

**Major: Human Resource Management**

**Major/No. (H-08)**

**The Impact of Workplace Ostracism on Coworker Directed  
Deviant Behavior in Telecommunication Sector: Examining the  
Mediating Roles of Psychological Contract Breach and Negative  
Reciprocity Beliefs.**



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**Fall 2025.**

**FINAL PROJECT/THESIS APPROVAL SHEET**

**Open Defense Examination**

Open Defense Date 13/01/2026

**Topic of Research:** The Impact of Workplace Ostracism on Coworker Directed Deviant Behavior in Telecommunication Sector: Examining the Mediating Roles of Psychological Contract Breach and Negative Reciprocity Beliefs.

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

From the depths of my heart, I would like to thank Allah Almighty for granting me strength, patience and perseverance to complete this thesis. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to everyone who supported me and encouraged me throughout this journey. This work would not have been possible without the guidance, kindness, and continuous support I received at every stage of its completion. A heartfelt gratitude to my supervisor **Dr. Harris Laeeque**, whose valuable guidance, constructive feedback, patience, and consistent support enabled me to approach this study with clarity and confidence. His confidence in my abilities gave me the strength to persevere, even during challenging times. I also thank my professors at **Department of HR & Management and Bahria business school** for creating an environment that shows curiosity and personal growth. The knowledge I gained here has shaped this study. A heartfelt thank you to my family and friends for their support and understanding. Your encouragement has helped me through stressful times, constantly reminding me to stay focused on my goals.

Thank you all for your support, mentorship and encouragement.

YUSRA REHMAN

## **DECLARATION**

I Yusra Rehman hereby declare that I have produced the work presented in this thesis, during the scheduled period of study. I also declare that I have not taken any material from any source except referred to wherever due. I also confirm that amount of plagiarism is within acceptable range. If a violation of HEC rules on research has occurred in this thesis, I shall be liable to punishable action under the plagiarism rules of the HEC.

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## Abstract

This study investigates the impact of workplace ostracism on coworker directed deviant behavior in the telecommunication sector of Pakistan, with emphasis on the mediating roles of psychological contract breach and negative reciprocity beliefs. Grounded in social exchange theory, the study examines how experiences of social exclusion and neglect in the workplace influence employees' psychological perceptions and subsequent behavioral responses towards coworkers. Data were collected through structured questionnaire of 180 employees working in major telecom organization in Pakistan (PTCL) using sampling technique and the results were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) to test hypothesis. The findings reveal that workplace ostracism has significant positive effect on coworker directed deviant behavior. Moreover, psychological contract breach and negative reciprocity beliefs mediate this relationship, indicating that ostracized employees are more likely to perceive violation of implicit organizational obligations and develop retaliatory beliefs which in turn increase deviant behaviors towards colleagues. These results highlight the critical role of social exclusion and psychological processes in shaping harmful workplace behaviors. This study underscores the need for telecommunication organization to foster inclusive work environment, manage employee expectations and address perceptions of unfair treatment. Overall, this research contributes to the literature by providing empirical evidence on the mechanism through which workplace ostracism influences deviant behavior and offers practical recommendations to mitigate its adverse effects in the organizational settings.

**Keywords:** Workplace Ostracism, Coworker Directed Deviant Behavior, Psychological Contract Breach, Negative Reciprocity Beliefs, Telecommunication Sector.

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# **Chapter1: Introduction:**

## **1.1. Background:**

Companies in the Telecommunications sector are encountering many human resource (HR) problems that have major implications for the organization's performance and the well-being of its employees. One of the main issues for HR is handling differences between employees, motivating staff as technology changes fast, finding solutions to work-life challenges and leading the organization in a global market (Noe et al., 2023). When looking at major issues, workplace ostracism is distinctive because of the major problems it can cause. At work, when employees are ignored or excluded by their colleagues, this is workplace ostracism which occurs widely in companies. This is because the competition and importance of these jobs lead some employees to worry about being part of the 'ingroup,' try to conform or show frustration (Ferris et al., 2008). As well, the presence of strong hierarchies and unequal power in many corporations makes it possible for those in charge to marginalize or dominate others by excluding them openly.

In some cases, workplace ostracism helps make co-workers susceptible to negative and illegal behavior. Actions that disrupt the organization and hurt other people can show up as incivility, sabotage or harassment. Many people who are targeted in this way often find their jobs less satisfying, experience increased tension, are more likely to get burned out and deal with psychological problems. At the same time, organizations may experience less work being done, more employees choosing to leave and harm to their reputation (Luo et al., 2022). Thus, it is crucial to minimize workplace ostracism to address co-worker directed rule-breaking and the negative things that come with it. Understanding the process through which they develop must be part of this objective to reduce workplace deviant conduct.

Deviance in the workplace created by co-workers can severely damage the social structure of a business environment. These behaviors, starting from minor rudeness and ending with physical or verbal abuse, weaken people's trust, hurt relationships and lead to a negative work environment (Jiang, Wiang, & Qi, 2020). Co-worker directed deviance has many causes such as personal traits, setting-specific pressures and the way the organization operates. It has been discovered that problems like misperception of fairness, errors in communication and weak leadership are major contributors of labor conflict. The negative effects are many and cause individual distress, encourage missing work, lower performance, harm the ability to meet production goals, make it difficult to keep employees and lead to difficulty in following the law. Because of these important risks, companies must pay special attention to coworker-directed deviant behavior.

Applying the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory sheds light on how workplace ostracism leads to coworkers committing harmful acts. Being ostracized at work might lead the employee to feel the organization is breaking its unspoken promises which psychologists call a psychological contract breach (Sabir et al., 2024). Such a breach hurts employees' need to feel included and creates feelings of betrayal. Ultimately such a violation may encourage employees to adopt negative reciprocity beliefs, believing they are justified in retaliating against those they perceive as wronging them (Hua et al., 2023). Feeling like the psychological contract was broken by ostracism can lead employees to behave deviantly such as targeted misbehavior toward coworkers. Research suggests that workplace ostracism first leads to people following psychological contracts and then to their negative expectations which finally affect coworker-directed deviance. It allows us to see how exclusion at work influences organizations and it lays the ground work for actions to maintain employee morale and company morals.

## **1.2. Contextual Analysis:**

A significant portion of Pakistan's economy is due to the telecommunications sector which includes many manufacturing, service and financing industries. Because this sector holds large multinational companies and also includes smaller local firms, it supports the growth of industry and provides many types of services (State Bank of Pakistan, 2023). Pakistan's telecommunications sector has been shaped by different economic policies that led to moves of nationalization, then privatization, all combined to give the sector its current structure and methods. Currently, the sector needs to handle uncertainties in the market, complex laws and regulations and the need to use modern technology to remain efficient and competitive worldwide.

