

The Mediating Role of Organizational Ostracism in the Effect of Supervisor Support on Ambivalent Identification: Evidence from a Collectivist Industrial Context

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Background/Purpose: This study investigates the questions “Does supervisor support affect ambivalent identification?” and “Does organizational ostracism play a role in this potential effect?” The primary objective is to determine the mediating role of organizational ostracism in the relationship between employees’ perceptions of supervisor support and their ambivalent identification. The hypotheses are grounded in Social Exchange Theory and Social Identity Theory.

Methods: A cross-sectional survey design was employed. Hypotheses were tested using data collected from 404 employees working in a diverse range of sectors within a major Organized Industrial Zone in Türkiye. Analysis was conducted using SPSS 29 and AMOS 24.

Results: The findings reveal that perceived supervisor support has a statistically significant negative effect on both ambivalent identification and organizational ostracism, while organizational ostracism exhibits a positive effect on ambivalent identification. Furthermore, the findings indicate a complementary mediation mechanism: Perceived supervisor support reduces ambivalent identification both directly and indirectly by mitigating organizational ostracism.

Conclusion: The results support the arguments of the aforementioned theories. By discussing the findings within the context of prior literature, this study establishes a foundation for further research. Moreover, it explores the dynamics within a high power-distance, collectivist industrial culture, offering novel insights into how paternalistic support mechanisms can buffer against social exclusion in industrial clusters.

Keywords: Ambivalent identification, Supervisor support, Organizational ostracism, Social exchange theory, Social Identity theory, Organized industrial zones

1 Introduction

Identification refers to the psychological orientation of the self toward a person or group and the resulting sense of close emotional connection (Merriam-Webster Dictionar-

ies, n.d.). Accordingly, organizational identification is defined as an employee’s perception of defining themselves in terms of their membership in the organization, forming a bond with it, or feeling a sense of belonging (Fuller et al., 2006, p. 816). This involves a process where organi-

zational and individual goals gradually integrate and align (Ashforth and Mael, 1989, p. 23). While organizational identification is generally desirable, Kreiner and Ashforth (2004) proposed the Extended Model of Organizational Identification, suggesting that employees may simultaneously experience both positive and negative feelings toward their organizations—a phenomenon termed ambivalent identification. The complex and uncertain nature of contemporary organizations means that employees' values, goals, and beliefs may or may not align with those of their organization (Kreiner and Ashforth, 2004, p. 4). Ambivalent identification plays a crucial role in understanding employees' relationships with their organizations (Chen et al., 2021, p. 2008) and directly influences their attitudes and behaviors (Lee et al., 2024, p. 2). Despite its importance, this construct remains under-researched compared to pure identification or disidentification, particularly in non-Western industrial contexts. Given its emerging status in the literature, further examination of this concept is warranted.

Ambivalence refers to holding contradictory attitudes or emotions toward someone or something simultaneously (Merriam-Webster Dictionaries, n.d.). Thus, ambivalent identification captures an employee's simultaneous identification and disidentification with their organization (Caprar et al., 2022, p. 771). It reflects employees associating certain aspects of the organization with their social identity while dissociating from others (Chen et al., 2021, p. 2009). This duality implies that employees define themselves through some organizational attributes while distancing themselves from others, creating a state of psychological tension. Ambivalent identification originates from Tajfel's (1978) Social Identity Theory, which examines group membership, intra-group processes, and relationships from a social psychology perspective (Lee et al., 2024, p. 2). Additionally, it serves as a means to interpret the uncertainty individuals perceive regarding their identity goals (Caprar et al., 2022, p. 772).

