

Psychological Stress felt by Employees at Workplace: A Study on Employee Empowerment by examining the Workplace Ostracism and Employee Resilience

Dr Sneha^{1,a}, Dr Mala Kapoor^{1,b}, Komalpreet Kaur^{1,c}

¹ Chandigarh Group of Colleges Jhanjeri, Mohali – 140307, Punjab, India, Department of Management, Chandigarh School of Business, CGCJ, Mohali

Corresponding Email:

^aEmail ID: Sneha.j2822@cgic.ac.in

^bEmail ID: mala.j2905@cgic.ac.in

^cEmail ID: komalpreet.j2198@cgic.ac.in

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ABSTRACT

The study examines the effect of workplace ostracism relationship with the employee empowerment was investigated that highlight the impact of psychological Stress and its role on the employee empowerment, employee's resilience. The study discusses in detail about how the workplace ostracism impact the employee engagement level of the employees. The nature of study is qualitative in nature. The result of the study favors the positive role of employee's resilience behavior and psychological stress is the negative outcome of the workplace ostracism which affect negatively to the mindset of the employees. Hence Organizations need to focus on introduction of such programs that ensure employees about their belongingness with others and improve their bond with peer groups. This will make them more engaged towards the Organizations goals by managing their personal situations.

Keywords: Ostracism, Organizational Behavior, Employee Resilience, Psychological Stress

1. INTRODUCTION

In the most comprehensive manner, many studies has been conducted on the empowerment oriented practices happen in the Organizations and demonstrated how they positively impact the growth of the empowerment concept in recent few years. Employee Empowerment is one of the concepts which has been gaining popularity in the last 15 years, today more than 70% of the organizations adopted some kind of empowerment initiatives for their workforce. The question arises here is why the employee empowerment is gaining must fame in recent years? Today organizations are facing tough competition from the organizations of similar nature and size, to overcoming the intense competition is one of the foremost challenging situations for the organizations. With the rise in the talented workforce demand the Organizations are continuously looking for the loops to find solution to retain the talented workforce. Facing lots of competition, demand for low cost, rise in performance level and demand for more flexible work increasingly demand for the enhancement of employee empowerment (Spreitzer and Doneson, 2015). Spreitzer and Doneson, continue to focus on the Employee empowerment which is one of the practices, often help the organizations employees in overcoming the workplace dissatisfaction and reduce the chances of their absenteeism, turnover and delivering the poor quality of work.

Psychological health of people is one of the most complex sections to be get understood under psychological science. It has been accepted that psychological health is different from the mental health of people, rather they get interchange each other, still there is difference between both. It was proposed that the 'mental health' is related to the mental processes and mechanisms, while the 'psychological health' linked to the person as whole, which is one of the highest manifestations of human spirit.

2. RESEARCH GAP IN STUDY

1.This study bridges the gap between the workplace ostracism and the empowerment level of employees and focus on improving the engagement level of the employees by empowering them as a socially acceptable human being at their respective workplaces.

2. The current study going to examine the impact of workplace ostracism in the Indian context the all-past study mostly considers the other nation context, very few studies has been found on the Indian context.

3. The study aims to provide the reasons behind the workplace ostracism and how we can improve the situation in future.

The following section provides an overview with regards to literature relevant to the variables workplace ostracism, psychological stress, employee resilience and employee empowerment. After the review of enriched literature available on the variables, the main results are to be discussed. The study would be focused on the workplace ostracism as well as future research prospective must be provided.

3. EMPLOYEE EMPOWERMENT CONCEPT

Employee Empowerment held as a management technique which can be applied across various organizations as a means to deal with the needs of modern global business. (Lashley, 1999), conducted their research on the employee empowerment in the service sector organizations which has been applied empowerment in different forms. Employee empowerment is a term used for the business leaders who are proactive in nature and self-sufficient in assisting the goals of an organization. Employee empowerment gains prominent popularity, after the issues are raise earlier in the 'employee involvement' concept. As per Simon, 1976, a concept can be operational if it is scientifically useful, like the employee empowerment is one of the scientifically desirable goals which require specific actions to be taken by the organization. It has been believed that the participation or involvement enhances the employee performance and their satisfaction. (Herrenkohl. et. al., 1999) worked upon the development of the operational definitions of employee empowerment.

