The Effect of Organizational Ostracism and Organizational Silence on Knowledge Sharing Behavior: Examining the Moderating Role of Gender

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Abstract—**This study examined how organizational ostracism and organizational silence influence knowledge sharing behavior among employees in Delta State, Nigeria, while introducing gender as a moderating variable. The research was motivated by persistent communication barriers and exclusionary practices that undermine collaboration in Nigerian workplaces. A survey research design was adopted, and data were collected from three hundred respondents drawn from both public and private organizations using standardized and validated instruments. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlation, multiple regression, and moderation testing through Hayes' PROCESS macro. The results revealed that ostracism (r = –.48, p < .01) and silence (r = –.39, p < .01) had significant negative associations with knowledge sharing, while ostracism and silence were positively related (r = .41, p < .01). Regression analysis showed that ostracism (β = –.36, p < .001) and silence (β = –.28, p < .001) jointly explained 34 percent of the variance in knowledge sharing. The findings indicated that employees who experience exclusion or maintain silence are less willing to share knowledge. The moderation analysis further revealed that gender significantly shaped these relationships, with female employees experiencing greater declines in knowledge sharing than male employees under conditions of ostracism and silence. The study concluded that exclusionary practices and communication barriers weaken the innovative capacity of organizations. It recommends that organizations in Delta State promote inclusive cultures, gender responsive**

communication strategies, and leadership accountability to sustain knowledge sharing and innovation.

Index Terms—**Organizational ostracism, organizational silence, knowledge sharing, gender, Nigeria.**

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and Context

Knowledge sharing has become a central element in the pursuit of organizational growth, innovation, and competitiveness. It enables employees to exchange ideas, experiences, and skills that enhance problem solving and performance (Sokoh and Okolie, 2021). Within Nigerian organizations, particularly in Delta State, the success of collective learning depends largely on the willingness of employees to contribute their knowledge to others. However, this process is frequently obstructed by social and cultural practices that discourage open communication. Two of the most pervasive barriers are organizational ostracism and organizational silence, both of which restrict the flow of information and erode interpersonal trust (Kaushal, Kaushik, and Sivathanu, 2021). Organizational ostracism describes the experience of being ignored, excluded, or socially isolated within a workplace. It occurs when individuals or groups deny others participation in formal or informal activities, thereby weakening their sense of belonging (Howard, Cogswell, and Smith, 2020). Organizational silence, on the other hand, refers to the deliberate decision of employees to withhold opinions, suggestions, or

concerns that could improve the organization (Knoll, 2021). In Nigeria, these conditions are reinforced by deep rooted social hierarchies, rigid power distance, and cultural expectations that discourage subordinates from challenging authority (Olowookere, Agoha, Omonijo, Odukoya, and Elegbeleye, 2021). Employees often remain silent out of fear of reprisal, which further entrenches cycles of exclusion and disengagement (Elhanafy and Ebrahim, 2022).

In work environments where exclusion and silence prevail, knowledge sharing becomes limited and uneven. The flow of information and ideas is constrained because employees who feel isolated are unlikely to participate in discussions or collaborative decision making (Fatima, Bilal, Imran, Ayub, and Arshad, 2024). Over time, this weakens innovation and organizational learning, two factors that are vital for productivity and competitiveness in emerging economies such as Nigeria's.

II. ORGANIZATIONAL SILENCE

Organizational silence has been extensively studied as a critical barrier to effective communication and knowledge management in organizations (Knoll, 2021). Defined as the collective phenomenon where employees withhold potentially useful ideas, information, or feedback, silence reflects a lack of voice within organizations, often maintained through cultural norms, fear, or organizational politics (Kim & Wang, 2024). Scholars categorize silence into acquiescent silence, where employees remain quite due to resignation; defensive silence, where fear of retaliation prevents voice; and prosocial silence, where employees withhold information to protect others or maintain harmony (Elhanafy & Ebrahim, 2022). In Delta State, silence is further reinforced by hierarchical leadership styles, cultural respect for authority, and organizational traditions that discourage dissent or upward feedback (Ejumudo, Douglas, & Ejumudo, 2024).

The consequences of organizational silence are multifaceted, ranging from diminished employee engagement to stifled innovation (Sarı, 2022). Employees who feel unable to express themselves are less likely to share knowledge, provide feedback, or contribute creative solutions to organizational problems (Vu & Fan, 2022). Silence also perpetuates toxic organizational climates where errors and inefficiencies go unreported, thereby compounding organizational dysfunction (Farghaly Abdelaliem & Abou Zeid, 2023). Research demonstrates that silence not only reduces knowledge sharing but also fosters knowledge hiding, as employees intentionally or unintentionally suppress valuable information that could benefit organizational learning (Takhsha, Barahimi, Adelpanah, & Salehzadeh, 2020).

III. KNOWLEDGE SHARING BEHAVIOR

Knowledge sharing behavior constitutes a cornerstone of organizational effectiveness, enabling employees to exchange ideas, expertise, and experiences that foster learning and innovation (Sokoh & Okolie, 2021). Defined as the process by which individuals disseminate and acquire knowledge within an organization, knowledge sharing encompasses both tacit knowledge (personal insights, skills, experiences) and explicit knowledge (documented procedures, reports, data) (Ononye, 2021). In Delta State, knowledge sharing has become particularly vital for institutions in sectors such as oil and gas, education, and public administration, where complex problems require collaborative solutions (Ojo, 2023). However, the willingness of employees to engage in knowledge sharing is shaped by contextual factors such as organizational culture, leadership, trust, and interpersonal dynamics (Kmieciak, 2021). Research reveals that positive organizational cultures and leadership styles enhance knowledge sharing by fostering trust and psychological safety, whereas exclusion, silence, and toxic leadership undermine it (Guo, Cheng, & Luo, 2021). For instance, Azeem, Ahmed, Haider, and Sajjad (2021) emphasized that competitive advantage is achieved when knowledge sharing is supported by inclusive organizational cultures. Similarly, Haider, Akbar, Tehseen, Poulova, and Jaleel (2022) demonstrated that responsible leadership enhances knowledge sharing through stronger person–organization fit, an effect that may be undermined by ostracism and silence.

In the Nigerian context, studies reveal that knowledge sharing remains inconsistent across organizations, partly due to socio-cultural norms, weak institutional frameworks, and interpersonal barriers (Idhalama & Echedom, 2021). Employees may hoard knowledge to maintain power advantages, or withdraw knowledge as a defensive response to ostracism and silence

(Fatima et al., 2024). Consequently, knowledge sharing becomes contingent on organizational interventions that reduce exclusionary practices and empower employees to voice without fear. Importantly, Delta State institutions face the challenge of balancing formal knowledge management systems with informal, socially embedded processes, requiring greater attention to workplace dynamics that influence individual willingness to share knowledge (Izu & Fombad, 2024).