In spite of facing a lot of challenges, Pakistan's business sector remains strong and displays hidden growth possibilities. Reports from 2025 indicate a slow but steady recovery, because GDP growth is up and services and agriculture are improving (Pakistan Overview: Development News, Research, Data | World Bank, 2025). Structure reform, efforts to attract foreign investment and digital transformation are part of what the government is doing to help different sectors to grow. In addition, Pakistan's position in the region and the big number of young people open up new possibilities for companies to enter emerging markets. Even so, this sector's success in making use of these prospects relies on dealing with ongoing issues, for example, balancing the budget, improving telecom governance and fostering a better business environment (Mansoor Ahmad, 2025).

Pakistan's telecommunications sector plays a role much bigger than just economic growth; it focuses on social areas too. It is important for employment, for exports and for the GDP of the country. The sector greatly contributes to encouraging new ideas, moving technology forward and teaching workers the necessary management skills. On the social side, firms are taking part in CSR programs,

concentrating on problems including poverty, the advancement of education and the improvement of medical care (Monitoring Desk, 2024). Practicing sustainability in business and supporting social programs are ways the telecommunications sector can spark growth and improve living standards for people in Pakistan (Monitoring Desk, 2024).

### **1.3. Research Gap:**

Although recent studies have begun to examine the consequences of workplace ostracism but still important gaps remain unaddressed. Recent studies revealed that workplace ostracism predicts counterproductive behaviors through mechanism such as psychological contract breach (Sabir et al., 2024) and psychological contract violation moderated by self-esteem (Tourism Review, 2024). However, these studies primarily focus on general counter productive work rather than coworker directed deviant behavior which is more distinct and more interpersonal harm. Moreover, recent studies highlight negative reciprocity beliefs as important pathway through which ostracized employees may retaliate against coworkers (Derby University Study, 2023) no contemporary studies have simultaneously examined both psychological contract breach and negative reciprocity beliefs together as dual mediators. this creates an incomplete understanding of how and why ostracism translates into personal deviance. Additionally, researches have been conducted in healthcare, hospitality but very few investigations have been carried out in Pakistan's telecommunication sector. While a 2024 process-model emphasizes that employees' reactions to ostracism vary across organizational context, there is still limited evidence exploring this mechanism within South Asian collectivist workplaces (Sharma & Dhar, 2024). Despite progress in recent year more research is needed to examine coworker directed deviant behavior as an outcome of workplace ostracism in Pakistan's Telecom sector.

### **1.4. Problem Statement:**

“Recent researches have shown that workplace ostracism can lead to harmful employee outcome yet studies conducted focus on counterproductive work behaviors rather than coworker directed deviant behavior which involves direct harm toward colleagues. New evidences suggests that ostracism may trigger psychological contract breach (Sabir et al., 2024) and foster negative reciprocity beliefs (Hua et al., 2023), existing studies examines these mediators as separate rather than together resulting in an incomplete understanding of how ostracism unfolds into personal deviance.”

Guided by Conservation of Resources theory (Hobfoll et al., 2018), the present study seeks to address these gaps by examining a dual stage psychological process through which workplace ostracism

leads to harmful coworker directed deviant behavior. According to the COR theory social exclusion represents a significant loss of valued psychological resources. When employees in telecom organization perceive that ostracism violates the unwritten obligations between them and their employer, they may interpret it as psychological contract breach which can give rise to negative reciprocity beliefs a motivation to retaliate against those around them to restore perceived losses (Saini & Sharma, 2024). Despite theoretical support empirical studies rarely test these mediators together and so does Pakistan's collectivist work setting so this study responds directly to that call by investigating how workplace ostracism, psychological contract breach and negative reciprocity beliefs interact to produce coworker directed deviance with Pakistan's telecom sector.

### **1.5. Research Objectives:**

This study is guided by the following research objectives:

1. This study aims to analyze how social exclusion in the workplace influences employees' coworkers to engage in antisocial behavior in Pakistani corporations.
2. Examine the possibility that psychological contract breach acts as a mediator between social exclusion in the workplace and antisocial behavior directed by coworkers.
3. In order to determine if negative ideas about reciprocity have a mediating role in the connection between social exclusion and deviant behavior aimed towards coworkers. In order to find out if the link between social exclusion at work and deviant actions directed by coworkers is mediated in a sequential fashion by negative views about reciprocity and psychological contract breakdown.

### **1.6. Research Questions:**

This study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. Are employees in Pakistan's telecom sector more likely to engage in deviant behavior when they experience workplace ostracism?
2. Is the association between social exclusion and employee misconduct moderated by psychological contract breach?
3. Workplace ostracism and deviant behavior directed by coworkers: is negative reciprocity belief a mediator?
4. Workplace ostracism and coworker-directed deviant behavior: is there a sequential mediating role for psychological contract breach and negative reciprocity beliefs?

## **1.7. Significance of the Study:**

It is important for the management of telecom sector organizations in Pakistan. Examining how ostracism in the workplace increases deviant acts by coworkers points out the negative effects for a person as well as the entire organization, since it can lead to less teamwork, less happiness at work and less productivity. The results will give managers advice backed by research to handle issues related to ostracism in the workplace. This will allow organizations to prevent social exclusion, support a sense of belonging and support better relationships at work to reduce the bad outcomes of it.

Conservation of Resources theory is applied to understand how workplace ostracism, violating the psychological contract, negative reciprocity belief and deviant behavior are connected. While research has studied each of these constructs individually or in various groups, this study is the first to combine them into a whole model that details how people respond to the loss of resources. Thus, COR theory is applied more widely in organizational research and negative work events are shown to unfold via complex cognitive and emotional processes.

Besides, this project is expected to add useful information about workplace ostracism to the current scholarly base in Pakistan, since most relevant studies today focus on Western countries. Pakistan's culture and traditions-defined by group unity, respect for authority and focus on inclusion-influence how employees are affected psychologically and behaviorally by being ostracized at work. For this reason, this research will allow scholars to study how culture in a specific locale may impact things that happen in the workplace. It makes it possible to study organizational behavior in different cultural and regional positions which benefits regional research and global knowledge of workplaces.

## **1.8. Structure of the Thesis:**

The topic of this research is examined in 5 chapters in a methodical order. The Introduction Chapter in Chapter 1 discusses the background of the research, what the problem is, what is being investigated and why it counts. It makes it clear for the researcher why this topic should be studied.

In Chapter 2, Literature Review and Theoretical Framework, the authors review what research has been conducted on workplace ostracism, psychological contract breach, negative reciprocity and deviant behavior. It states that understanding is built from the principles of the Conservation of Resources.

In Chapter 3, Methodology, the research design, the method used to select samples and the tools and methods for collecting and analyzing information relevant to the research questions are explained.

