

## *Needs frustration makes me silent: Workplace ostracism and newcomers' voice behavior*<sup>☆</sup>

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### Abstract

Employing self-determination theory, in this study, we explore how workplace ostracism (being ignored and excluded by others) affects newcomer's voice behavior. Through an empirical study with 353 matched supervisor–subordinate pairs from a large high-technology company, we find that workplace ostracism has negative influence on newcomer's both promotive and prohibitive voice through the mediating effect of psychological needs satisfaction. In addition, narcissism moderates the effects of ostracism on psychological needs satisfaction. Theoretical and practical implications of these findings are discussed.

**Keywords:** narcissism, promotive voice, prohibitive voice, psychological needs satisfaction, workplace ostracism

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### INTRODUCTION

Voice is a proactive and challenging extra-role behavior, aiming at benefiting the organization (LePine & Van Dyne, 2001; Detert & Burris, 2007). Voice plays an increasingly important role in the dynamic and uncertain business environment, including crisis prevention (Schwartz & Wald, 2003), helping managers to identify and respond to threats and opportunities (Grant, 2013), innovation (Scott & Bruce, 1994; LePine & Van Dyne, 1998), and team learning (Edmondson, 1999; Liang, Farh, & Farh, 2012). Some researchers (e.g., Edmondson, 1996; Gladwell, 2008; Grant, 2013) have indicated that lack of voice correlates with organizational disasters such as medical errors and airline crashes. Scholars thus have explored the antecedents of voice at the organizational and individual levels, such as organizational context (Dutton, Ashford, O'Neill, Hayes, & Wierba, 1997; Edmondson, 2003), leadership behavior (Detert & Burris, 2007), individual personality (LePine & Van Dyne, 2001; Crant, 2003), and individual psychological factors (Liang, Farh, & Farh, 2012; Takeuchi, Chen, & Cheung, 2012).

Despite these progresses, current approaches to examining voice can still be improved in several ways. First, most studies (i.e., Eisenberg, Fasolo, & Davis-LaMastro, 1990; Detert & Burris, 2007; Tucker, Chmiel,

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Turner, Hershcovis, & Stride, 2008) examine how support from organization and supervisor promotes employees' voice. However, few studies have investigated the influence of negative factors, such as ostracism, being ignored and excluded by others (Williams, 2001), on employees' voice behavior. Second, the role of new employees' voice behavior has received scant attention. Even that some newcomers are self-confident about their competence, organizational adjustment is a new learning experience for them. This adjustment phase can be precarious and stressful (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979; Bauer & Truxillo, 2000), characterized by shocks, surprises (Kim, Cable, & Kim, 2005), and anxiety (Katz, 1985). Thus, newcomers' motivation to speak up during their adjustment phases should be a topic of great importance. Third, previous studies have explored the impact of several psychological factors in isolated ways (e.g., Fuller, Marler, & Hester, 2006; Detert & Burris, 2007). Studies indicate that certain proximal motivations are prone to predict coexistent voice behavior (Van Dyne, Ang, & Botero, 2003; Liang, Farh, & Farh, 2012). Our research attempts to investigate how multiple psychological factors synergistically influence voice.

We adopt self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1980) to examine how ostracism affects newcomer's voice behavior. This theory defines three basic psychological needs that are essential for individual integrity and development: competence, relatedness, and autonomy (Ryan, Sheldon, Kasser, & Deci, 1996). Failure or frustration of these basic needs satisfaction has a negative influence on individuals (Gagné & Deci, 2005). These negative outcomes include well-being reduction, rejection to external contingencies, and negative affect to organization (Lanaj, Johnson, & Lee, 2016; Van den Broeck, Ferris, Chang, & Rosen, 2016). Moreover, current study reveals that when social context is not supportive and makes employees' psychological needs thwarted, they tend to be defensive (Vansteenkiste & Ryan, 2013). Thus, ostracism deprives people of the satisfaction of three psychological needs (Williams & Sommer, 1997) and may have negative effects on employees' motivation to benefit organization, including hindering employees' voice behavior. Therefore, we believe self-determination theory is an appropriate perspective to explore the relationship between ostracism and newcomers' voice behavior.

We also investigate how narcissistic individuals respond when they feel ostracized. According to self-determination theory, individuals tend to maintain a positive feeling of the self. Individuals with high narcissism are expected to have an inflated evaluation of self (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). They pursue superiority and have the need for dominance of their environment (Campbell, Reeder, Sedikides, & Elliot, 2000). Meanwhile, narcissists are also fragile and sensitive about their inflated self-views, and they exert great effort to maintain their ego (Morf & Rhodewalt, 1993; Rhodewalt & Eddings, 2002; Wallace & Baumeister, 2002). As such, the narcissist may be vulnerable to the negative influence of ostracism, because their perception of being ignored by others would harm their positive self-views, which in turn affects their voice behavior. Therefore, we use narcissism as the moderator in the relationship between ostracism and voice.