Employee empowerment is one of the important jobs which help the Organization in strategic way by improving the performance of the Organizations in a best possible way. (Adaileh et. al., 2024) in their research connect a bridge between the empowerment of employee with the intellectual capital of an organization. The employees can convey their suggestions and can take part in the decision making due to delegation of the intellectual capital. Empowerment grants more freedom to its employees to take the creative decisions and develops its capabilities by raising their performance rates. Employee empowerment liberating the employees for decision making and achieve the Organizations missions and goals. Empowerment concept gives the employees a high sense of taking the responsibilities, to take strategic decisions, additionally reducing the cost and making the quick decision. In case of strategic decision making the empowerment act as change agent, it has been widely accepted that empowerment stimulated employees to learn and grow. Employee empowerment reduces the task time and enhances the relationship between the employees and leads to fastest growth of Organization.

To accomplish the higher rate of performance from the employees the Organizations empower the employees to achieve the competitive advantage under the challenging conditions. Empowerment is not only the way to improve morale of employees rather it has been concerned with the encouragement of employees with high power and more responsibilities. It defines as 'giving employees the power and necessary confidence and freedom to improve their skills and get the high experience. Creation of an opportunity is one of the important work of empowerment concept, which not only gives power to employees, but also provide them with the best skills and expertise to attain strategic objectives.

3.1 Empowerment Concept

To understand the empowerment of employees it is important to understand the business environment first which is facing major challenges like change in technology, shortage of skilled manpower and obsolescence of the products or services are forcing Organizations to reorienting the employees to invoke survival and competence. It has been observes that the committed workforce are highly empowered psychologically (Sahoo et. al., 2010). Empowerment is the processes which enable the individual to behave in autonomous way, this help the workers to do their work in their own way and take responsibility of their own actions. As per the researcher's higher productivity, proactive nature of employees toward work and superior service delivery are part of performance outcomes. While positive attitude, job satisfaction, commitment toward Organization is attitudinal outcomes. The positive outcomes, high performance-based outcomes, high level of commitment and Organizational loyalty are few common features of a psychology empowered employee. To understand in detail about the concept a systematic review of previous research works on the variable's employee empowerment, psychological stress, workplace ostracism and employee resilience are studied in the section below. This paper will contribute to the ongoing discussion on empowering employees and what they feel at their job positions they have assigned in the Organizations.

3.2 Workplace ostracism

(Anasori et al., 2020) defines ostracism as a process of reject or exclusion of people, individual or group from the general part of society. It is generally considered as a practice of ignoring the individual or group, as people need social bonding and feel the sense belongingness to be get accepted by society. It has been studied that the feeling of aggression, intimidation are the outcomes of social rejection and ostracism that prevent an individual from being part of Organization or a work engagement. The workplace ostracism affects the wellbeing of individual and associated with the negative outcomes like feeling of dissatisfaction, absenteeism and high rate of turnover are outcomes of the workplace ostracism that affect the psychological integrity level of employees.

(Gamian-wilk and Bien, 2018) did a detail study on the workplace ostracism and recognized that it is one of the most serious problems suffered by the Organizations. Some reports favor the alarming stage of the ostracism at workplace, their findings reveal that over 15% of the surveyed people experience the workplace ostracism or , rejection over the 5 year period. (William, 2007) workplace ostracism is one of the unrecognizable problems that have been actually throwing severe impact on the workplace culture. (Ferris, Brown, Berry and Lian, 2008) recognized that the workplace ostracism is slightly different from the workplace mistreatment.

Ostracizing behavior is confronted by many employees in the Organization now a days where they face ostracizing behavior from others, this actually cause the pain to the individual same as the physical pain done to human (Howard et. al.,2020). The topic ostracism has grown in recent years, even when the people feel minor form of ostracism in some activities and events even, this creates the discomfort and feeling of sadness among the employees. (Williams and Jarvis, 2006). What if you pass by some fellow colleagues sitting beside you on the table, and suddenly when you join them, they suddenly change the topic this feeling being awkwardly hurt the people in a negative sense (Robinson et al., 2013). Then you replay all the events happened to you during the past few days or weeks that stuck in your mind where you come to realize that in the past also they did the things like this and you never been invited to lunch or join any party.

