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## Article

# Impact of nurse supervisor on social exclusion and counterproductive behaviour of employees

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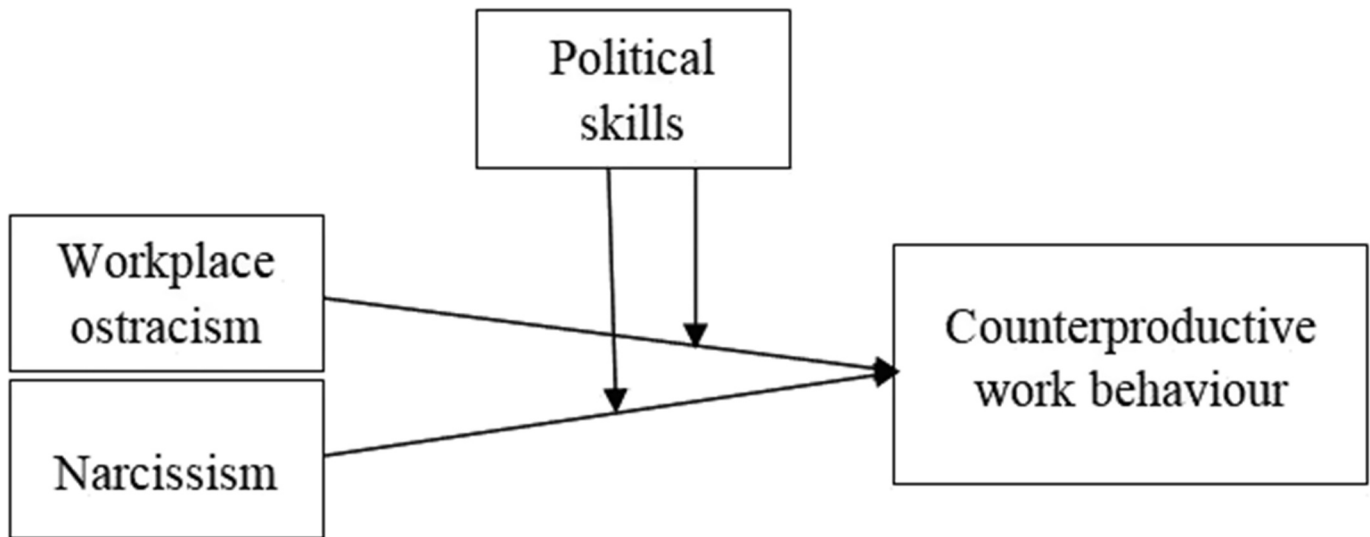
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## MANAGEMENT | RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Impact of nurse supervisor on social exclusion and counterproductive behaviour of employees

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**Abstract:** This study aimed to examine how ostracism and narcissistic nursing supervisors affect the counterproductive work behaviour of junior nurses, with political skills as a moderator, in a country-specific context. This study achieved its objectives by reviewing the literature on ostracism, narcissism, counterproductive work behaviour, and political skills as well as the outcomes of relevant previous studies. The social exchange theory and conservation of resources theory were drawn upon to explain the relationships under study. An adapted questionnaire was used to gather responses using a 5-point Likert scale. The obtained data were analysed using Smart-PLS 3. Ostracism and narcissistic nursing supervisors were found to contribute to the counterproductive work behaviour of nurses. The moderating roles of political skills on the proposed relationships were also assessed. Based on a sample of junior nurses, the obtained results appeared to support the hypothesised relationships. Conclusively, when nurses encounter ostracism and narcissistic nursing supervisors, they are more likely to react with counterproductive work behaviour with a low level of political skills, and vice versa. The use of external self-reporting measure for narcissism produced more concise results. The dark aspects of human behaviour in the organisational and behavioural contexts were



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Kashif Ali obtained his master's degree in Project Management from the Department of Management Sciences, COMSATS University Islamabad Pakistan in 2016. He is currently doing Ph.D. in the Management Sciences from Universiti Teknologi PETRONAS (UTP) Malaysia. His current research is centered on quality management, industrial revolution 4.0, human behavior, and sustainable development.

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### PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

Human is a social creature that requires a sense of appreciation and active interaction at the workplace and within the community. In the health-care sector, supervisor narcissism and ostracized behavior deteriorating the organization's economic and social aspects. The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of nursing supervisor narcissism on counterproductive work behavior and with the moderating role of political skills. This study also examines the relationship between workplace ostracism and counterproductive behavior, with the moderating role of political skills. The results show that the relationship between narcissism, ostracism, and counterproductive work behavior is weaker with a high level of political skills. The obtained findings on ostracism, narcissism, and counterproductive work behavior in this study were expected to contribute to the growing body of knowledge.

also revealed. Finally, the moderating role of political skills in the behavioural context was proved in this study.

**Subjects: Multidisciplinary Psychology; Work & Organizational Psychology; Human Resource Management**

**Keywords: Workplace ostracism; narcissism; counterproductive work behaviour; political skills**

## 1. Introduction

Every individual requires a sense of appreciation and experiences active interactions within the community and at the workplace. A narcissistic leader is goal-oriented with a strong desire for indefinite power and achievement. Furthermore, the behaviour of human is social; therefore, a sense of belonging is the desire of every human. Social isolation or elimination is the root cause of belonging deficiency, which causes an individual or groups of individuals feel that they are being ostracized or ignored. These destructive behavioural aspects can cause havoc and damaging organisational outcomes, such as financial loss of USD 50 billion in the US, business failure (of more than 30%), and even, business shutdown (of about 20%; Baharom et al., 2017).