In Chapter 4, Results, the findings from studying the data are explained, including any testing of hypotheses and mediation models.

In Chapter 5 (Discussion and Conclusion), the researcher examines the outcomes in light of theory and earlier literature, describes the study's practical effects, admits to a few limitations and provides directions for continuing research.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review:**

### **2.1. Literature Review:**

Being ignored, excluded or overlooked by people at your job is what is known as workplace ostracism (Gamian-Wilk & Madeja-Bien, 2021). It is not always easy to notice, but it can severely harm employees by taking away the social connection they need. Because social inclusion and group belonging are very important in Pakistan, ostracism in the telecom world can be much more of a challenge than in other societies (Yildirim & Eslen-Ziya, 2021). Ostracism, according to research, causes people to experience less job satisfaction, more stress, a lack of loyalty to their employer and can make them behave in ways that harm their work (Howard et al., 2020). Jealousy, rivalry, giving unequal treatment or office politics are some of the reasons why people might face ostracism. Being hard to notice by official grievance structures, it has significant effects. One can address it using inclusive leadership, open policies on communication, activities to build teams and creating awareness within the organization (Leung et al., 2022). Being aware of ostracism is necessary to support better environments at work and stop a negative habit of exclusion.

The psychological contract is broken when employees feel let down because their employer does not meet obligations, stated or not which leads to feelings of being betrayed and distrustful (Faizan, Yousuf, & Khan, 2025). Being left out in the workplace can make an employee feel that the organization is no longer interested in them which may prompt them to think that the organization's promise has been broken (Zhao et al., 2022). This betrayal can cause employees to adapt negative beliefs, making them feel they can harm others or the organization to get revenge (De Clercq, 2024). If employees believe in negative reciprocity, they may behave recklessly by gossiping, ruining other people's work or withholding details, in an effort to balance the scales (Nyang'wa, 2024). Such behaviors which are usually hidden, often lead to divisions among colleagues, lower trust and make productivity suffer. The change from being rejected to engaging in deviant actions shows why acting early is important. Organizations can avoid psychological contract breaks by keeping the information open, respecting all employees and supporting diversity. Also, employee feedback, private reporting and training for managers can help lessen retaliatory thoughts and improve the psychology in the workplace.

### **2.2. Conservation of Resources Theory:**

The Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, proposed by Hobfoll (1989), is considered a key stress theory and states that individuals try to gain, hold onto and safeguard important resources which might be material or emotional. In COR theory, resources that are in danger or are lost have a greater effect than resources that are gained which means people notice resource loss more. This can

occur in a workplace when emotions are stressed out, relationships become strained or there is a lack of justice which might result in psychological stress and odd behaviors.

Using COR theory, organizational behavior research reveals how experiencing issues like being ostracized, incivility or not meeting expectations may cause a person to experience a loss spiral. In the case of workplace ostracism, an employee can feel left out which can cause reduced confidence in themselves. Such a start can then progress to feelings that the organization has broken the contract and in the future such feelings might emerge as negative actions such as behaving badly. According to COR theory, people react to stressful events by either making an effort to save what they still have or by becoming defensive once their coping abilities are used up (Hobfoll et al., 2018). That is why it is often used to explore workers' behavior when resources are scarce, like in the corporate world.

### **2.3.1. The Relationship Between Workplace Ostracism and Co-worker Directed Deviant Behavior:**

Relationships, respect, and emotional stability are examples of scarce resources that people strive to acquire, maintain, and protect in accordance with the COR principle. When staff are overlooked, excluded or made to feel like outsiders by co-workers or supervisors, it directly hampers both social and emotional resources. When they are rejected by others, employees might feel their relationships and inner strength diminish which may lead to stress and frustration. Such lack of resources leads to stress and challenges the idea of being treated fairly at work which negatively impacts how well people get along with each other (Wang et al., 2023).

To deal with the lack of resources, a few employees may turn to inappropriate actions or defiance against other employees. When someone goes through a loss and finds it hard to recover with other means, COR theory suggests that they may start behaving defensively or aggressively to protect whatever they have left. As a result, gossiping, sabotage or the denial of information can develop in situations where someone feels excluded from the community or thinks they are being treated unfairly (Belgasm, Alzubi, Iyiola, & Khadem, 2025).

### **2.3.2. The Mediating Role of Psychological Contract Breach in the relationship between Workplace Ostracism and Coworker Directed Deviant Behavior:**

The COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989) argues that individuals are inspired to protect important resources like trust and fairness they find in the workplace. If a worker is ostracized at work, it means that respect and inclusion, key parts of the psychological contract, are not being upheld by the company. This kind of violation is called a psychological contract breach and it means the employee feels that the

organization has not given the expected assurances of fairness and support (Robinson & Morrison, 2000). Such a breach results in losing social capital, as well as stability and perceived fairness at work.

Employees might try to retaliate or assert more power by carrying out coworker-directed. This theory states that, if somebody feels their crucial resources have been removed and support is absent, they might choose to protect themselves or harm the one who harmed them. Because of this, experiencing psychological contract breach is what helps individuals understand ostracism and react in certain ways. Such a violation can lead someone to feel even more upset and bear more resentment against those workers, especially when they think their coworkers agree with or do not care about the ostracism (De Clercq, 2024). So, when the psychological contract is broken, it helps to bring about bad interactions among coworkers.

### **2.3.3. The Mediating Role of Negative Reciprocity Beliefs in the relationship between Workplace Ostracism and Coworker Directed Deviant Behavior:**

COR theory states that individuals try to preserve their important assets, including dignity, happiness and relationships with others. Employees feel that workplace ostracism puts their social and mental resources at risk. Lack of resources can lead some to believe that retaliation is the appropriate way to react to mistreatment which is called negative reciprocity (Liu et al, 2022). Based on COR such beliefs work as a way to prepare your mind to respond to unfairness by trying to restore power or fairness through taking revenge.

Members of staff may act hurtful to their colleagues by spreading rumors, denying help or putting people down, as a way of getting back at them for perceived injustice. So, it plays a major role in the process from exclusion to committing acts of deviance. The idea that payback for mistreatment is needed makes it seem right to employees engaging in retaliation, since it gives them a reason to retaliate or take revenge. As a result, negative reciprocity beliefs help connect the cause (exclusion) to the effect (retaliation) by translating how ostracism makes someone feel into acts of retaliation (Deery et al., 2021).

