



The Intellectual Landscape Of Workplace Ostracism: A Bibliometric Analysis

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Abstract: This study presents a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of workplace ostracism (WO) research, tracing its intellectual development from its inception to December 2024. Using a systematic literature review and bibliometric techniques, the study analyzes 699 research publications sourced from the Scopus database. The analysis employs science mapping techniques, including co-authorship analysis, keyword co-occurrence, and citation analysis networks, using VOS viewer software. The findings highlight key publishing trends, influential journals, highly cited publications, and prominent authors contributing to WO research. The study also identifies the most productive countries and industries engaged in this field. This research enriches the existing literature by offering critical bibliographic insights and identifying future research directions. The findings serve as a valuable resource for scholars and practitioners, facilitating deeper engagement with the field and fostering further advancements in WO studies.

Index Terms: Workplace Ostracism, Bibliometric, Co-Authorship, Co-Occurrence, Citation Analysis, VOS viewer

I. INTRODUCTION

Workplace ostracism (WO) has gained increasing attention in organizational behavior research over the past decade due to its subtle yet profound impact on employees and organizations. Defined as the perception of being ignored or excluded by colleagues or supervisors (**Ferris et al., 2008**), WO manifests through behaviors such as being left out of meetings, overlooked in conversations, or excluded from social interactions (**Williams, 2007**). Unlike overt workplace mistreatment, ostracism is often ambiguous in intent, making it difficult to identify and address (**O'Reilly et al., 2015**). Despite its seemingly benign nature, research indicates that WO can significantly affect employees' psychological well-being, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment (**Zhao et al., 2016**). Reports suggest that nearly 66% of employees have experienced some form of silent treatment at work (**Fox & Stallworth, 2005**), highlighting the prevalence of this issue.

While WO has been extensively studied in Western contexts, research in Asian nations, including India, remains limited. Given the rising concerns about workplace negativity and incivility in India, a deeper understanding of WO in this context is crucial. Organizations experiencing WO often report lower employee engagement, reduced productivity, higher turnover, and increased absenteeism (**Leung et al., 2011; Zheng et al., 2016; Li & Zhang, 2019; Farasat et al., 2021; Glazer et al., 2021; Singh et al., 2024**). Despite its significance, existing literature primarily focuses on the psychological and behavioral outcomes of WO without systematically mapping its intellectual landscape.

Few bibliometric reviews of WO have been conducted in the past; however, such analyses have limitations, as they typically include studies only up to 2023. Given the rapid expansion of research in this area, a more comprehensive review incorporating recent studies is essential. Additionally, prior reviews have not fully utilized advanced science mapping techniques, such as co-authorship analysis, keyword co-occurrence, and citation analysis, to trace the intellectual evolution of the field. These gaps highlight the need for an updated, systematic investigation into the development, key themes, and future directions of WO research.

This study aims to address these gaps by conducting a bibliometric analysis that provides a holistic view of WO research. By incorporating publications up to 2024, the study will offer a more updated and comprehensive understanding of the intellectual landscape of WO. The use of science mapping techniques will allow for an in-depth examination of the field's past, present, and future trends, offering valuable insights for researchers, practitioners, and policymakers. A better understanding of WO can help organizations develop targeted interventions to mitigate its negative effects, ultimately fostering a healthier and more inclusive work environment. By systematically mapping the existing literature, this study will contribute to the advancement of WO research and provide a foundation for future studies exploring this critical yet often overlooked workplace phenomenon.

II. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The present study makes significant contributions by addressing existing research gaps and exploring key aspects of WO. To achieve this, it seeks to answer the following critical questions:

1. How has the publication trend on WO evolved in recent years, particularly up to 2024?
2. Who are the key contributors in WO research, and what patterns of collaboration exist among them?
3. Which academic journals have played a pivotal role in disseminating influential research on WO?
4. What are the most impactful scholarly works that have shaped the intellectual discourse on WO?
5. What recurring themes and emerging research trends can be identified within the existing literature on WO?

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Data Source and Selection Criteria

To ensure a comprehensive and high-quality bibliometric analysis of WO research, the Scopus database was selected as the primary data source. Scopus was chosen due to its extensive coverage of peer-reviewed journals, conference proceedings, and high-impact scholarly articles, ensuring a broad and reliable dataset.