Ambivalent identification may stem from various antecedents, one of which is perceived organizational support or the lack thereof. Supervisor support, due to its close association with in-role and extra-role behaviors, is considered a critical concept in organizational behavior (Tavares et al., 2016, p. 35). While support from all organizational members is valuable, some members—particularly supervisors—are viewed as direct agents of the organization. Supervisors are crucial in delivering organizational incentives and resources, making them a significant source of support (Kurtessis et al., 2017, p. 1860). As organizational agents, supervisors shape employees' perceptions of organizational support through their positive or negative orientations (Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002, p. 700). Moreover, supervisor support serves as a primary coping mechanism for employees (Kalliath et al., 2020, p. 2057) by fulfilling needs such as attention, tangible outcomes,

and emotional reinforcement (Heyns et al., 2021, p. 13). High supervisor support, which includes intangible forms like informal performance feedback and professional guidance, transcends mere economic exchange and significantly influences beneficial outcomes (Li et al., 2021, p. 4). Accordingly, the first research question addresses whether supervisor support can mitigate ambivalent identification, which may adversely affect both employees and organizations:

“Does supervisor support affect ambivalent identification?”

While support is desirable, its absence often leads to ostracism. Organizational ostracism involves employees being overlooked, dismissed, or excluded by coworkers or teams (Williams, 1997, p. 134). Ostracism undermines employees' sense of worth and damages their identity (Ferris et al., 2008, p. 1349). It encompasses behaviors such as social indifference, avoidance of eye contact, and deliberate neglect. Employees who are ostracized face social isolation and a sense of not belonging, negatively affecting their self-identity in connection to other organizational members (Zhang et al., 2023, pp. 3280-3281). The absence of social connections can lead to negative behavioral outcomes and reduced performance (Mlika et al., 2017, p. 400). Workplace deviance actions—contrary to organizational norms—incur significant individual and organizational costs (Ferris et al., 2008, p. 1348). Research also indicates that situations involving both positive and negative elements contribute to ambivalence (Chen et al., 2021, p. 2009). This leads to the study's second question:

“Does organizational ostracism mediate the effect of supervisor support on ambivalent identification?”

Driven by these research inquiries, this study investigates the impact of supervisor support on ambivalent identification and the mediating role of organizational ostracism. Social Identity and Social Exchange Theories, which are widely used frameworks for understanding the connection between the employee and the organization, form the theoretical basis of this study.

Ambivalent identification creates uncertainty (Lee et al., 2024, p. 5). Employees experiencing ambivalence expend cognitive and emotional resources that could otherwise enhance performance, leading to suboptimal outcomes. Ambivalence also fosters isolation, stress, and adaptation difficulties (Kreiner and Ashforth, 2004, p. 4). Empirical studies consistently link ambivalence to negative organizational outcomes (Yanık and Karaca, 2023, p. 592). Reducing ambivalence benefits both employees and organizations (Coşar, 2023, p. 173).

This study responds to Kreiner and Ashforth's (2004, p. 21) call to explore the origins of ambivalent identification, enriching the literature both qualitatively and quantitatively. Given that collectivist societies define social identity through group affiliations (Kağıtçıbaşı, 2012, p. 307), a sample from Türkiye provides a meaningful context. Tür-

kiye's industrial landscape, characterized by Organized Industrial Zones (OIZs) that function similarly to eco-industrial parks, offers a unique environment where social interactions are dense and hierarchical, making ostracism and support particularly salient dynamics. Additionally, as the first empirical test of this model, the research tackles a deficiency in the existing literature while offering practical insights. The research begins with hypothesis development, followed by methodology, findings, and discussion. The conclusion presents implications for practitioners and future researchers.

2 Literature Review and Hypotheses

2.1 Supervisor Support and Ambivalent Identification

The foundational theory underlying the current study is Social Exchange Theory, which provides critical perspectives on employee-organization relationships (Blau, 1964). Social exchanges primarily occur within employee-employer dynamics, with supervisor-employee relationships representing one of the most effective and important components of work life (Li et al., 2021, p. 4). Blau (1964) suggests that social exchange consists of voluntary behaviors that people engage in with the anticipation of receiving rewards. Social exchange theorists characterize employment as the trade of labor and loyalty for tangible benefits and social rewards (Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002, p. 698). This theory fundamentally assumes that the connection between employees and organizations is founded on an exchange of commitment and loyalty for several advantages, such as wages and support (van Knippenberg et al., 2007, p. 459). In this exchange relationship, what is termed organizational support - defined as the degree to which the organization values employee contributions and cares about their welfare - gains acceptance (Tavares et al., 2016, p. 35).