This study contributes to the literature in several ways. First, we contribute to the self-determination theory by enriching the influence of psychological needs satisfaction. Although the critical role of psychological needs satisfaction in improving individual outcomes are noticed (Vallerand, 2000; Greguras & Diefendorff, 2009), self-determination theory does not specify whether and how psychological needs satisfaction influences these outcomes. Therefore, efforts are needed to identify these outcomes (Greguras & Diefendorff, 2009). Existing studies indicate that psychological needs satisfaction can promote well-being (Sheldon, Ryan, & Reis, 1996), work engagement (Deci, Ryan, Gagne', Leone, Usunov, & Kornazheva, 2001), affective organizational commitment, and task performance (Greguras & Diefendorff, 2009). However, the influence of psychological needs satisfaction on voice, a challenging proactive behavior, has not been examined. In addition, existing self-determination theory literature mainly focuses on factors that can satisfy or enhance psychological needs satisfaction. Studies on factors that frustrate psychological needs satisfaction should be conducted (Van den Broeck et al., 2016). In this study, we contribute to this gap by examine how workplace thwarts newcomers' psychological needs satisfaction.

Second, we extend voice study by examining when employees are motivated to speak up from a systematical perspective. Voice has been explored from the perspectives of social exchange theory, social

identity theory, and mood as feedback theory (Edmondson, 2003; Tangirala, Kamdar, Venkataramani, & Parke, 2013). However, what these theories may neglect is the motivational state of voice. In their study, Parker, Bindl, and Strauss (2010) argued that employees spoke up only when their motivational states signaled that they ‘can do’ so or that they had a ‘reason to’ or were ‘energized to’ do so. In our study, we intend to examine whether the three psychological needs (i.e., autonomy, competence, and relatedness) can motivate employees to speak up.

Third, we shed light on newcomers’ voice behavior in organizations. Voice is challenging in general (Van Dyne, Cummings, & McLean Parks, 1995) and thus can be a challenge specifically for leaders (Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2008). The disruptive aspects of voice behavior can backfire on employees, resulting in a loss of trust, respect, promotion, or other career opportunities (Milliken, Morrison, & Hewlin, 2003; Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2008). Considering these risks, employees sometimes may feel reluctant to express their voice (Milliken, Morrison, & Hewlin, 2003). Newcomers’ voice behavior exhibits considerable differences between those of other employees. Compared with employees with longer tenures, newcomers have less social status (Vecchio, 2005) and face more challenges in their works (Louis, 1980). New employees may be more prone to anxiety and frustration and thus may have different attitudes toward voice behavior when compared with seasoned employees. Our study attempts to define these differences and help scholars to understand how the transition to a new work environment affects newcomer’s proactive behaviors.

## THEORY AND HYPOTHESES

### Self-determination theory

Self-determination theory holds that individuals’ behaviors consist of three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness (White, 1963; deCharms, 1968; Deci, 1975; Baumeister & Leary, 1995). These three needs are innate and universal for all individuals (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Individuals satisfy these three basic psychological needs through social interaction and self-perception. These intrinsic behaviors help to internalize personal values and to promote self-realization and self-growth (Ryan et al., 1996). Self-determination theory posits that understanding an individual’s development requires understanding his or her internal psychological needs, social environmental conditions, and the relationship between these two factors (Deci & Ryan, 1980). The role of social context is critical for individuals’ behaviors. Specifically, social context can satisfy employees’ needs and frustrate their needs, bringing very different influences in employees’ development (Lam, Law, Chan, Wong, & Zhang, 2015).

Moreover, self-determination theory argues that external environments are critical to the process of internalization and integration of individuals’ extrinsic motivation (Pavot & Diener, 2013; Yam, Klotz, He, & Reynolds, 2017). The social–contextual events that satisfy people’s psychological needs can thus promote intrinsic motivation, whereas failure to meet these needs can undermine intrinsic motivation (Deci, 1975; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Gagné & Deci, 2005). Recent studies find that fulfillment of these three psychological needs can promote employees’ psychological well-being and positive affect to organization (Pavot & Diener, 2013; Lanaj, Johnson, & Lee, 2016).

### Workplace ostracism and voice

As an act of sabotage within the organization (Duffy, Ganster, & Pagon, 2002), workplace ostracism negatively affects employees’ behaviors and attitudes. For example, some studies have shown that workplace ostracism can negatively affect employees’ job performance (Ferris, Brown, Berry, & Lian, 2008), increase employee turnover (Hitlan, Clifton, & DeSoto, 2006), endanger employee relationships (Gerber & Wheeler, 2014), and reduce employees’ personal and work satisfaction

(Ferris et al., 2008). Perceptions of ostracism are subject to the individual’s subjective attribution and evaluation (Williams, 2001). Williams (2009) further argued that ostracism threatened the four fundamental needs at workplace: attachment, self-esteem, control, and meaningful existence.

Liang, Farh, and Farh (2012) divided voice into two parts: promotive voice, which refers to suggestions to improve *status quo* and to organizational operations, and prohibitive voice, which addresses concerns about issues that may undermine organizational functioning. Promotive voice can facilitate positive actions, such as favorable performance evaluation and recognition of leaders (Dutton & Ashford, 1993; Stamper & Van Dyne, 2001). Prohibitive voice can challenge (Van Dyne, Cummings, & McLean Parks, 1995) and even threaten organizational harmony and leaders (Milliken, Morrison, & Hewlin, 2003; Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2008). Employees who use prohibitive voice may experience undesired outcomes, such as loss of trust among coworkers and supervisors and loss of promotion (Milliken, Morrison, & Hewlin, 2003; Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2008). Employees therefore may engage in voice behavior only when the benefits outweigh the costs (Dutton et al., 1997; Milliken, Morrison, & Hewlin, 2003).