You realize that you hadn't thought of much until now, but you start imagine how it feels like if you left alone at work like this, this feeling is all about the ostracism situation face by the employee at work. In addition to workplace ostracism there are some other factors that affect the employee empowerment. In the further sections we are going to discuss about the two other variables under study employee resilience and psychological stress. (Bardoel et al., 2014), favors the increasing attention of Organizations towards the concept of resilience and require the further discussion on the topic in HRM concept. Employee resilience gains the popularity due to the theories on psychology gain pace, which become one of the HR practices of Organizations and contribute to the potential development of employees.

3.3 Employee Resilience

Employee resilience is a very new but important concept that requires a careful examination by the Organizations to understand the bond between the employees and their immediate team members or managers. Resilience is one of the functions of individuals as a team member (Meredith et al., 2011) according to which the individual's adaptability has been checked, like the emphasis must be given on the (a) basic abilities individual possess, (b) adaptability to the events or changes happen in the Organization, (C) it must be the availability of the documentation required for reflection of positive adversity on Organization. There are lots of controversial statements with regards to the positive changes that follow the stressful event, which need to be resilient that need to be successful adaptation (Frazier et al., 2019).

The current study has to understand the effect of workplace ostracism on the employee empowerment. To explore the mediating variable to the relationship between workplace ostracism and employee empowerment. To examine the role of employee's resilience and psychological stress on the employee empowerment. This is very important to understand to relationship between these variables to better understand the stimulators to empowerment relationship of employees. Employee resilience is the basic ability of an employee to face the challenges happen at workplace, meets the obligations and targets on deadlines, even if it costs their personal life distractions. (Shin et al., 2019) resilience play an important role in bringing the change and addressing the change happen in the Organizations. The studies specifically signify the resilient individuals are better equipped with the challenges come towards them.

3.3.1 Theoretical foundations of Resilience

Resilience is originated in the clinical psychology (Norman, Luthans and Luthans,2005) where you need to overcome and thrives to response to the events that are triggering you and gives you traumatic experience. In the organizations resilience is treated as a common phenomenon which is the outcome of normal or basic human adaptation process. The concept of resilience has been further related to the two theoretical approaches at workplace: positive psychology and conservation of resource. Here the concept positive psychology is related to the stress and burnout situations face by an individual and positive behavior of individual which provide the strength to people and enhance its psychological capacities (Luthans, 2002). According to (Luthans, Youssef and Avolio, 2007b, 3) psychological capabilities of individual depend upon the treatment given to employees at their workplace, whether it involves the development of self-confidence or ability to face challenge at workplace. Resilience is a concept where the individual has been exposed to the threat and risk or chances of having harm of some kind. In the threat or even in risky situation and individual adapts the positive behavior and does not lose normal function that's where the resilience concept comes (Bonanno, 2004).

Employee resilience variable is a variable that reflects the individual differences and become the unique feature of individual's personality along with the dynamic ability to use their proactive resources. It has been observed that the employee resilience becomes the part of the Organizations resilience, as it is related to the treatment provided to the employees at workplace by their respective organizations (Liang and Linlin, 2021). It has been observed that employee resilience plays mediating role between learning organization and work engagement (Malik and Garg, 2017). The study advocated the perception of employee resilience as antecedent to the work engagement, resilience individual has better in

coping stressful situations and adaptive in abilities. Resilience also plays a significant role in protecting the interest of employees and saving them from the adverse effect of work-related stress and issues (Howard, 2008). However, resilience is inevitable part of employees work life, although the employees are on high demand that is high on the resilience side, due their complex ability to handle the emotional and complex occupational challenges.

3.4 Psychological Stress

Individuals suffer from stressful situation since postindustrial business life, where they have to face high level of stress because of many reasons like different roles that had been installed at work. The stress not only affect the work life but also the personal life of individual as they have to regularly work under the social and economic pressure to achieve high level of productivity (Akgemic et. al.,2013). It is necessary for the employees to be stress less to perform better for organization; this will improve the commitment level of the employees. Employee commitment is one of the factors that must be considered by the company and have positive impact of developing positive attitude of the employees towards the Organizations. The employee's commitment depends upon the satisfaction at job which is directly comes from the workplace. The sounder the workplace is the more stress less and committed workforce works their (Anggregyani and Satrya, 2020).