Social exchange anticipates the norm of reciprocity. When both employees and supervisors adhere to the reciprocity norm in their relationship, the favorable treatment each side receives results in advantageous outcomes for all (Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002, p. 698). Employees' evaluation of the quality of their exchange relationships with organizational representatives (e.g., leaders or managers) determines their attitudes and behaviors. The better the perceived quality of the exchange relationship (in other words, the greater the benefit received from the other party), the more motivated employees become to exert effort and maintain the relationship on behalf of the other party (van Knippenberg et al., 2007, p. 459). Through the influence of the reciprocity norm, employees develop a sense of obligation to reciprocate the organizational support they

receive (Tavares et al., 2016, p. 35).

In social exchange, the terms and content of each party's contribution to the exchange relationship are not predetermined but left to the parties' discretion (Blau, 1964, p. 34). At this point, Uzun (2018, p. 780) argues that positive supervisor support brings about positive employee attitudes toward the organization, one of which may be identification. Additionally, according to Ülbeği and colleagues (2021, p. 1044), supervisors are important representatives of the organization. Therefore, supervisors play a critical role in shaping employees' perceptions of the organization. Consequently, employees who receive support from their supervisors can identify with the organization. Establishing supportive and trust-based relationships with employees is important in preventing ambivalence among them. When employees experience ambivalent identification with the organization, supervisor support can minimize the negative effects of this ambivalence (Yanık and Karaca, 2023, p. 606). Accordingly, the first hypothesis is proposed as follows:

H₁: Supervisor support has a statistically significant negative effect on ambivalent identification.

2.2 Mediating Effect

The second theoretical foundation of the current study is Social Identity Theory. Group membership fulfills important psychological and social needs, with social identity formation being one of its key benefits (Kağıtçıbaşı, 2012, p. 285). This part explores the connection between organizational ostracism and ambivalent identification from the perspective of Social Identity Theory. The theory describes social identity as the aspect of an individual's self-concept that originates from their awareness of belonging to a social group, along with the value and emotional importance associated with that belonging (Tajfel, 1978, p. 63). The theory's primary purpose is to understand and explain how individuals adopt social identities and behave according to these identities (Ellemers and Haslam, 2012, p. 381). Identification is one of the core concepts of Social Identity Theory (Bilger and Özdemir, 2021, p. 84). From the perspective of Social Identity Theory, employees identify with their organizations by integrating their personalities with organizational membership, making organizational identity part of their self-concept (Ciampa, 2021, p. 120). This identification process results in employees developing a social identity based on organizational membership (Tak Meydan, 2021, p. 84). The theory emphasizes the psychological importance of group identification (Kağıtçıbaşı, 2012, p. 308).