When explaining voice behavior, some scholars focus on employees’ perceptions of safety at workplace (e.g., psychological safety created via management openness and leadership) as the driving forces of employee voice (Withey & Cooper, 1989; Edmondson, 2003; Detert & Edmondson, 2007; Wei, Zhang, & Chen, 2015). Others consider achieving benefits for the organization as the motivation behind employees’ voice behavior. Employees are likely to voice constructive suggestions to benefit the organization when their self-esteem is enhanced (Fuller, Hester, Barnett, Frey, Relyea, & Beu, 2006) or when they have a high-quality relationship with leaders (Van Dyne, Kamdar, & Joireman, 2008; Liu, Zhu, & Yang, 2010). As previously indicated, most voice studies are conducted from a single perspective that cannot completely reveal the uniqueness of voice. Moreover, scholars (i.e., Van Dyne, Ang, & Botero, 2003; Liang, Farh, & Farh, 2012) have argued that some factors may coexist in forecasting voice behavior. Therefore, we suggest that studies focus on how motivation drives employee voice when explaining voice behavior. In our current study, we investigate the relationship between the newcomers’ satisfaction of basic psychological needs and their voice behavior.

New employees maintain a relatively low social status in their organizations (Vecchio, 2005). They confront many challenges and obstacles in their new jobs (Louis, 1980). In such conditions, newcomers have a strong desire to establish their identity and to be recognized by their organizations (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). They also want to develop good relationships with their coworkers and supervisors (Berger & Calabrese, 1975). In other words, newcomers seek to fulfill their competence, relatedness, and autonomy needs. Feelings of ostracism during this stage can exert a significant negative influence on the satisfaction of these psychological needs. As previously indicated, voice is a challenging and proactive behavior. Employees speak up if they feel comfortable to do so (Parker, Bindl, & Strauss, 2010). Ostracism prevents employees from meeting their psychological needs and undermines their intrinsic motivation, which in turn distorts their intentions to speak up. In this study, we use self-determination theory to establish the mechanism of how workplace ostracism affects new employees’ voice behavior. Figure 1 displays our theoretical framework.

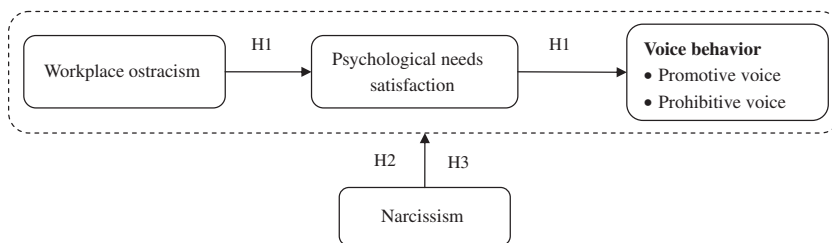


FIGURE 1. CONCEPTUAL MODEL

### **Mediating role of psychological needs satisfaction**

Satisfaction of psychological needs derives from three aspects: autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 1980). Autonomy is the individual ability to make independent choices (deCharms, 1968; Deci, 1975). Workplace ostracism creates pressure and anxiety for new employees, which diminishes their sense of control over their work and their ability to make self-adjustments (Bruneau, 1973; Baumeister, Dewall, Ciarocco, & Twenge, 2005). It prevents employees from making independent choices and thus threatens their autonomy.

Competence is the ability to respond to various challenges to achieve desired results (White, 1959; Skinner, 1995). Feeling excluded at the workplace can cause employees to lose focus, which negatively affects their performance. They may even doubt the value of their work (Cooley, 1902; Greenberg et al., 1992). These factors harm the employees' competence (Hitlan, Clifton, & DeSoto, 2006).

Relatedness is the sense of belonging in an organization and harmonious relations with others in a working group (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Workplace ostracism signals to the focal employee that he or she is not accepted by the organization. It may reduce the employee's sense of belonging (Williams, 2007). It also damages relationships between the employee and other colleagues, which in turn reduces the employee's satisfaction of relatedness need. Therefore, ostracism is expected to have negative influence on newcomer's psychological needs satisfaction.

According to self-determination theory, if the organization cannot satisfy employees' basic psychological needs, it may deprive employees of their intrinsic motivation to conduct behaviors that benefit the organization (Gagné & Deci, 2005). Hobfoll (1989) also pointed out that when employees' psychological needs were not fulfilled, they might spend time and resources engaging in self-adjusting activities instead of work tasks, thus decreasing their extra-role behaviors (Vansteenkiste & Ryan, 2013). They instead engage in self-protection to fix the sense of imbalance caused by other incidents (Organ, 1988; Lam et al., 2015). Thus, newcomers' psychological needs satisfaction can promote voice behavior.