Relevant literature was identified using the keywords “workplace ostracism,” “workplace exclusion,” and “workplace isolation.” This search retrieved a total of 699 articles, which were used for further analysis. The dataset includes studies published up to 2024, allowing for an updated and thorough investigation of publication trends, author contributions, and emerging research themes.

3.2 Bibliometric Analysis Approach

This bibliometric study was conducted in two phases:

1. Performance Analysis: The Scopus Analysis tool was used to examine key bibliometric indicators, including publication trends, leading authors, influential journals, and frequently cited papers. This phase helped in understanding the overall research productivity and the impact of WO literature over time.
2. Network Analysis: The retrieved data in CSV format was analyzed using VOS viewer (Version 1.6.9) to visualize relationships between authors, keywords, and citations. Three key analyses were conducted: Inter-country co-authorship analysis to examine global research collaborations, keyword co-occurrence analysis to identify dominant research themes and emerging trends, and citation analysis to determine

influential publications and their scholarly impact. These analyses provided a comprehensive understanding of research patterns, key contributors, and thematic developments in WO literature.

IV. RESULT AND FINDINGS

4.1 Performance Analysis

i. Documents Analysis by Year

The publication trend over the past decade indicates a significant rise in WO research, particularly in the last three years. **In 2024, the highest number of publications (132) was recorded**, reflecting a growing scholarly interest in this domain. This surge suggests an increasing recognition of WO as a critical issue in organizational behavior, potentially driven by evolving workplace dynamics and the impact of remote and hybrid work models. **In 2023, 98 publications were recorded**, marking a substantial increase from previous years, indicating sustained academic engagement. **In 2022, with 84 publications**, the research momentum was already building, laying the foundation for the sharp rise observed in subsequent years (see Figure 1). This upward trend highlights the expanding discourse on WO and its implications for employee well-being and organizational outcomes.

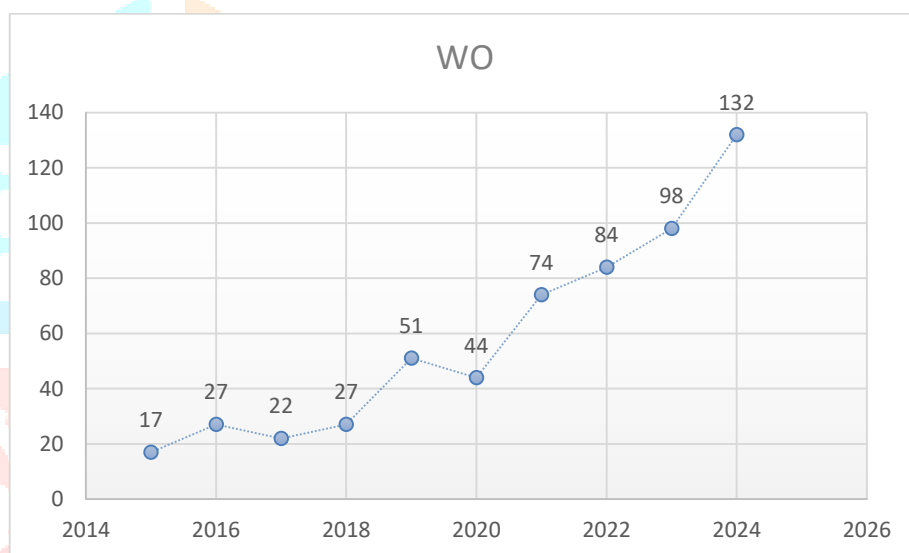


Figure 1: Analysis of Documents by Year

Source: <http://www.scopus.com>

ii. Analysis of Publications by Country

The publication distribution on WO research highlights **China (187 publications)** as the leading contributor, indicating a strong academic focus on workplace dynamics and employee well-being within Chinese organizations. This dominance may stem from the country's increasing emphasis on organizational behavior research and workplace psychology. **The United States follows closely with 167 publications**, reflecting its well-established research culture and the growing awareness of workplace mistreatment and its impact on organizational effectiveness. **Pakistan ranks third with 75 publications**, showcasing a notable research interest in WO, likely influenced by its unique socio-cultural and organizational contexts (see Figure 2). The prominence of these three countries suggests that WO is a globally recognized issue, with varying research motivations and contextual influences shaping scholarly contributions.