Stress is non-specific response of body towards the uncertain demands, out of various types of stress some stress can be positive which can motivate the employees to be focused upon the task to solve problem. The stress must be in particular limit if the stress goes beyond the limit it can lead to negative outcome, like strain and burnout (Tran et al., 2020). Stress can have adverse reactions on physical and mental forms which can occur when conflict has been goes beyond the job needs (Canadian Mental Health Association, 2016). . It has been studied that stress has harmful influence on the health and wellbeing of employees and negatively related to the productivity and profits of organizations.

4. KEY HIGHLIGHTS OF THE STUDY

- The indirect effect of workplace ostracism relationship with the employee empowerment was investigated.
- Psychological Stress and its role on the Employee Empowerment.
- Employees Resilience's level of impact on the level of Employee Empowerment.
- Workplace Ostracism impact on Employee Empowerment.

5. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The current review was conducted as per the systematic reviews and Meta analysis. A systematic search of various published articles on Web of science, Google scholar, Psych Info, Elsevier and Scopus were carried between the periods of 1999 to 2024 years. The study has conducted to understand the change in the variable's role in the Organization over past 25 years. Search terms have been focused upon new concepts and its application in reality like workplace ostracism and employee resilience are variable being less explored by researchers along with the psychological stress and employee empowerment. The review has been based upon the screening included in abstracts, article title and in the whole document. Study screened and further includes the other sources of articles, which were included in the research reference lists. Study has included the research paper that were published in peer reviewed journals; in English language, presents the original data promote workplace interactions based on the current variables under study. Studies applied mixed sampling, where the participants were employed, unemployed or can be students were included in the review if the primary area of the concerned paper focused upon employee empowerment or workplace ostracism and other two variables psychological stress and employee resilience. The study has considered the conference proceedings, abstracts, grey literature or dissertations covering the variables

6. DISCUSSION ON THE RELATIONSHIP EXISTENCE AMONG THE WORKPLACE OSTRACISM, EMPLOYEE EMPOWERMENT, EMPLOYEE RESILIENCE AND PSYCHOLOGICAL STRESS

The following section will be going to detailed study of review that has been done by the various authors on the variables under study and critically examine the role of the variables of employees behavioral outcomes at their workplace.

6.1 Workplace ostracism and Psychological Stress

Ostracism is one of the most painful situations faced by the employees at workplace, to experience and influence the most attitudes and behavior of the people of the Organization (Risgiyanti et al., 2023). Employees possess a need to belong and have a sense of social relationship with the group member, it has been seen that employees who feel that they are accepted by the peer member of group have improved motivation. Employees attempt that they have good relationship with the co-workers to meet their basic needs. Social support serves by social bond enhance the stress management of the people due sense of belongingness in the workplace. It has been also found that the employees who feel that they are supported by group are more able to cope the challenges and difficulties (William and Sommer, 1997). (Chenjo and Sode, 2019) conduct their study on the workplace ostracism talk about the employee creativity and how the employee can cope up with the stressors. They contribute to the literature by favoring that the workplace ostracism is one of the psychological stresses or affects the

employee's creativity. It has been found that the defensive silence also plays a major role in mediating the workplace ostracism and improves the employee's creativity. Empowerment of the employees is directly link with the job engagement level of the employees, as their personalities, emotions must be link to the role performance of employees. (Chung, 2018) investigated in their study that ostracism is interpersonal stressor and link with many behavioral outcomes, and lead to low psychological empowerment.

H4: There is a relationship between the psychological stress and employee resilience

H2: There is a positive relationship between employee resilience and employee empowerment

6.2 Employee resilience and psychological stress

Organizational resilience is the capacity of an organization to respond to and try to recover from the unforeseen circumstances in any challenging situation. The employees can cope with the challenges due to their high level of empowerment (Dekoulou et al., 2023). Empowerment is one of the psychological phenomenon's which should felt by employees at workplace and become the reason for their empowerment. (Oladip, 2009). Stress is the condition which has been arises from the interaction of people, which simply means the person feel stressed with the change in the attitude of people and this impact negatively on the people and force them to deviate from their functions. A report by National Association of Mental Health differentiates the stress from the work pressure, here pressure has been defined as one of feeling of tension that can be arise by triggering the stressful situation at workplace (Panigrahi, 2016). It has been further finding that the stress is divided into two categories internal and external.