IV. GENDER ROLES AND COMMUNICATION PATTERNS

Gender plays a pivotal role in shaping communication and knowledge-sharing behaviors in organizations, with implications for how ostracism and silence are experienced and enacted (Shen & Joseph, 2021). Gender role theory posits that social expectations regarding masculinity and femininity influence workplace behaviors, particularly in contexts where cultural norms emphasize traditional roles (Anglin, Kincaid, Short, & Allen, 2022). In Nigeria, entrenched gender dynamics often privilege male voices in organizational discourse, while limiting the visibility and influence of female employees (IGUODALA-COLE, 2023). Evidence suggests that women are disproportionately vulnerable to ostracism and silence, as they are more likely to be marginalized in decision-making processes and face social penalties for assertiveness (Fine et al., 2020). Studies also indicate that men and women adopt different communication styles, with men often displaying agentic, task-oriented behaviors, and women employing more communal, relational approaches (Hsu, Badura, Newman, & Speech, 2021). These differences shape knowledge-sharing dynamics, as women may be more inclined toward collaborative knowledge exchange but also more constrained by organizational cultures that undervalue their contributions (Lemoine & Blum, 2021). The moderating role of gender in ostracism, silence, and knowledge sharing has been highlighted in several studies. For instance, Aftab, Ali Shah, and Khan (2020) demonstrated that gender significantly moderated the relationship between organizational commitment and citizenship behavior, while Kunasz (2024) found that silence and turnover intentions were influenced by employees' gender. These findings suggest that any examination of ostracism and silence

must integrate gender to provide a holistic understanding of workplace dynamics. In Delta State, where gender disparities persist in both private and public sectors, the moderating role of gender becomes critical to understanding how ostracism and silence influence knowledge sharing across male and female employees (Okolie & Oyovwevotu, 2023). The statement of problem here is that Despite the global recognition of knowledge sharing as a key element of organizational development, many institutions in Delta State continue to report low levels of collaborative exchange due to ostracism and silence (Idhalama and Echedom, 2021). Studies conducted in various contexts show that ostracism damages trust and psychological safety, discouraging employees from engaging in open dialogue (Khalid, Iqbal, and Hashmi, 2020). Silence also reduces creativity and learning because it prevents the expression of new ideas (Vu and Fan, 2022). Within Nigerian workplaces, these issues are intensified by hierarchical authority systems and gendered social structures that limit open participation (Ejumudo, Douglas, and Ejumudo, 2024).

Existing literature provides limited insight into how these dynamics operate in the Nigerian environment, particularly in Delta State, where unique cultural and organizational features shape communication patterns. Moreover, although gender plays a vital role in how employees experience exclusion or silence, few studies have explored its moderating influence. Gender differences in communication and role expectations may determine how individuals respond to ostracism and whether they continue to share knowledge under such conditions (Aftab, Ali Shah, and Khan, 2020). This study therefore addresses the gap by investigating the combined effects of organizational ostracism and silence on knowledge sharing, and by testing whether gender moderates these relationships within organizations in Delta State. The central aim of this research is to determine how organizational ostracism and organizational silence affect knowledge sharing behavior among employees, while examining the moderating influence of gender. The specific objectives are to:

1. Determine the effect of organizational ostracism on knowledge sharing behavior among employees in Delta State.
2. Examine the effect of organizational silence on knowledge sharing behavior among employees.

Assess the moderating role of gender in the relationship between organizational ostracism, organizational silence, and knowledge sharing (Asmita, Akhouri, Singh, and Tabash, 2025).

V. THEORETICAL REVIEW

The literature on organizational ostracism, silence, and knowledge sharing has been shaped by several theoretical frameworks that provide explanatory depth for understanding how interpersonal dynamics and organizational structures influence employee behavior. This study anchors its analysis on three main theories: Social Exchange Theory (SET), Conservation of Resources Theory (COR), and Gender Role Theory (GRT). Each of these frameworks contributes unique insights into the mechanisms through which ostracism and silence impact knowledge sharing and how gender moderates these relationships.

VI. SOCIAL EXCHANGE THEORY (SET)

Social Exchange Theory (SET), originally developed by Blau (1964), posits that human relationships are governed by cost–benefit calculations, reciprocity, and the expectation of mutual gain (Ahmad, Nawaz, Ishaq, Khan, & Ashraf, 2023). The theory assumes that individuals are motivated to engage in interactions that maximize rewards such as recognition, trust, and belonging, while avoiding costs such as rejection, exclusion, or punishment (Wallenburg & Handfield, 2022). In organizational settings, this implies that employees contribute positively, including through knowledge sharing, when they perceive fairness, reciprocity, and support in their exchanges (Chang, 2021). Conversely, when employees experience ostracism or silence, they interpret these dynamics as violations of exchange norms, leading them to withdraw and withhold knowledge as a form of negative reciprocity (Cortez & Johnston, 2020; Knoll, 2021). In Nigeria's collectivist cultural context, exclusion represents a severe relational breach because belonging and social harmony are highly valued, making ostracism particularly damaging to knowledge-sharing behaviors (Obiunu & Yalaju, 2020; Zaman, Nawaz, Shafique, & Rafique, 2021). Therefore, SET provides this study with a relational lens for understanding why employees disengage from knowledge exchange when they perceive unfairness, exclusion, or lack of voice.

VII. CONSERVATION OF RESOURCES THEORY (COR)

The Conservation of Resources Theory (COR), proposed by Hob foll (1989), explains human behavior through the principle that individuals strive to acquire, protect, and retain valuable resources such as time, energy, relationships, and status (Bardoel & Drago, 2021). This theory provides important perspective for understanding the impact of ostracism and silence on knowledge sharing. COR theory argues that individuals strive to acquire, protect, and conserve valuable resources whether material, social, or psychological and that stress arises when these resources are threatened or lost (Bardoel & Drago, 2021). In organizational contexts, resources such as social support, respect, and opportunities for voice are central to employees' well-being and performance (Radford, 2024). Ostracism represents a significant threat to such resources, as being ignored or excluded strips individuals of belonging, recognition, and relational capital (Howard et al., 2020). Similarly, organizational silence deprives employees of opportunities to influence decisions or assert their perspectives, resulting in further resource depletion (Kim & Wang, 2024).

VIII. GENDER ROLE THEORY (GRT)

Gender Role Theory (GRT), Theory provides the third theoretical pillar for this study, advanced by Eagly (1987), emphasizes that societal norms and cultural expectations shape the behaviors deemed appropriate for men and women in different contexts (Anglin, Kincaid, Short, & Allen, 2022). According to this theory, men are often associated with agentic traits such as assertiveness, independence, and dominance, while women are linked to communal traits such as cooperation, empathy, and nurturance (Hsu, Badura, Newman, & Speech, 2021). In organizational life, these role expectations influence communication patterns, access to voice, and vulnerability to exclusion. Empirical studies show that women are more likely to face ostracism and silence due to structural biases and stereotypes that undervalue female contributions, while men may

experience exclusion more in terms of lost influence than personal rejection (Fine, Sojo, & Lawford-Smith, 2020; Shen & Joseph, 2021). In Nigeria, entrenched gender norms often privilege male authority while limiting female visibility in decision-making, creating asymmetries in how ostracism and silence affect knowledge-sharing behavior (IGUODALA-COLE, 2023; Okolie & Oyovwevotu, 2023).

