclusion. It thus fits within the framework of academia for a number of reasons.

Firstly, its unobtrusive nature aligns well with the indirect aggression that would be expected by the standards of collegiality (Crawford, 2020; Keashly & Neuman, 2018; Misawa, 2015). Thus ostracising behaviours in academia usually are cronyism, intimidation, malicious gossip, exclusionary strategies and ignoring contributions (Bilal *et al.*, 2020; Crawford, 2020; Vickers, 2014). The most frequently cited behaviour is gossip which threatens the individual's professional status. This makes sense considering that reputation is of critical importance in academia and the loss of reputation has major implications for appointments, promotions and research funding (Keashly & Neuman, 2010; Martin & Peña, 2012).

Secondly, ostracism is less easy to prove than overt bullying. For the latter, there may be witnesses or written records whereas, with covert behaviours, it may be problematic to provide tangible evidence of inaction or omissions. Furthermore, most academics may be too timid to speak out on any controversial issue, especially if this is against the university administration (Martin, 1983). Management and co-workers may consider ostracism as a safe and undetectable strategy that is less likely to be viewed as illegal retaliation (Williams, 2002). Furthermore, ostracism can fall below the horizon of official visibility and the use of euphemistic language ('personality clash') can enable individuals to describe their actions in inoffensive ways with no sense of personal agency (Miller *et al.*, 2019; Simpson & Cohen, 2004).

Thirdly, being female has implications for ostracism and academia. In general, if females bully at all, they tend to engage in same-sex bullying using rejection and ostracism (Allen & Flood, 2018). Women used punitive ostracism more often than men did (Nezlek *et al.*, 2015). Indeed, the methods used by women bullies called the 'weapon of choice' are described as gossip, exclusion, intimidation, undermining, backstabbing, manipulating and ridicule (Dellasega, 2019), called the 'weapon of choice' (Crothers, Lipinski, & Minutolo, 2009, p. 103).

Although ostracising someone may cause discomfort to the perpetrator, co-opting colleagues may ameliorate any

negative burden, dilute responsibility and can help justify their actions (Howard *et al.*, 2019; McDonald, Begic, & Landrum, 2020). Another reason for co-workers to join in is fear of becoming targets themselves (Coyne *et al.*, 2019). Jana co-opted her colleagues easily because of the extremely small number of staff in the discipline with most being graduates of the university and students of Jana (information from the university's website). Such informal alliances may play a vital role in forming cliques (Hutchinson *et al.*, 2010). Furthermore, Tamara had discussed the misconduct of many staff members thereby enhancing their sense of inclusion in Jana's actions. Corruption cases typically required the knowing cooperation of other employees who participated in the unethical behaviours (Sachet-Milliat, 2016).

An additional aspect of the cost of purposeful ostracism is task interdependence: ostracism occurs more commonly in workplaces when task interdependence is low (Robinson *et al.*, 2013). This means that social contact is reduced, making ostracism less taxing for the perpetrator. If the victim has been ostracised, the perpetrator has even less need to acknowledge their existence. Tamara and Jana were both researchers on a government-funded research project and thus task interdependence was high. However, Jana, as a chief researcher, was able to easily remove herself from direct involvement with Tamara, resulting in an incomplete data set that had a deleterious effect on the project outcomes. Thus, with little effort, task interdependence was radically reduced.

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Robertson and colleagues also proposed that purposeful ostracism is more common in workplaces that have limited alternative mechanisms to resolve conflict. If the culture favours less conflict, ostracism may become the method of choice to remove an employee. Within academia, available mechanisms may be too formalised and with a limited mandate; furthermore unions may not be able to deal with member-on-member issues (Keashly & Neuman, 2018). Tamara's university had an extensive library of policies regarding their code of conduct, complaints and their own anti-bullying program. A formal complaint was promoted as the main means of addressing bullying, despite very few complaints being upheld, possibly because universities are places where conflict is often avoided. There has been no evidence to demonstrate that organisational responses (bullying policies, training courses) help; indeed there is growing evidence that they do not (Cleary, Walter, Andrew, *et al.*, 2013).