### **2.3.4. The Sequential Mediation of Psychological Contract Breach and Negative Reciprocity Beliefs in the Workplace Ostracism- Coworker Directed Deviant Behavior Relationship:**

COR theory outlines how experiencing social rejection at work starts a chain reaction that can end in employees behaving unethically. Being ostracized at work causes employees to feel they have

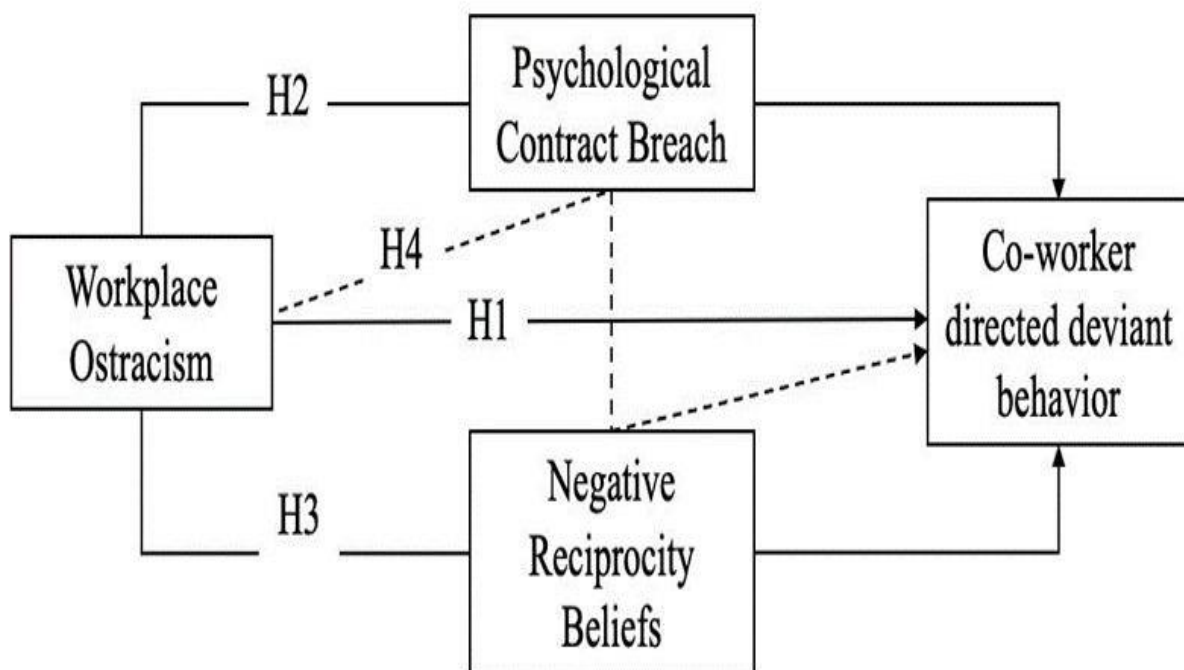
lost important social and emotional support. Because of the initial resources lost, employees start to feel the organization is not honoring its part of the psychological contract which may cause them to feel betrayed and violated (Liao et al., 2024). Such a leak makes people feel that the organization didn't keep its unspoken promise to include and support them which increases their emotional and mental stress. Such a breach may lead employees to believe that mistreatment can be returned in kind since it is justified. Because of this belief, individuals are driven to act in ways that harm others as a response to what they see as unfairness and losing things, often to restore a sense of balance (Topa et al., 2022). Therefore, if an employee experiences workplace ostracism, it makes them think their psychological contract has been breached, triggering negative reciprocity ideas which eventually cause them to act out against their colleagues

H<sub>1</sub>: Workplace Ostracism is positively associated with Co-worker Directed Deviant Behavior.

H<sub>2</sub>: Psychological Contract Breach mediates the relationship between Workplace Ostracism and Coworker Directed Deviant Behavior.

H<sub>3</sub>: Negative Reciprocity Beliefs mediates the relationship between Workplace Ostracism and Coworker Directed Deviant Behavior.

H<sub>4</sub>: Psychological Contract Breach and Negative Reciprocity Beliefs mediate the relationship between Workplace Ostracism and Co-worker Directed Deviant Behaviour.



## **Chapter 3: Research**

### **3.1. Research Philosophy:**

Research philosophy is made up of beliefs and assumptions guiding development in a certain area of study. It directs researchers in handling issues, obtaining evidence, looking over the evidence and interpreting what it means. Common philosophical bases in business research include positivism, interpretivism, realism and pragmatism. In positive statistics, focus is placed on objective observable facts and pays more attention to qualitative information, testing, building hypotheses and adhering to scientific rules. Unlike positivism, both interpretivism and realism, want to understand human actions in their contextual frameworks. In pragmatism, the main concern is how to tackle a problem, so any suitable method can be chosen, no matter the foundational views (Saunders et al., 2019; Bryman & Bell, 2015; Collis & Hussey, 2021).

The study uses the positivist philosophy because it fits the purpose and style of the study. The goal of the research is to find out the relationships between workplace ostracism, breaching the psychological contract, believing in negative reciprocity and participating in coworker-directed deviance. Since positivism offers the chance to gather objective data, use surveys and analyze ideas rigorously, it is suitable in this case. Generalizing the findings among a large group of employees in Pakistan which positivism is good at, also influenced choosing this approach (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Saunders et al., 2019; Blumberg et al., 2014).

### **3.2. Research Purpose:**

In business administration, the research purpose guides how a study is designed, operates and interpreted. Depending on their goal, research studies are mainly of these three types: exploratory, descriptive and causal. Exploratory research takes place when not much information is available about a topic and it aims to explore, get new ideas or form suggestions. It aims to correctly show what a population or phenomenon is like or does. Explanatory research, also referred to as causal research, studies how one thing causes another to happen (Saunders et al., 2019; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Sekaran & Bougie, 2019). How the research will be used determines the ways data is gathered, examined and the kind of approaches used to design the research.

This research falls under causal types because it examines the cause-and-effect relationship between workplace ostracism (independent variable) and coworker-directed deviant behavior (dependent variable) by analyzing the role of psychological contract breach and negative reciprocity beliefs. The study seeks to discover if there are any relationships among factors and to clarify the underlying causes of employees ending up in criminal behavior in companies which is why it uses a

causal approach. It is suggested by the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory that when someone is rejected, the loss of resources may cause them to retaliate in some way. Using quantitative and empirical procedures, the authors strive to learn important things about the connection between organizational justice and employee outcomes (Hobfoll, 1989; Raza et al., 2020; Blau, 1964).

### **3.3. Research Approach:**

A Research approach is about the method used for doing the research process, starting with broad thoughts and ending with detailed collection, analysis and understanding of the data. There are mainly two recognized ways to do research in business administration: deductive and inductive. A deductive approach starts with existing theories or frameworks, proposes hypotheses and checks these ideas by observing empirical data typically gathered through quantitative methods. By contrast, starting from observations or collected data, an inductive approach seeks to discover patterns. Based on these, it builds theories or models that tend to be qualitative (as described by Saunders et al., 2019, Creswell & Creswell, 2018 and Bryman & Bell, 2015). Which approach to use is mostly influenced by what the research is about, the researcher's beliefs and what is meant to be achieved.