IX. LINKING ORGANIZATIONAL OSTRACISM AND KNOWLEDGE SHARING BEHAVIOR

The reviewed literature consistently identifies organizational ostracism as a barrier to knowledge sharing (Zaman, Nawaz, Shafique, & Rafique, 2021). Ostracized employees experience diminished psychological safety, belongingness, and trust, which discourages voluntary contributions of knowledge (Li, Xu, & Kwan, 2021). In Nigerian workplaces, where collectivist values emphasize social belonging, ostracism is particularly damaging, as employees interpret exclusion as a fundamental breach of social and organizational norms (Obiunu & Yalaju, 2020).

Studies further show that ostracism prompts defensive behaviors such as knowledge hiding and hoarding. For example, Khalid, Iqbal, and Hashmi (2020) found that ostracized employees deliberately hoarded knowledge, mediated by defensive silence. Albana and Yeşiltaş (2022) confirmed that ostracism in multicultural settings exacerbated knowledge hiding, especially when cultural intelligence was low. These findings underscore that ostracism directly undermines collaborative knowledge-sharing climates.

Therefore, it was proposed that

H_{01}: Organizational ostracism has no significant effect on knowledge sharing behavior.

X. LINKING ORGANIZATIONAL SILENCE AND KNOWLEDGE SHARING BEHAVIOR

Organizational silence also negatively influences knowledge sharing, as employees who withhold ideas or feedback deprive organizations of valuable input (Kim & Wang, 2024). Silence may be acquiescent (resignation), defensive (fear-based), or prosocial (intended to maintain harmony) (Elhanafy & Ebrahim, 2022). Regardless of form, silence limits upward communication and curtails collaborative knowledge flows (Vu & Fan, 2022).

Research indicates that silence not only results from ostracism but also independently reduces knowledge sharing. Takhsha, Barahimi, Adelpanah, and Salehzadeh (2020) demonstrated that silence mediated the ostracism knowledge sharing relationship. El-Sayed, Ali, Abdel Razek, Abdelaliem, and Asal (2025) confirmed that silence heightened procrastination, further reducing performance. In Nigerian organizations, silence is reinforced by hierarchical leadership and cultural norms that discourage speaking out, thereby making knowledge sharing highly selective (Ononye, 2021).

Therefore, it was proposed that

H_{02}: Organizational silence has no significant effect on knowledge sharing behavior

XI. THE MODERATING ROLE OF GENDER

Gender differences shape how ostracism and silence influence knowledge sharing. Globally, women often face greater risks of exclusion and silence due to cultural stereotypes and undervaluation of female voices (Fine, Sojo, & Lawford-Smith, 2020). Women are also more likely to internalize ostracism as personal rejection, while men may frame exclusion in instrumental terms (Shen & Joseph, 2021).

In Nigeria, entrenched cultural and organizational gender roles exacerbate these disparities. IGUODALA-COLE (2023) highlighted that Nigerian woman frequently perceive lower satisfaction and recognition in workplaces. Okolie and Oyovwevotu (2023) further demonstrated that gender influenced leadership effectiveness and employee satisfaction in Delta State hospitals. These findings suggest that gender moderates how ostracism and silence impact knowledge sharing, with women potentially experiencing stronger negative effects.

Empirical evidence supports this moderating effect. Aftab, Ali Shah, and Khan (2020) confirmed that gender moderated the relationship between organizational commitment and citizenship behavior. Kunasz (2024) found that gender influenced silence and turnover intention, while Strzelecki and ElArabawy (2024) showed that gender moderated technology acceptance in higher education. Together, these findings underscore the relevance of incorporating gender as a moderator in examining

ostracism, silence, and knowledge sharing in Delta State.

Therefore, it was proposed that

H04: Organizational gender does not moderate the relationship between organizational silence and knowledge sharing behavior.

Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework of the study. As shown, organizational ostracism and organizational silence are expected to negatively influence knowledge sharing behavior. Gender is hypothesized to moderate these relationships, such that the magnitude of the effects of ostracism and silence on knowledge sharing differs across male and female employees in Delta State organizations.
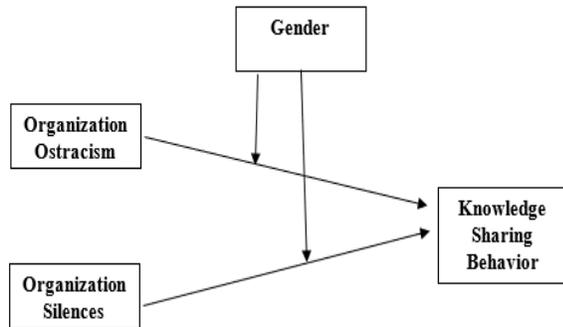
The framework positions organizational ostracism and organizational silence as the independent variables. These constructs are theorized to exert a negative influence on employees' willingness to engage in knowledge-sharing behavior, which is the dependent variable. In other words, when employees are ignored, excluded, or discouraged from speaking up, their inclination to share useful information, ideas, or expertise within the workplace diminishes. A crucial dimension of the framework is the inclusion of gender as a moderating factor. This suggests that the effect of ostracism and silence on knowledge sharing is not uniform but differs across male and female employees. Drawing from Gender Role Theory, the framework anticipates that women, due to cultural and organizational biases, may experience stronger negative impacts of ostracism and silence compared to men. Thus, gender does not act as a direct predictor but shapes the intensity of the relationships between the independent and dependent variables.

The framework is grounded in three theoretical perspectives:

1. Social Exchange Theory (SET): explains how employees' decisions to share knowledge depend on perceptions of reciprocity, trust, and fairness.

2. Conservation of Resources Theory (COR): highlights how ostracism and silence deplete psychological resources, leading employees to withdraw from knowledge-sharing to conserve energy and avoid further losses.

3. Gender Role Theory (GRT): clarifies why men and women differ in how they experience and respond to ostracism and silence, reflecting socially constructed expectations and cultural norms.

Figure 1 encapsulates the study's logic: ostracism and silence undermine knowledge sharing, but the extent of their influence is moderated by gender differences within organizational contexts in Delta State. The diagram therefore integrates relational, psychological, and sociocultural dimensions into a single explanatory model.

XII. METHODOLOGY

Design

This study adopted a survey design, which is widely used in organizational behavior research to capture employees' perceptions, attitudes, and behavioral tendencies through standardized instruments (Knoll, 2021). The survey design was deemed appropriate because it facilitates the collection of quantitative data from a large population within a relatively short period, allowing for statistical testing of relationships among variables (Cortez & Johnston, 2020). In line with the study objectives, the design enabled the examination of how organizational ostracism and silence affect knowledge-sharing behavior, and how gender moderates these relationships in Delta State.