Robinson and colleagues (2013) propose that a flat or non-hierarchical structure may provide limited alternatives for resolving conflict. In non-hierarchical organisational structures such as universities, more members share the same level of formal authority and they have to therefore rely on more informal means to control or manage others' behaviour. In Tamara's case, this issue may be exacerbated by the fact that women are under-represented in more senior positions in Australian universities (Arvanitakis & Pothen, 2019) and may thus strive to protect their hard-won positions.

Significantly, as named in Tamara's submission, this university had a history of covering up academic misconduct; it refused to admit that any problem existed (Biggs, 2002). Ostracism (dismissal, gagging clauses) had been a frequent means of dealing with academics, particularly whistle-blowers, at this university (Martin, 1983; Parkes, 2011). This reflects the assertion that within Australia, sectors of academia were considered as isolated pockets of tyranny which can be difficult if not impossible to disrupt and need even more effort to discontinue (Addison, 2001). Thus it becomes easier for individuals to engage in wrongdoing because others are doing the same (Zyglidopoulos & Fleming, 2008).

Robinson and colleagues (2013) postulated that stressful work environments and organisations in flux would increase the likelihood of non-purposeful ostracism. Conversely, the culture of the organisation could contribute not only to the initiation of, but also to extending, purposeful ostracism (Raineri, Frear, & Edmonds, 2011; Skinner *et al.*, 2015). A culture that breeds bullying is competitive, adversarial, lacking trust, stressful, with excessive performance pressure and weakened unions, and with employees misusing their positions for personal power and political gain. Higher exposure to stressors at work, as reported by women, increasingly occur in academia and can incite bullying and other abuse (Zabrodska & Kveton, 2013).

In addition, the organisation's leaders may have a substantial influence on the workplace culture by lowering the tone of the entity, demoralising staff and withholding resources (Cleary, Walter, Andrew, *et al.*, 2013; Lumby, 2019). The leaders may be described as authoritarian, intolerant of nonconformity, and may support or ignore negative workplace behaviour, leading to deleterious work environments (Hollis, 2019; Howard *et al.*, 2019). The university's senior management had denied in their local newspaper that bullying was an issue, despite evidence, and stated that it was calling in the police to investigate an anti-bullying group. Organisations which individualise bullying can obscure the need to understand its organisational basis or the ethical responsibilities to deal with it (Rhodes *et al.*, 2010). With such an organisational culture of cover-up, ineffective complaint mechanisms and high

casual staff numbers, it is not surprising that the purposeful ostracism against Tamara was quickly and seamlessly extended to all levels of management.

Factors affecting the intensity of ostracism

Robinson and colleagues (2013) identified four factors (Figure 2) that determine the intensity of ostracism. Firstly, ostracism will be more intense if it is pervasive; in the case of Tamara, the ostracism extended across all facets of her academic life. For example,

- She was allocated an office on the other side of campus and denied access to mail.
- She was refused access to her office during office hours and only permitted to collect her research and personal belongings (under supervision) after 14 weeks,
- She was removed from the discipline email list (despite conducting research within the discipline and being listed on the website),
- She was not permitted to contact the head of discipline for one year,
- She was physically prevented from attending her research group, and excluded from a workshop by Jana's colleague, despite the international presenter's personal invitation.
- She was shunned in face-to-face encounters and electronic contact by research colleagues from other universities.
- Employment applications and enquiries were unacknowledged and never received.
- A personal item, stolen from her locked, sole-occupancy office by a fellow academic, was returned seven months later.

She received no assistance from Human Resources staff, despite the fact that their failure to protect the health and wellbeing of staff is considered as corruption (Vickers, 2014).