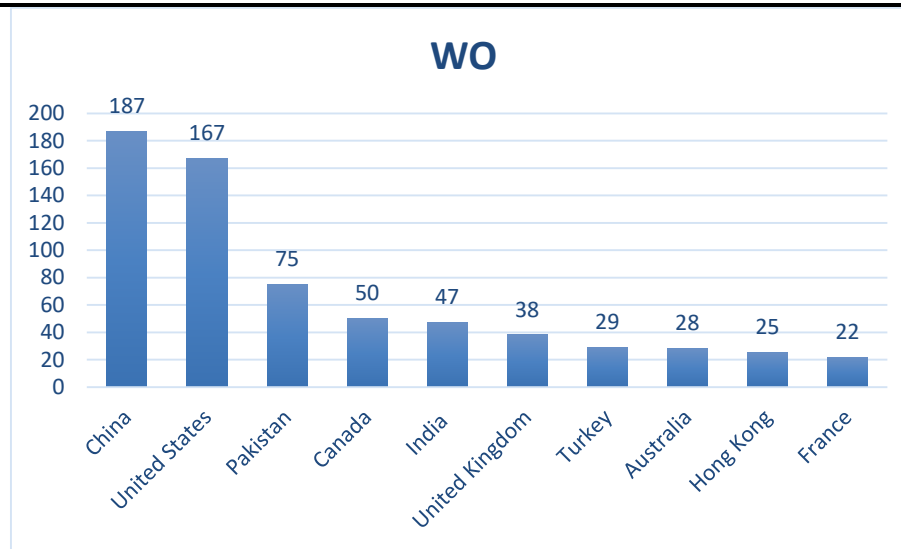


Figure 2: Analysis of Documents by Country or Territory

Source: <http://www.scopus.com>

iii. Documents by Subject Area

The subject-wise distribution of WO research highlights its multidisciplinary relevance, with the highest number of publications in **Business, Management, and Accounting (313 publications)**. This indicates that WO is primarily studied in organizational and managerial contexts, focusing on its impact on employee performance, engagement, and workplace culture. **Psychology (222 publications)** ranks second, reflecting the strong emphasis on the psychological and emotional consequences of ostracism, including stress, job dissatisfaction, and mental well-being. **Social Sciences (201 publications)** holds the third position, suggesting that WO is also explored from a broader societal perspective, including its implications for workplace relationships, social interactions, and cultural influences (see Figure 3). The dominance of these three fields underscores the significance of WO as both an organizational and psychological phenomenon.

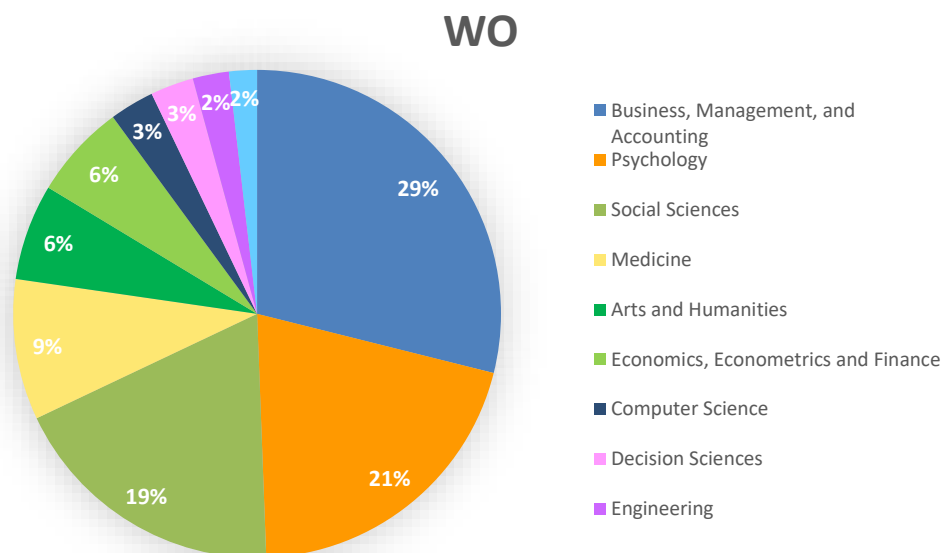


Figure 3: Analysis of Documents by Subject Area

Source: <http://www.scopus.com>

iv. Documents by Type

The document type distribution for WO research reveals that **journal articles (588 publications)** dominate the field, indicating that most contributions come from empirical and theoretical studies published in peer-reviewed journals. This reflects the rigorous academic investigation into WO and its implications. **Review papers (36 publications)** rank second, highlighting efforts to synthesize existing knowledge and provide

comprehensive overviews of research trends, theories, and methodologies in this domain. **Book chapters (34 publications) hold the third position**, suggesting that WO is also explored within broader academic discussions in edited volumes, often linking it to related organizational behavior and psychological concepts (see Figure 4). The prominence of these three document types underscores the growing academic focus on WO and its integration into various scholarly discussions.