As a result of how the study is being conducted, a deductive method was selected. Since the study relies on the COR theory, it can propose ways that workplace ostracism, not meeting the psychological contract, negative reciprocity beliefs and behavior for own gain are related. Scientists aim to study these proposed relationships using a reliable and quantifiable way, sticking with the principles of deductive reasoning. Moreover, covering a wide sample of telecom sector employees in Pakistan means the study depends on deductive thinking, testing hypotheses and statistical methods (Sekaran & Bougie, 2019; Blumberg et al., 2014; Collis & Hussey, 2021).

### **3.4. Research Strategy:**

A research strategy sets out the steps a researcher should follow to address the research questions or test hypotheses. It requires picking data collection, analysis and interpretation ways that suit the research approach and philosophy. Within business administration, research approaches are usually divided into the main categories of qualitative and quantitative. Quantitative research begins by collecting numbers and then using data analysis to find repeating patterns, examine theories and make predictions. Deductive reasoning and positivist philosophy are the two things most linked to the "scientific method." Qualitative research, however, involves understanding experiences and social contexts by using methods like interviewing, having focus groups or observing people, rather than using statistics (as mentioned by Saunders et al., 2019; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Bryman & Bell, 2015).

Because of the objectives and type of this research, quantitative methods are being used. The strategy fits the study because it intends to explore if workplace ostracism, psychological contract breach, negative reciprocity beliefs and coworker-directed deviant behavior are all related to each other as described by a theory-based model. Using a structured survey with the quantitative approach allows for collecting information from a large group of employees in Pakistan so the results have objective validity. Mediation and sequential mediation analysis which are statistical approaches, make it possible to accurately test the suggested hypotheses. Both the approach and the philosophy of the research support using a quantitative strategy which emphasizes empirical proof and hypothesis testing (Sekaran & Bougie, 2019; Collis & Hussey, 2021; Blumberg et al., 2014).

### **3.5. Time Horizon:**

Time horizon includes the time span over which a study happens and its data are collected. Following this principle, studies are mostly put into cross-sectional or longitudinal categories. A cross-sectional study takes data at one specific point, showing the situation as it is now. This method is used for seeing how two variables are linked in a particular group and is normally applied in studies where data collection is limited. By contrast, a longitudinal study means that researchers keep watching the same variables for a long time. Longitudinal research shows changes, patterns and causes by following events as they unfold over time, though it generally requires large investments, careful planning and sustained attention from the participants (Saunders et al., 2019; Bryman & Bell, 2015; Sekaran & Bougie, 2019).

Because of the limits and features of the research, this study focuses solely on the present. This approach is favored to study the relationships between workplace ostracism, psychological contract breach, negative reciprocity beliefs and coworker-directed deviant behavior from the same data gathered over a defined period and with the limited resources at hand. The study also tries to apply the findings to a wide group of telecom sector employees in Pakistan which makes using a cross-sectional approach efficiency and suitable. Because of this design, the researcher can quickly gather lots of data and experiment with the research model by statistical methods which matches the study's logic and research approach (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Collis & Hussey, 2021).

### **3.6. Data Collection Method:**

Data collection for this study was carried out using an electronic structured questionnaire developed via Google Forms. The questionnaire was specifically designed to gather relevant and accurate data in line with research objectives. The study was conducted in Islamabad and Pakistan Telecommunication Limited (PTCL) was selected as target organization. The structured questionnaire was distributed among employees of PTCL preferably middle and lower management employees through electronic means including official emails and instant messaging platform which is WhatsApp to ensure wider reach and convenience for the respondents. This online mode of data collection facilitated timely responses and maintained confidentiality and allowed employees to participate voluntarily at their convenience. The use of electronic forms helped in efficient data management and minimization of data entry errors in excel sheet thereby enhancing the reliability and accuracy of the collected data.

### **3.7. Questionnaire Development:**

The questionnaire was created in English with 20 questions via google forms to make sure the overall structure was clear and consistent which allows participants to provide reliable answer during data collection. In first part of the questionnaire the information gathered was about respondents' age, gender, education, job experience that how long they had been working which helped set the study's findings and select possible control variables. In the second part, I looked at how factors like workplace ostracism, psychological contract breach, negative reciprocity beliefs and coworker-directed deviant behavior can be measured. The draft of the questionnaire was built using advice and input from MS scholars and professors, thanks to whose expertise the instrument was both relevant and matched the research objectives.

### 3.8. Measures:

Variables	Questions	Authors
Workplace Ostracism	<p>“Others ignore me at work.”</p> <p>“Others left the area when I entered.”</p> <p>“Others refused to talk to me at work.”</p> <p>“Other shut me out of conversations at work.”</p>	Ferris, Brown, Berry and Lian.
Psychological Contract Breach	<p>“I have not received everything promised to me in exchange for my contributions.”</p> <p>“My employer has broken many of its promises to me even though I’ve upheld my side of the deal.”</p> <p>“Almost all the promises made by my employer during recruitment have been kept so far”</p> <p>“I feel betrayed by my organization.”</p>	Robinson & Morrison.
Negative Reciprocity Beliefs	<p>“If someone treats me badly, I feel I should treat them even worse.”</p> <p>“If someone causes me trouble, I should find a way to make them regret it.”</p> <p>“If I am treated unfairly, I will take revenge.”</p> <p>“Getting back at others is a natural part of life.”</p>	Eisenberger, Lynch, Aselage and Rohdieck.
Coworker Directed Deviant Behavior	<p>“Made fun of someone at work.”</p> <p>“Said something hurtful to someone at work</p> <p>“Made an ethnic, religious or a racial remark at work.”</p>	Bennett & Robinson.

### **3.9. Units of Analysis:**

Units of analysis are the main elements or things being studied or analyzed. Here, sample refers to what or who the researcher studies to make conclusions about the whole population or situation. When doing research in business and social science fields, common points of study can be individuals, groups, organizations or events, depending on what's being studied (Luo et al 2022). Here, the research is focused on individual employees in the telecom sector of Pakistan. The research looks at individuals since the focus is on how workplace ostracism influences their psychological contracts, creates negative reciprocity beliefs and results in employees engaging in deviant behavior against coworkers. Since personal perceptions, beliefs and behaviors are at the heart of the study, looking at data on an individual level gives us the best insights into the causes being looked into.

