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# Employee Silence Predicted by Abusive Leadership and Workplace Ostracism: Role of Employee Power Distance

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## Abstract

The proposed research aimed to examine abusive leadership and workplace ostracism as predictors of employee silence among school teachers in Sargodha, Pakistan. Studies further tend to examine the moderating role of power distance. Purposive sampling was employed to acquire the data. The research variables were quantified using the Abusive Supervision Scale (Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007), Workplace Exclusion Scale (Hitlan & Noel, 2009), Silence Scale (Van Dyne et al., 2003) and Power Distance Scale (Dorfman & Howell, 1988). Pearson correlation analysis revealed a significant relationship between abusive leadership, workplace ostracism, employee silence, and power distance. Results showed that abusive leadership, ostracism, silence, and power distance have a positive relationship with each other. The findings of linear regression revealed that abusive leadership, ostracism and power distance positively predicted employee silence. Moderation analysis revealed that power distance significantly moderated the relationship of abusive leadership and workplace ostracism with employee silence. The proposed research provides some recommendations and conclusions for future researchers who may be interested in examining the abuse that teachers experience in a high-power-distance culture that compels them to act silently.

## Keywords

Abusive leadership, workplace ostracism, employee silence, power distance, schoolteachers.

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# Silencio del Empleado Predicho por Liderazgo Abusivo y Ostracismo Laboral: Papel de la Distancia Jerárquica del Empleado

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## Resumen

La investigación propuesta tuvo como objetivo examinar el liderazgo abusivo y el ostracismo laboral como predictores del silencio de los empleados entre los profesores de escuela en Sargodha, Pakistán. Los estudios también tienden a examinar el papel moderador de la distancia jerárquica. Se utilizó un muestreo intencional para adquirir los datos. Las variables de investigación se cuantificaron utilizando la Escala de Supervisión Abusiva (Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007), la Escala de Exclusión Laboral (Hitlan & Noel, 2009), la Escala de Silencio (Van Dyne et al., 2003) y la Escala de Distancia Jerárquica (Dorfman & Howell, 1988). El análisis de correlación de Pearson reveló una relación significativa entre el liderazgo abusivo, el ostracismo laboral, el silencio de los empleados y la distancia jerárquica. Los resultados mostraron que el liderazgo abusivo, el ostracismo, el silencio y la distancia jerárquica tienen una relación positiva entre sí. Los hallazgos de la regresión lineal revelaron que el liderazgo abusivo, el ostracismo y la distancia jerárquica predijeron positivamente el silencio de los empleados. El análisis de moderación reveló que la distancia jerárquica moderó significativamente la relación del liderazgo abusivo y el ostracismo laboral con el silencio de los empleados. La investigación propuesta proporciona algunas recomendaciones y conclusiones para futuros investigadores que puedan estar interesados en examinar el abuso que experimentan los profesores en una cultura de alta distancia jerárquica que los obliga a actuar en silencio.

## Palabras clave

Liderazgo abusivo, ostracismo laboral, silencio del empleado, distancia jerárquica, profesores de escuela.

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Essential part of a workplace is leadership which is responsible for breaking or making the organization through how it is conducted. Educational leadership is generally linked to a specific organizational position in a school. There is recognition in many countries, including Pakistan, that for schools to give their students the quality education possible; they need skilled administrators and teachers. The leadership in each school has a direct impact on teachers and their professional performance. During his/her career, a teacher may work for several principals due to the increasing accountability at this time (Cook, 2014).

The effectiveness of teachers' instruction and classroom management is somewhat correlated with student achievement. The term effectiveness of a teacher relates to both their job satisfaction and willingness to carry out their duties in line with the objectives of the school. Educational studies on teachers' performance in the workplace have been focused on organizational and administrative theories (Kim & Lodman, 1994). Findings provided by the majority of studies on teachers' performance, linked fulfilling elements to Herzberg's "dual-factor theory", high-level "motivating factors" and low-level "hygiene factors." A task's intrinsic qualities, such as accomplishment, recognition, accepting responsibility, and opening chances, can be motivating. The term "hygiene elements" refers to external issues such as the working environment, management, work rules, compensation, and interpersonal connections (Bogler, 2001).

The performance of teachers can be improved by school principals recognizing their efforts and demonstrating an interest in them, enhancing justice and confidence in interactions throughout school processes, and forging a clear vision around shared objectives and a good atmosphere. Thus, it may be stated that the leadership styles that improve teachers' performance are typically those that focus on the individual, address psychological needs, emphasize humanistic, social, and ethical ideals, and present chances for self-realization (Cansoy, 2019). On the other side, when a leader's actions are harmful and detrimental to the teachers, it will damage the leader's credibility in the eyes of the teachers. This will cause a gap between the teacher and the principal.