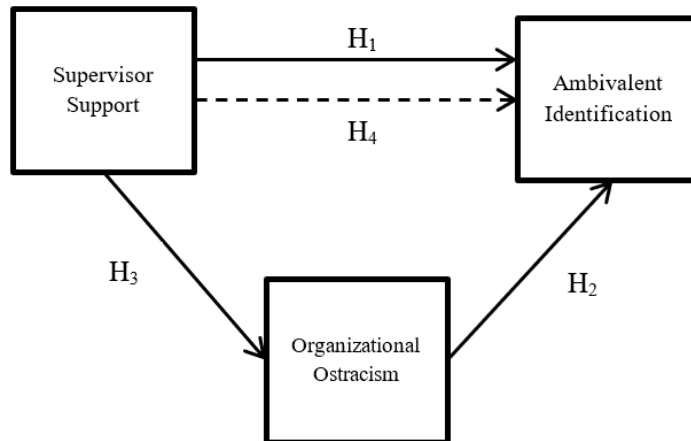


Figure 1: Research Model

Just as employees may identify with their organizations, they may also experience ambivalent identification. Elevated ambivalence causes employees to form contradictory thoughts and emotions regarding the organization and question the extent to which their organizational membership defines their social identity (Ciampa et al., 2021, p. 122). Identification is a dynamic state influenced by contextual conditions (Bilger and Özdemir, 2021, p. 95), and consequently, ambivalent identification is also affected by these conditions. Social Identity Theory refers not only to an individual's cognitive awareness of belonging to a particular group but also to the emotional significance of that group membership (Ellemers and Haslam, 2012, p. 382). This emotional connection depends on the employee being accepted within the organization. Employees' sense of acceptance and respect within the organization is closely related to their identification (Fuller et al., 2006, p. 815). However, employees may not always feel accepted in the organization.

Ostracism threatens the fundamental human need for belonging (Ferris et al., 2008, p. 1349). In this context, being ostracized represents one of the explicit methods of attacking one's sense of belonging (Williams, 1997, p. 148). Fuller et al. (2006, p. 819) associated employees' organizational positions with inclusion or exclusion. Consequently, being accepted in the organization reflects a respectable self-image and relates to the motivation to achieve and maintain a positive personal identity. Organizational ostracism, which emerges from relationships and interactions among multiple employees, results in employees developing a negative social identity (Yarmaci, 2018, p. 12). Ostracized employees experience significant declines in quality of life. Therefore, employees who feel ostracized in their organizations tend to develop negative perceptions of work (Howard et al., 2020, p. 582). The cruel and unpleas-

ant experience of organizational ostracism leads employees to perceive it as punishment. This perception threatens their sense of belonging (Wu et al., 2016, p. 8). Employees who have a strong sense of identification with their organization or team experience greater negative impacts from ostracism (Mlika et al., 2017, p. 400). Ostracized employees lack opportunities to establish interpersonal connections that facilitate interaction with the organization. Consequently, when employees are ostracized by others, their feelings of belonging and identification with the organization weaken (Ferris et al., 2008, p. 1358). Ashforth et al. (2014) contend that organizational dilemmas are very likely to generate ambivalence since they concurrently uphold opposing norms, values, and beliefs regarding what is deemed acceptable within the group. Ostracism is an active attack on an individual's need for belonging and has a traumatic effect on identity (Baumeister and Leary, 1995). Therefore, it is important in explaining identity crises such as ambivalent identification. Based on these arguments, the second hypothesis is formulated as follows:

H₂: Organizational ostracism has a statistically significant positive effect on ambivalent identification.

As representatives of group identity, supervisors focus on interpersonal interactions to shape employees' identities and corresponding behaviors by demonstrating their own qualities (Zhang et al., 2023, p. 3280). As role models, supervisors can easily change employees' opinions by ensuring their ideas gain widespread acceptance (Hogg and van Knippenberg, 2003, p. 11). Additionally, supervisors have the ability to prevent or prohibit mistreatment throughout the organization (Howard et al., 2019, p. 581). Accordingly, the third hypothesis is proposed:

H₃: Supervisor support has a statistically significant negative effect on organizational ostracism.

According to Social Identity Theory, while supervisor support facilitates employees' identification with their organization (Ashforth and Mael, 1989), organizational ostracism damages this process (Hitlan et al., 2006), potentially leading to ambivalent identification. Studies based on this theory show that organizational ostracism threatens individuals' group membership identity, resulting in ambivalent identification (Robinson et al., 2013). Thus, ostracism triggers ambivalent identification by threatening organizational identity, while supervisor support can buffer this identity threat (Ashforth and Mael, 1989; Sluss and Ashforth, 2007). In other words, rather than serving as a direct identity-building tool, supervisor support functions as a protective mechanism that eliminates ostracism - an identity-damaging factor. In this regard, supervisor support protects employees from the identity threat created by organizational ostracism and reinforces their sense of being valued, thereby mitigating the destructive effects of ostracism (Kurtessis et al., 2017). From the perspective of Social Exchange Theory, the positive relationship between supervisor support and organizational identification weakens when employees experience ostracism (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). Nonetheless, supervisor support enhances employees' reciprocal connections with the organization and enhances their sense of being valued. This significantly reduces perceptions of organizational ostracism while strengthening employees' feelings of gratitude and positive emotions toward the organization, thereby reducing ambivalent identification and reinforcing organizational commitment (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Hitlan et al., 2006; Lee and Peccei, 2007; Ferris et al., 2008;). Based on these findings, the final hypothesis is proposed:

H₄: Organizational ostracism mediates the effect of supervisor support on ambivalent identification.

The research model is illustrated in Figure 1.

3 Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The research was designed as an empirical study. Among quantitative research designs, the survey model was used. Data were collected through the questionnaire method. When researchers need to reach diverse participants, the questionnaire method can be beneficial. Additionally, convenience sampling is one of the sampling methods where researchers easily obtain necessary information or data from population members. At the same time, this method provides speed to researchers (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016). In this context, data were collected through convenience sampling to use time effectively and minimize costs.

3.2 Participants

Organized industrial zones host many businesses operating in different sectors and a diversified workforce employed in these businesses. Due to their high regional representativeness in terms of both employment density and production diversity, they are environments where organizational dynamics and social interactions occur more intensively and observably. The hierarchical structures and relationships in these environments make ostracism perceptions more evident (Duffy et al., 2002) and allow measuring the role of supervisor support (Shoss et al., 2013). Additionally, while the homogeneous employee profile and geographical limitations facilitate data collection (Spector, 2019), they also help fill the gap in studies focusing on industrial employees in the literature (Robinson and O'Leary-Kelly, 1998). In this regard, organized industrial zones provide a suitable and meaningful field for organizational behavior research.

The study focused on approximately 52,000 employees working in the Konya Organized Industrial Zone (KOS, 2024), where production is carried out in 40 different sectors and which is one of the country's important export centers. In the zone, production is carried out in the fields of construction, plastics, food, packaging, metal, trailers and dumpers, furniture and wood products, milling machines and hydraulics, automotive spare parts, and agricultural machinery and equipment. A minimum sample size of 384 participants was required at a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016). A total of 408 Turkish-language questionnaires were returned.

3.3 Measures

The Ambivalent Identification Scale, developed by Kreiner and Ashforth (2004) and adapted by Yanık and Karaca (2023), was used to measure participants' perceptions of ambivalent identification. The scale has 6 items and one dimension.

The Supervisor Support Scale, developed by Aydın Göktepe (2017) with 7 items and 2 dimensions, was preferred to measure participants' perceptions of supervisor support.

The Organizational Ostracism Scale, developed by Ferris et al. (2008) and adapted by Çalışkan and Pekkan (2020), was used to measure participants' perceptions of organizational ostracism. The scale consists of 10 items and one dimension.

All scales were measured using a 5-point Likert scale ("1: Strongly Disagree, 2: Disagree, 3: Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4: Agree, 5: Strongly Agree").

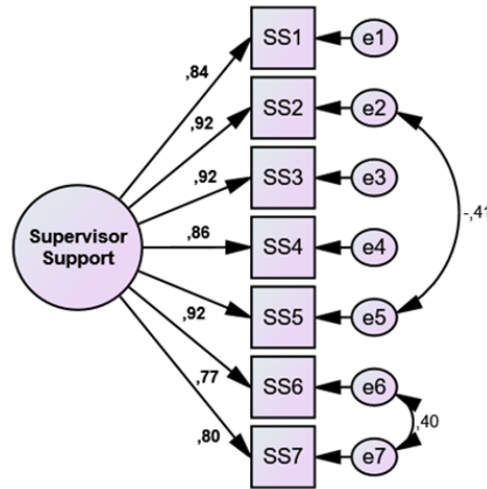


Figure 2: Factor Structure Model of Supervisor Support

3.4 Procedure

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the relevant Ethics Committee via the decision dated 25.06.2024 and numbered 10/71. Data were collected face-to-face between 25.11.2024 and 31.01.2025. Participants' contributions to the research were based on voluntary participation. The researchers strictly adhered to scientific research and ethical rules at all stages of the study.