Ostracism is described as social exclusion when the target or sources does not receive any verbal communication (Freedman et al., 2016). On the other hand, the term narcissism is conceptualized as social-personality traits. Narcissist individual developed short-term social connection like one-night stand (Nash et al., 2019). But these short-term social connections are not reliable. Therefore, narcissist individual face a dilemma of social exclusion. Social exclusion is challenging dilemma for people with high in narcissism and experience ostracized behaviour (Mazinani et al., 2020). In this study, narcissism and ostracism are used under the umbrella of social exclusion. From the prior studies, social connection affects human physical and psychological health. However, these effects are more prolonged and prominent in some specific profession like healthcare (Mazinani et al., 2020).

Nurses play a key position in the health-care sector with their close contact with the doctors and their patients. These relations require collaborative efforts from their supervisors and colleagues (Almost et al., 2016). It is acknowledged that the poor managerial support and lack of shared feelings with colleagues can affect the caring abilities of nurses (Clarke & Wheeler, 1992). The manifestation of negative behaviour is a concern within and across the health-care professional groups; prior studies identified negative behaviour from the horizontal and vertical ends as the most significant concern among nurses (Almost et al., 2016). According to the Canadian Health Services Research Foundation, the poor relations among the frontline nurses are the root cause of stress and disheartened that potentially results in profession quitting. Furthermore, it also harms the safety of the patients. Therefore, analysing the causes of the manifestation of negative behaviour among frontline nurses in health-care organisations is an essential step.

Theoretically, the conservation of resources theory (COR) emphasizes elements of loss, threats and common considerations jointly by employee's (Hobfoll, 2010). COR theory reflects the concept of integrative stress that reveals internal and environmental processes. Meanwhile, the social exchange theory (SET) best explains the concept of counterproductive work behaviour. This theory serves as an important prototype to assess any exchange relationship with the assumption that human relationships are based on the subjective use of cost-benefit analysis. When employees have a positive experience with their supervisor that eases the impact of negative experience, they would demonstrate a lower tendency of destructive work behaviour. The relationships between leaders and managers are very important because they reflect ethical and moral behaviour.

Despite gaining growing attention, the influence of the level of belonging on the counterproductive work behaviour in the nursing profession has remained underexplored. The current study

extended the existing knowledge by distinguishing the behaviours of superiors and peers at the workplace and their influence on the counterproductive work behaviour (Baloch et al., 2017; García-Chas et al., 2018). The obtained findings on ostracism, narcissism, and counterproductive work behaviour in this study were expected to contribute to the growing body of knowledge.

In view of the above, the purpose of this study was to assess the relationships of ostracism, narcissism, and counterproductive work behaviour. This study also aimed to examine the intervening role of political skills on the hypothesised relationships.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Conceptualisation of constructs

#### 2.1.1. Ostracism

When the employees experience being ignored and isolated by their colleagues at the workplace, it develops a sense of social pain, which leads to numerous negative consequences. This sense of social pain is expressed as “ostracism”. There are some identical expressions for ostracism, such as abandonment, isolation, social exclusion, and rejection. The concept of ostracism at the workplace was proposed by Ferris and their colleagues in 2008, which describes the feeling of being disrespected by colleagues. When a person or a group of persons experience being socially overlooked or ignored by their co-workers, they experience the feeling of exclusion—this state is termed as ostracism (Mlika et al., 2017). Liu and Xia (2016) described that ostracism includes behaviour like avoiding or rejecting an individual physically and emotionally at the workplace. Ostracism is a human experience to feel uncomfortable when they are being excluded from their peers (Berlingo, 2015). This phenomenon is passive-aggressive in nature and displays the anthology of human behaviour like avoiding, ignoring, and social exclusion (Hitlan & Noel, 2009).

#### 2.1.2. Narcissism

The concept of narcissism has Greek origin and is extensively used in social and psychological research. In the clinical sense, the term “narcissism” is a personality defect and an inflexible behaviour that involves egotism, lack of empathy, and self-admiration (AAP, 2013). According to Campbell and Foster (2012), narcissism is the individual quality of self-significance and can be rather dominating in their sense of thinking and feeling. Suzy Fox (2011) described narcissism as an individual constant behaviour towards self-lavishness, the need for appreciation, and unsympathetic conduct. The feature of narcissism is allied with the individual personality variables to the need for indefinite power and achievement (Aghaz et al., 2014).

#### 2.1.3. Counterproductive work behaviour

When employees have the intent to cause harm to the organisational interest and business internal stakeholders (e.g., colleagues, subordinates, and supervisors) and violate the moral principles and commonly shared ethical values, such behaviour is described as counterproductive work behaviour (Zaghini & Fida, 2016). Counterproductive work behaviour is the most prevalent problem at the workplace. The main feature of such behaviour lies in the violation of moral and ethical norms. Employees who depict unethical behaviour are aware of the situation and aim to cause harm to other individuals and the organisation (Zaghini & Fida, 2016). Instone (2012) defined counterproductive work behaviour as deliberate behaviour that potentially generates adverse outcomes to the employees and their organisation. Such deliberate behaviours include fraud, theft, violence, improper use of business assets, and sexual harassment. Raman et al. (2016), counterproductive work behaviour involves a wide spectrum of behaviour that potentially harms the interest of other individuals, customers, and the organisation.

#### 2.1.4. Political skills

Today, political skills in a health-care organisation are considered important to override the negative responses and make use of influential behaviour for goal attainment (Montalvo, 2015).