Abusive leadership is often linked to increased negative behaviours at the workplace (Bamberger & Bacharach, 2006) and has also been linked to decreased positive behaviours at the workplace (Zellars et al., 2002). Further, social exchange theory suggests that the behaviours of subordinates are dependent on the actions of people in higher positions, and many people tend to be bound to follow those actions. If employees are employed justly, they will be engaged in ongoing behaviours profitable for the organization and heads (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

Many employees consider destructive leader behaviours and troublesome leaders as their job's worst part (Hogan & Kaiser, 2005). Abusive leadership affects the desired outcomes because leaders have different roles in the workplace; they monitor, mentor and appraise employees on their routine activities on the job (Aryee et al., 2008). Leaders are expected to be supportive of their subordinates. In an organization, the employee is considered a vital source, without them, it is hard for the firm to generate profits. Therefore, respectful and fair interpersonal treatment with subordinates can lead them to satisfaction and they see themselves as valuable assets in the workplace.

Employees relate importance to how leaders and coworkers treat them in the workplace. A constructive evaluation of oneself is necessary (Bar-Kalifa & Atzil-Slonim, 2020). However, the evaluation of abusive leadership will result in subordinates' perceptions of inappropriate treatment and interpersonal tension at work (Wang et al., 2020). According to Burton and Barber (2019), the perception of declining nobility and status as a result of abusive leadership will discourage employees from interacting socially and cause social difficulties on the job. It will then result in a loss of emotional ties to the organization and ostracism at work.

Employee silence is the purposeful retention of opinions, concerns, relevant information or suggestions, regarding organizational issues that are potentially important (Van Dyne et al., 2003). Researchers claimed that the silence of an employee can be either detrimental or beneficial to institutions. In the workplace, abuse victims have a restricted capacity to retaliate, as they might have to stay aware of their job. Accordingly, the silence of abuse victims is a typical reaction (Parker, 2014). Victims of occupational abuse may choose silence on account of the danger of being designated (Rayner et al., 2002).

This study emphasizes two types of silence originating from cold work settings and infliction of organizational performance (Wang & Hsieh, 2013). Defensive silence is a protective behaviour form based on fear, whereas acquiescent silence is a disengaged behaviour form based on low self-viability and acquiescence (Van Dyne et al., 2003). Furthermore, the defensive form of silence is the result of the dynamic responses of employees towards extrinsic warnings to self-security. Acquiescent silence befalls when representatives are profoundly withdrawn and inactively acknowledged by the organization (Pinder & Harlos, 2001).

Within the organization, the victim's action may be influenced or constrained by the power balance between a leader and an employee. Abusive leadership implies employees' view of how much leaders participate in the continued demonstration of threatening verbal and non-verbal practices, barring actual contact (Rauniyar et al., 2017). One of the basic obligations of school initiative is to go about as the mentor to the subordinates and guarantee that an empowering climate is made where individuals from the association and instructors explicitly feel that they are essential for the school family and are valuable. School principals are responsible for ensuring that their concern is the establishment of an empowering environment that involves growth and a friendly atmosphere in the organization. The organization they are working at is not dangerous or threatening (Khan et al., 2017).

In a country like Pakistan, which is still in the developing phase, the unemployment rate is very high, people have fewer work opportunities, and due to economic and social pressure, they do not intend to leave their jobs. An important cause of abusive leadership is downsizing, especially for those employees who appear particularly submissive and vulnerable (Neves, 2014). Instead of apparent reprisal and aggression by ending relationships with the leader (Tepper, 2007), in a risky economic condition which could result in future job loss. Representatives rather attempt to stay away from the source of abuse by staying away from their leader (Prouska & Psychogios, 2016) staying quiet regarding the issues inside the organization and maintaining low voice behaviour.

The present research proposed to find out the impact of abusive leadership and workplace ostracism on employee silence among school teachers. Further, it aimed to discover the moderating role of employee power distance.

Nowadays, School teachers are facing many issues which prominent are abusive leadership, ostracism and high-power distance. These constructs are also known as the main reason behind employee silence. The employees would rather keep quiet and withhold opinions, ideas and information that might be valuable to the organization.

### **Abusive Leadership**

Studies suggest that abusive leaders exhibit unfriendly behaviour with alarming frequency towards their representatives (Lam & Xu, 2019). He further contests that when leaders cannot efficiently inhibit, neglect and abstain from following behavioural impulses, they are likely to become abusive generally. Breevaart and de Vries (2017) argue that abusive leadership exhibit varying behavioural forms. Hu and Liu (2017) reported that to represent an authoritative image in front of the employees, superiors may abuse them as a strategy and influence their behaviours. According to Priesemuth and Schminke (2019), a substantial study has shown that offensive behavior toward employees doesn't happen in privacy. The offensive leaders enjoy doing it openly and mostly in their presence or front of other colleagues. In the school context, these behaviours are manifested in front of other coworkers.

Priesemuth and Schminke (2019) hypothesize that outsiders can observe harmful activities by leaders, for example, mocking or knocking representatives down. Representatives who encounter such maltreatment react unexpectedly. Some decide to stay silent, while others will, in general, strike back. There are occasions where violence shown against teachers has been accounted for McMahan et al. (2017) contend that the reason for violence against teachers must be seen from multiple aspects. Abusive leadership is considered one of the inferable factors sustaining this violence. This creates an ostracised context for the representatives leading them towards silence.