- Internal- Internal stress based upon the perception of an individual
- External- External stress based upon the external factors upon which the individual's job performance has been based upon. These external factors further include job security, working hours, control at work, managerial style and overload of work.

These all the stress related to the psychological health of the employees, if the employees are motivated and better able to manage the stressful situation this will help them in adopting resilience behavior.

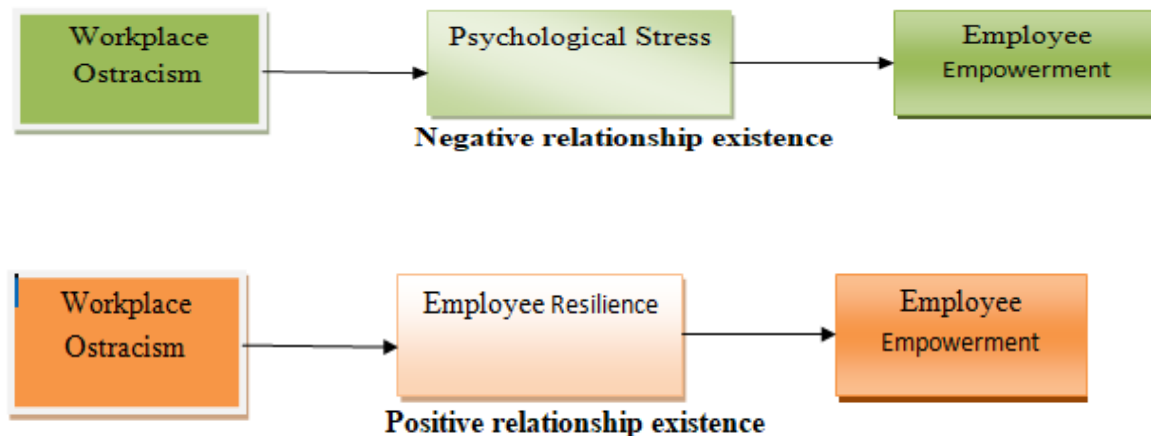
6.3 Employee Resilience, Psychological stress and Employee empowerment

(Hosseini et al., 2024) discuss in their research about the positive psychology and paying attention to the motto that human talents and capabilities must be focused in the research area. Employee resilience is one of the important assets of an organization, as they are more effective in coping with difficult situations and changes (Fan et al., 2021). Employee empowerment includes employee participation at tactical and strategic level, which refers to the participation of employee in the higher responsibility of business at their own level. Empowerment leads to participation of employees at workplace which means their people's resilience has been increased and they are more willing to work under motivation (Hosseini et al., 2024). Resilience ability of person establishes biological-psychological-spiritual connection in the worth condition. In psychological resilience it demands the person's ability which can help them in recovering from negative emotions and help them in adapting to changes which demands for stressful experience (Niitsu et al., 2017). Psychological empowerments influence the voice of employees and their opinions and feel freer and courageous to take part in the organizational activities.

- **H3: There is a positive relationship between workplace ostracism on the employee empowerment**

6.4 Workplace ostracism and Employee empowerment

Workplace ostracism has been the need felt behavior which is negatively impact the perception of the employees on and influence its negative wellbeing, this makes the employees feel that they are unworthy and make them insecure about their own capabilities (Wu et. al., 2011). While psychological empowerment is one of the powerful simulators that affects the wellbeing of the employees. This helps the employees to respond positively toward the negative situations or events happen to them at workplace. Generation Y employees are more targeted through the autonomy in accomplishing task at job which actually gives them power to complete the task in an autonomous way (Kong et al., 2016). Research reveals that it is the positive perception and positive psychological state of the employee that leads to high self-esteem and fosters employee's engagement. The employee engagement demands more extra efforts from the employee's side. (Huertas et al., 2019) conclude in their research on the service organizations that are primarily focused on the customers satisfaction, they include the food chains, restaurants, must include the hotels and must be more careful about the emotional health of their internal customers to achieve competitive advantage in their business. This resulted into more self-esteemed employees and improves the better service at the service sector organizations. Friction among the employees and conflicting situations results into development of more ostracized feelings among employees.