Population of the Study

The target population comprised employees working across selected organizations in Delta State. This population was considered appropriate because organizational settings provide natural contexts in which ostracism, silence, and knowledge-sharing behaviors occur (Obiunu & Yalaju, 2020). The

diversity of organizations in the State, spanning both public and private sectors, ensured that the study captured varied perspectives and experiences.

Sample and Sampling Technique
A sample of employees was drawn using a stratified random sampling technique, which ensured proportional representation across gender, organizational hierarchy, and sector. Stratification was necessary to reflect the heterogeneity of the workforce while maintaining randomness to reduce bias (Howard, Cogswell, & Smith, 2020). Using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size determination table, 315 questionnaires were distributed, out of which 300 valid responses were retrieved, yielding a 95.2% response rate suitable for inferential analysis.

Instrument for Data Collection
The study employed a structured questionnaire as the primary data collection instrument. Questionnaires are effective for capturing employee attitudes and behaviors in a systematic, standardized, and replicable manner (Shani, Noumair, Zandee, & Coghlan, 2025). The instrument consisted of five sections: demographic information, organizational ostracism, organizational silence, knowledge-sharing behavior, and gender.

To enhance validity, the study adapted **well-established scales** previously validated in organizational behavior research. All items were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 5 = *Strongly Agree*. This scaling choice allowed respondents to express varying degrees of agreement while enabling robust statistical analysis (Vu & Fan, 2022).

Sample Items
- *Organizational Ostracism*: "Others left the area when I arrived"; "I was ignored at work" (Ferris et al., 2008; Howard, Cogswell, & Smith, 2020).
- *Organizational Silence*: "I remain silent at work because speaking up might have negative consequences"; "I withhold suggestions to avoid conflict" (Van Dyne, Ang, & Botero, 2003; Knoll, 2021).
- *Knowledge-Sharing Behavior*: "I share my work reports and documents with colleagues"; "I frequently exchange ideas with team members" (Bock, Zmud, Kim, & Lee, 2005; Sokoh & Okolie, 2021).
- *Gender*: Captured as a demographic variable (Male/Female), consistent with previous moderation studies (Aftab, Ali Shah, & Khan, 2020).

Summary of Instruments and Scales

Variable	Instrument / Scale Used	Sample Items	Scale Type	Source Reference(s)	Reported Reliability (α)
Organizational Ostracism	Workplace Ostracism Scale (Ferris et al., 2008)	"Others left the area when I arrived"	5-point Likert	Howard, Cogswell, & Smith (2020); Wang et al. (2023)	α = 0.80–0.88
Organizational Silence	Organizational Silence Scale (Van Dyne, Ang, & Botero, 2003)	"I remain silent to avoid negative consequences"	5-point Likert	Knoll (2021); Elhanafy & Ebrahim (2022)	α = 0.75–0.85
Knowledge-Sharing Behavior	Knowledge Sharing Scale (Bock, Zmud, Kim, & Lee, 2005)	"I frequently exchange ideas with team members"	5-point Likert	Sokoh & Okolie (2021); Ojo (2023)	α = 0.80–0.86
Gender	Demographic Variable	Male/Female	Categorical	Aftab, Ali Shah, & Khan (2020); IGUODALA-COLE (2023)	N/A

Method of Data Collection
The questionnaires were distributed in person across sampled organizations in Delta State. Respondents were assured of confidentiality and anonymity to minimize social desirability bias and enhance

response accuracy (Elhanafy & Ebrahim, 2022). Trained research assistants were employed to administer and retrieve questionnaires, ensuring a high response rate.

Method of Data Analysis
Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive analysis summarized demographic characteristics and central tendencies of variables. Pearson correlation was used to establish preliminary relationships among variables. Multiple regression analysis tested the direct effects of ostracism and silence on knowledge-sharing behavior, while moderation analysis using Hayes' PROCESS macro evaluated the moderating role of gender (Aftab, Ali Shah, & Khan, 2020). All tests were conducted at a 95% confidence level ($p < 0.05$).

XIII. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents and interprets the results of the statistical analysis carried out to test the study hypotheses. Analyses were conducted using descriptive statistics, correlation, multiple regression, and moderation analysis with Hayes' PROCESS macro. Results are presented systematically, with each subsection followed by a discussion of its implications in light of existing literature.

Reliability of Scales
Reliability analysis was conducted to determine the internal consistency of the study measures. Cronbach's alpha values were satisfactory: organizational ostracism ($\alpha = .84$), organizational silence ($\alpha = .81$), and knowledge-sharing behavior ($\alpha = .86$). These values exceed the 0.70 threshold recommended for social science research, confirming the reliability of the measurement scales (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994; Fatima, Bilal, Imran, Ayub, & Arshad, 2024). The acceptable reliability strengthens confidence in the findings, aligning with prior studies that employed similar scales (Ferris et al., 2008; Bock, Zmud, Kim, & Lee, 2005).

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents
Out of 315 questionnaires distributed, 300 were valid for analysis, yielding a response rate of 95.2%. The demographic breakdown is presented in Table 4.1. Respondents were 55% male and 45% female, with most in the 30–39 age range (36.7%). More than half (51.3%) held bachelor's degrees, while 27.4% had postgraduate qualifications. Regarding experience, 37.3% had 6–10 years of work experience, 33.4% above 10 years, and 29.3% between 1–5 years. At job

level, 40% were non-executives, 33.3% supervisors, and 26.7% managers.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 300)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	165	55.0
	Female	135	45.0
Age	20–29 years	72	24.0
	30–39 years	110	36.7
	40–49 years	73	24.3
	50 years above	45	15.0
Educational Level	Diploma	64	21.3
	Bachelor's	154	51.3
	Postgraduate	82	27.4
Work Experience	1–5 years	88	29.3
	6–10 years	112	37.3
	Above 10 years	100	33.4
Job Level	Non-executive	120	40.0
	Supervisor	100	33.3
	Managerial	80	26.7

The diversity across gender, education, and job levels ensured representation of different perspectives. Figures 1 – 5 illustrate the demographic distributions.
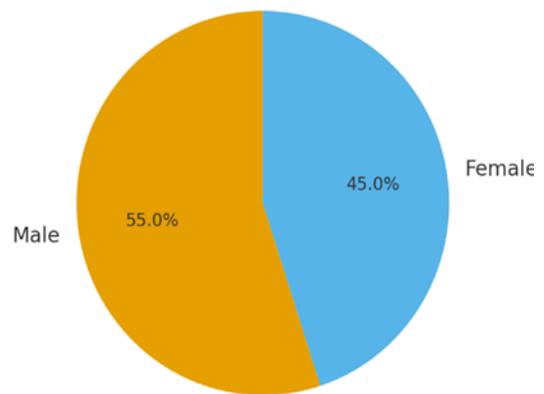

Figure 2: Gender Distribution of Respondent

Figure 2 illustrates the gender composition of respondents. Out of 300 participants, 55% were male and 45% were female. This near balance indicates that both genders were adequately represented in the

study, allowing for a reliable examination of gender as a moderating factor. The gender spread also reflects the workforce structure in Delta State organizations, where men still slightly outnumber women in formal employment.