Secondly, ostracism is also more intense if it is chronic, rather than episodic (Robinson *et al.*, 2013). For Tamara, the ostracism was total and ongoing (five years at 2012). Bullying in academia is usually of a long-standing nature; the academic environment may be particularly vulnerable to persistent aggression, continuing for five years or longer (McKay *et al.*, 2008). Ostracism persisting over time depletes the targets' coping resources, resulting in feelings of alienation, depression, helplessness, worthlessness, and, ultimately meaninglessness (Williams, 2012).

Thirdly, the intensity of ostracism may also be greater if it emanates from more than one person (Keashly & Neuman, 2010). Tamara's ostracism spread throughout the university

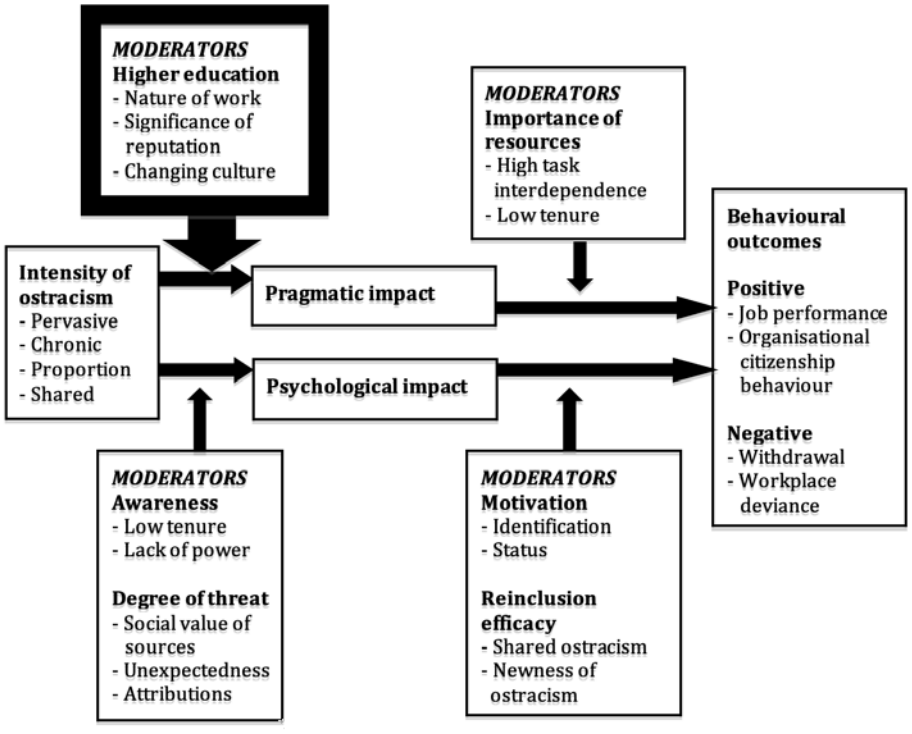

Figure 2: The Consequences of Ostracism model (Robinson et al.), modified to include the bold-bordered box (Moderators – Higher Education)

management to senior academics in her discipline at other universities and to clinicians. It can only be assumed that Jana had spoken to them. The spreading of malicious gossip is intended to harm and isolate the target (Pheko, 2018; Vickers, 2014). The ease of networking and the small academic sector and discipline mean that rumours can be easily disseminated (Morgan, 2014).

The collective form of bullying, known as mobbing, is

> an impassioned, collective campaign by co-workers to exclude, punish, and humiliate a targeted worker. Initiated most often by a person in a position of power or influence, mobbing is a desperate urge to crush and eliminate the target. The urge travels through the workplace like a virus, infecting one person after another. (Westhues, 2004, p. 5).

Mobbing involves a group dynamic in which a lead bully will initiate and coordinate harassment through informal networks (Duffy, 2018). Bullies use these networks to protect their behaviour by rewarding their allies with promotion, political gain and financial incentives, allowing it to be normalised and acknowledged as acceptable (Hutchinson *et al.*, 2009; Martin & Peña, 2012).