Source: (Author' own)

Employees with low self-esteem would less likely to engage in the prosocial behavior like they are less likely to help others. If the employee's identity has been threatened by putting them in socially excluded people, he or she becomes discouraged and rather than putting extra efforts they perform into lower level (Chung and Yang, 2017). According to the results of workplace ostracism and employee empowerment, it has been found that social isolation makes the employees feel socially down and they perceived themselves to be less valued, their experience makes them unable to survive in the existing culture and this will lead to worsen the service level of employees. Hence workplace ostracism and employee empowerment are related to each other if the employee is empowered psychologically and by every means at workplace they feel more confident and easily able to overcome the ostracism up to some extent by delivering the image driven and more productive outcomes in the organization.

- **H1: There is a negative relationship between psychological stress and employee empowerment**

6.5 Psychological stress and Employee empowerment

Manpower in the organization is the most important factor that affects the business entities and impacts the employee turnover rates, their productivity level and financial performance. The mass level of employee turnover is the result of the less empowerment given to employees to take their decisions and employee manipulation is the root cause behind the psychological stress. The stress has negatively affected the work aspects, it is normal and unavoidable part of the work. According to (Jacome and Chion, 2022), it is a condition that can be experienced by the employee and become part of their perception which can be interfering by the organization's environment as stimuli to situation. Employee empowerment is intrinsic in nature which is called psychological empowerment among the employee, as an intrinsic motivation, which influences behavior of employees (Olcer, 2015). Employees who are psychologically less stressed feel more empowered and they intrinsically develop the power to cope with the psychological stress face by them under different situations. Hence there is negative relationship between psychological stress and empowerment of the employees, the more stressed employees feel less empowerment and less dedicated towards their work.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

There are various methods that can be adopted by individuals to manage stress and that can be depend upon individual that which method can be suitable according to their condition. The stress can be able to resolve if can be measured in advance. Psychological measurement- this can be based upon the observation on psychology of an individual and how they react toward stressors. (Shaikh et al., 2022) discuss in their study about the increasing level of workplace ostracism and how this would affect the behavior level of employees. Workplace ostracism creates dismissive effect on the emotional state of employees; employees lose their confidence, negative impact on their performance which let them loose its creativity. The people who suffer from this situation have extra loads of emotional stress along with psychological stress, The extra load of stress disturb the emotional state of people, which leads to negative behavior outcome of individual toward their job tasks. Were emotional resilience act as mediator between workplace ostracism and employee empowerment. The workplace ostracism creates the stressful situation for the employees, to which the employees take as challenge. Handling of challenges with confidence is one of the actions of resilience behavior that have positive impact on the psychological stress management and improves the empowerment level of employees. To adapt into the changing environment one of the most important skills is the understanding of diversity and inclusion of diversity training in the core team training to develop the emotional intelligence among the employees (Lee and Ok, 2012). To the best of knowledge of authors, empowerment is dependent upon the psychological stress level and employee resilience is the ability which help them in coping such a stressful situation,

it all starts with ostracism situation and ends with the empowerment level. The literature provides enriched evidence with regards to relationship existence among the workplace ostracism, psychological stress, and employee resilience behavior and employee empowerment.

8. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE SCOPE

The current study serves as the base for the empirical research in future, which can be one of the bases of current study to find the existence among the relationships among variables. It is worth mentioning that many studies have contributed to the literature, but there are very less studies conducted on the similar variable under study. Despite the limitation of the study with regards to the theoretical background study, in future the study can be more useful in-service sector industry and teaching can be one of the more recognizable areas for future research (Sliskovic, 2011).

9. CONCLUSION

The current research aimed to analyze the existence of relationship between the various variables that impact the employee's perceptions and behavior at workplace. Most of the organizations are suffer from the mass layoffs, due to excessive workplace pressure and inefficient management of workplace issues. Among all of the other issues face by the employees, there is workplace ostracism is another unrecognizable issue which affects the empowerment of employees. Employees feel stressed at workplace due the severity of incidents of ostracism happens to them at workplace. Although, literature supports the mediating role employee resilience which support the positive empowerment circulation among the organizations. Psychological stress is one of the variables that is outcome of the workplace ostracism leads to negative empowerment relationship existence among employees. Organizations must need to spend time on training of employees on diversity and inclusion concept and different teams of separate staff members must be created to solve a situation-based problem, which help the employee to develop sense of belongings.

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