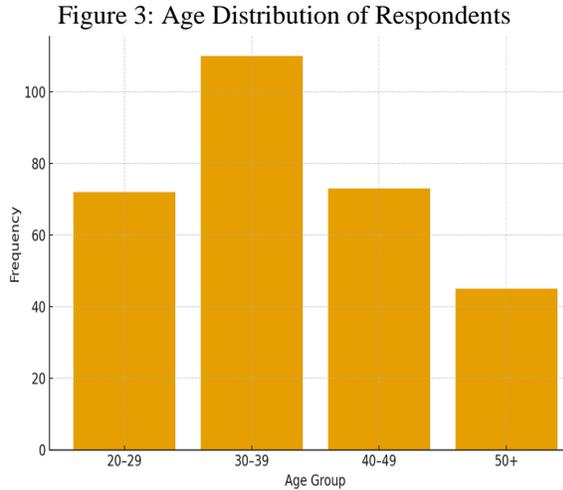Figure 3: Age Distribution of Respondents

Figure 3 shows the age profile of respondents. The largest group (36.7%) fell within the 30–39 years category, followed by those aged 40–49 years (24.3%) and 20–29 years (24%). Respondents aged 50 years and above constituted 15%. This distribution indicates that most participants were in their prime working years, a stage associated with active involvement in organizational knowledge sharing and decision-making.

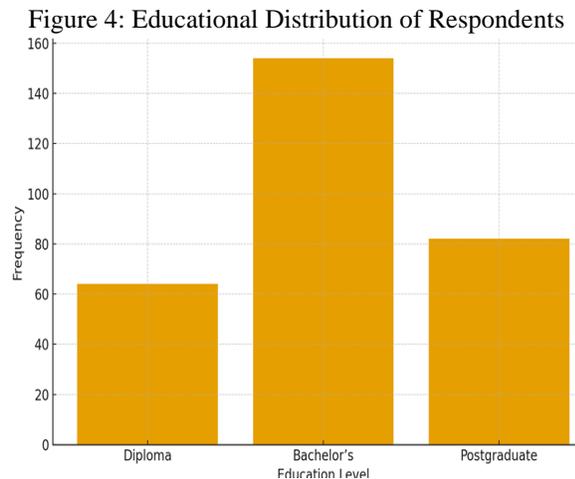Figure 4: Educational Distribution of Respondents

Figure 4 displays respondents' educational qualifications. A majority (51.3%) held Bachelor's degrees, 27.4% had postgraduate qualifications, while 21.3% possessed diplomas. This educational profile reflects a well-educated workforce, implying that respondents had sufficient literacy and professional exposure to understand and respond meaningfully to the survey items on knowledge sharing, ostracism, and silence.

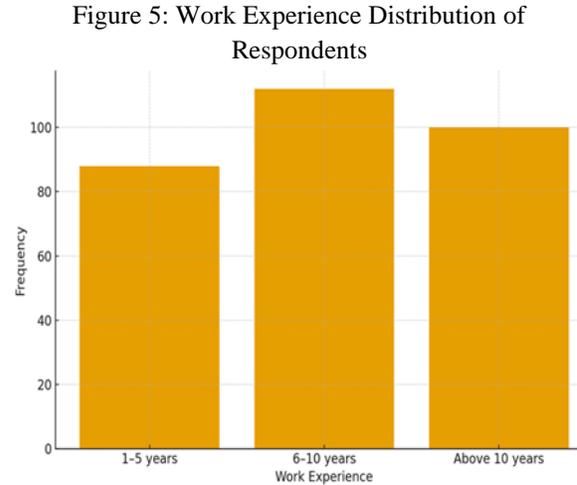Figure 5: Work Experience Distribution of Respondents

Figure 5 illustrates respondents' work experience. About 37.3% had 6–10 years of experience, 33.4% had over 10 years, and 29.3% had 1–5 years. This spread demonstrates that the sample comprised both relatively new and highly experienced employees, ensuring a diversity of perspectives on workplace behavior and knowledge-sharing practices.
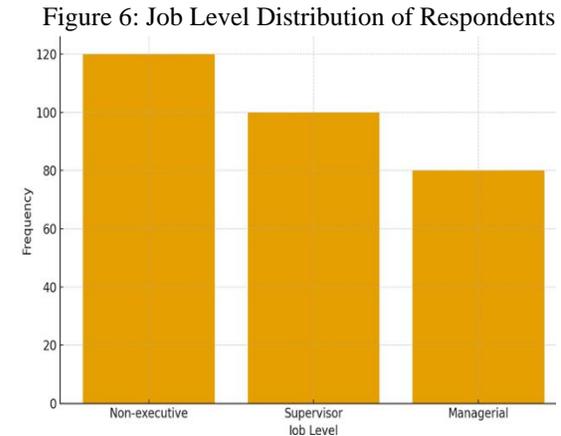
Figure 6: Job Level Distribution of Respondents

Figure 6 presents respondents' job levels. The largest group were non-executives (40%), followed by supervisors (33.3%), and managers (26.7%). This distribution underscores that most responses came from employees directly engaged in daily operations, while still capturing managerial viewpoints. It also highlights that workplace ostracism and silence can manifest across different hierarchical levels.

The demographic structure reflects a balanced workforce composition typical of Nigerian organizations, particularly in Delta State. This balance provides a strong basis for testing the moderating effect of gender on workplace dynamics (Obiunu & Yalaju, 2020). The high proportion of educated respondents also suggests familiarity with knowledge processes, enhancing the credibility of self-reported knowledge-sharing behaviors (Sokoh & Okolie, 2021).

Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables

The descriptive statistics (Table 4.2) show that mean scores for ostracism (M = 3.12, SD = 0.82) and silence (M = 3.25, SD = 0.79) were moderate, while knowledge-sharing behavior was somewhat higher (M = 3.58, SD = 0.74).

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics (Means and Standard Deviations)

Variable	Mean	SD
Organizational Ostracism	3.12	0.82
Organizational Silence	3.25	0.79
Knowledge-Sharing Behavior	3.58	0.74

These results indicate that although knowledge sharing occurs, it is vulnerable to negative organizational climates marked by ostracism and silence. This supports previous research showing that exclusionary practices diminish employees' willingness to contribute discretionary knowledge (Howard, Cogswell, & Smith, 2020; Albana & Yeşiltaş, 2022). The moderate presence of ostracism and silence suggests that these are subtle but persistent features of organizational life, consistent with Knoll's (2021) argument that silence and exclusion often become normalized in workplaces.

Correlation Analysis

Correlation results (Table 4.3) show that ostracism negatively correlated with knowledge sharing (r = –.48, p < .01), and silence also negatively correlated with knowledge sharing (r = –.39, p < .01). Ostracism and silence were positively correlated (r = .41, p < .01).