Academia has been identified as one of the common sites for such non-violent mobbing, accounting for around 80 per cent of cases (Stokes & Klein, 2008). In academic mobbing, academics gang up on a target to undermine them via any means possible (Cleary, Walter, Horsfall, *et al.*, 2013). The target (often a high achiever with strong principles) becomes isolated and ostracised (Khoo, 2010). Faculty members were almost twice as likely as administrative staff to be mobbed by three or more individuals and female academics are more at risk (Prevost & Hunt, 2018). The more people involved and the longer it went on make it more difficult for bystanders to remain neutral, leading to high rates of mobbing (McDonald *et al.*, 2020; Westhues, 2004).

The fourth factor relating to the intensity of ostracism is the number of people who are being targeted, with greater intensity directed at a sole individual. In Tamara's case, she was the sole focus of ostracism. By experiencing all four intensity factors, Tamara likely experienced the most intense ostracism.

Effects of ostracism

According to the model, ostracism has two effects, pragmatic and psychological. The pragmatic impact of ostracism has been overlooked; this has particular significance in organisations when targets are excluded from those aspects from which power is derived, namely, the resources one controls, access to information, and social connections (Al-Atwi, 2017; Robinson *et al.*, 2013). No employee can successfully fulfil the requirements of their work without information and resources, but it can be argued that working in academia demands extensive reliance on information, resources and connections both within and outside of the organisation. It is thus not surprising that the most frequently noted bullying in academia relates to isolating and obstructional behaviour (Keashly & Neuman, 2010).

Moderators of the Ostracism-Pragmatic impact relationships

In an extension of the model (Figure 2), there are factors in academia which mediate, positively or negatively, the relationship between ostracism and its pragmatic effect. These moderators are the nature of work, the significance of reputation and the changing university culture.

Firstly, the nature of the target's staff position may be teaching only, research only, or a combination of both, together with administrative duties. A recent shift from teaching to research means that research performance is often used as the main criterion for determining achievements, and access to resources becomes increasingly significant. To be a successful researcher involves producing high quality research, publishing in peer-reviewed high-ranking journals, applying for and receiving research funds, and presenting work at conferences (Cleary *et al.*, 2012). Tamara was removed from electronic communication from colleagues and other relevant professionals, thereby excluding her from accessing significant information and opportunities. In addition, physical ostracism barred her from face-to-face day-to-day information-sharing, events and activities. Research is also a social process; the initial impetus for research projects originates predominantly from informal networks, particularly for women, and contact within departments, universities and professional networks (Maranto & Griffin, 2011). In addition, academic research is increasingly becoming inter-disciplinary, inter-institutional and international (Jerrams, Betts, & Carton, 2008).

A second moderator of the ostracism-pragmatic relationship is the significance of reputation for academic success. Work performance is a critical component of reputation and disseminating news about this performance is as important (Cleary *et al.*, 2012). Having research published and cited is of major significance in academia and is the means for gaining academic respectability and ongoing employment. As Daxner (2006) stated, 'without recognition, academic work is futile' (p. 233). In addition, research collaboration is seen as a measure of quality which demonstrates skills of networking and coalition building , as academics cannot go it alone (Cleary *et al.*, 2012; Jackson, Andrew, & Cleary, 2013). International relationships provide opportunities for exchange visits and sabbaticals (Jackson, Andrew, *et al.*, 2013). An academic reputation is critical for future career prospects and is wide open to public scrutiny (Winefield *et al.*, 2003). Ever-increasing digital networking using academia-focussed websites and forums have accelerated collaboration and the ease with which reputations can be built and destroyed. Due to

the extensive reputational damage, publication opportunities for Tamara ceased.

The third moderator relates to the changing culture of universities in recent decades. The transformation of universities into entrepreneurial organisations has resulted in increased competitiveness among employees, steeper hierarchical structure, greater casualisation and reduced resources (see Oleksiyenko, 2018; Sharma, 2017; Taylor, 2017). Such a culture provides an arena ripe for bullying.