### **3.10. Population:**

A research population consists of all the entities whether they be people, places, or things that share the traits that will shape the study's conclusions (ScienceInsights, 2025). It sets the limitations of the research and helps decide what or who should be studied. This study is aimed at employees who are part of the telecom sector in Pakistan. The population was selected because the research aims to see how workplace ostracism can lead some individuals to act inappropriately at work. Initial calculations and data from the organizations revealed that roughly 150 to 200 people are working in various departments of the chosen companies. By being in this part of the population, not all 150 to 200 but some employees (180) took on the common role of potentially participating in the data collection.

### **3.11. Sampling Technique:**

To study a bigger group, business researchers may sample some individuals from it as a representative set. With these approaches, researchers obtain useful facts by looking at some people, not every person in the population which is very difficult in terms of resources and time. Probability sampling (e.g., simple random sampling, stratified sampling, cluster sampling) ensures that every member of the population has an equal and known chance of being included in the sample. Non-probability sampling (e.g., convenience sampling, purposive sampling) relies on factors like ease of use or expert opinion to make the selection. How you choose a sampling method is based on what you want to study, how large your population is, how easy it is to reach people and the resources you have

(Shamsudin, Hassim, and Abd Manaf, 2022). In this study data is collected from telecom sector in Pakistan, (Islamabad) specifically from employees working in PTCL, Islamabad as the location is accessible and organizational support is available. The sampling technique convenience sampling was used, allowing participation from employees who were willing to respond. This approach of data collection was practical and ensured diversity.

### **3.12. Sample Size:**

The term sample size means how many individuals are picked from a population for a study. Using the appropriate samples is very important, since it influences how accurate, reliable and applicable the research results are. If the sample is small, the results might not be trusted because there is high sampling error, but taking a large sample can be impractical as it uses up a lot of time and resources. The sample size in business and social science research is usually decided by how big the population is, how sure you want to be and how much error you can accept. Many researchers use sample size table which tells them the recommended sample size based on a given population size, a confidence level of 95% and an error margin of 5%. In this study a population of 200 requires minimum sample size of 180 respondents to produce statistically reliable results. Therefore, the employees from telecom sector were targeted for this study to ensure the data collected is reliable representative and suitable for hypothesis testing.

### **1.13. Ethical Considerations:**

During collection of questionnaire-based survey answers, I made certain to stick to all academic research ethics. It was made sure that informed consent was given by all: they were clearly advised about the reasons for the study, the fact that they could withdraw at any point without consequence and that their participation was entirely voluntary. I promised participants that their identities would stay private and unwanted and that I would only use the data for academic works. No personal data was gathered that would identify the participants behind the responses. As well, the words chosen for the questionnaire were polite and did not intrude. I did not apply any pressure or extra incentives so that my research would just attract those who wanted to take part. In the end, the process followed ethical rules and was meant to uphold the dignity, privacy and autonomy of every respondent.

## Chapter 4: Results

This chapter presents the findings and data analysis of the study data. The primary objective is to examine the impact of workplace ostracism on coworker directed deviant behavior within the telecommunication sector while also investigating the mediating roles of psychological contract breach and negative reciprocity beliefs. The analysis is based on data collected through structured electronic questionnaires administered via Google Forms and subsequently analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). In addition, reliability and validity tests were conducted to ensure the accuracy and consistency of the measurement model used in this study.

### 4.1. Demographic Profile:

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender</b>	Male	102	56.7%
	Female	78	43.3%
<b>Age</b>	20-29 years	52	28.9%
	30-39 years	75	41.7%
	40-49 years	38	21.1%
	50 years and above	15	8.3%
<b>Education</b>	Bachelor's Degree	112	62.2%
	Master's Degree	58	32.2%
	Diploma/Other	10	5.6%
<b>Experience</b>	Less than 3 years	41	22.8%
	3-7 years	89	49.4%
	8-12 years	35	19.4%
	More than 12 years	15	8.3%

Table 4.1.1: Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 180)

The demographic profile represents the characteristics of the respondents (N = 180) in terms of gender, age, education level and work experience. The findings show that 56.7% of the respondents were male while 43.3% were female indicating a balanced gender distribution. In terms of age the majority of respondents fell within the range of 30-45 years age group (41.7%) followed by those age group of 20-29 (28.9%). Respondents aged 40-49 years accounted for 21.1% whereas 8.3% were 50 years and above suggesting that most participants were in the early to mid-career stage. Regarding educational qualifications a large portion of respondents held a Bachelor's degree (62.2%) followed by Master's degree (32.2%) holder reflecting well educated sample. With respect to work experience nearly half of the respondents having 3-7 years of experience (49.4%) while 22.8% had less than 3 years. Respondent with 8-12 years of experience constituted of 19.4% and 8.3% had more than 12 years of experience indicating moderate professional experience among the participants.

## 1.2. Reliability Statistics:

Construct	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha ( $\alpha$ )
Workplace Ostracism (WO)	4	0.87
Psychological Contract Breach (PCB)	4	0.89
Negative Reciprocity Beliefs (NRB)	4	0.82
Coworker-Directed Deviant Behavior (CDDB)	3	0.85

Table 4.2.2: Reliability Statistics (Cronbach's Alpha)

The reliability analysis examines how consistently the items of each construct measure. The table shows the Cronbach's alpha values for all study variables along the number of items used to measure each construct. All the constructs were measured using Cronbach's alpha values which range from 0.82 to 0.89 which are well above the commonly accepted minimum threshold of 0.70. This indicates that the items within each scale are highly correlated and reliably measure their respective constructs.

Workplace Ostracism recorded a Cronbach's alpha of 0.87 suggesting that the 4 items used to measure this construct are internally consistent. Psychological Contract Breach showed the highest reliability with an alpha value of 0.89 indicating excellent consistency among its measurement items. Negative Reciprocity Beliefs demonstrated a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.82 reflecting good

reliability while Coworker Directed Deviant Behavior measured with three items achieved an alpha value of **0.85** also indicating strong internal consistency despite having fewer items.

### 4.3. Confirmatory Factor Analysis:

Model	$\chi^2$	df	$\chi^2/df$	CFI	TLI	RMSEA [90% CI]	SRMR
<b>Hypothesized 4-Factor</b>	142.65	84	1.70	0.97	0.96	0.06 [0.04, 0.08]	0.04
3-Factor (PCB+NRB merged)	298.41	87	3.43	0.88	0.86	0.12 [0.10, 0.13]	0.08
1-Factor (All merged)	601.22	90	6.68	0.68	0.62	0.18 [0.17, 0.19]	0.13
<i>Note: CFI = Comparative Fit Index; TLI = Tucker-Lewis Index; RMSEA = Root Mean Square Error of Approximation; SRMR = Standardized Root Mean Square Residual.</i>							

Table 4.3.3: Confirmatory Factor Analysis Model Fit Indices

Confirmatory Factor Analysis is used to validate the measurement model by examining whether the observed items accurately represent the underlying constructs. Table 3 represents the model fit for three competing measurement model: the hypothesized four factor model, a three-factor model in which psychological contract breach and negative reciprocity beliefs were merged and a one factor model in which all constructs were combined.