Table 3: Correlation Matrix

Variable	1	2	3
Organizational Ostracism	1		
Organizational Silence	.41**	1	
Knowledge-Sharing Behavior	–.48**	–.39**	1

Note: p < 0.01.

The significant negative associations confirm that both ostracism and silence undermine collaborative behaviors. The positive relationship between ostracism and silence implies that employees who feel excluded are also more likely to remain silent, which corroborates findings by Vu and Fan (2022). In the Nigerian context, where respect for authority is pronounced, exclusion and silence often reinforce each other, limiting open dialogue (Ejumudo, Douglas, & Ejumudo, 2024).

Regression Results: Main Effects

Regression results (Table 4.4) showed that ostracism (β = –.36, p < .001) and silence (β = –.28, p < .001) significantly predicted knowledge sharing, jointly explaining 34% of its variance.

Table 4: Regression Results for Ostracism and Silence Predicting Knowledge Sharing

Predictor	β	t	P
Organizational Ostracism	–.36	–7.15	.000
Organizational Silence	–.28	–5.47	.000

R² = .34; F (2, 297) = 76.3, p < .001

The findings support Hypotheses 1 and 2, confirming that exclusionary behaviors reduce the likelihood of employees sharing knowledge. Ostracism had a stronger effect than silence, suggesting that direct exclusion from interactions is more damaging to knowledge sharing than passive withholding of voice. This aligns with Sharma and Dhar (2022), who noted that ostracism disrupts the fundamental social bonds required for collaboration. Silence, while harmful, may sometimes be strategic or prosocial, which explains its relatively weaker predictive strength (Sarı, 2022). The results highlight that knowledge-sharing culture cannot thrive in environments where employees feel ignored or discouraged from speaking up.

Moderation Analysis: Gender Interaction Effects
Moderation analysis tested whether gender influenced the relationships between ostracism, silence, and knowledge sharing.

Table 5: Moderation of Gender in Ostracism Knowledge Sharing Relationship

Predictor	B	t	p
Organizational Ostracism	–.31	–6.45	.000
Gender (Male = 0, Female = 1)	–.12	–2.48	.014
Ostracism × Gender	–.09	–2.05	.041

$R^2 = .39$; $F(3, 296) = 63.1$, $p < .001$

Table 6: Moderation of Gender in Silence Knowledge Sharing Relationship

Predictor	B	t	p
Organizational Silence	–.25	–5.11	.000
Gender (Male = 0, Female = 1)	–.10	–2.19	.029
Silence × Gender	–.11	–2.34	.021

$R^2 = .36$; $F(3, 296) = 55.6$, $p < .001$

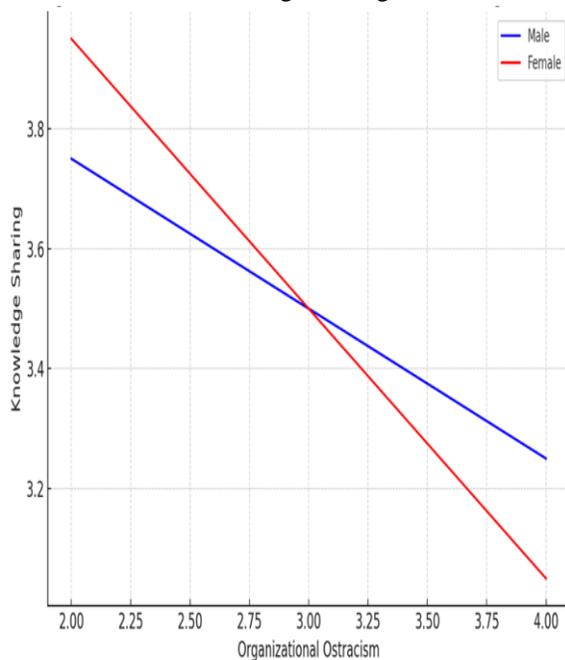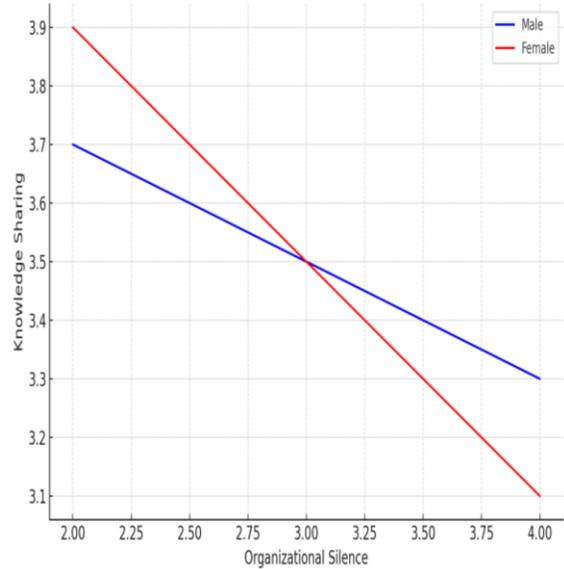Figure 7: Interaction of Gender and Ostracism on Knowledge sharing

Figure 8: Interaction of Gender and Silence on Knowledge Sharing

The interaction between ostracism and gender was significant ($\beta = –.09$, $p = .041$), indicating that ostracism reduced knowledge sharing more strongly among female employees. Figure 7 shows a steeper decline in knowledge sharing for women compared to men as ostracism increased. This supports Hypothesis 3 and resonates with Gender Role Theory, which explains that women are often more vulnerable to exclusion in organizations (Fine, Sojo, & Lawford-Smith, 2020; IGUODALA-COLE, 2023). Similarly, the interaction between silence and gender was significant ($\beta = –.11$, $p = .021$). Figure 8 illustrates that under high silence conditions, women exhibited sharper reductions in knowledge sharing than men. This supports Hypothesis 4 and reflects evidence that women face stronger cultural barriers when attempting to express dissenting opinions (Shen & Joseph, 2021; Okolie & Oyovwevotu, 2023). These moderation results extend prior research by demonstrating gendered differences in the Nigerian workplace, where hierarchical structures amplify the disadvantages, women face in collaborative environments (Anglin, Kincaid, Short, & Allen, 2022).

XIV. SUMMARY OF HYPOTHESES TESTING

- H1: Ostracism significantly predicts knowledge-sharing behavior → Supported.

- H2: Silence significantly predicts knowledge-sharing behavior → Supported.
- H3: Gender moderates the ostracism–knowledge sharing relationship → Supported.
- H4: Gender moderates the silence–knowledge sharing relationship → Supported.