According to Harvey et al. (2007), the nature of political skills is similar to social competence and intelligence. From the perspectives of social competence, political skills reflect an individual capacity to interact effectively with their environment and produce desirable outcomes. Meanwhile, from the perspectives of intelligence, political skills reflect one's personal ability to deal with other individuals effectively. McAllister et al. (2015) described political skills as a three-phase process of social influence from recognition and evaluation to the capitalisation of opportunities. On the other hand, Atay (2010) defined political skill as a pattern of social competencies that includes affective, behavioural, and cognitive aspects.

## **2.2. Relationships between constructs and hypothesis development**

### **2.2.1. The association between ostracism and counterproductive work behaviour**

There are many related terms used in literature to express ostracism, such as isolation, rejection, and social exclusion. Ball (2011) assessed the consequences of ostracism on the neural and behavioural indicators of self regulation and general cognitive and hypothesized a negative relationship between the self-regulatory process of accuracy and ostracism. Besides that, Zimmerman et al. (2016) examined the faculty experience regarding ostracism at the workplace in specific departments. The results indicate that male staff members perceived less ostracism whereas female staff members perceived more ostracism. The study revealed that the experience of ostracism and the departments and perceived information sharing were not correlated. In a questionnaire-based study, Mlika et al. (2017) analysed different variables of organisational ostracism and found that most of the respondents engaged in ostracism without an actual purpose. Additionally, organization environment play a positive role in enhancing ostracism and CWB. In the study of Al-Atwi (2017) depicted that workplace ostracism affects the employee performance. The practical consequences of ostracism threaten the ability of employees to access resources, support, and opportunities. Meanwhile, Fiset et al. (2017) conducted an experiment and field study to assess the reaction of victims who face ostracism at the workplace. The findings revealed ostracism as a three-way interaction, namely ostracism, status of ostracism and external social support. The victim's of ostracism harm organisational citizenship behaviour and display adverse motives to their organisation. Furthermore, ostracizee' external social support and felt ostracism envisage turnover intention. In a nutshell, the employee's ostracised behaviour enhances the counterproductive work behaviour. In view of the above, the following hypothesis was proposed for testing:

**H<sub>1</sub>:** There is a positive and significant association exist between workplace ostracism and counterproductive work behaviour.

### **2.2.2. The association between narcissism and counterproductive work behaviour**

Narcissism is a personality disorder. It is not a type of mental illness. Aghaz et al. (2014) identified covert narcissism as the strongest predictor of organisational and interpersonal counterproductive work. Braun (2017) reviewed the positive and negative outcomes of narcissism in leadership. The results of a multi-level analysis depicted that narcissism negatively affects the behaviour of subordinates (e.g., counterproductive work behaviour and citizenship) at the dyadic, team, and organisational levels. Individuals with a non-managerial position at the organisational level demonstrated overt and covert narcissism. In another study, Blinkhorn et al. (2018) examined the violent offending behaviour of both male and female participants and found that narcissistic female participants demonstrated higher propensity to engage with such behaviour. With regard to the narcissism of nursing supervisors, the junior nurses were hypothesised to experience frustration or pain caused by self-admiration or intent to become leaders themselves, resulting in counterproductive work behaviour. Therefore, the following hypothesis was proposed for testing:

**H<sub>2</sub>:** There is a positive and significant association exist between narcissism and counterproductive work behaviour.

### 2.2.3. *Political skills as a moderator*

Shi et al. (2011) explained the effectiveness of political skills on human behaviour. An individual who possesses a high level of political skills conveys a self-comfort sense and personal security that attract other individuals and they have feelings of comfort (G. R. Ferris et al., 2005). Narcissistic persons who have a lower level of political skills often display over-confidence, lack of empathy, and exploitative behaviour (Campbell, 2007). However, narcissistic individuals who have a higher level of political skills effectively adjust their self-maintenance mechanism (Baloch et al., 2017). Similarly, individuals who have dark personality traits and having high level of political skills are able to express higher levels of sincerity and honesty in their work (Brouer et al., 2012). The association between ostracism and counterproductive work behaviour were weak in the presence of high political skills (Zhao et al., 2013). Employees with high level of political skills have a better understanding of their social environment during times of hardship. Besides that, they have a better understanding of the type of resources that offer them the best return of their investment (Bentley et al., 2017). Hence, in this study, the following hypotheses were tested:

**H<sub>3</sub>:** The association between ostracism and counterproductive work behaviour were negatively moderate by Political skills.

**H<sub>4</sub>:** The association between narcissism and counterproductive work behaviour were negatively moderate by Political skills.

## 2.3. *Underpinning theories*

### 2.3.1. *Conservation of resources (COR) theory*

The conservation of resources (CoR) theory based on an integrative stress theory that reflects internal and environmental processes and proposed by Hobfoll in 1988. In the study of Hobfoll et al. (2018) elaborate the COR theory that people would make efforts to acquire, preserve, look after, and protect those things that have central value to them. The basic principle of the COR theory suggests that employees are encouraged to keep their existing resources and attain new resources. Celeste Alvaro et al. (2010) applied the COR theory as a theoretical basis to understand the knowledge translation and capacity to use research in a health-care organisation. The obtained results demonstrated the power of organisational resources to manipulate the research use in knowledge translation. Furthermore, certain resources were found to compensate for the discrepancies of other resources. Meanwhile, Halbesleben et al. (2014) understand the role of conservation of resources theory to propose the concept of motivation. Holmgreen et al., (2017) discussed the outcome of the COR theory in the health context. Based on the COR theory, the association between innovativeness and activation in the presence of mindfulness as moderators (Montani et al., 2016).