According to the Conservative Resource theory, abusive leadership is viewed as a pressure factor that assimilates the employee's mental resource operating frustration and impatience. Subordinates suffer from stress which expands the load for abusive leadership, and alienated behaviour could be a responsive system in the work environment, driving to an absence of achievement towards obligations, showing bad quality work execution and harming firm property.

One Pakistani research by Mehmood et al. (2020) found that supervisors abuse their subordinates for their gain. They use a variety of abusive strategies to take advantage of their subordinates' services for themselves. The patronage of their superiors is used to cover up the bad deeds of those subordinates who fulfil their desires. Additionally, subordinates employ acquiescence to lessen the impacts of abusive supervision.

### **Workplace Ostracism**

It is fundamental to have an extensive comprehension of workplace ostracism to explain what is viewed as ostracism and what isn't. Ostracism in the workplace is being avoided, overlooked

or excluded from social cooperation inside organizational contexts (Howard et al., 2019). Workplace ostracism is a dishonest and out-of-line treatment causing helpless working environment connections (Williams & Nida, 2011) that can bring about subordinate withdrawal dread of agony from dismissal (Robinson et al., 2013) and vulnerability. Van Dyne et al. (2003) gave silence elements i.e., prosocial, acquiescent and defensive silence in their original work.

When the leader and the subordinate have poor relationships within the organization, the subordinates perceive that their leader is ignoring their needs and not giving them importance. They may confront a lack of trust and support and belong to an out-group. This perception has adverse consequences as subordinates are susceptible to losing their engagement in work, and citizenship behaviours and this situation may generate feelings of turnover in them. In such scenarios, there is a danger of not performing even job duties. They feel less committed and obligated to the association and frustrate with their concepts, inventive thoughts, and sentiments, and decide to remain silent.

Ostracism forms a distressing work circumstance for a subordinate which creates a danger of other people groups' positive perspectives being changed into negative ones. Conservative resources can help subordinates to deal with ostracism at the workplace, the dread of negative assessment, and voice relationships by giving them a functioning methodology of resource protection instead of jumping their psyche to the static cycle of resource loss.

According to a study conducted in Pakistan, workplace ostracism lowers productivity by making people stay silent. Additionally, ostracized employees who engage in voice behaviour cannot do better than those who maintain silence and rebuild their self-esteem (Imran et al., 2021).

### **Employee Silence**

The emerging silence literature has continually shown pathological relations with superiors as the source of employees' choice to withhold essential information (Morrison, 2014). Silence interferes with the voice behaviour of an employee at the workplace. It's essential to comprehend how social values play a role in how ostracism affects voice behaviour.

Past researches declare that fear is the most well-known factor producing silence. It strengthens the silence in the workplace (Nikolaou et al., 2011), generates fear of punishment, dismissal, censure, dropping any prizes/rewards, fear of negative criticism from the leader, and isolation risk among employees.

As indicated by Redmond (2014), the expectancy theory can give a reasonable hypothetical structure to examine the perception of employees regarding the impact of organizational factors on the cognitive decision-making process of employees which decides inspiration, decisions, activities, and execution of employees in various workplaces. According to (Morrison, 2014) an expectancy theory expresses that mostly a subordinate has something valuable to share and the present circumstance is known as voice opportunity. Presently subordinates have dual choices of alternate behaviour, either to speak more loudly or pick defensive silence behaviour.

Previous research and empirical evidence described that in organizations with high power distance, subordinates see abusive leadership with dread (Newman & Nollen, 1996) because it isn't reliable with norms of power distance. Because of this dread, people become hesitant to



initiate ideas and offer their interests and, at last, become defensively silent. According to a study by Rhee et al. (2014), acquiescent silence occurred among the employees within the organization due to power distance. As such, when supervisors oftentimes use power while managing subordinates, the latter latently withhold thoughts concerning the resolution of problems.

### **Employee Power Distance**

Power distance is a cultural value vital in organizational study because it is primary to all relationships. It is essential in hierarchical organizations and influences various managerial rules or consequences (Keltner et al., 2003).

The power distance mirrors people's mentalities toward inconsistent force dispersion, which directly influences their acceptance and acknowledgement of leadership conduct (Zhou & Liao, 2012a). Power distance stresses acquiescence, honour, regard, dedication, and devotion to power figures (Farh et al., 2007).

The Power Distance Index (PDI) (Hofstede & Minkov, 2013) is an instrument to measure the recognition of power found between people in higher positions and those with the least. Pakistan appears to have a pretty high score on the Power Distance Index, which shows that Pakistanis experience significant inequality.

A society with a high degree of power distance holds many discrepancies in power in workplaces. Subordinates show a lot of honour for those in higher positions. Status, ranks, and titles weigh a lot. In countries where the power distance index (PDI) score is high, subordinates appear reliant on their superiors and hesitant to show dissimilarity. The idea of the concentration of executives implies that a high PDI country would favour centralized structures and hierarchical levels in the workplace. A low Power Distance Index culture plays down biases as much as possible representatives are not afraid of their superiors. People prefer less centralized organizational structures in the workplace in countries with low Power Distance Indexes.