In accordance with self-determination theory, employees are motivated to conduct extra-role behaviors for either autonomous motives (factors that intrinsically meet individual's interest or are consistent with their values or the sense of the self) or controlled motives (factors driven by an external locus of causality, such as expectations and roles) (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Yam et al., 2017). Either autonomous or controlled motives can shape employees' behaviors. When the three psychological needs are satisfied, psychological internalization (a proactive process to transform external reasons for behavior into internal reasons that promote psychological growth and well-being) will be promoted (Ryan & Deci, 2000). With psychological internalization, employees can experience meaning even with an unenjoyable job (Poile, 2017). Such experience will motivate employees to benefit organization. The purpose of voice is to benefit organization. In this case, employees' voice is likely to be enhanced.

In contrast, at workplace of ostracism or social exclusion, employees' psychological needs are frustrated or thwarted, which will hinder their psychological internalization. As mentioned, voice is a risky behavior for employees. When employees' psychological needs are frustrated, they tend to be defensive and silent (Vansteenkiste & Ryan, 2013). To summarize all the above, we present the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: Psychological needs satisfaction mediates the negative influence of workplace ostracism on voice behavior.

### **Moderating effect of narcissism and moderated mediation effect**

Narcissism means the strong tendency of inflated self-evaluation and superiority, keeping the self-view continuously improved (Gerstner, König, Enders, & Hambrick, 2013). Based on

summary by the DSM-5 (American Psychiatric Association, 2013), employees with high narcissism have strong need for public admiration and desire to control others at workplace. Typically, they have such characteristics as superiority, self-centeredness, and entitlement (Ackerman, Witt, Donnellan, Trzesniewski, Robins, & Kashy, 2011; Orth & Luciano, 2015). As such, they tend to be more sensitive to the external environment than are those with a low level of narcissism.

We argue that under conditions of workplace ostracism, the difference in narcissism levels among employees can result in discrepancies in the fulfillment of psychological needs. First, employees with high narcissism tend to be superior in their minds (Gerstner et al., 2013), believing that they are highly intelligent. They are overconfident in their abilities (Campbell, Goodie, & Foster, 2004; Judge, LePine, & Rich, 2006). In addition, narcissists have the need to dominate their organizations (Raskin, Novacek, & Hogan, 1991; Gerstner et al., 2013). Ostracism implies the rejection of chance to grow and is likely to be the obstacle for narcissists' needs for their competence, entitlement, and their pursuit of 'unlimited success' (Grijalva & Harms, 2014). Consequently, the negative influence of ostracism on need for competence is stronger for employees with high narcissism than low narcissism.

Second, we expect that ostracism may have different influences on needs for relatedness and autonomy for employees with different level of narcissism. Narcissists have the desire for attention and applause (Buss & Chiodo, 1991), using their organization as a stage to fulfill their pursuit of being protagonist (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001; Bogart, Benotsch, & Pavlovic, 2004; Gerstner et al., 2013). Sensation-seeking is also one of their ways to satisfy their need (Emmons, 1987; Gerstner et al., 2013). Workplace ostracism is a kind of exclusion, which can frustrate narcissists' need for attention and applause. Current research also shows that narcissists view ostracism in the workplace as a challenge to their self-views (Hepper, Gramzow, & Sedikides, 2010).

To summarize, narcissists have the tendency of 'hypersensitivity to criticism,' (Grijalva & Harms, 2014; Grijalva, Harms, Newman, Gaddis, & Fraley, 2015). Because narcissists unrealistically overestimate their own character, they may view workplace ostracism as threat to their perceived perfection. Their perception of exclusion by others threatens their needs and pursuit of superiority and relatedness (Gumpel, Wiesenthal, & Soderberg, 2015). Therefore, compared with less narcissistic individuals, narcissists are more susceptible to the inhibiting effects of workplace ostracism on their psychological needs. Thus, we present the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: Narcissism may strengthen the negative effect of workplace ostracism on psychological needs satisfaction.

Voice is a risky behavior that may bring undesired outcomes, such as loss of credibility and frustration, to those who speak up (Liang, Farh, & Farh, 2012; Takeuchi, Chen, & Cheung, 2012). As mentioned, the narcissists are prone to self-importance, admiration, and excessive attention (Gerstner et al., 2013; Grijalva & Harms, 2014). Ostracism at workplace will frustrate their need for social dominance and self-image as a powerful social actor (Gumpel, Wiesenthal, & Soderberg, 2015). The negative influence from ostracism on voice behavior of employees with higher narcissism will be stronger than with lower narcissism. In other words, how employees perceive ostracism's influence on their voice, via their psychological needs satisfaction, may be contingent upon the extent of their narcissism. We thus present that when narcissism of employees is higher, the indirect influence of workplace ostracism on voice through psychological needs satisfaction is stronger than narcissism is lower.

Hypothesis 3: Narcissism may strengthen the indirect effect of workplace ostracism on voice through psychological needs satisfaction. Such indirect effects on voice will be stronger when narcissism is higher rather than lower.



## METHOD

### Sample and procedure

Based on self-determination theory, the three psychological needs are universal for all human beings. Moreover, few studies use samples from nonindividualistic social context to enrich related research (Van den Broeck et al., 2016). Thus, we used samples for Chinese company.

We obtained samples from a large high-technology company in China. Before we conducted survey, we interviewed some employees and knew that relational conflicts and ostracism frequently happened in this company. Because there is no universally accepted definition of newcomers, we collected data from research and development employees who joined the company within less than one year. To avoid common method bias, we used a four-wave method for data collection, with each wave separated by 10 days. We asked newcomers to report control variables (Time 1), their perceived ostracism in the workplace (Time 1), psychological needs satisfaction (Time 2), and narcissism (Time 3). We also asked the supervisors to rate newcomers' voice behavior (Time 4).

