

Chapter 11

How Workplace Loneliness Impacts Workplace Wellbeing?

Leader Influence in Lowering the Impact

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ABSTRACT

Workplace loneliness is growing as a major factor affecting workplace wellbeing. Drilling down into the causes of workplace loneliness this chapter comes across workplace isolation, workplace ostracism and workplace alienation as the three main perpetrators. While workplace isolation occurs due to the inherent type of work, it could also occur due to position or role held at work. Remote and hybrid work models further contribute to workplace isolation also perpetrating workplace alienation and workplace ostracism—two added dimensions of workplace loneliness. While workplace ostracism is an outcome of toxic work environment, organization culture and team dynamics, workplace alienation results from an individual's response to work. Resilience develops the potential to combat alienation facilitating the ability to regroup one's strengths and balance the flipside of remote and hybrid work models thereby alleviating workplace isolation. The facilitating and enabling role played by leaders mitigate workplace loneliness while enhancing, sustaining

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INTRODUCTION

Workplace loneliness is an employee issue that resonates workplace isolation. Humans being social are negatively affected by isolation. The lack of organisational support leads to loneliness depleting resilience. The resilience thus impacted requires support through development and nurturing of wellbeing. When workplace wellbeing is vigorous workplace loneliness can be eliminated. Workplace loneliness is affected by workplace isolation, loneliness, task interdependence, supportive behaviours of colleagues and wellbeing at work. Lack of social connectiveness is associated with a variety of physical and mental health effects with loneliness heightening sensitivity to social threats and motivating renewal of social connections, along with impairing executive functioning, sleep, and mental and physical well-being (Cacioppo & Cacioppo, 2014).

Psychological theorists have emphasized the importance of positive human social connection for health, well-being, and survival defining “social connection as a person’s subjective sense of having close and positively experienced relationships with others in the social world” The different subfields of psychology use different terms for social connection. For example, the subfield of developmental psychology uses the term attachment; clinical psychology and related sociological research employ the terms social support and loneliness; and social psychology applies the terms belongingness, social connectedness, and social exclusion (Seppala et al., 2013; p.412-3). Social connectedness originates from belongingness which together make social connectedness meaningful. These feelings include a sense of similarity, and, emotional connection and affection.

Sense of similarity or perceived similarity is a sense of belongingness (Botha, Dibb & Frost, 2022). It is a sense of mattering to each other indicating 4 elements: membership, influence, integration and fulfillment of needs, and shared emotional connection (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Shared emotional connection activates social connection serving as a protective factor with closer the relationship providing powerful support (Seppala et al., 2013) making belongingness a factor for emotional connection. Emotional connection provides a significant positive correlation with emotional well-being (Suragarn, Hain & Pfaff, 2021) drawing its inverse association with workplace loneliness. Taylor and Stanton (2007) defines social support as “the perception or experience that one is loved and cared for by others, esteemed and valued, and part of a social network of mutual assistance and obligations” (p. 381). The perception is that to develop connectedness, social skills are required alongwith and opportunities to apply social skills. Belonging to prosocial groups

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