### **Employee Power Distance as a Moderator**

High power distance subordinates are upfront in identifying and admitting the disparity in position, status, and power in the interaction between the leader and the subordinate (Kirkman et al., 2009). According to multiple past studies, power distance functions as a moderating variable that affects the association between leadership practices and job outcomes (Xie et al., 2018). The social exchange theory and reciprocity expectations for people with low power distance are less likely to be the foundations on which high power distance subordinates base their behaviours and influence. Conversely, people who have little power distance will be unconcerned with the position, rank, and power imbalance that is present in the relationship between a leader and their subordinates and will support their behaviours, contributions, and production in accordance with norms of reciprocity (Sun et al., 2013).

Moreover, Hofstede (2008) reviewed the display of power distance at school. In high power distance situations, leaders/supervisors are handled with respect and subordinates may have to stand up when a leader enters the room. At the workplace, there is thought to be a stern order, with the leader starting all communication.

Oppositely, in low power distance circumstances, leaders are assumed to employ their subordinates equally and are supposed to be negotiated as equal by their co-workers. Subordinates carry out unprovoked attacks and are thought to interrogate when they do not understand. They quarrel with the leaders and express their differences and criticisms in front of them. Some studies researched the connection between power distance and different hierarchical factors. Brockner et al. (2001) found that power distance is linked to the response given to voice. Asgari et al. (2011) affirmed that power distance impacts hierarchical practices. Generally, studies produced on this issue found that hierarchical factors are affected by power distance.

### Theoretical Framework

In comparison with the research paradigm where abusive leadership portrays a leader's behavior that is an uncalled-for workplace where subordinates under their leadership are dealt with cruelly (Rathert et al., 2018). As indicated by COR theory, the abusive leadership is viewed as a pressure factor that assimilates the employee's mental resources operating frustration and impatience. Subordinates suffer from stress which expands the load for abusive leadership, and alienated behavior could be a responsive system in the work environment, driving to an absence of achievement towards obligations, showing bad quality work execution and harming firm property.

As indicated by social exchange theory that give-take is the foundation of all relationships in an organization. However, the equilibrium of this exchange isn't always equivalent. This theory depicts how employees feel about a relationship with others relying on their discernments. Social exchange lies between two groups, which involves exchange (Cook et al., 2013). The creation of a relationship between employee and organization implies that representatives exchange their work for compensation and their dedication to the organization for their support and consideration. People weigh the expected advantages and dangers of relationships. Furthermore, where the dangers offset the prizes, people stop or leave that relationship. Because of the confined guidelines and methods winning inside the hierarchical environment, employees feel dread and choose to stay quiet. This inclination makes them restricted in their interests for their association.

Following Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), power distance might act as the moderator in the relationship between abusive leadership with deviance in the workplace (Wang et al., 2012). Power distance alludes to the action where a society acknowledges the truth that the distribution of power in organizations is unfair (Hofstede, 2013). If the culture promotes balance between people, then an individual related to such culture will likewise check out the world with the eye of fairness and won't force unfair powers on others. Power distance at the personal level expresses how much an individual concedes unfair power distribution (Tepper et al., 2009). The theories on abusive leadership, workplace ostracism, employee silence, and



employee power distance were used to assess the influence of the constructs on teachers in schools.

### Research Questions

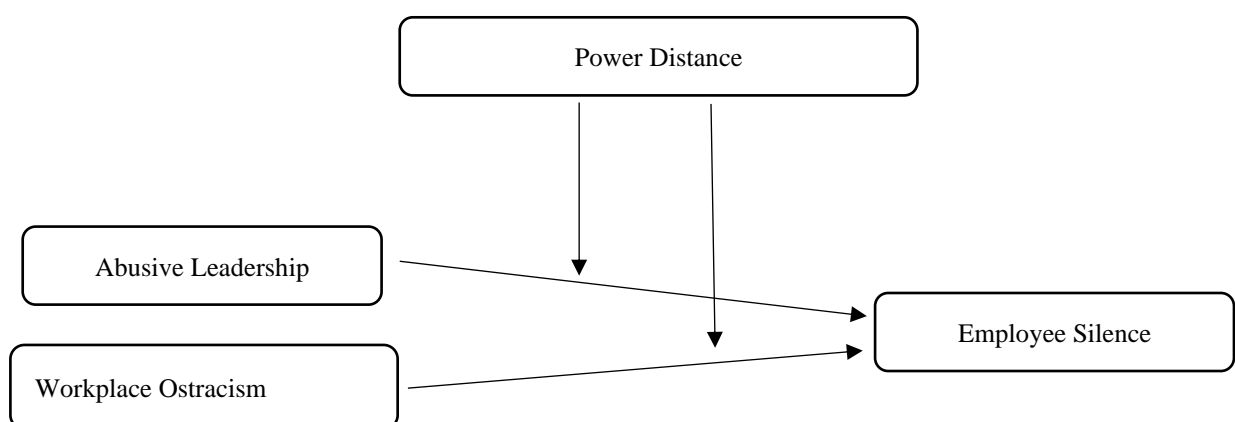
1. What is the impact of abusive leadership (AL) on employee silence (ES) among school teachers?
2. What effect does Workplace ostracism (WO) have on employee silence (ES) among school teachers?
3. How does the relationship between abusive leadership (AL) and employee silence (ES) among school teachers change as a result of employee power distance (EPD)?
4. What effect does employee power distance (EPD) have on the relationship between workplace ostracism (WO) and employee silence (ES) among teachers?