The hypothesized factor model demonstrated excellent fit to the data with a  $\chi^2/df$  value of 1.70 which is below the recommended threshold of 3. The CFI (0.97) and TLI (0.96) exceed the acceptable cutoff of 0.90 indicating strong comparative fit. Additionally, the RMSEA value of 0.06 with 90%

confidence interval of [0.04, 0.08] along with SRMR of 0.04 falls within the acceptable limit confirming a good model fit.

In contrast the three-factor model where psychological contract breach and negative reciprocity beliefs were combined shows a noticeable poorer fit. The  $\chi^2/df$  value increases to 3.43 while the CFI (0.88) and TLI (0.86) fall below the recommended threshold furthermore the RMSEA (0.12), SRMR (0.08) exceed the acceptable limit indicating that merging these constructs reduces model adequacy.

The one factor model in which all the constructs were combined into a single factor exhibits the weakest fit. The  $\chi^2/df$  value of 6.68 along with very low CFI (0.68) and TLI (0.62) values and high RMSEA (0.18) and SRMR (0.13) indicates a poor representation of the data and suggests the presence of distinct constructs rather than a single underlying factor

#### 4.4. Convergent & Discriminant Validity:

Construct	AVE	1	2	3	4
1. Workplace Ostracism (WO)	0.63	<b>0.79</b>			
2. Psych. Contract Breach (PCB)	0.66	0.59	<b>0.81</b>		
3. Negative Reciprocity (NRB)	0.55	0.53	0.65	<b>0.74</b>	
4. Deviant Behavior (CDDB)	0.65	0.48	0.57	0.60	<b>0.81</b>
<i>Note: Diagonal elements (in bold) are the square root of the AVE. Off-diagonals are inter-construct correlations.</i>					

Table 4.4.4: Convergent & Discriminant Validity (CFA Results)

Convergent validity shows whether items of the same construct are strongly related usually assessed through AVE ( $\geq 0.50$ ). Discriminant validity indicates that constructs are distinct from each other commonly confirmed when the square root of AVE is greater than inter-construct correlations.

Table 4 presents adequate convergent validity as all the constructs that is Workplace Ostracism (AVE=0.63), Psychological Contract Breach (0.66), Negative Reciprocity (0.55) and Deviant Behavior (0.65) exceed the recommended threshold of 0.50. Discriminant Validity is also established because the square root of AVE (bold diagonal values of 0.79, 0.81,0.74,0.81) are higher than their corresponding

inter-construct correlations. Overall, the results confirm that constructs are consistent internally and empirically distinct supporting the adequacy of the measurement model for the thesis.

#### 4.5. Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations:

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
1. Workplace Ostracism (WO)	3.20	1.05	1			
2. Psychological Contract Breach (PCB)	3.65	0.98	.59**	1		
3. Negative Reciprocity Beliefs (NRB)	3.85	0.86	.53**	.65**	1	
4. Deviant Behavior (CDDB)	2.55	1.12	.48**	.57**	.60**	1
** p < 0.01 (2-tailed).						

Table 4.5.5: Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations

The Mean indicates the average level of each variable, standard deviation shows how much responses vary around the mean and the correlations reflect the strength and direction of relationships between variables. Table 5 presents the descriptive statistics and intercorrelations among the study variables. The Mean values indicate that respondents reported moderate levels of Workplace Ostracism (M=3.20) and Psychological Contract Breach (M=3.65) relatively higher levels of Negative Reciprocity Beliefs (M= 3.85) and comparatively lower level of Coworker Directed Deviant Behavior (M=2.55). The Standard Deviations ranging from 0.86 to 1.12 suggest an acceptable level of variability in responses. Correlation Analysis shows that workplace is positively and significantly related to Psychological Contract Breach ( $r=.59$ ,  $p < .01$ ), Negative Reciprocity Beliefs ( $r=.53$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and Deviant Behavior ( $r= 0.48$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Psychological is also positively associated with Negative Reciprocity Beliefs ( $r=.65$ ,  $p < 0.1$ ) and Deviant Behavior ( $r=.57$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Furthermore, Negative Reciprocity Beliefs exhibit a strong positive relationship with Deviant Behavior ( $r=.60$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Overall, these results indicate the higher levels of workplace ostracism and psychological contract breach are associated with stronger negative reciprocity beliefs and increased deviant behavior.

#### 4.6. Results of Serial Mediation Analysis:

Path	Coeff. (β)	SE	t	p	95% Bootstrap CI
<b>Direct and Total Effects</b>					
Total Effect: WO → CDDB (H1)	0.38	0.08	4.75	<.001	[0.22, 0.54]
Direct Effect: WO → CDDB (after mediators)	0.05	0.07	0.71	0.477	[-0.09, 0.19]
<b>Indirect Effects (Mediation)</b>					
H2: WO → PCB → CDDB	0.11	0.04			[0.04, 0.20]
H3: WO → NRB → CDDB	0.08	0.03			[0.03, 0.15]
H4: WO → PCB → NRB → CDDB (Serial Mediation)	0.14	0.04			[0.07, 0.23]
<b>Model Pathways</b>					
a1: WO → PCB	0.55	0.06	9.17	<.001	[0.43, 0.67]
a2: WO → NRB (controlling for PCB)	0.21	0.07	3.00	0.003	[0.07, 0.35]
d21: PCB → NRB	0.47	0.07	6.71	<.001	[0.33, 0.61]
b1: PCB → CDDB (controlling for WO, NRB)	0.20	0.11	1.82	0.070	[-0.02, 0.42]
b2: NRB → CDDB (controlling for WO, PCB)	0.52	0.12	4.33	<.001	[0.28, 0.76]
<i>Note: WO = Workplace Ostracism; PCB = Psychological Contract Breach; NRB = Negative Reciprocity Beliefs; CDDB = Coworker-Directed Deviant Behavior. Unstandardized coefficients are reported. CI = Confidence Interval.</i>					

Table 4.6.6: Results of Serial Mediation Analysis (PROCESS Model 6)