### 2.3.2. *Social exchange theory (SET)*

The concept of counterproductive work behaviour may be implicit within the support of social exchange theory (SET). This theory serves as an important prototype in assessing any exchange relationship with the assumption that human relationships are based on the subjective use of cost-benefit analysis. SET explains how affiliation starts and persists with the consistent exchange of incentives and the imposition of costs between individuals. Theoretically, it also provides a logical explanation of the average work-related outcomes. A positive experience under the leadership of a supervisor can ease the negative influence or experience on the subordinates, which minimises their tendency of destructive workplace behaviour (Chernyak-Hai & Tziner, 2014). Meanwhile, Russell Cropanzano et al. (2017) conducted a critical review with theoretical remedies to conceptual the prominent perspectives of social exchange theory (SET). The study addressed four critical



issues of SET, which included (1) overlapping constructs, (2) positive or negative hedonic constructs, (3) assumption of bipolarity, and (4) behavioural predictions. Based on SET, O'Boyle et al. (2012) conducted a meta-analysis to assess the dark personality traits and counterproductive work behaviour.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Research framework

##### 3.1.1. Methodological aspects

This section describes the methodological aspects of empirical research in terms of philosophy, study type, approach, and strategy used. This section also describes the tools and techniques considered for the measurement of constructs.

##### 3.1.2. Research design

The purpose of a research design is to create a connection between philosophy and assumptions. It is a plan that involves a series of processes to transform hypotheses into significant findings. Positivism research philosophy establishes the underlying basis in developing the relevant assumptions from the existing theories that fall under the deductive approach. In particular, the nature of the present study was descriptive. Using a questionnaire survey approach, this quantitative study involved a sample of nurses at the primary health-care units of hospitals in Punjab, Pakistan. The actual data collection for the present study was conducted in a one-time setting, specifically from June 2018 to July 2018.

##### 3.1.3. Study population and sample size

The primary health-care units were selected for this study because the government revamped the primary hospitals and implemented a performance-based reward system over the past 2 years. Furthermore, new and improved techniques have been introduced with information technology support to enhance the quality of care and monitoring system for patients. With that, the primary health-care units were deemed as the ideal environment for this study to test the proposed hypotheses.

For this study, the unit of analysis involved junior nurses. The study population was junior nurses in the primary health-care units across three districts of Punjab, Pakistan. The data of the population were collected from the human resources department at the district and province levels.

Meanwhile, the sample size was determined by referring to the predefined table for determining sample size for a finite population by Krejcie and Morgan (1970). For this study, the final sample size was set at 294 at 95% confidence level. Simple random sampling technique was applied to gather the samples from the selected sampling frame using a computer-generated list of nursing staff. The list of the nursing staff was generated from a spreadsheet to ensure that the selection of every repeated item was disregarded and replaced.

##### 3.1.4. Measurement of constructs

A multi-scale structure questionnaire was developed based on prior literature. The scale was slightly modified from nursing profession. Firstly, a pilot study was conducted with 50 nurses and pre-test several times. Then, the survey instrument was modified based on pilot study and then validated with the help of human resources practitioners, academicians and experts. The purpose of validation is to ensure that expert would have no difficulty in answering the questions, as well as offering suggestions. Based on feedback some questions were modified and others were eliminated.

3.1.4.1. *Workplace ostracism*. D. Lance Ferris et al. (2008) developed and validated the workplace ostracism scale in “*The development and validation of the workplace ostracism scale*”, which comprised of five items like “*Others ignored me at work*”, “*My greetings have gone unanswered at work*”. The respondents were required to respond according to a 5-point Likert scale with the endpoints of “strongly disagree” (1) and “strongly agree” (5).

3.1.4.2. *Narcissism*. Hochwarter and Thompson (2012) presented the supervisor narcissism scale, which comprised of five items like “*My supervisor is a very self-centred person*” and “*My boss always has to be the centre of attention no matter what*”. These items were measured according to a 5-point Likert scale with the endpoints of “strongly disagree” (1) and “strongly agree” (5).

3.1.4.3. *Political skills*. G. R. Ferris et al. (2005) presented the political skills scale in “*Development and validation of the political skill inventory*”. The proposed scale contained eight items like “*I understand people very well*” and “*I am able to communicate easily and effectively with others*”. These items were measured according to a 5-point Likert scale with the endpoints of “strongly disagree” (1) and “strongly agree” (5).

3.1.4.4. *Counterproductive work behaviour*. Szostek (2017) presented the counterproductive work behaviour scale that comprised of five items like “*I stayed at home saying that I was ill, but I was not*”. The respondents were required to respond according to a five-point Likert scale with the endpoints of “strongly disagree” (1) and “strongly agree” (5).

3.1.4.5. *Control variables*. Control variables that potentially confound the relationships between variables under study were also included in this study. Age and work experience have a central role in organisational research (Bernerth & Aguinis, 2016). There were two human-capital control variables in this study, namely age and work experience. The respondents in the current study were required to indicate their age (1 = 20 to 30 years; 2 = 31 to 40 years; 3 = 41 to 50 years; 4 = 51 years and above) and work experience (1 = 1 to 10 years; 2 = 11 to 20 years; 3 = 21 to 25 years; 4 = 26 years and above).

### 3.2. Data analysis

The proposed model was assessed in two stages (Hernández-Perlines et al., 2017) using Smart-PLS 3. Smart-PLS 3 is a promising statistical technique for prediction purposes. The predictive validity of the model was assessed through the measurement and structural models (Henseler et al., 2016). As recommended by Henseler et al. (2016), the analysis was completed in four steps.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Assessment of measurement model

#### 4.1.1. Convergent validity

Initially, the measurement model was assessed in terms of factor loadings and reliability and validity of constructs. The obtained values for all constructs are tabulated in Table 1. The values of all indicators should meet the corresponding threshold value. Variance inflation factor (VIF) that exceeds 5 indicates the presence of collinearity issues. Meanwhile, Cronbach’s alpha coefficient reflects internal consistency; it is recommended to exceed the minimum threshold value of 0.70 (Sijtsma, 2009). On the other hand, composite reliability is determined based on the consistent loading with the minimum threshold value of 0.70 (Henseler et al., 2016). The value of average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct that exceeds 0.05 reflects the appropriateness of the construct.