With CEO approval and support from the human resource department, we sent emails to all employees describing the survey and explaining that participation was voluntary and confidentiality was guaranteed. We provided pens and printed questionnaires. We gave the respondents our email addresses and telephone numbers in case they had questions. In Time 1, we handed out 684 questionnaires and obtained 591 valid samples. In Time 2, we obtained 503 valid samples. We matched 353 supervisor–subordinate samples. Respondents completing all-round surveys were given 25 Chinese Yuan as rewards.

### Measures

#### *Workplace ostracism*

Newcomers were asked to report workplace ostracism with Ferris et al.'s (2008) 10-item workplace ostracism scale ( $\alpha = 0.89$ ), which included the following sample item: 'Please indicate the extent that others ignore you in the workplace.'

#### *Psychological needs satisfaction*

We used Kasser, Davey, and Ryan's (1992) 21-item psychological needs satisfaction scale ( $\alpha = 0.83$ , composite reliability = 0.79). Sample question includes 'Most days I feel a sense of accomplishment from working.' Based on previous research (Rosen, Ferris, Brown, Chen, & Yan, 2014) and for theoretical perspective, we viewed need satisfaction as an overall index rather than separate need satisfaction categories. Moreover, we did not expect every needs to relate differentially to employee outcomes.

#### *Narcissism*

We selected five items with the highest loading from the Narcissistic Personality Inventory scale ( $\alpha = 0.76$ ) (Ames, Rose, & Anderson, 2006) to measure narcissism. A sample item is 'I insist upon getting the respect that is due to me.'

#### *Voice behavior*

We employed promotive and prohibitive voice developed by Liang, Farh, and Farh (2012), to measure employees' voice behavior. Cronbach's  $\alpha$  is 0.90 for both promotive and prohibitive voice scales.

#### *Control variables*

We controlled gender, age, education, position, and tenure of employees. Tenure was categorized as the number of months that the employees worked. Education was measured as below college, college, and above college.

## RESULTS

### Common method test, descriptive statistics, and correlations

Some variables (workplace ostracism, psychological needs satisfaction, narcissism) were from the same source (newcomers) and other variables (promotive voice and prohibitive voice) were from another source (supervisors), first, we employed Harman one-factor test to test the common method effect (Malhotra, Kim, & Patil, 2006). We loaded all items of workplace ostracism, psychological needs satisfaction, and narcissism on a single latent construct. The fit of this model was not good ( $\chi^2[594]=3,164.96$ , comparative fit index (CFI)=0.70, incremental fit index (IFI)=0.70, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA)=0.11, standardized root mean square residual (SRMR)=0.13). Similarly, the model of loading all these items of promotive voice and prohibitive voice on a single factor showed weak fit ( $\chi^2[35]=798.67$ , CFI=0.65, IFI=0.65, RMSEA=0.25, SRMR=0.16). In addition, we further tested common method effect with Marker variable analysis (Lindell & Whitney, 2001). After we added the marker variable into our research model, no paths and correlations showed significant changes.

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of each variable along with their correlations. Workplace ostracism had a significant negative correlation with psychological needs satisfaction, promotive voice, and prohibitive voice.

### Hypothesis testing

To test the mediating effect of psychological needs satisfaction between workplace ostracism and employee voice, we applied methods of Baron and Kenny (1986). Psychological needs satisfaction and employee voice were treated as dependent variables, workplace ostracism was treated as an independent variable, and psychological needs was treated as mediating variable. Gender, age, degree of education, position, and tenure were treated as control variables.

Table 2 shows that the control variables have a nonsignificant impact on promotive voice (Model 1:  $F=1.11$ ,  $p>.05$ ) but that the independent variable (i.e., workplace ostracism) had a significant negative effect on psychological needs satisfaction (Model 2:  $\beta=-0.34$ ,  $p<.001$ ). The independent variable alone has a significant negative effect on promotive voice (Model 3:  $\beta=-0.46$ ,  $p<.05$ ). When the mediating variable was added, psychological needs satisfaction significantly affected promotive voice (Model 4:  $\beta=0.46$ ,  $p<.001$ ). The regression coefficient of the independent variable dropped to 0.34 from 0.30. It indicates a significant mediating effect. The mediating effect exerted by psychological needs satisfaction between workplace ostracism and promotive voice is  $-0.16$ . The gross effect shows  $-0.46$  (Model 3), hence the ratio of mediating effect is 34.78%. The independent variable (i.e., workplace ostracism) had a significant predictive effect on promotive voice in Model 4 ( $\beta=-0.30$ ,  $p<.001$ ). We thus concluded that psychological needs satisfaction had a partial mediating effect between workplace ostracism and promotive voice.

