

The Silent Crisis: Why Being Ignored Hurts More Than Being Harassed

Context: Research shows 'acts of omission' (being ignored/excluded) are more common & destructive than overt harassment, threatening fundamental human belonging.



Ostracism vs. Harassment: The Invisible Threat

Ostracism
(Acts of Omission)



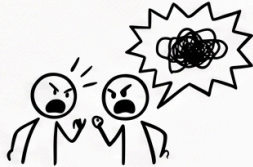
71%
Prevalence

More employees report
being ignored or excluded.



Total Absence of
Social Engagement.

Harassment
(Acts of Commission)



49%
Prevalence

Less common
than ostracism.



Negative Action
Toward Someone.



The Belonging Paradox

Negative attention still acknowledges
your existence; being ignored signals
you don't matter or exist.

Perception vs. Reality (O'Reilly et al., 2015)

Mistreatment Type	Perceived as Prohibited?	Predicts Actual Turnover?
Overt Harassment	✓ High (Regulated)	✗ No (Negligible link)
Workplace Ostracism	✗ Low (Ignored)	✓ Yes (Strong Link)



The Cost of Silence & How to Break It

Ostracism Equals Physical Pain



Social exclusion activates
the same regions as physical
injury.

The Retention Killer



Significant predictor
of employee turnover
three years after the
initial incidents.

Five Pillars of Inclusion



- Combat exclusion through awareness.
- Formal anti-ostracism policies.
- Equipping managers to foster belonging.