### Hypotheses

1. Abusive leadership will positively predict employee silence.
2. Workplace ostracism will positively predict employee silence.
3. Employee power distance would act as a significant moderator in the relationship between abusive leadership and silence, such as the high level of employee power distance will strengthen the existing relationships between predictor and outcome variables.
4. Employee power distance would act as a significant moderator in the relationship between workplace ostracism and silence, such as the high level of employee power distance will strengthen the existing relationships between predictor and outcome variables.

**Figure 1**

*Conceptual Framework of the Study*



## Methodology

### Research Sample & Design

This study employed a purposive sampling technique. The sample included 120 teachers from registered primary and secondary level schools in the Sargodha District and Division. The sample consisted of 48 private schools, 32 public schools, 54 schools were English medium, and 26 were Urdu medium. Both male ( $n = 60$ ) and female ( $n = 60$ ) teachers were part of the study. Teachers' opinions about the school's principals were the subject of the data collection. The principal of the school was their leader by designation because of being the administrative head. The teachers ranged in age from 24 to 60. Only teachers having a minimum of two years of job experience were allowed to participate in the study, so inclusive criteria were established. However, the participation in the study was purely on a voluntary basis and no monetary or fringe benefits were provided to sample participants. Exclusive criteria excluded teachers who had been on the work for less than two years or who were younger than or older than 24–60 years old.

## Measurement Tools

### Demographic Data Form

This form was made to collect data on the gender, age, experience, education, sector, marital status, and salary of school teachers in Sargodha, Pakistan. Non-significant demographic differences were seen in the present research.

### Abusive Supervision Scale

Mitchell and Ambrose (2007) established this scale to gauge the abusive leadership that teachers had to deal with. There are five items in total. It uses a 5-point Likert scale with a rating of 1 to 5 (strongly disagree to strongly agree). The current study's alpha reliability was .82.

### Workplace Exclusion Scale (WES-R)

Hitlan and Noel developed this scale in 2009. A 17-item scale that asks participants to rate how frequently they believe they have encountered various exclusionary practices over the last 12 months at their organization. Three subscales make up the scale: a 3-item language-based exclusion subscale, a 5-item subscale measuring how one feels about being excluded by supervisors, and a 7-item subscale measuring how one feels about being excluded by coworkers. The last two items are tests of criteria. All comments were recorded on a 5-point scale, with a rating of 1-5 (strongest disagreement and strongest agreement). The subscale language-based was not included in future analyses due to the low base rate associated with the exclusion factor based on the language and demographic makeup of the current sample. It has six items with reversed scores, including items no. 1, 3, 5, 8, and 10. The WES-R is

dependable in prior research, with alpha coefficients varying from .79 to .85 across investigations (Hitlan et al., 2006).

### **Silence Scale**

In the current study, six of the items with the greatest loadings on the Van Dyne et al. (2003) scale was employed. On this scale, the two silent versions were evaluated. This scale has also been applied in previous Wang & Hsieh (2013) research. Participants who engaged in defensive silence reported if they actively suppressed pertinent information out of fear and whether speaking their minds was personally dangerous. Participants were asked if they had passively hidden crucial information due to low self-efficacy when it came to acquiescent silence. These two scales had alpha reliability values .82 and .83, respectively.

### **Power Distance Scale**

Using Dorfman and Howell's scale (1988), the power distance of the participants in the current study was determined. Six items make up this scale. They have a .63 alpha reliability. This scale has been utilized in research by Wu (2006). The responses were rated using a 5-point Likert-type scale, 1 to 5 (strongly disagree to strongly agree). For this study, the reliability coefficient was .89.

## **Procedure**

The sample of the study consisted of school teachers from institutions in the Sargodha District. All participants were personally contacted. A brief explanation of the study's goals was given to a few participants who were contacted in groups. The organization's permission was obtained before accessing any teachers. An introduction to the purpose of the study was given to the respondents. Their right to withdraw from the research at any time was made clear to them. The information would only be used for study purposes; it was assured to them. Regarding maintaining their confidentiality, respondents received clarification. After obtaining informed consent, a booklet comprised of demographic form, and scales measuring abusive supervision, workplace exclusion, silence, and power distance, was provided to the respondents. To complete each of the questions in the booklet, all the instructions were provided. The survey took about 10-15 minutes to complete.

## **Results**

SPSS 26th version was used to analyse the sample (N=120). Descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, linear regression, and moderation analysis were the analysis utilized to evaluate the hypotheses.