Table 3 reveals that the independent variable (i.e., workplace ostracism) has a negative effect on the mediating variable (i.e., psychological needs satisfaction) (Model 2:  $\beta=-0.34$ ,  $p<.001$ ). The independent variable alone has a significantly negative predictive effect on prohibitive voice (Model 3:  $\beta=-0.46$ ,  $p<.001$ ). After adding the mediating variable, psychological needs satisfaction exerted a significantly positive effect on prohibitive voice (Model 4:  $\beta=0.39$ ,  $p<.001$ ). The regression coefficient of the independent variable dropped to 0.34 from 0.33, indicating the significant mediating effect. The mediating effect of psychological needs satisfaction between workplace ostracism and prohibitive voice was  $-0.13$ . Table 3 shows the gross effect is  $-0.46$  (Model 3), hence the ratio of the mediating effect is 28.26%. Because the independent variable (i.e., workplace ostracism) significantly affected prohibitive voice in Model 4 ( $\beta=-0.33$ ,  $p<.001$ ), we concluded that psychological needs satisfaction had a partial mediating effect between workplace ostracism and prohibitive voice.

Employing methods of Aiken and West (1991), we tested narcissism's moderating effect between workplace ostracism and psychological needs satisfaction (Hypothesis 2). We first obtained the mean



TABLE 1. MEAN, STANDARD DEVIATION AND CORRELATIONS OF VARIABLES

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Gender <sup>a</sup>	0.57	0.5									
2. Age <sup>e</sup>	2.36	1.04	-0.03								
3. Education <sup>b</sup>	2.4	1	-0.05	-0.05							
4. Position <sup>c</sup>	1.65	0.81	-0.05	-0.01	0.10						
5. Tenure <sup>d</sup>	2.27	1	0.06	-0.05	-0.06	0.12*					
6. Workplace ostracism	2.75	1.22	-0.05	0.07	0.04	0.07	0.00				
7. Psychological need satisfaction	3.47	1.29	0.01	-0.06	0.11*	-0.07	-0.02	-0.33**			
8. Narcissism	3.04	1.18	0.01	-0.10	0.05	0.03	0.13*	-0.19**	-0.19**		
9. Promotive voice	3.27	1.39	0.04	-0.08	-0.01	0.02	0.09	-0.40**	0.50**	0.09	
10. Prohibitive voice	3.30	1.39	-0.07	-0.10	0.13*	0.01	0.04	-0.40**	0.46**	0.14*	0.44**

Note. *n* = 353.

<sup>a</sup>Gender was measured using two categories: 1 = 'male,' and 2 = 'female.'

<sup>b</sup>Education was measured using three categories: 1 = 'college or below,' 2 = 'college,' and 3 = 'above college.'

<sup>c</sup>Position in the organization was measured using four categories: 1 = 'employee,' 2 = 'first-line manager,' 3 = 'middle manager.'

<sup>d</sup>Organizational tenure was measured in months.

<sup>e</sup>Age was categorized into: 20–25; 26–30; 31–35; 36–40.

\**p* < .05; \*\**p* < .01.

**TABLE 2. REGRESSION ANALYSIS RESULT OF MEDIATING EFFECT OF PSYCHOLOGICAL NEEDS SATISFACTION (PROMOTIVE VOICE)**

	<i>Dependent variable: promotive voice (Model 1)</i>	<i>Mediating variable: psychological needs satisfaction (Model 2)</i>	<i>Dependent variable: promotive voice (Model 3)</i>	<i>Dependent variable: promotive voice (Model 4)</i>
<b>Control variable</b>				
Gender	0.09	0.00	0.04	0.04
Age	-0.10	-0.04	-0.06	-0.04
Education	-0.01	0.16*	0.01	-0.06
Position	-0.02	-0.10	0.02	0.07
Tenure	0.12	-0.01	0.12	0.13**
<b>Independent variable</b>				
Workplace ostracism		-0.34***	-0.46*	-0.30***
<b>Mediating variable</b>				
Psychological needs satisfaction				0.46***
<i>F</i>	1.11	8.28***	12.10***	24.24***
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.02	0.13	0.17	0.33

Note. *n* = 353.  
\**p* < .05; \*\**p* < .01; \*\*\**p* < .001.

**TABLE 3. REGRESSION ANALYSIS RESULT OF MEDIATING EFFECT OF PSYCHOLOGICAL NEEDS SATISFACTION (PROHIBITIVE VOICE)**

	<i>Dependent variable: prohibitive voice (Model 1)</i>	<i>Mediating variable: psychological needs satisfaction (Model 2)</i>	<i>Dependent variable: prohibitive voice (Model 3)</i>	<i>Dependent variable: prohibitive voice (Model 4)</i>
<b>Control variable</b>				
Gender	-0.20	0.00	-0.25	-0.25*
Age	-0.12	-0.04	-0.08	-0.07
Education	0.18*	0.16*	0.19**	0.13*
Position	-0.05	-0.10	-0.01	0.03
Tenure	0.08	-0.01	0.08	0.08
<b>Independent variable</b>				
Workplace ostracism		-0.34***	-0.46***	-0.33***
<b>Mediating variable</b>				
Psychological needs satisfaction				0.39***
<i>F</i>	2.35	8.28***	13.75***	21.63***
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.03	0.13	0.19	0.31

Note. *n* = 353.  
\**p* < .05; \*\**p* < .01; \*\*\**p* < .001.

center of narcissism and workplace ostracism and then multiplied narcissism by workplace ostracism to obtain the interaction effect. We further treated psychological needs satisfaction as a dependent variable and regarded workplace ostracism, narcissism, and workplace ostracism by narcissism as independent variables. We included control variables (gender, age, degree of education, position, and tenure) to conduct layered linear-regression analyses.