**Table 1. Convergent validity**

Items	Collinearity	Reliability and validity			
	VIF	Cronbach's Alpha	rhoA	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
CWB1	1.47	0.89	0.89	0.92	0.70
CWB2	2.45				
CWB3	2.69				
CWB4	2.80				
CWB5	3.27				
NRC1	1.52	0.80	0.81	0.86	0.55
NRC2	1.83				
NRC3	1.90				
NRC4	1.65				
NRC5	1.50				
WO1	1.95	0.88	0.88	0.91	0.67
WO2	1.81				
WO3	2.05				
WO4	2.50				
WO5	2.29				
PS1	1.70	0.84	0.85	0.89	0.61
PS2	1.58				
PS3	1.74				
PS4	2.40				
PS5	1.80				

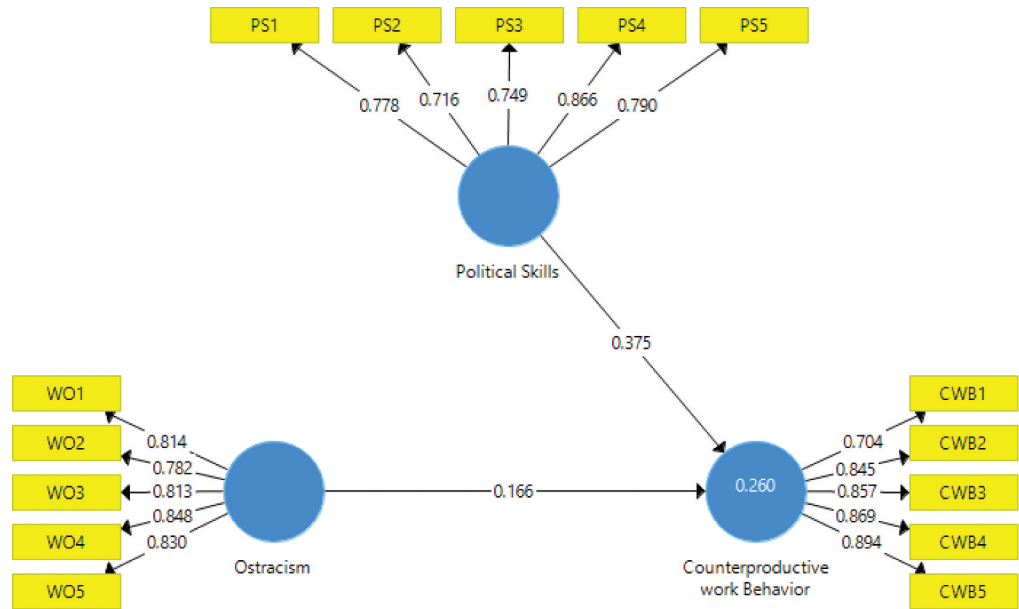
**4.1.2. Discriminant validity**

Discriminant validity (Table 2) reflects the statistical and theoretical differences of every pair of constructs involved (Henseler et al., 2016). An accurate assessment is very important as each construct should capture a phenomenon uniquely from the empirical aspects (Hair et al., 2019). There are three criteria to measure discriminant validity, namely Fornell-Larcker criterion, heterotrait-monotrait ratio of correlation (HTMT), and cross-loading. Unlike the other criteria, HTMT is more precise (Henseler et al., 2016). The maximum threshold value of HTMT is 0.85 (Ramayah et al., 2017) (Figure 1 and 2).

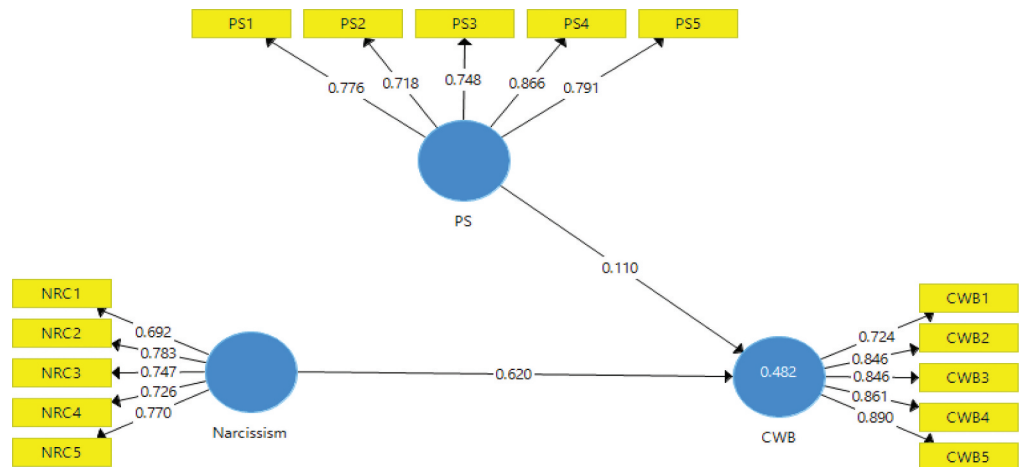
**Table 2. Discriminant validity**

	Model-1		Model-2	
	CWB	Ostracism	CWB	Narcissism
Ostracism	0.49			
Narcissism			0.79	
Political skills	0.56	0.85	0.56	0.76