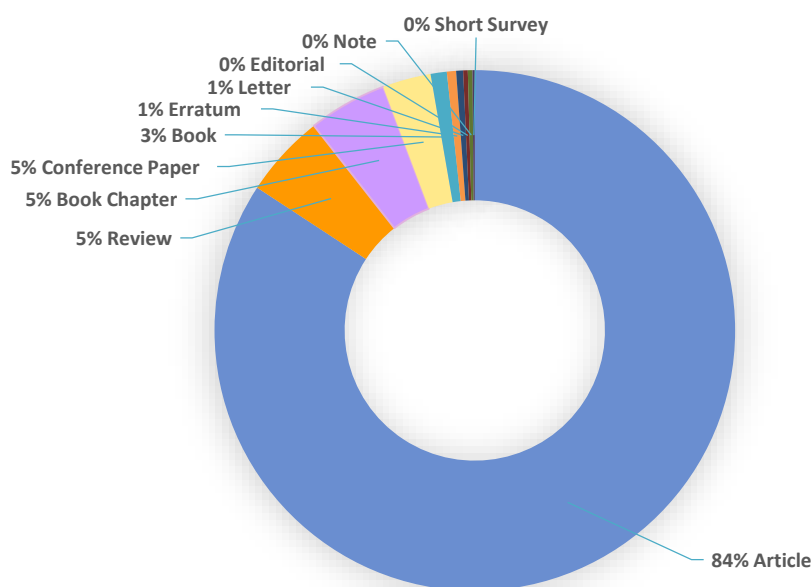


Figure 4: Analysis of Documents by Type

Source: <http://www.scopus.com>

v. Documents by Author

The author-wise distribution of WO publications reveals **Kwan, H.K.** as the leading contributor with **17 publications**, indicating a significant and sustained focus on the topic within their research. This suggests that Kwan is a key figure in advancing the field of WO, possibly through extensive empirical or theoretical work. **Fatima, T.** follows closely with **15 publications**, marking her as another prominent researcher in this area, likely contributing to a range of studies that explore various facets of WO and its implications. **Imran, M.K.** and **Liu, C.**, both with **10 publications**, also emerge as important contributors, indicating a collaborative and impactful approach to WO research (see Figure 5). The prominence of these three authors highlights their central role in shaping the academic discourse on this topic.