3.5 Analytical Process

First, outlier analysis was performed on the 408 responses. As a result of the outlier analysis, the analyses proceeded with 404 questionnaires. In the second stage, although no changes were made to the scales, since they were used in a new sample, the validity and reliability of the scales were tested. Then, frequency analyses, descriptive statistics, normality tests, and correlation tests were performed. Finally, structural equation modeling analysis was used to test the hypotheses. SPSS 29 and AMOS 24 were utilized for the analyses.

4 Findings

4.1 Demographic Findings

According to the frequency analysis, it is observed that 48% of the participants were female, 52% were male; 10.1% had 0-1 year, 21.8% had 2-5 years, 36.6% had 6-10 years, 23.8% had 11-15 years, and 7.7% had more than 16 years of experience.

4.2 Validity and Reliability Analyses

Construct validity demonstrates how effectively the results derived from using the measure align with the theories for which the test was created (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016). First, the construct validity of the "Supervisor Support Scale" was examined. Although the factor loadings of the scale items were statistically sufficient, the model fit index values remained below statistical thresholds, and the model could not be validated.

"The prevailing and widely accepted view in social science research is that when the validity of scales previously validated through different studies is to be demonstrated, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) is conducted to present evidence regarding construct and factorial validity. However, if the values accepted in the literature cannot be achieved through CFA and the construct and factorial validity cannot be confirmed, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) can be performed to explore the relationship patterns between scale items and factors" (Harrington, 2009). Accordingly, although the "Supervisor Support Scale" is a scale whose validity and reliability have been proven in many different studies, considering that the items might have been perceived differently by the participants of the current study, EFA was conducted to determine under which factors the scale items were grouped.

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test was conducted to assess the appropriateness of the data for EFA. "The KMO value obtained as a result of the analysis indicates that the sample is sufficient for factor analysis if it is 0.60 or above" (Huck, 2012). The KMO value (0.928) and Bartlett test results were significant at the 0.05 significance level ($p=0.00$). To determine the factorial validity of the scale, principal components analysis was used, and the varimax

rotation technique was preferred because it is the easiest and most frequently used method for interpreting factors (Huck, 2012). As a result of the EFA, first, items with factor loadings below 0.60, which is the acceptable validity threshold in social sciences (Huck, 2012), were checked, and it was determined that all factor loadings were in the range of 0.698-0.846. Then, it was examined whether there were any overlapping items, and no issues were found. The KMO result showed that the 7 items came together under a single-factor structure. To validate the structure obtained as a result of the EFA, first-level CFA was performed, and the resulting model is presented in Figure 2.

The factor loadings of the scale items ranged between 0.77 and 0.92. "Factor loadings are evaluated as 'excellent' for values above 0.71, 'very good' for values between 0.63 and 0.71, 'good' for values between 0.55 and 0.62, and 'acceptable/reasonable' for values between 0.45 and 0.54" (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2018). The fit index values for the scale (CMIN/df (X^2/sd)=5.702; RMSEA=0.108; GFI=0.949; CFI=0.980; NFI=0.976; TLI=0.965) were determined to be at an "acceptable fit" level (Schumacker and Lomax, 2010; Simon et al., 2010). Although the RMSEA value (0.108) is slightly above conventional cutoffs, Kenny et al. (2015) argue that RMSEA tends to be inflated in models with small degrees of freedom. Given that CFI (0.980) and TLI (0.965) indicate excellent fit, the measurement model is deemed acceptable. So, the single-factor structure obtained in the analyses was used.