Serial Mediation Analysis examines whether the effect of an independent variable on a dependent variable is transmitted through two or more mediators in a specific sequence. Table 6 reports the results of the serial mediation analysis using the PROCESS Model 6. The total effect of workplace ostracism on coworker directed deviant behavior is positive and significant ( $\beta = 0.38$ ,  $p < .001$ , 90% CI [0.22,0.54]), supporting H1. However, when psychological contract breach and negative reciprocity beliefs are included as mediators the direct effect becomes non-significant ( $\beta = 0.05$ ,  $p = .477$ ) indicating full mediation. The indirect effect analysis shows that workplace ostracism influences deviant behavior through psychological contract breach alone (H2:  $\beta = 0.11$ , 95% CI [0.04,0.20]) and through negative reciprocity beliefs alone (H3:  $\beta = 0.08$ , 95% CI [0.03,0.1]) as neither confidence interval includes zero. Importantly the serial mediation path from workplace ostracism to psychological contract breach to negative reciprocity beliefs to deviant behavior is also significant (H4:  $\beta = 0.14$ , 95% CI [ 0.07, 0.23] confirming the proposed sequential mechanism. Examination of the model pathway reveal that workplace ostracism significantly predicts psychological contract breach (a1:  $\beta = 0.55$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and negative reciprocity beliefs (a2:  $\beta = 0.21$ ,  $p = .003$ ), while psychological contract breach significantly predicts negative reciprocity beliefs (d21:  $\beta = 0.47$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Negative Reciprocity Beliefs in turn significantly predicts coworker directed deviant behavior (b2:  $\beta = 0.52$ ,  $p < .001$ ) whereas the direct effect of psychological contract breach on deviant behavior is marginal and nonsignificant when other variables are controlled (b1:  $\beta = 0.20$ ,  $P = .070$ ). These findings indicate that workplace ostracism increases deviant behavior primarily by triggering psychological contract breach and fostering negative reciprocity beliefs thereby providing strong support for the hypothesized serial mediation model.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion**

### **5.1. Theoretical Implications:**

The findings of this study offer actionable insights for organizations especially within the Pakistan telecom sector by demonstrating that workplace ostracism is not a minor interpersonal issue but a serious organizational threat that escalates into deviant behaviors. Managers must actively monitor employee interactions and ensure that subtle forms of exclusion such as ignoring colleagues withholding information or excluding others from work related conversations. Implementing formal reporting channels anonymous feedback systems and regular team assessments can help identify teams can help identify ostracism before it develops into psychological contract breach and retaliatory beliefs Also fostering a culture of inclusivity through diversity training, team building exercises and leadership workshops strengthen employees' relational resources reducing the harmful effects of exclusion. Supervisors should also train to observe early signs of disengagement and emotional withdrawal, minimizing the risk of deviant behavior caused by resource loss.

Furthermore, this study highlights the importance of maintaining and reinforcing the psychological contract between employees and the organization. HR department should communicate expectations clearly and ensure fairness in workload distribution and demonstrate consistency with rewards recognition and organizational support. When employees believe their psychological contract is honored, they are less likely to develop negative reciprocity beliefs. Organizations should also introduce conflict resolution programs and counselling services to help employees process feelings of exclusion in healthy ways rather than resorting to harmful actions.

### **5.2. Limitations and Future Implications:**

This study has several limitations that provide direction for future research. all variables that is workplace ostracism, psychological contract breach, negative reciprocity beliefs and coworker directed deviant behavior were measured using a single source that is subordinates the result may be influenced by common method bias. Therefore, the study should multisource data collection such as collecting ostracism rating from coworkers and deviant behavior assessment from supervisor. Second the cross-sectional design restricts the ability to make causal inferences meaning it cannot be definitively concluded that workplace ostracism leads to psychological contract breach, negative reciprocity beliefs or deviant behavior so future researchers are encouraged to collect longitudinal or time lagged data to more accurately test causality among these variables. Although many HR and management related

factors such as emotional exhaustion, organizational support, organizational justice or moral disengagement may also mediate the relationship between workplace ostracism and coworker directed deviance, this study focused only. Additionally, the findings may not be generalizable to employees across Pakistan's entire telecom sector because data were obtained from organization (PTCL) located in specific area of Islamabad.

### **5.3. Conclusion:**

In today's competitive and socially demanding workplaces understanding how interpersonal mistreatment translated into harmful employee behavior is crucial, particularly in Pakistan's telecommunication sector where hierarchical structures a relationship driven cultures intensify the psychological impact of being ignored or excluded. This study adopted a deductive approach using a questionnaire approach and a cross sectional time horizon. Data was collected telecom sector employees in PTCL using convenience sampling, resulting in a sample that reflect sector's operational environment. Findings revealed that workplace ostracism significantly increases coworker directed deviant behavior and both psychological contract breach and negative reciprocity beliefs mediate this relationship through a sequential pathway. theoretically the study advances COR theory by explaining how resource loss triggers psychological contract violation and retaliatory cognition offering a deeper mechanism underlying deviant behavior. Practically this study provides manager in the telecom sector with insight into reducing ostracism, strengthening psychological contracts and mitigating retaliatory attitudes through training, communication, and supportive HR practices. Overall, this research offers meaningful contributions by uncovering how social exclusion unfolds into harmful workplace actions by highlighting practical avenues for fostering healthier fairer and more collaborative organizational environments.

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RC-04

1<sup>st</sup> Half Semester Progress Report

Name of Student(s)	Yusra Rehman
Enrollment No.	01-221242-015
Thesis/Project Title	The impact of Workplace Ostracism on Coworker Directed Deviant in Telecommunication Sector: Examining the mediating roles of Psychological contract breach and Negative reciprocity Beliefs

## Supervisor Student Meeting Record

No.	Date	Place of Meeting	Topic Discussed	Signature of Student
1	16 sep 2025	supervisor office	Data collection	Yusra
2	25 sep 2025	"	Reviewed Questionnaire	Yusra
3	08 oct 2025	"	Process of data collection	Yusra
4	20 oct 2025	"	SPSS Analysis	Yusra

Progress Satisfactory Progress Unsatisfactory Remarks: The student is hardworkingSignature of Supervisor: Dr HarrisDate: 16-12-2025Name: Dr Harris Note:Students attach 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> half progress report at the end of spiral copy.

2<sup>nd</sup> Half Semester Progress Report & Thesis Approval Statement

Name of Student(s)	Yusra Rehman			
Enrollment No.	01-221242-015			
Thesis/Project Title	The impact of Workplace ostracism on coworker Directed Deviant Behavior in Telecommunication Sector; Examining the Mediating Roles of Psychological Contract Breach and Negative Reciprocity Beliefs			
Supervisor Student Meeting Record				
No.	Date	Place of Meeting	Topic Discussed	Signature of Student
5	6 Nov 2025	Supervisor office	Analysis Result Reviewed	
6	25 Nov 2025	"	Discussed Result Interpretation	
7	10 Dec 2025	"	Final Review & checked Plagiarism	

APPROVAL FOR EXAMINATION

Candidates' Name: Yusra Rehman Enrollment No: 01-221242-015

Project/Thesis Title:  
The impact of Workplace ostracism on coworker Directed Deviant Behavior in Telecommunication Sector; Examining the mediating roles of Psychological contract Breach and Negative Reciprocity Beliefs.

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