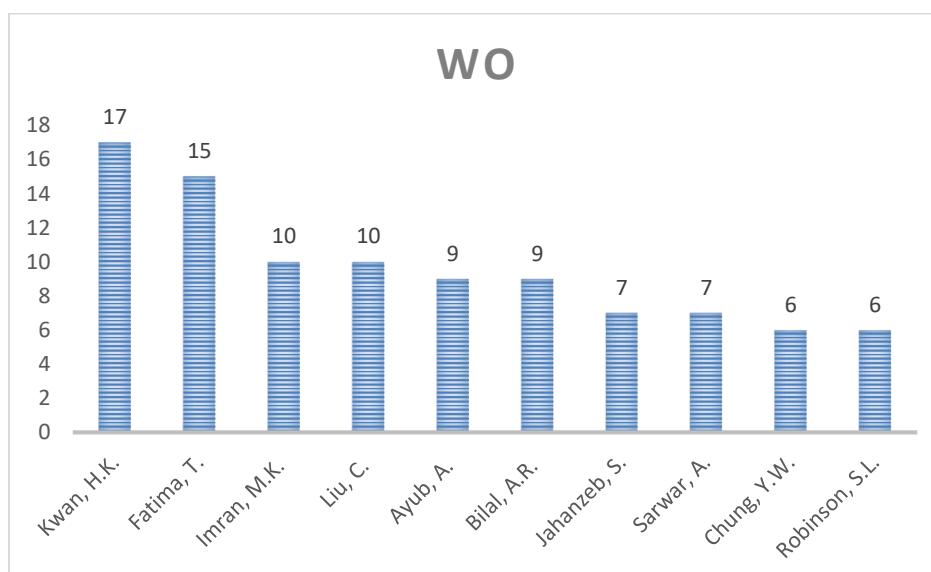


Figure 5: Analysis of Documents by Author

Source: <http://www.scopus.com>

vi. Document Analysis by Sources

The journal-wise distribution of WO research highlights **Frontiers in Psychology** as the leading publication source with **21 articles**, emphasizing the strong psychological focus on WO, particularly its impact on mental health, emotions, and behavior. **The Journal of Business Ethics (14 publications)** ranks second, reflecting the ethical and moral considerations associated with workplace exclusion, including its effects on organizational justice and employee well-being. **The International Journal of Hospitality Management and the Journal of Applied Psychology (both with 12 publications)** share the third position, indicating a growing interest in WO within service-oriented industries, where employee interactions and social dynamics play a crucial role (see Figure 6). These journals serve as key platforms for advancing the academic discourse on WO across multiple disciplines.



Figure 6: Analysis of Documents per Year by Sources

Source: <http://www.scopus.com>

vii. Documents by Affiliations

The analysis of institutional affiliations in WO research highlights **The Islamia University of Bahawalpur and the University of Lahore** as the top contributors, each with **19 publications**. This suggests a strong academic focus on WO within Pakistani institutions, possibly driven by the increasing recognition of workplace mistreatment in South Asian organizational settings. **Renmin University of China follows with 17 publications**, indicating China's significant role in advancing WO research, likely influenced by its evolving workplace culture and organizational behavior studies (see Figure 7). The prominence of these institutions underscores the global interest in WO, with notable contributions from both South Asian and Chinese academic communities.

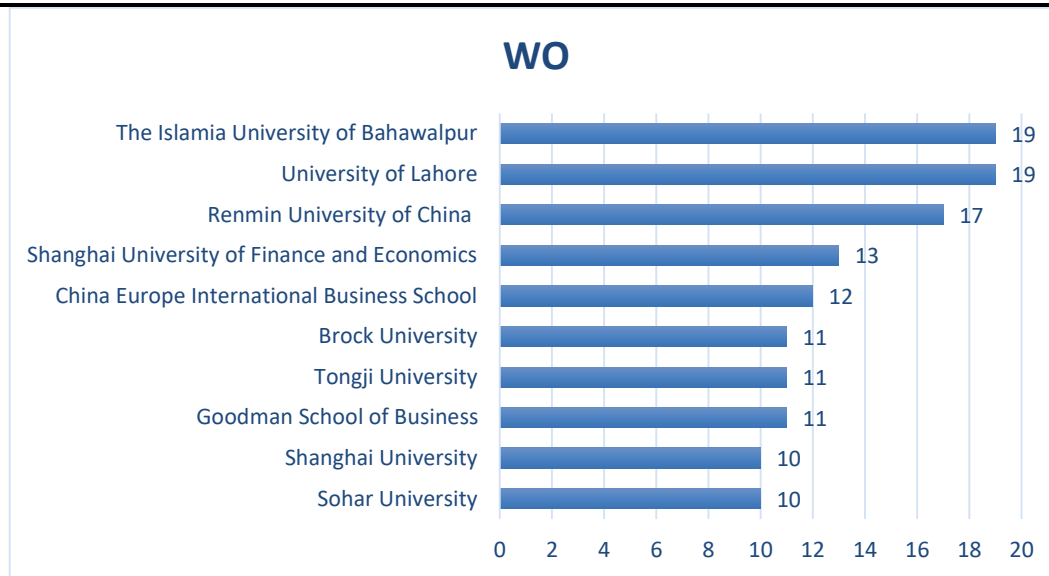


Figure 7: Analysis of Documents by Affiliation

Source: <http://www.scopus.com>

viii. Analysis by Funding Sponsors

The funding sponsor analysis for WO research reveals that **the National Natural Science Foundation of China (70 funded publications)** is the leading supporter, highlighting China's significant investment in organizational behavior and workplace psychology studies. This strong backing indicates a national priority in understanding workplace dynamics and employee well-being. **The Ministry of Science and Technology of the People's Republic of China (27 publications)** ranks second, further reinforcing China's commitment to advancing research in WO through scientific and technological funding. **The Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China (23 publications)** holds the third position, emphasizing the role of educational institutions in driving research on WO (see Figure 8). The dominance of Chinese funding agencies underscores the country's leadership in this research domain, fostering extensive academic contributions.