Moderators of the ostracism-psychological impact relationships

The second impact of ostracism within the model is psychological and this has been well-documented. Ostracism has been shown to negatively affect psychological needs, emotions and attitudes as well as health; thus an ostracised individual may become depressed, anxious, fearful, despairing, and feel helpless and worthless (Vickers, 2014; Williams, 2012). These feelings are exacerbated by the frequent lack of support and empathy for the targets from colleagues, managers, unions and health services (Vickers, 2014). Thus it is envisaged that the effects Tamara suffered would be severe.

Of more significance to the topic of this paper are the model's organisational factors that moderate the relationship between ostracism and the psychological impact: awareness of being ostracised and the degree of threat. Firstly, they propose that the extent of one's awareness will strengthen the impact of this experience. Tamara could not be unaware of her ostracism as this was direct, immediate and all-encompassing. Secondly, ostracism that is more threatening will strengthen the impact of ostracism and it threatened every aspect of her professional and personal life.

The psychological impact of ostracism may be enhanced by the value of the person doing the ostracising; this value relates to how much Tamara depended on Jana to fulfil her needs. Jana was a relatively well-known academic and, as the head, could determine what work contracts were available. Furthermore, those with less power (like Tamara) are considered to be more aware of the behaviour of more powerful others; bullying thrives in situations of a power imbalance (Raineri *et al.*, 2011). For Tamara, the psychological impact may have been more severe because she was on contract. Senior academics will direct their aggression against untenured academics, particularly women, who have a lower status, and women's careers may more often be stopped in lower-level positions (Henning *et al.*, 2017; Keashly & Neuman, 2018). Furthermore, Tamara's ostracism was sudden and unexpected despite working closely over a five-year period. Unanticipated ostracism following a period of inclusion had a greater effect and was a means of catching the target off guard (Westhues, 2004).

If the target is a newcomer or in insecure employment, they depend more on resources and information from co-workers (Robinson *et al.*, 2013) and on personal relationships. Australian academia has the third highest level of casual/sessional employment among 14 industries with teaching-only positions being 80 per cent casuals (Louissikian, 2016; Ryan *et al.*, 2013). This precarious employment makes these staff 'susceptible in terms of: bullying and intimidation, unfair demands, feelings of isolation, lack of recognition and feeling undervalued' (Ryan *et al.*, 2013, p. 165). For sessional academics, future employment is based on personal relationships and preferences; thus, for Tamara, her annual contracts could be unilaterally terminated by the head of discipline.

At the individual level, Tamara experienced both physical and psychological effects from being ostracised (see 'Consequences of ostracism' section). The consequences may be magnified by the reactions of senior managers. It is not only the fact of being ostracised by more than one person; the issue is the collusion of other staff at all levels. McKay and colleagues (2008) report that such a lack of reaction by the administration was a recurring theme among their university respondents. All levels of academia readily and openly acted against Tamara based on Jana's actions. Even her subsequent short-term employment in another faculty was terminated by senior management, rather than by Human Resources. The institutionalised element of bullying is reflected in the openness with which employees show bullying behaviour (McKay *et al.*, 2008).

A final factor that may affect the degree of ostracism concerns the attributions made by the victim. Individuals strive to understand negative events affecting them (Weiner, 2018); if they consider these to be due to a personal quality, the effect of ostracism will be greater. Tamara could not attribute her ostracism to any characteristic and it thus related solely to a quality of Tamara herself and she therefore perceived it as her own fault. According to Martin and Peña (2012), the major characteristic of mobbing is that the attack is made on the academic themselves, rather than on their words or actions. Thus reputation is closely linked to another pragmatic effect of ostracism, namely the loss of social connections and influence (Robinson *et al.*, 2013) (see 'Moderators of the Ostracism-Pragmatic impact relationships').