**Figure 1. Measurement Results of Model-1.**



**Figure 2. Measurement Results of Model-2.**

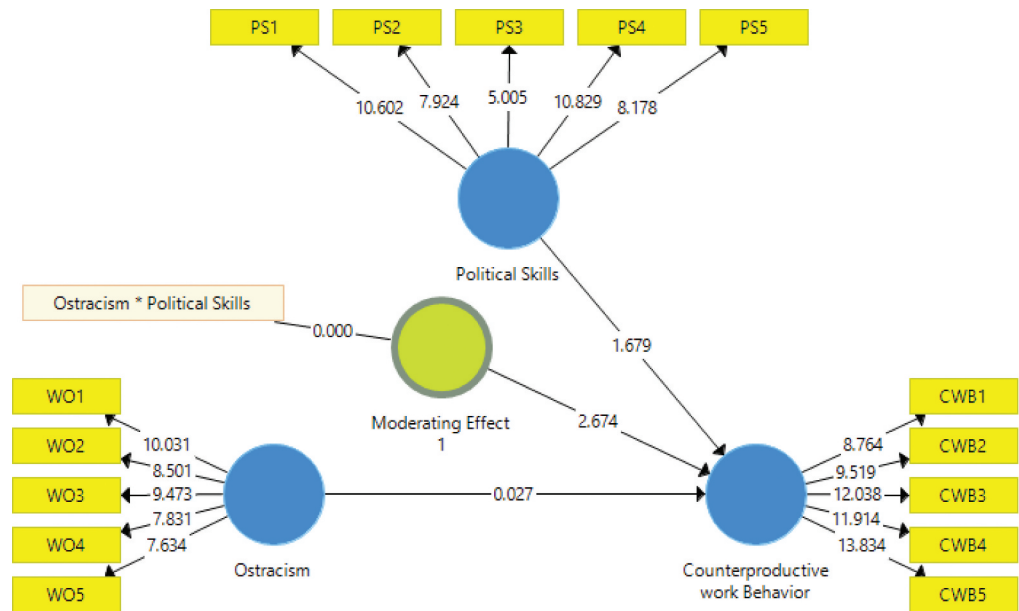


**4.2. Assessment of structural model**

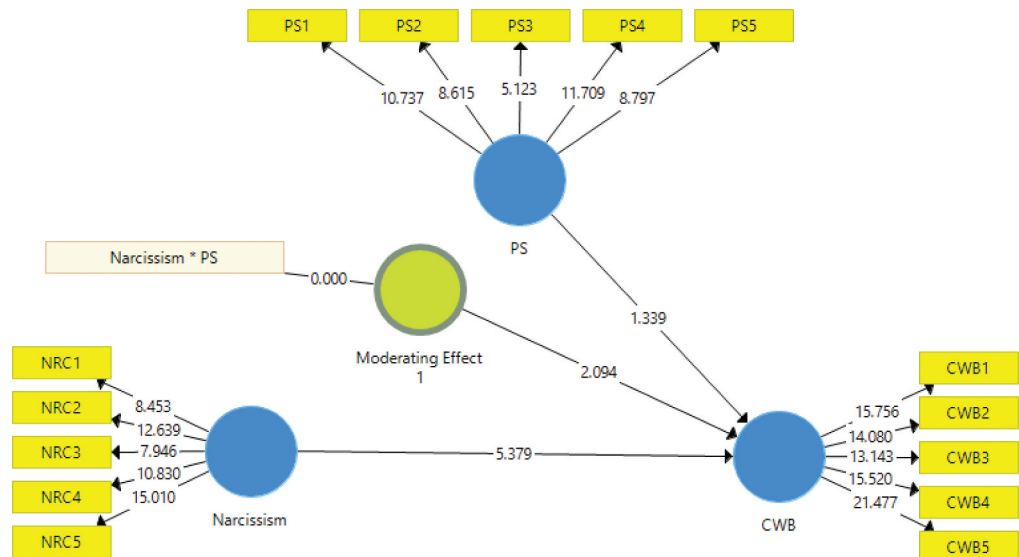
Following that, the assessment of the structural model was conducted in two non-exclusive ways, namely model fit and approximate model fit. The model fit test relies on the geodesic discrepancy ( $d_G$ ) and unweighted least square discrepancy ( $d_{ULS}$ ) whereas the approximate model fit test involves standardised root-mean-square residuals (SRMR) and Normed Fit Index (NFI) (Table 3). The value of SRMR that is below 0.08 (Hu and Bentler, 1999) and the value of NFI that exceeds 0.9 (Byrne, 2008) are deemed acceptable. However, goodness-of-fit is potentially useful for purely confirmatory research. Furthermore, the absolute application of any fit measure remains not fully developed (Hair et al., 2019) (Figure 3 and 4).