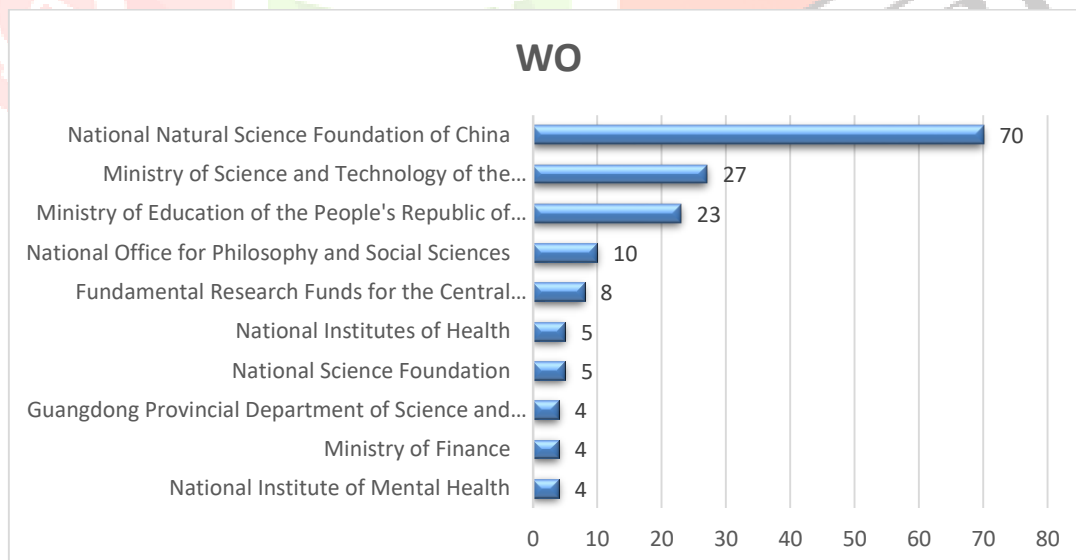


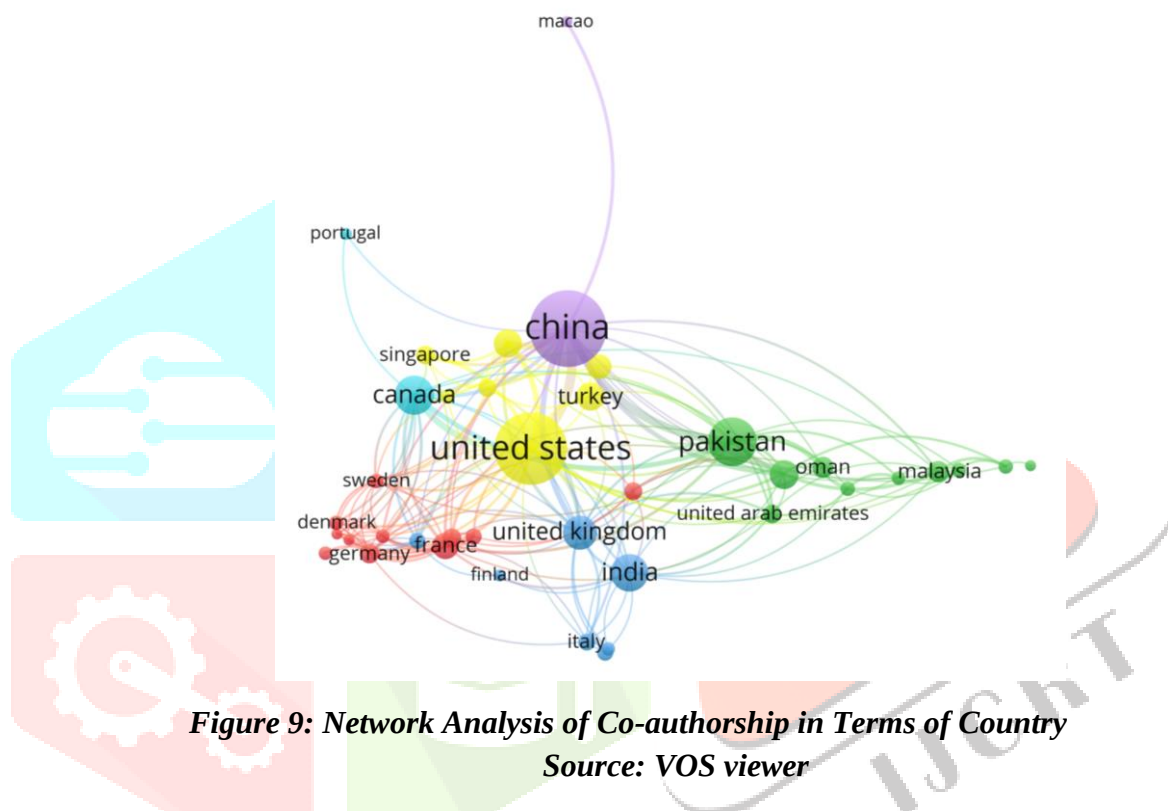
Figure 8: Analysis of Documents by Funding Sponsor