In the second stage, CFA was applied to test the construct validity of the "Ambivalent Identification Scale." The lowest factor loading for the scale was determined to

be 0.53. The factor loadings were determined to be statistically adequate, and no items were eliminated from the scale. To obtain the ideal form of the model fit, covariances were established between the error terms of items based on modification indices, where theoretically justified, and the factor structure model shown in Figure 3 was obtained as a result of the created covariances.

The fit index values for the scale (CMIN/df (X^2/sd)=3.150; RMSEA=0.073; GFI=0.979; CFI=0.990; NFI=0.986; TLI=0.982) were determined to be at an "acceptable fit" level (Schumacker and Lomax, 2010; Simon et al., 2010). The validated single-factor structure was used in the analyses.

In the final stage, CFA was performed to test the construct validity of the "Organizational Ostracism Scale." The lowest factor loading was determined to be 0.57, and accordingly, the factor loadings were found to be statistically sufficient, with no items removed from the scale. The factor structure model for the scale is presented in Figure 4.

The fit index values for the scale (CMIN/df (X^2/sd)=5.176; RMSEA=0.102; GFI=0.922; CFI=0.948; NFI=0.937; TLI=0.929) were determined to be at an "acceptable fit" level (Schumacker and Lomax, 2010; Simon et al., 2010). The validated single-factor structure was used in the analyses.

Along with construct validity, convergent and discriminant validity and reliability values were analyzed, and correlation coefficients between the variables were calculated. The results are presented in Table 1.

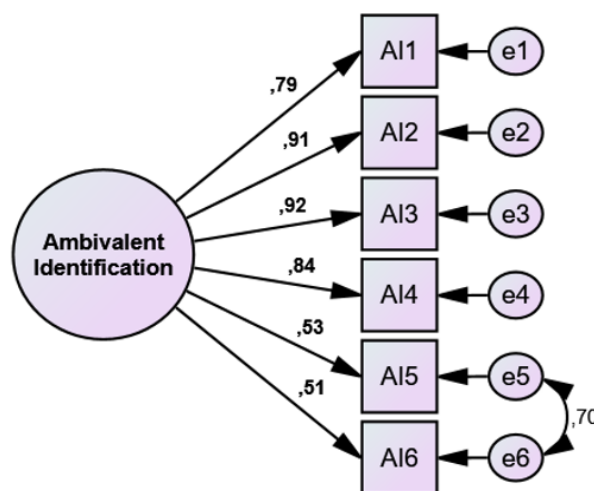


Figure 3: Factor Structure Model of Ambivalent Identification

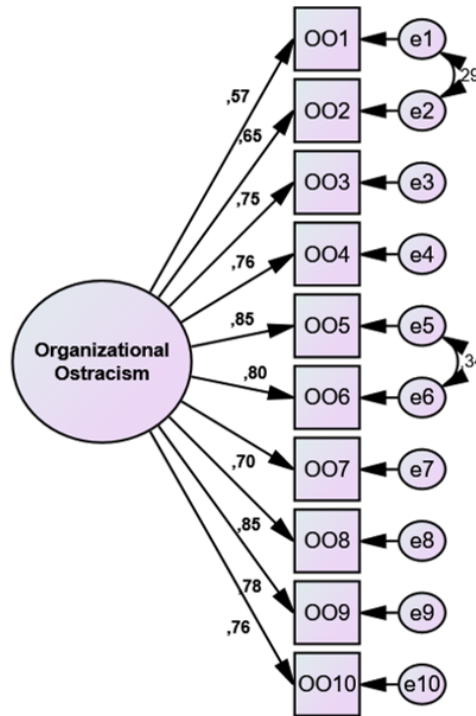


Figure 4: Factor Structure Model of Organizational Ostracism

Table 1: Correlation, Validity and Reliability Values of the Variables

| | (1) | (2) | (3) | CA | CR | AVE | MSV | ASV |
|---------------|----------|---------|---------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| SS (1) | (0.863) | | | 0.953 | 0.953 | 0.744 | 0.227 | 0.160 |
| AI (2) | -0.476** | (0.769) | | 0.896 | 0.892 | 0.591 | 0.265 | 0.246 |
| OO (3) | -0.305** | 0.515** | (0.752) | 0.921 | 0.928 | 0.566 | 0.265 | 0.179 |