**Table 1***Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Analysis of the Study Constructs*

Variable	<i>a</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1 AL	.82	8.67	2.01	-	.50**	.51**	.45**	.53**	.47**	.56**	.45**
2 WO	.91	35.82	10.01		-	.94**	.96**	.89**	.88**	.85**	.87**
3 SO	.79	14.47	4.69			-	.81**	.88**	.85**	.86**	.84**
4 CO	.88	21.35	5.83				-	.83**	.83**	.78**	.82**
5 ES	.91	18.78	6.68					-	.97**	.96**	.89**
6 DS	.82	9.13	3.62						-	.87**	.87**
7 AS	.83	9.65	3.29							-	.84**
8 EPD	.89	20.17	6.37								-

*Note.* N=120. AL = Abusive leadership; WO = Workplace ostracism; SO = Supervisor ostracism; CO = Coworker ostracism; ES = Employee silence; DS = Defensive silence; AS = Acquiescent silence; EPD = Employee Power Distance.

\*\* $p < .01$ .

Table 1 shows the link between research constructs, the mean, the standard deviation, and the alpha reliability. For all research constructs, Cronbach's alpha ranges from .79 to .91, indicating strong internal consistency. Furthermore, the findings show that employee silence and its subscales are strongly positively connected to abusive leadership, workplace ostracism, supervisor ostracism, and coworker ostracism. Additionally, findings indicate that power distance significantly positively correlates with each construct.

**Table 2**

*Regression Coefficients of Abusive Leadership and Workplace Ostracism on Employee Silence (N = 120)*

Predictor	ES			DS			AS		
	$\Delta R^2$	<i>B</i>	<i>F</i>	$\Delta R^2$	$\beta$	<i>F</i>	$\Delta R^2$	$\beta$	<i>F</i>
AL	.28	.53	46.84***	.22	.47	33.77***	.31	.56	55.15***
WO	.80	.89	482.31***	.77	.88	402.07***	.73	.85	318.75***
SO	.78	.88	413.62***	.72	.85	310.20***	.73	.86	324.13***
CO	.69	.83	262.13***	.68	.83	253.27***	.60	.78	182.08***

*Note.* AL = Abusive leadership; WO = Workplace ostracism; SO = Supervisor ostracism; CO = Coworker ostracism; ES = Employee silence; DS = Defensive silence; AS = Acquiescent silence.

\*\*\* $p < .001$ .

Table 2 indicates abusive leadership is a significant predictor of employee silence, defensive silence, and acquiescent silence at [F (1, 118) = 46.84, 33.77, 55.15,  $p < .001$ ] and explains 28%, 22%, and 31% variance. Results also reveal that workplace ostracism is a significant predictor of employee silence, defensive silence, and acquiescent silence at [F (1, 118) = 482.31, 402.07, 318.75,  $p < .001$ ] and explains 80%, 77%, and 73% variance. Supervisor ostracism is a significant predictor of employee silence, defensive silence, and acquiescent silence at [F (1, 118) = 413.62, 310.20, 324.13,  $p < .001$ ] and explains 78%, 72%, and 73% variance. Coworker ostracism is a significant predictor of employee silence, defensive silence, and acquiescent silence at [F (1, 118) = 262.13, 253.27, 182.08,  $p < .001$ ] and explains 69%, 68%, and 60% variance.

**Table 3***Role of Power Distance Between Abusive Leadership and Employee Silence (N = 120)*

Outcome: Employee Silence			
Variables	<i>B</i>	95% CI	
		LL	UL
Constant	11.46*	2.10	20.79
Abusive Leadership	-1.10*	-2.17	-.04
Power distance	-.10	-.69	.49
Outcome: Employee Silence			
Variables	<i>B</i>	95% CI	
		LL	UL
AL x EPD	.11**	.04	.17
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.82***		
<i>F</i>	178.12***		
$\Delta R^2$	.02**		
$\Delta F$	10.33**		

Note. CI = Confidence interval; LL = Lower limit; UL = Upper limit.

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

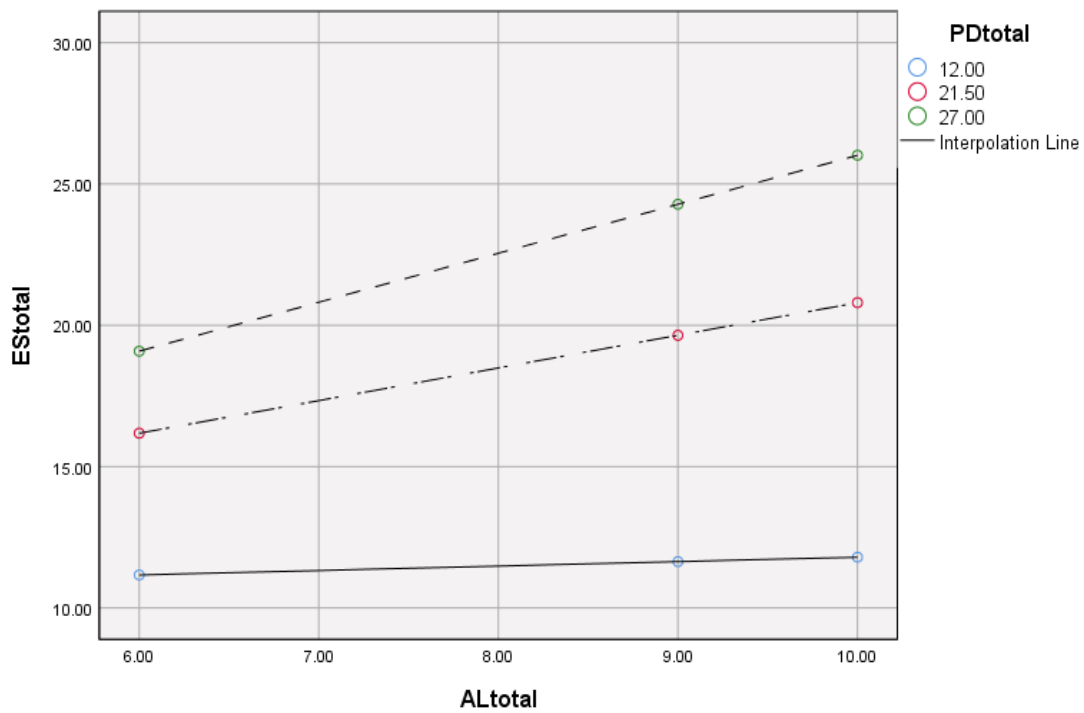
The moderating effect of power distance between abusive leadership and silence is depicted in Table 3. Findings revealed that abusive leadership x power distance positively predicted