Source: <http://www.scopus.com>

4.2 Network Analysis

i. Co-authorship in Terms of Country

The analysis of the top five active countries in WO research reveals **China (186 documents, 28.34 C/D, 121 TLS)** as the most influential contributor, with the highest number of publications and the strongest research collaborations. This indicates China's leading role in shaping the academic discourse on WO through extensive scholarly networks. **The United States follows closely (166 documents, 31.71 C/D, 104 TLS)** with the highest average number of citations per document (C/D), reflecting the strong impact and visibility of its research contributions. **Pakistan ranks third (75 documents, 21.16 C/D, 70 TLS)**, highlighting its growing presence in WO studies, likely influenced by its unique socio-cultural and organizational dynamics (see Figure 9). The Total Link Strength (TLS) values suggest that while China and the U.S. have the most collaborative networks, Pakistan is also establishing significant research connections in this domain.



ii. Co-occurrence Analysis in Terms of Author Keywords

The analysis of author keywords in WO research, based on a minimum occurrence of five, identified **71 keywords** out of **1,762 total keywords**. The study revealed **8 clusters, 331 links, and a total link strength (TLS) of 637**, mapping key themes and relationships in the literature. The co-occurrence analysis highlights **“Workplace Ostracism” (236 occurrences)** as the most dominant keyword, reflecting the central focus on exclusion and social isolation in professional settings. **“Ostracism” (82 occurrences)** ranks second, indicating that researchers also explore broader aspects of social exclusion beyond workplace settings. **“Emotional Exhaustion” (22 occurrences)** emerges as the third most frequently used keyword, underscoring the psychological consequences of WO and its impact on employee well-being (see Figure 10).