Table 3. Assessment of structural models		
	Model-1	Model-2
SRMR	0.07	0.09
NFI	0.90	0.80
d_ULS	0.61	0.99
d_G	0.25	0.42

**Figure 3. Structural Results of Model-1.**



**Figure 4. Structural Results of Model-2.**



### 4.3. Testing of hypotheses

The analysis using Smart-PLS 3 proceeded to the testing of hypotheses. According to Hair et al. (2017), the measures of hypothesis testing involve the basic acceptance or rejection criteria based on the values of  $R^2$ , beta, and corresponding t-value via a bootstrapping procedure with a resample of 4,999 (Henseler et al., 2016). In addition, effect size ( $f^2$ ) and predictive relevance ( $Q^2$ ) should also be reported (Ramayah et al., 2017). In a formative model, the best feasible approach for moderation lies (Table 4) in the two-stage approach (Henseler & Fassott, 2009; Hair et al., 2019). In the first stage, the main effect was calculated to obtain the scores of latent variables. Following that, in the second stage, the interaction term was determined from the multiplication of independent variable (X) and moderator (M) ( $X*M$ ) (Henseler & Fassott, 2009). In order to analyse the moderating effect, the presence of moderating effect in the population was first determined. Secondly, the strength of the moderator ( $f^2$ ) was then calculated based on the following formula by Henseler and Fassott (2009).

$$f^2 = \frac{R^2_{\text{model with moderator}} - R^2_{\text{model without moderator}}}{1 - R^2_{\text{model with moderator}}}$$

**Table 4. Moderation analysis**

	Model-1	Model-2
$R^2$ without moderation	0.26	0.5
$R^2$ with moderation	0.37	0.7
Beta	-0.12	-0.13
$f^2$	0.17	0.7
$Q^2$	0.19	0.31
p-value	0.01	0.05

When the values of  $f^2$  and  $Q^2$  exceed 0.02, the moderating effect is regarded as weak; when the values of  $f^2$  and  $Q^2$  exceed 0.15, the moderating effect is regarded as moderate; when the values of  $f^2$  and  $Q^2$  exceed 0.35, the moderating effect is regarded as strong (Hair et al., 2017; Henseler & Fassott, 2009). Referring to the following tabulated results for Model-1, political skills were found to exhibit moderate. On the other hand, political skills were found to exhibit a strong moderating effect on the relationship between narcissism and counterproductive work behaviour.

### 4.4. Control variables

Similarly, the control variables in this study, specifically age and work experience, were assessed using Smart-PLS 3. The control variable of age comprised four dummy variables. The effect of each dummy variable was analysed via a bootstrapping procedure with a resample of 4,999 (Henseler et al., 2016). The obtained results depicted that age did not exhibit any significant effect on counterproductive work behaviour. Likewise, the control variable of work experience was divided into four dummy variables and analysed via bootstrapping process with a resample of 4,999 (Henseler et al., 2016). The obtained results depicted that work experience did not exhibit any significant effect on counterproductive work behaviour.

## 5. Discussion

The primary focus of the present study was to assess the relationships of ostracism, narcissism, and counterproductive work behaviour and the moderating role of political skills in these relationships. These constructs were analysed in the nexus of human belonging and behavioural outcomes like counterproductive work behaviour (Baloch et al., 2017; Gkorezis et al., 2016; Huang, 2017). Prior studies theoretically examined the relationships between behavioural factors and counterproductive work behaviour. However, the question of whether the impact of ostracism and narcissism on counterproductive work behaviour is indirect or direct was not answered in those studies.

Furthermore, the moderating role of the political skills of employees should be in the context of counterproductive work behaviour was deemed noteworthy to explore. In healthcare, the role of nursing supervisor is very crucial because it promote professional and ethical development in nursing profession (Nylund & Lindholm, 1999). But supervisor personality traits like narcissistic behaviour (Wang et al., 2018) and ostracism (Jahanzeb et al., 2018) deteriorate the junior nurse's career because of their egomaniacal needs. The supervisor's narcissistic behaviour reacts to external ego-threat with aggression and other counterproductive work behaviour (Hochwarter & Thompson, 2012). Prior studies reported that ostracized behaviour of supervisor and co-workers makes the employees towards social exclusion. This social exclusion makes the junior worker feel socially invisible, less human and non-existent (Jahanzeb et al., 2018).

The empirical results of the first model in this study revealed a direct and positive relationship between ostracism and counterproductive work behaviour in the nursing profession. Based on the results,  $H_1$  was supported. In other words, more ostracized behaviour exhibits a higher level of counterproductive work behaviour. The result is in line with the study of Jahanzeb et al. (2018) stated that ostracism threatened the employees' efficacy needs that lead to counterproductive behaviour. These results are in accord with recent studies of Mlika et al. (2017) indicated that ostracism is mainly observed in public organizations like healthcare. Besides that, this study also empirically proved the presence of an indirect relationship between ostracism and counterproductive work behaviour through political skills as a moderator. Based on these results,  $H_3$  was supported. In other words, political skills negatively influence the relationship between ostracism and counterproductive work behaviour. Employees who demonstrate a high level of political skills display a low level of counterproductive work behaviour. Nevertheless, the obtained results on the various levels of political skills at the individual level have remained inconclusive. These findings are consistent with the data obtained in Bentley et al. (2017). Employees with a high level of political skills possess dark personality traits (Baloch et al., 2017). Conclusively, ostracism directly influences counterproductive work behaviour but indirectly and negatively influences counterproductive work behaviour in the presence of political skills as a moderator.

The proposed relationship between narcissism and counterproductive work behaviour was also empirically examined in this study. Based on the obtained statistical results,  $H_2$  was supported. Narcissistic supervisors show a lack of trust on others, which is considered as a behaviour misfit to the organisational behavioural outcomes. Furthermore, their behaviour exhibits negative consequences on employees of the lower level, especially on their counterproductive work behaviour. As their needs are continuously overlooked, they experience frustration and ultimately, display counterproductive work behaviour (Braun et al., 2016; Braun, 2017). Generally, women are more interpersonally sensitive than their counterparts. Therefore, in the presence of highly narcissistic female supervisors, female subordinates are more likely to exhibit counterproductive work behaviour (Blinkhorn et al., 2018). These views further strengthen the assumption that narcissistic behaviour of females triggers counterproductive work behaviour. The findings broadly support the work of other studies in this area linking narcissism and CWB (Ding et al., 2018; Hochwarter & Thompson, 2012; Mazinani et al., 2020). Meanwhile, the study empirically proved the moderating effect of political skills on the relationship between narcissism and counterproductive work behaviour; thus,  $H_4$  was supported. Employees with a low level of political skills exhibit a higher level of counterproductive work behaviour whereas employees with a high level of political skills exhibit a lower level of counterproductive work behaviour. Besides that, employees with a high level of political skills are more social and able to combat narcissistic behaviour.