XV. OVERALL DISCUSSION

The results of this study confirm that organizational ostracism and organizational silence significantly undermine knowledge-sharing behavior among employees in Delta State organizations (Howard, Cogswell, & Smith, 2020; Knoll, 2021). The descriptive statistics (Table 2) showed moderate levels of ostracism (M = 3.12, SD = 0.82) and silence (M = 3.25, SD = 0.79), while knowledge sharing was comparatively higher (M = 3.58, SD = 0.74). These findings indicate that although employees engage in knowledge exchange, such practices are vulnerable to organizational climates shaped by exclusion and silence, consistent with the argument that negative social dynamics erode collaborative potential (Vu & Fan, 2022; Albana & Yeşiltaş, 2022). Correlation analysis (Table 3) revealed that both ostracism (r = –.48, p < .01) and silence (r = –.39, p < .01) were negatively associated with knowledge sharing, while ostracism and silence were positively correlated (r = .41, p < .01). This implies that exclusion and silence often reinforce each other, reflecting earlier findings that employees who feel ignored are also likely to withhold their voices (Vu & Fan, 2022; Ejumudo, Douglas, & Ejumudo, 2024). Regression results (Table 4) further established that ostracism (β = –.36, p < .001) and silence (β = –.28, p < .001) jointly accounted for 34% of the variance in knowledge sharing, with ostracism exerting a stronger influence. This supports Social Exchange Theory and Conservation of Resources Theory, as employees reduce discretionary behaviors when faced with relational violations and resource depletion (Ahmad, Nawaz, Ishaq, Khan, & Ashraf, 2023; Bardoel & Drago, 2021).

The demographic figures (Figures 2–6) provide additional context for interpreting these results. For instance, the gender distribution (Figure 2) shows that males (55%) slightly outnumber females (45%), ensuring balanced representation for moderation

analysis. The age distribution (Figure 3) indicates that most respondents were in the 30–39 age range (36.7%), a stage typically associated with active professional engagement. The educational profile (Figure 4) demonstrates that over 78% of respondents held at least a bachelor's degree, suggesting strong familiarity with knowledge processes. The diversity in work experience (Figure 5) and job levels (Figure 6) further ensured that the findings captured perspectives across organizational hierarchies, from non-executives to managers. Together, these demographic insights affirm the reliability of the sample for assessing workplace dynamics (Obiunu & Yalaju, 2020; Sokoh & Okolie, 2021).

Moderation analysis results (Tables 5 and 6) and their corresponding interaction plots (Figures 7 and 8) confirmed that gender significantly moderated the relationships between ostracism, silence, and knowledge sharing. Specifically, ostracism reduced knowledge sharing more steeply for women (β = – .09, p = .041), while silence also had a stronger negative effect on female employees (β = –.11, p = .021). These gendered patterns are clearly illustrated in Figures 7 and 8, where women's knowledge-sharing behavior declined more sharply than men's under conditions of high ostracism and silence. This supports Gender Role Theory, which explains that women often encounter structural and cultural barriers to voice and inclusion in workplace settings (Fine, Sojo, & Lawford-Smith, 2020; IGUODALA COLE, 2023). In Delta State, where hierarchical authority and gendered norms persist, female employees appear more vulnerable to exclusionary practices, leading to disproportionate reductions in their willingness to share knowledge (Okolie & Oyovwevotu, 2023; Strzelecki & ElArabawy, 2024). The synthesis of these results demonstrates that ostracism and silence erode trust, belonging, and psychological safety resources essential for collaborative knowledge-sharing (Howard, Cogswell, & Smith, 2020; Kim & Wang, 2024). The stronger effect of ostracism compared to silence underscores the damaging consequences of being actively excluded from workplace interactions, a finding that aligns with global scholarship while also reflecting Nigeria's collectivist work culture where exclusion is a severe relational breach (Obiunu & Yalaju, 2020; Agbim, Gomna, & Ndibe, 2022). By integrating demographic insights (Figures 2–6), statistical

relationships (Tables 2– 6), and gendered differences (Figures 7–8), this study provides a holistic understanding of how organizational dynamics shape knowledge sharing.

In conclusion, the findings validate theoretical expectations from Social Exchange Theory, Conservation of Resources Theory, and Gender Role Theory, while also contextualizing them within Delta State organizations. They highlight the urgent need for managers and policymakers to reduce ostracism and silence, foster inclusive cultures, and implement gender-sensitive interventions to enhance knowledge-sharing practices (El-boudy, Hashem, & Emaraa, 2023; Perotti, Rozsa, Kuděj, & Ferraris, 2024). Such strategies are essential not only for organizational effectiveness but also for improving employee well-being in environments where knowledge is a critical resource for socio-economic development (Akporehe & Asiyai, 2023; Nwanzu & Babalola, 2025).

XVI. CONCLUSION

This study set out to investigate how organizational ostracism and organizational silence influence knowledge-sharing behavior, with gender examined as a moderating factor. The results demonstrate that both ostracism and silence significantly undermine employees' willingness to share knowledge within organizations in Delta State. The statistical analyses confirmed that ostracism exerts a stronger negative effect on knowledge sharing than silence, highlighting the disruptive consequences of being excluded from workplace interactions compared to the more passive withholding of ideas. The correlation results also showed that ostracism and silence are closely related, suggesting that employees who feel excluded are also likely to remain silent. Furthermore, the moderating role of gender was validated, with female employees experiencing sharper declines in knowledge-sharing behavior compared to male employees under conditions of high ostracism and silence. These outcomes illustrate that exclusionary practices and communication barriers are not experienced uniformly but are shaped by social and organizational factors that make women particularly vulnerable. Overall, the study concludes that ostracism and silence weaken collaborative cultures, erode trust, and obstruct the flow of knowledge that is vital for organizational growth and

adaptability. The findings also emphasize that gender considerations are central to understanding and addressing these dynamics in the workplace.

XVII. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Cultivate Inclusive Work Cultures: Organizations should actively discourage exclusionary practices by fostering openness, dialogue, and collaboration. Formal and informal structures should encourage participation and recognize contributions from all employees.

2. Adopt Gender-Sensitive Policies: Workplace policies should be designed to ensure that both male and female employees have equal access to voice and inclusion. Targeted interventions, such as mentorship programs and leadership training, can help mitigate gender disparities in communication and participation.

3. Promote Psychological Safety: Leaders should create environments where employees feel safe to express their ideas, concerns, and feedback without fear of negative consequences. Encouraging open communication will help reduce silence and improve collective problem-solving.

4. Hold Leaders Accountable: Supervisors and managers should be evaluated not only on performance outcomes but also on their ability to promote inclusive practices and minimize exclusion. Accountability structures will reinforce positive leadership behavior.

5. Leverage Workforce Diversity: The diversity of employees across gender, age, education, and job level should be recognized as an asset. Encouraging cross-level and cross gender collaboration can strengthen informal knowledge networks and reduce the risk of marginalization.

6. Encourage Policy Support at the State Level: Broader policy frameworks in Delta State should integrate inclusivity and knowledge management into workplace regulations. Such measures will not only improve organizational effectiveness but also contribute to wider socio-economic development in the region.