Table 4 shows that the interaction of workplace ostracism by narcissism had a significantly negative effect (Model 4:  $\beta = -0.15$ ,  $p < .001$ ) on psychological needs satisfaction. The fact that significant interaction effect indicates that narcissism may significantly moderate the relation between workplace ostracism and psychological needs satisfaction. Thus, Hypothesis 2 is supported.

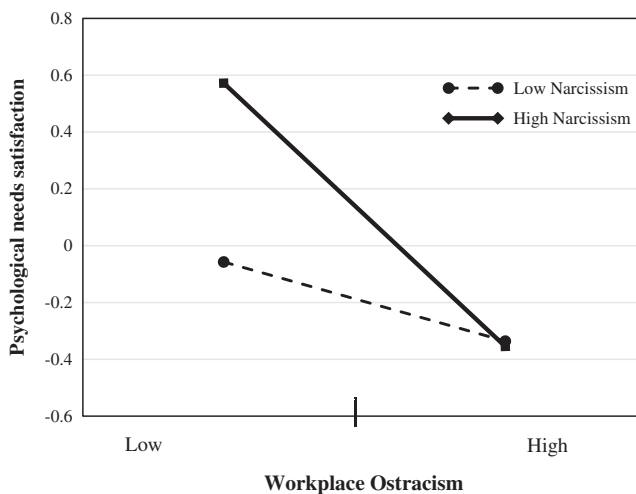
We computed slopes based on two levels of narcissism (i.e., high and low, a standard deviation above and below the mean, respectively) to show the moderating effect. Figure 2 shows the interaction under different levels of narcissism.

**TABLE 4. MODERATING EFFECT OF NARCISSISM**

	<i>Dependent variable: psychological needs satisfaction</i>			
	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 3</i>	<i>Model 4</i>
Control variable				
Gender	0.04	0.00	0.00	0.04
Age	-0.07	-0.04	-0.03	-0.04
Education	0.15	0.16*	0.15*	0.13
Position	-0.13	-0.10	-0.11	-0.09
Tenure	-0.01	-0.01	0.01	0.01
Independent variable				
C Workplace ostracism		-0.32***	-0.34***	-0.30***
Moderating variable				
C Narcissism			0.14*	0.15**
Interaction				
C Workplace ostracism $\times$ C narcissism				-0.15***
F	1.57	8.28***	8.12***	8.93***
R <sup>2</sup>	0.02	0.13	0.14	0.17
$\Delta R^2$	0.02	0.10***	0.02*	0.03***

Note.  $n = 353$ . C Workplace ostracism and C narcissism are variables after centering.

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$ .



**FIGURE 2. INTERACTIVE EFFECT OF WORKPLACE OSTRACISM WITH NARCISSISM ON PSYCHOLOGICAL NEEDS SATISFACTION**

**TABLE 5. RESULTS OF THE MODERATED PATH ANALYSIS**

Independent variable	Mediator variable	Dependent variable	Moderator variable: narcissism	Results	
				First stage	Indirect effect
Ostracism	Psychological needs satisfaction	Prohibitive voice	Low narcissism (-1 SD)	0.38	0.19
			High narcissism (+1 SD)	0.00	0.00
			Differences between low and high	-0.38***	-0.19*
Ostracism	Psychological needs satisfaction	Promotive voice	Low narcissism (-1 SD)	0.38	0.16
			High narcissism (+1 SD)	0.00	0.00
			Differences between low and high	-0.38***	-0.16*

Note.  $n = 353$ . Tests of differences for the indirect and total effect were based on bias-corrected confidence intervals derived from bootstrap estimates.

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

**Moderated mediation effect**

The results reported in Table 5 support the first-stage moderation effects, providing additional support to the moderating role of narcissism between ostracism and psychological needs satisfaction (Hypothesis 2).

Using the moderated path analysis approach (Edwards & Lambert, 2007), we tested moderating role of narcissism among the indirect effects. As indicated in Table 5, the difference in the indirect effect of workplace ostracism on prohibitive voice was significant (difference =  $-0.18$ ,  $p < .05$ ), and the difference in the indirect effect of workplace ostracism on promotive voice was significant (difference =  $-0.12$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Therefore, Hypothesis 3 (narcissism may strengthen the indirect effect of workplace ostracism on voice through psychological needs satisfaction) is supported.

**DISCUSSION**

**Theoretical implications**

In accordance with self-determination theory, we advanced and tested a moderated mediation model that explains how workplace ostracism influences newcomers’ voice behavior. We found that workplace ostracism negatively influenced newcomers’ promotive and prohibitive voice through the mediating role of psychological needs satisfaction. Our findings also indicated that narcissism moderated the influence of ostracism on psychological needs satisfaction and strengthened the indirect influence of ostracism on voice through psychological needs satisfaction. Actually, recent studies have indicated that social conflict and other negative factors in the workplace can result in undesirable behaviors and attitudes among employees. For instance, social conflict may undermine new employees’ performance (Kammeyer-Mueller, Wanberg, Rubenstein, & Song, 2013). Nahrgang, Morgeson, and Ilies (2009) found that workplace ostracism exerted a negative influence on employee performance and extra-role behaviors. Nifadkar, Tsui, and Ashforth (2012) indicated that conflict with coworker frustrated newcomers’ need for belonging.