Overall, this study characterised an initial attempt to statistically analyse and demonstrate the moderating effect of political skills on the relationship between ostracism and counterproductive work behaviour and the relationship between narcissism and counterproductive work behaviour in the nursing profession. Politically enriched employees regulate their social resources. In particular, at the individual level, politically active employees are more goal-oriented to accomplish their goals, have a good understanding of their environment, and make positive self-evaluation about

themselves. Meanwhile, at the interpersonal level, politically enriched employees are aware of various strategies that are applicable to different situations. They have the capacity to influence their peers, managers, and subordinates at the workplace.

## 6. Conclusion

In summary, the present study provided new insights into the behavioural aspects of employees, specifically nurses, in the healthcare context. The current study empirically examined the moderated model of ostracism and narcissism at the workplace. Specifically, junior nurses were found to demonstrate a higher propensity to display counterproductive work behaviour with a low level of political skills as a result of ostracism and narcissistic nursing supervisors and vice versa. The study contributed both theoretical and practical implications in the behavioural and organisational contexts.

### 6.1. Theoretical implications

The current study offered theoretical implications in three different ways. Firstly, this study offered essential theoretical insights on the relationship between human behaviour (narcissism) and behavioural outcome (counterproductive work behaviour) among nurses. The junior nurses perceived narcissistic supervisors as a leader who lacks empathy, displays arrogance, and emotional isolation. Such perception subsequently challenges the interpersonal relationships, resulting in a lack of trust and counterproductive work behaviour. In addition, the present study used an external reporting of narcissism that reflects a better understanding of a supervisor's behaviour (Braun, 2017). Thus, the obtained findings on narcissistic behaviour from an external reporting are more concise.

Secondly, this study also offered essential theoretical insights on ostracism in the nursing profession. The empirical findings were expected to further enhance the behavioural literature, where most past studies focused on situational variables only (Zhu et al., 2017). Unlike most past studies, the present study explored ostracism, a dark side of human behaviour, in the organisational context. Based on SET, ostracism in this study was found to significantly affect the interpersonal and counterproductive work behaviour at the workplace. The obtained findings also provided empirical evidence on how ostracism leads to counterproductive work behaviour in the nursing profession.

Finally, this study contributed enhanced knowledge on ostracism and narcissism by exploring the moderating role of political skills with respect to the CoR theory. The presence of political skills appeared to reduce the significant influence of ostracism and narcissism on counterproductive work behaviour at the workplace in the healthcare context. The obtained empirical evidence and theoretical model were expected to highlight the significance of employees' personality in the healthcare context (Baloch et al., 2017).

### 6.2. Practical implications

Productive behaviour in the health-care sector is crucial for patients (Zhu et al., 2017). This study highlighted the propensity of nurses display a higher level of counterproductive work behaviour when they experience ostracism and narcissism at the workplace. In other words, nurses would eventually display an active engagement in non-productive activities. This study provided significant implications for the healthcare system. The obtained empirical findings highlighted a positive relationship between ostracism and counterproductive work behaviour as well as a positive relationship between narcissism and counterproductive work behaviour in the nursing profession. Narcissistic supervisors have low-quality relations, exploit others, and take short-cuts (Erkutlu and Chafra, 2017) whereas ostracism adversely affects the psychological needs and make others feel marginalised at the workplace. As a result, the victims of ostracism and narcissism would "attack" the organisation through their counterproductive work behaviour (Liu & Xia, 2016).

It is essential to reinforce an ethical context and a specific procedure to select leaders. Essentially, the promotion and hiring processes, psychological test, and interview process should



be properly conducted. The most straightforward way to deal with narcissism is to refrain such leader from abusing their power or influencing the hiring process (Erkutlu and Chafra, 2017). Meanwhile, the negative influence of ostracism must be promptly addressed when it takes place. There are several ways to overcome ostracism, such as promoting interpersonal interaction, team-building, and training programme (Zhu et al., 2017). Furthermore, cooperative goal interdependence can potentially minimise the influence of ostracism at the workplace (Wu et al., 2011). Hence, it is necessary for an organisation to own a specific mechanism to refine the employees' goals, specifically among their supervisors and colleagues.

### 6.3. Limitations of study and recommendations for future research

The present study encountered several limitations that serve as a direction for future research. Firstly, the data were gathered from a single source, specifically through a self-reporting measure. Hence, common method bias may occur. As for a self-reporting measure, the respondents may confuse counterproductive work behaviour with social desirability, which can be rather difficult to rule out, as such limitation is inherent. However, Berry et al. (2012) supported the use of a self-reporting measure in research. Secondly, the causal relationship between constructs cannot be clearly established due to the use of a cross-sectional design. In order to explore the causality between constructs, the longitudinal research design should be applied in the future research. Thirdly, the participants in the survey of this study were all female in a specific department, where selection bias issue may occur. A diverse demographic profile of respondents across different departments should be considered for future research in order to generalise the obtained results and findings. Furthermore, a comparative study is also recommended for future research to examine the behavioural aspects based on the gender basis.

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