defensive silence ( $\beta = .11, p < .01$ ). The  $R^2$  value of .82 revealed, the predictors explained 82% variance in the outcome with  $F(3, 116) = 178.12, p < .001$ . The .02 value of  $\Delta R^2$  revealed a 2% change in the variance of the model with  $\Delta F(1, 116) = 10.33, p < .01$ .

**Figure 2**

*Employee power distance as a moderator in the relationship of abusive leadership with employee silence*



**Table 4**

*Role of Power Distance between Workplace Ostracism and Employee Silence (N = 120)*

<b>Outcome: Employee Silence</b>			
<b>Variables</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>95%CI</b>	
		<b>LL</b>	<b>UL</b>
Constant	7.12*	.72	13.52
Workplace ostracism	.02	-.21	.24

<b>Outcome: Employee Silence</b>			
<b>Variables</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>95%CI</b>	
		<b>LL</b>	<b>UL</b>
Power distance	-.08	-.44	.28
WO x EPD	.02**	.01	.03
R <sup>2</sup>	.86***		
F	242.97***		
Δ R <sup>2</sup>	.01**		
Δ F	10.22**		

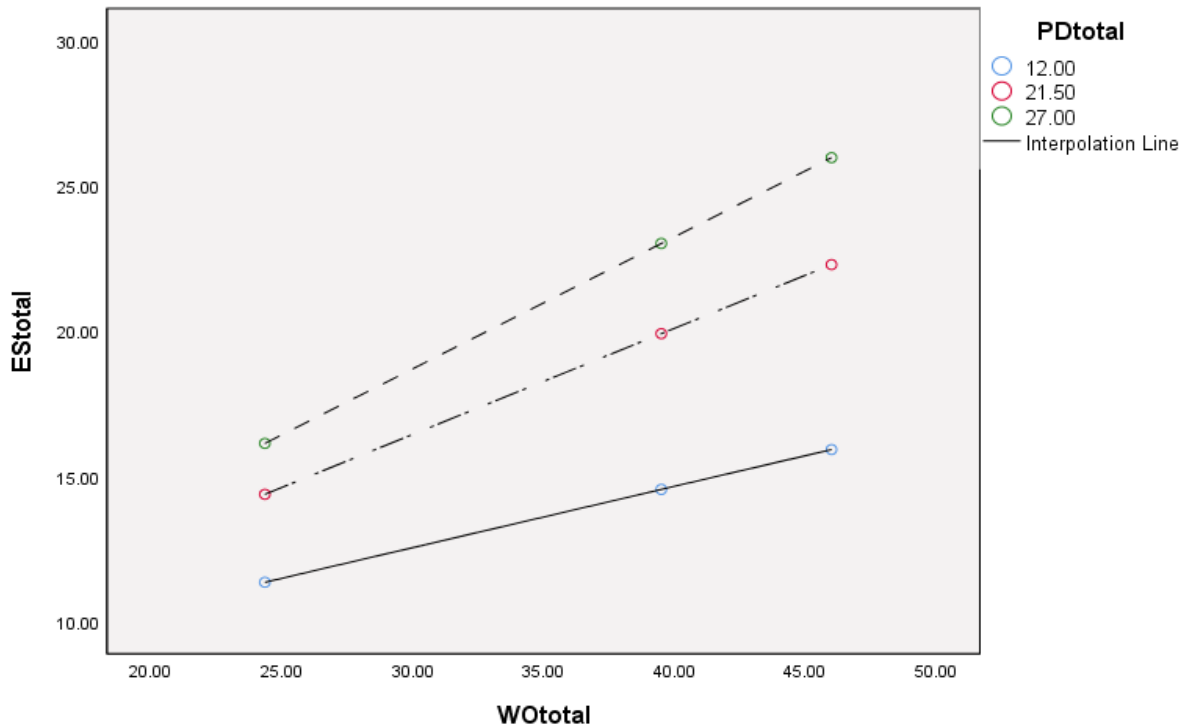
*Note.* CI = Confidence interval; LL = Lower limit; UL = Upper limit.