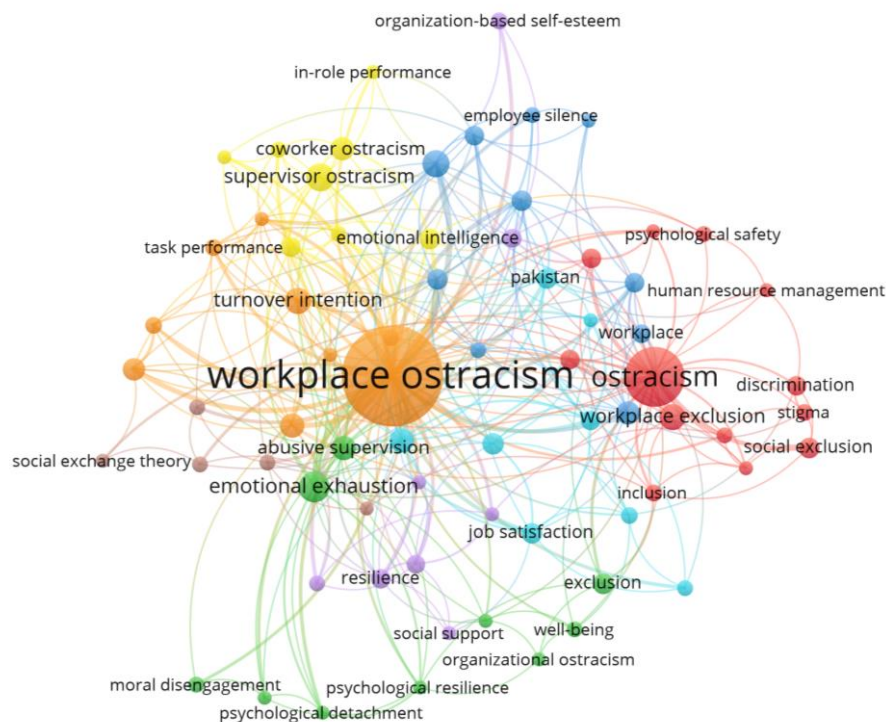


Figure 10: Network Analysis of Co-occurrence in Terms of Author Keywords

Source: VOS viewer

iii. Citation Analysis of Documents

The top three most-cited documents in WO research highlight key contributions to the field. **Ferris et al. (2008)** published in the **Journal of Applied Psychology** is the most influential work with **666 citations**, as it developed and validated the WO Scale, providing a standardized measure for future studies. **Robinson et al. (2013)** in the **Journal of Management** follows with **379 citations**, introducing an integrated model of WO, which offers a theoretical framework for understanding its antecedents and consequences. **Zhao et al. (2016)** in the **International Journal of Hospitality Management** ranks third with **286 citations**, exploring the link between WO and knowledge hiding in service organizations, emphasizing its impact on organizational knowledge-sharing practices. These highly cited works have significantly shaped the scholarly discourse on WO, providing both theoretical and empirical foundations for further research.

V. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study offer a comprehensive overview of the intellectual landscape of WO research, highlighting its evolution, influential contributors, and emerging themes. The steady increase in the number of publications, particularly in the last three years, reflects a growing academic interest in understanding the implications of WO. China, the United States, and Pakistan have emerged as the most active contributors, demonstrating the global significance of this topic. The prominence of Business, Management & Accounting, Psychology, and Social Sciences as the dominant subject areas indicates that WO is being examined from multiple disciplinary perspectives, including organizational behavior, mental health, and workplace dynamics.

The dominance of journal articles in this field underscores the rigor of peer-reviewed research in advancing knowledge on WO. Leading authors such as Kwan, H.K., Fatima, T., and Imran, M.K. have made substantial contributions, shaping the discourse through their publications. Similarly, key journals, including **Frontiers in Psychology**, **Journal of Business Ethics**, and **International Journal of Hospitality Management**, have provided an essential platform for disseminating WO research. Institutional contributions from The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, University of Lahore, and Renmin University of China further emphasize the academic engagement in this domain. Additionally, funding from organizations such as the

National Natural Science Foundation of China has significantly supported research efforts, enabling scholars to explore WO from various perspectives.

The **network analyses** have provided deeper insights into research collaborations and thematic developments. The **co-authorship analysis** highlights strong research partnerships, particularly between China and the United States, reinforcing the importance of international collaborations in expanding knowledge on WO. The **co-occurrence analysis of author keywords** identifies “Workplace Ostracism,” “Ostracism,” and “Emotional Exhaustion” as dominant themes, suggesting that research has predominantly focused on the psychological effects and workplace implications of ostracism. Furthermore, **citation analysis** highlights foundational studies, such as those by **Ferris et al. (2008)**, **Robinson et al. (2013)**, and **Zhao et al. (2016)**, which have significantly shaped the theoretical and empirical framework of WO research.

VI. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Despite its contributions, this study has certain limitations. The bibliometric analysis was conducted using data exclusively from the **Scopus** database, which, while comprehensive, excludes publications indexed in other major databases such as **Web of Science, Wiley, and Inderscience**. Future research could extend the analysis to these databases to ensure broader coverage and a more inclusive understanding of the field. Additionally, while the study provides an extensive overview of publication trends and thematic developments, a **systematic literature review** could complement this analysis by offering deeper insights into the theoretical frameworks and methodological approaches employed in WO research.

VII. CONCLUSION

This study provides a structured bibliometric analysis of WO research, mapping its evolution, key contributors, and dominant themes. The findings suggest that WO has gained substantial scholarly attention, particularly in recent years, with significant contributions from China, the United States, and Pakistan. The interdisciplinary nature of research in this field indicates its relevance across various domains, including organizational behavior, psychology, and social sciences. By identifying influential authors, leading journals, and key research themes, this study enhances the understanding of WO and serves as a valuable resource for future researchers. Moving forward, expanding the scope of data sources, exploring new methodological approaches, and fostering international research collaborations will further enrich the literature on WO.

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