

Workplace ostracism clearly associated with health care workers' job satisfaction, stress, and perceived health: Study

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Workplace ostracism refers to someone being excluded from social interaction in the workplace without any explanation. [Published](#) in

Journal of Advanced Nursing, a recent study by the University of Eastern Finland shows that workplace ostracism weakened health care workers' job satisfaction and perceived health, and increased stress. The study also explored the mediating effects of loneliness and self-esteem on the aforementioned factors. A key observation was that loneliness did not weaken job satisfaction as much as ostracism alone did.

"This finding speaks volumes of the crushing effects of workplace [ostracism](#). Experienced loneliness weakens [job satisfaction](#) as such but, according to our study, ostracism is far worse," says the lead author, Doctoral Researcher Sirpa Manninen of the University of Eastern Finland.

Previous studies on workplace ostracism in the health care sector have not made comparisons between different occupational groups to see where ostracism is most prevalent. The new study, conducted among 569 health care workers in Finland, found that ostracism was most frequently experienced by [social workers](#) (78.9%). However, workplace ostracism was almost as frequently experienced by practical nurses (76.8%) and nurses (74.8%). Doctors (71.2%) and those working in managerial positions at different levels (67.4%) had experienced least ostracism.

"When we think about health care workers' coping and workplace well-being, these figures are extremely alarming. This also reinforces the idea that ostracism is not tied to [educational background](#) or workplace hierarchy," Manninen says.

A total of 569 health care workers from two Finnish university hospitals responded to a survey conducted in January 2021. In addition to health care workers, managers from all levels of leadership responded to the survey. The survey included statements on workplace ostracism and various aspects of workplace well-being.

Ostracism should be addressed in the workplace well-being debate

According to Manninen, the findings highlight the fact that ostracism can no longer be ignored in the debate on workplace well-being.

"The harmful effects of ostracism are significant both at individual and workplace level. Especially in the health care sector where people's work involves constant caregiving, it is extremely important to feel included and supported by the community," Manninen says.

"Ostracism can also hinder the flow of information within the workplace, which poses a particular risk to patient safety. In other words, ostracism affects not only those experiencing it, but it runs through the entire organizational structure, all the way to the level of patients and clients. The phenomenon itself is very subtle, but its consequences often are anything but," Manninen points out.

"Learning to identify and recognize ostracism as a specific phenomenon, and calling it out, is key. This will also make it easier to intervene and help workplaces build an atmosphere where ostracism is not tolerated," Manninen concludes.

More information: Sirpa M. Manninen et al, Workplace ostracism in healthcare: Association with job satisfaction, stress, and perceived health, *Journal of Advanced Nursing* (2023). [DOI: 10.1111/jan.15934](https://doi.org/10.1111/jan.15934)

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