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

Table 4 shows power distance as a moderator between workplace ostracism and silence. Findings revealed that workplace ostracism x power distance positively predicted employee silence ( $\beta = .02, p < .01$ ). The  $R^2$  value (.86) revealed, the predictors explained 86% variance in the outcome with  $F(3, 116) = 242.97, p < .001$ . The  $\Delta R^2$  value (.01) revealed a 1% change in the variance of the model with  $\Delta F(1, 116) = 10.22, p < .01$ .

**Figure 3**

*Role of power distance as a moderator in the relationship of workplace ostracism with silence*



## Discussion

This research was proposed to examine abusive leadership and workplace ostracism as predictors of employee silence among school teachers in Sargodha District/Division, Pakistan. In addition, another goal was to explore the role of employee power distance as a moderator between the relationships of the constructs. This study proposed that abusive leadership and workplace ostracism would be positive predictors of the silence of school teachers of Sargodha District/Division. The findings of the present study are following the recent study by Xu et al. (2015), who found that abusive leadership is positively and significantly linked with silence. Pertinently, the outcomes propose that employees who work under an offensive leader are likely to display silent behavior during important work affairs. Findings are also confirmed by another research, a study on a sample of private sector institutes in Pakistan demonstrated that abusive leadership is significantly and positively linked to employee silence (Naz, 2018).

The current study findings are as per the research of Gkorezis et al. (2016), which stated that employee silence is predicted by workplace ostracism. Another research by Fatima et al. (2017) additionally uncovered that ostracism at the workplace is positively connected with each aspect of employee silence, suggesting alienated teachers showed silent behaviour. When teachers encounter issues of ostracism, went through an impression of being ignored, and unwanted and eventually, they participate in the abandonment of silent behaviour (Zhang et al., 2016).

Additionally, the study anticipated that employee power distance would considerably influence the association between abusive leadership and employee silence, such that a high level of power distance would reinforce the positive correlation between the constructs. As it is contended in one research by Lam and Xu (2019), out of dread of future animosity, employees might take part in silence more under abusive leadership. High power distance representatives typically make the connection between abusive leadership and employee silence because they believe that power is unevenly distributed in organisations (Farh et al., 2007). Therefore, these representatives also value status and power as ways to better their position at work (Daniels & Greguras, 2014).

An empirical proof was discovered by Jaw et al. (2007) that among Chinese employees, those high in power distance communicated more grounded familiarity with an inclination for power. While interfacing with abusive leaders, high power distance representatives will be more mindful that their leaders have overall control. Since power is related to the charge of beneficial resources, seeing their leaders as more remarkable. High power distance might additionally evaluate abusive leadership as more compromising than subordinates with low power distance.

The results reported that power distance and workplace ostracism together predicted all aspects of employee silence, inferring that isolated teacher engages in silent behaviour validating the Gkorezis et al. (2016) findings, exposed ostracism at the workplace as a predictor of employee silence. The point when scenes of exclusion are experienced by the teachers fosters an impression of being overlooked and unwanted which eventually, triggers them to take part in withdrawal behaviour of silence (Zhang et al., 2016). Teachers perceive that the sharing of information and raising their voices won't have any effect and it's outside their ability to involve in the process of decision making thereby engaging themselves in acquiescent silence (Liang et al., 2012).

## Conclusions

The current research concluded abusive leadership and workplace ostracism are positive predictors of silence among school teachers of Sargodha District/Division. The study also concluded that employee power distance played a moderating effect in the association of abusive leadership and workplace exclusion with teachers' silence in the schools of Sargodha District/Division.

The present study revealed that school teachers of Sargodha District/Division who experience maltreatment from their administrative heads and are isolated by both supervisors and coworkers opt for silent behaviour. They believe that not bestowing their opinions and ideas with others safe them from stress and being defamed. They will be more likely to stay silent rather speaking up. Furthermore, power distance acted as a moderator in this study. Schools of Sargodha District/Division with high power distance culture depict abusive and ostracized environments for the teachers, decreasing their power to speak about what is good and bad.

### **Limitations and Suggestions**

The current study also has some limitations like every other social science research. The primary restriction was a non-homogeneous factor in sampling that might cause by the application of a purposive sample. So, it is preferred to go for the random sampling technique to have skewed data. The fact that data was only gathered from Sargodha city also limited the generalizability of the findings to the entire population of Pakistan. Therefore, when collecting data in the future, researchers should take into account different cities in Pakistan. Additionally, the use of self-explanatory questionnaires and the collecting of data from specific workplaces may function as restrictions because they may lead to respondents giving false positive responses and restricting their ability to speak freely. Therefore, it is advised that future researchers use a mixed-method approach to fully understand the issue. Information should also be acquired outside of the researchers' workplaces to ensure sincere responses.

### **Implications**

The Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (BISE) administration may find it useful to focus on the power disparity inside organisations as a result of this research. Create some strategies and measures to tackle the high-power, long-distance culture found in educational institutions to protect employees from abusive leadership and to lessen teacher silence. The study's findings may also be useful for social psychology, organizational psychology, and HRM.

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