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Questionnaire

Title of the Study:
Organizational Ostracism, Organizational Silence, and Knowledge-Sharing Behavior: The Moderating Role of Gender in Delta State Organizations

Introduction
Dear Respondent,
You are kindly invited to participate in this academic research study, which seeks to examine how organizational ostracism and organizational silence affect knowledge-sharing behavior among employees, with particular attention to the moderating role of gender. The study is conducted purely for academic purposes, and your honest responses will provide valuable insights into workplace behavior and organizational development.

Confidentiality Statement
Please note that all information provided will be treated with strict confidentiality. Your responses are anonymous and will be used solely for academic analysis. There are no right or wrong answers; only your sincere views and experiences are required.

Instructions
1. Kindly respond to all questions in the sections provided.

2. Indicate your level of agreement with each statement in Sections B, C, and D using the scale below:
1 = Strongly Disagree
2 = Disagree
3 = Neutral
4 = Agree
5 = Strongly Agree

3. For demographic questions, please tick the option that applies to you.

4. Ensure that you answer honestly to reflect your workplace experiences.

Sections of the Questionnaire
Section A: Demographic Information
Section B: Organizational Ostracism
Section C: Organizational Silence
Section D: Knowledge-Sharing Behavior
Section E: Gender

Section A: Demographic Information
1.   Gender: Male [ ] Female [ ]
2.   Age: 20–29 [ ] 30–39 [ ] 40–49 [ ] 50 and above [ ]
3.   Educational Level: Diploma [ ] Bachelor's [ ] Postgraduate [ ]
4.   Work Experience: 1–5 years [ ] 6–10 years [ ] Above 10 years [ ]
5.   Job Level: Non-executive [ ] Supervisor [ ] Managerial [ ]

Section B: Organizational Ostracism
(Adapted from the Workplace Ostracism Scale by Ferris et al., 2008; Howard, Cogswell, & Smith, 2020 Fatima et al., 2023)
)
Please indicate your level of agreement (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree):

1. Others ignored me at work. -- Strongly Disagree ( ) Disagree ( ) Neutral () Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( )

2. People avoided eye contact when I approached. Strongly Disagree ( ) Disagree ( ) Neutral () Agree () Strongly Agree ()

3. I felt left out of work-related social activities. Strongly Disagree ( ) Disagree ( ) Neutral () Agree () Strongly Agree ()

4. Colleagues excluded me from important discussions. Strongly Disagree ( ) Disagree ( ) Neutral () Agree () Strongly Agree ()

5. Others left the area when I arrived. Strongly Disagree ( ) Disagree ( ) Neutral ( ) Agree () Strongly Agree ()

6. My input is often overlooked in meetings or group tasks. Strongly Disagree ( ) Disagree ( ) Neutral()Agree()StronglyAgree()

7. I feel like an outsider in my workplace. Strongly Disagree ( ) Disagree ( ) Neutral () Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ( )

8. I have been left out of informal gatherings or office activities. Strongly Disagree ( ) Disagree ( ) Neutral () Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ()

9. I am purposely kept out of the loop regarding important information. Strongly Disagree ( ) Disagree ( ) Neutral () Agree ( ) Strongly Agree ()

Section C: Organizational Silence
(Adapted from Van Dyne, Ang, & Botero, 2003; Knoll, 2021, El-Sayed et al., 2025;)

1. I remain silent at work because speaking up might have negative consequences. Strongly Disagree ( ) Disagree ( ) Neutral () Agree () Strongly Agree ()

2. I avoid sharing ideas to prevent possible conflict. Strongly Disagree ( ) Disagree ( ) Neutral () Agree () Strongly Agree ()

3. I hesitate to provide feedback because it might be misinterpreted. Strongly Disagree ( ) Disagree ( ) Neutral () Agree () Strongly Agree ()

4. I keep my opinions to myself even when I have useful suggestions. Strongly Disagree ( ) Disagree ( ) Neutral () Agree () Strongly Agree ()

5. I withhold information to protect myself from criticism. Strongly Disagree ( ) Disagree ( ) Neutral () Agree () Strongly Agree ()

6. I withhold ideas or suggestions even when they could be useful. Strongly Disagree ( ) Disagree ( ) Neutral () Agree () Strongly Agree ()

7. I feel it is safer to remain silent than to speak up at work. Strongly Disagree ( ) Disagree ( ) Neutral () Agree () Strongly Agree ()

8. I avoid sharing my opinions because they are often ignored. Strongly Disagree ( ) Disagree ( ) Neutral () Agree () Strongly Agree ()

9. I stay quiet to avoid conflicts with management or colleagues. Strongly Disagree ( ) Disagree ( ) Neutral () Agree () Strongly Agree ()

10. I choose not to express concerns about organizational issues. Strongly Disagree ( ) Disagree ( ) Neutral () Agree () Strongly Agree ()

11. I feel discouraged from speaking out even when necessary. Strongly Disagree ( ) Disagree ( ) Neutral () Agree () Strongly Agree ()

Section D: Knowledge-Sharing Behavior
(Adapted from Bock, Zmud, Kim, & Lee, 2005; Sokoh & Okolie, 2021)

1. I share my work reports and documents with colleagues. Strongly Disagree ( ) Disagree ( ) Neutral () Agree () Strongly Agree ()

2. I frequently exchange ideas with team members. Strongly Disagree ( ) Disagree ( ) Neutral () Agree () Strongly Agree ()

3. I willingly provide my expertise when colleagues need assistance. Strongly Disagree ( ) Disagree ( ) Neutral () Agree () Strongly Agree ()

4. I share successful work experiences to help others. Strongly Disagree ( ) Disagree ( ) Neutral () Agree () Strongly Agree ()

5. I contribute knowledge that helps solve organizational problems. Strongly Disagree ( ) Disagree ( ) Neutral () Agree ()
    Strongly Agree ()
6. I help others understand difficult tasks by sharing what I know. Strongly Disagree ( ) Disagree ( ) Neutral () Agree ()
    Strongly Agree ()
7. I openly share my expertise to help improve team performance. Strongly Disagree ( ) Disagree ( ) Neutral () Agree ()
    Strongly Agree ()
8. I encourage others to share knowledge within the team. Strongly Disagree ( ) Disagree ( ) Neutral () Agree () Strongly Agree ()
9. I use available platforms (meetings, emails, intranet) to exchange information. Strongly Disagree ( ) Disagree ( ) Neutral () Agree () Strongly Agree ()

Section E: Gender (Moderator)
1. Please indicate your gender: Male [ ] Female [ ] (*Captured as a categorical demographic variable; see Aftab, Ali Shah, & Khan, 2020; IGUODALA-COLE, 2023*).

All items in Sections B–D will be measured on a **5-point Likert scale** (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree) to capture varying degrees of agreement and ensure suitability for inferential statistical analysis (Vu & Fan, 2022).
We sincerely appreciate your cooperation and contribution to this research.
Thank you.
Researcher's Name: MR EDAFE EJAKPOMEHWE
Date: 5/08/2025