Staff employment policies can also be used corruptly to damage the target's career, block promotion and harm their future circumstances and professional status (Vickers, 2014). To destroy a target's prospects, the bully may influence promotion and selection committees. Thus, Tamara's job applications are never considered and, at professional events, she is purposefully shunned by previous academic research collaborators. This indicates that the effects on the target escalated to 'outright hostility and emotional abuse – elsewhere labelled "psychoterror" – which stops nothing short of psychological and physical destruction of that employee' (Vickers, 2014, p. 13).

Outcomes of ostracism

A final stage of the model relates to the organisational outcomes of ostracism. These outcomes can be positive or negative. Sometimes, ostracism may result in victims attempting to regain their position within the ostracising group. This is the most adaptive response but is rare (Fiset, Al Hajj, & Vongas, 2017). Due to Tamara's sudden ostracism, these more positive avenues were not open to her. The outcomes for her, as for most cases of ostracism, were entirely negative, resulting in withdrawal and self-banishment. Of particular significance to Tamara, the outcome relates to the pragmatic/practical impact; her absolute and ongoing ostracism by Jana and colleagues extended to ostracism throughout the country (blacklisting). This was 'inactive occupation: that is, a starvation of work, information and interaction with others in the workplace and the cutting out of all communication with that person' (Vickers, 2014, p. 12). This had an overwhelming effect on Tamara's ability to conduct research and prevented any opportunity of her contributing to her profession, as well as any future employment. Academic whistle-blowers pay a long-term penalty and may be effectively blackballed from ever working again in academia (Morgan, 2014).

Future research directions

This application of Robinson *et al.*'s (2013) model of workplace ostracism to the specific field of academia offers a number of opportunities for future research. Firstly, most components of the model remain untested. This model is considered to be an important contribution to the topic of workplace ostracism (Bedi, 2019) and it may be applicable to most workplaces. All components and relationships depicted in this model of antecedents and consequences of workplace ostracism need to be carefully investigated to determine whether the model holds in workplaces in general, as well as specifically within the academic environment.

Secondly, research into ostracism within academia is limited, despite a recent increase into that research. This case study suggests that certain modifications to the model are needed. Academia has certain distinctive features that do not occur elsewhere and therefore any relevant model of ostracism must take these into account. These features include the focus on research performance, the significance of reputation for academic success, the transformation of universities into entrepreneurial organisations and the long-term penalty for academic whistle-blowers. The suggested changes also need to be further tested and clarified. To what extent does cessation of collegial relationships or of access to resources have on workplace performance? How deleterious is the loss of reputation to current and future employment opportunities? How has the corporatisation of universities, with its increasing competitiveness, casualisation of staff and reduced resources, contributed to the prevalence of ostracism?

Thirdly, a related issue that has been highlighted in this case study was the lack of accountability of the university at all levels. Most academic organisations have extensive policy libraries relating to bullying and complaints procedures. However, the failure of these aspects of the academic workplace is clearly apparent in this case study and in previous research (Bilal *et al.*, 2020; Sharma, 2017). Researchers should investigate not only the content of these policies but the extent to which they are implemented. Managers need to respond appropriately when policies are not followed (Jackson *et al.*, 2013). Furthermore, investigators should examine how certain work environments result in malicious behaviours being considered normal and acceptable.

Conclusions

Ostracism is a particularly destructive but relatively common form of bullying in the workplace. The model of ostracism proposed by Robinson and colleagues (2013) provides a detailed and comprehensive picture of the antecedents and consequences within the workplace. The current paper has advanced a modified and extended version of their model tailored to cater for ostracism within academia by considering the nature of these workplaces and the significance of reputation. Whilst the model may be applicable to most workplaces, modifications may be necessary for other workplaces such as hospitals or schools as well as to academic workplaces in other countries (Meriläinen *et al.*, 2019; Zabrodska & Kveton, 2013). This model and its proposed modifications continue to lay the groundwork for increased focus and research into workplace ostracism; this may also lead to greater awareness of the phenomenon and better ways in which to anticipate the antecedents and to ameliorate the consequences for those who are affected.

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Endnote

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