We believe our study has several theoretical contributions. First, we enrich self-determination theory studies by showing how employees’ psychological needs are frustrated. Traditionally, previous studies on self-determination theory focus on how employees’ needs are satisfied. Factors satisfying and thwarting employees’ psychological needs should be explored to completely identify antecedents of

basic psychological needs. In fact, some scholars (Van den Broeck et al., 2016) have called for relevant studies on the factors that frustrate psychological needs satisfaction.

Second, we regard psychological needs satisfaction as a primary mechanism through which new employees can be motivated to speak up (Parker, Bindl, & Strauss, 2010). As a special proactive behavior, voice is driven by various psychological motivations. Psychological needs satisfaction can motivate empower employees to conduct voice. Previously, substantial efforts have explored how and why employees speak up from a narrow perspective, such as psychological safety (Edmondson, 2003; Detert & Edmondson, 2007) and social identity (Van Dyne et al., 2008). Many scholars (e.g., Morrison & Milliken, 2000; Liang, Farh, & Farh, 2012) call for an integrated perspective in studying voice. We respond to this call by exploring the joint impact of three basic psychological needs on employees' voice behavior.

Finally, we enriched ostracism study in newcomer context. As individuals become more mobile (Bauer, Bodner, Erdogan, Truxillo, & Tucker, 2007), nearly 25% employees have transitioned to new jobs (Rollag, Parise, & Cross, 2005). New employees' successful organizational socialization thus has become critical for organizations. Previous studies on organizational socialization have focused on the influence of positive factors, such as employees' information-searching behaviors (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979) and organizational socialization strategies (Jones, 1986; Saks & Ashforth, 1997; Allen, 2006). Moreover, it is also common for new employees to confront unfavorable contextual factors, such as verbal aggression from leaders (Nifadkar, Tsui, & Ashforth, 2012; Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2013). These factors prevent newcomers' psychological status and successful socialization. However, few studies have noticed how social exclusion or ostracism frustrates newcomers' psychological needs and voice behavior. In this study, we found that workplace ostracism could harm newcomers' promotive and prohibitive voice behavior. These findings may help close the gap in ostracism study.

### **Practical implications**

Our study provides practical implications for organizations. First, during rapid economic development, employees play vital roles in helping their organizations to survive by sharing suggestions and concerns about work-related issues (Van Dyne et al., 2003; Liang, Farh, & Farh, 2012). Companies have thus sought or used various management methods to encourage employee to speak up. Given this situation, studies on factors that may discourage newcomers' voice behavior can be useful. To encourage voice behavior of new employees, managers and executives should try to reduce workplace ostracism in organization and improve supportive working atmosphere. For instance, executives should encourage and create a cooperative and friendly organization climate. Second, as the agents of organization, leaders also should employ effective management methods to enhance subordinates' sense of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. By reducing newcomers' anxiety and satisfying their psychological needs, their work outcomes and voice behavior are likely to be improved.

Finally, with transitions to new work environments, new employees' successful adjustment has become a concern for managers. In our study, we shed light on the possible negative effects of ostracism on these adjustment periods. Understanding the risks of ostracism can help to identify measures to mitigate its negative effects on newcomers.

### **Limitations and future research**

Our study may have potential limitations. The first is that we did not distinguish between coworker and supervisor ostracism. Although some studies have found no major difference between the effects of supervisor and coworker undermining on newcomer's performance (Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2013), leaders may have greater influence than coworkers on employees' behavior and attitudes, because they are the agents of the organization.

Second, Chinese culture prioritizes harmonious relationships and friendly ties between people and thus participants may do not want to report interpersonal conflicts than other cultural contexts. In this regards, social desirability should be considered when using Chinese samples. The Chinese proverb ‘silence is golden’ reflects its culture. In addition, although Liang, Farh, and Farh (2012) develops the measures of promotive voice and prohibitive voice in the Chinese context, the driving forces of voice behavior may be culture-bound.

Third, we did not compare the differences of psychological needs satisfaction in collectivistic and individualistic cultures. Some studies (Schwartz, 2000) questioned the view that the three psychological needs were universal for all human beings in self-determination theory. In fact, in management of globalization, samples from nonindividualistic cultures are needed in self-determination studies, because individuals in collectivistic and individualistic cultures may have different needs (Van den Broeck et al., 2016). For instance, interpersonal relationship is highly valued in collectivistic culture and thus relatedness becomes more obviously important for employees from collectivistic cultures than for their peers in individualistic social context. Future studies should conduct comparative studies with samples from different cultural contexts.

## CONCLUSION

In this study, using self-determination theory as the theoretical framework, we examined the influence of workplace ostracism on newcomers’ voice behavior. We find that psychological needs satisfaction can mediate the negative relationship between ostracism and voice behavior. Narcissism plays a moderating role in both the effect of ostracism on psychological needs satisfaction and its indirect effect on voice behavior through psychological needs satisfaction. Overall, our study suggests that newcomers will not speak up when their psychological needs are frustrated.

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