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
 Values in parentheses are the square root of the AVE of each variable.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics and Skewness-Kurtosis Values

| Variables | Mean | Std. Dev. | Skewness | Kurtosis |
|-----------|------|-----------|----------|----------|
| SS | 3.81 | 0.97 | -0.907 | 0.441 |
| AI | 1.77 | 0.77 | 1.033 | 0.950 |
| OO | 1.32 | 0.41 | 0.976 | -0.560 |

“Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient is considered good when it is 0.80 or above” (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016). Additionally, “for convergent validity, the CR value should be above 0.60 and the AVE value above 0.50; the CR value should be greater than the AVE value; for discriminant validity, the AVE values should be greater than the MSV and

ASV values, and the MSV value should be greater than the ASV value” (Fornell and Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2019). Furthermore, according to Fornell and Larcker (1981), the square root of the variance explained for each variable ($\sqrt{\text{AVE}}$) should be greater than its correlations with other variables. When these criteria are evaluated collectively, it

is possible to say that all variables are statistically reliable and valid.

“The correlation coefficient (r) ranges between -1 and +1 (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016). When this value is between 0.10 and 0.29, it indicates a low-level relationship; between 0.30 and 0.70, a moderate-level relationship; and between 0.71 and 1.00, a high-level relationship” (Büyüköztürk, 2023). Accordingly, the Pearson correlation analysis results presented in Table 1 show that there were moderate-level, negative, and statistically significant relationships between the participating employees’ perceptions of supervisor support and their attitudes toward ambivalent identification ($r=-0.476$; $p<0.01$) and organizational ostracism ($r=-0.305$; $p<0.01$), while there was a moderate-level, positive, and significant relationship between perceptions of organizational ostracism and attitudes toward organizational ambivalent identification ($r=0.515$; $p<0.01$).

4.3 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics, skewness, and kurtosis values for the variables are presented in Table 2.

Upon reviewing the descriptive statistics, it is observed that the variable with the highest mean is supervisor support ($\bar{X}=3.81\pm 0.97$), while the variable with the lowest mean is organizational ostracism ($\bar{X}=1.32\pm 0.41$). On the 5-point Likert scale, values between “1.00-2.33” are considered low level, values between “2.34-3.66” are considered medium level, and values between “3.67-5.00” are considered high level. Based on this classification, it can be concluded that participants’ perceptions of organizational ostracism and ambivalent identification are at a “low level,” while their perceptions of supervisor support are at a “high level.”

The skewness and kurtosis values of the variables are distributed between -1 and +1. At the same time, graphical results such as histograms and Q-Q plots show a distribution close to normal. Ultimately, it was accepted that the variables were univariately normally distributed (Moors, 1986; Huck, 2012). In examining multivariate normality distribution, Mardia’s coefficient was calculated (Mardia=483.81). Mardia’s coefficient was compared with the result obtained through $p*(p+2)$ ($23*25=575$). Since Mardia’s coefficient is smaller than this value, the data were accepted to have multivariate normal distribution (Teo et al., 2023).

On the other hand, the “Durbin Watson coefficient” was calculated to detect any potential autocorrelation problem between variables (Durbin Watson=2.05). “A value between 1.5 and 2.5 is accepted as an indication that there is no autocorrelation problem” (Kalaycı, 2018). Additionally, “VIF and Tolerance values” were calculated to detect multicollinearity problems (VIFSS=1.30; ToleranceSS=0.77; VIFAI=1.61; ToleranceAI=0.62; VIFOO=1.37; Toleran-

ceOO=0.73). “Tolerance values greater than 0.2 (Menard, 2002) and VIF values less than 10” (Kim, 2019) indicate that there is no multicollinearity problem between variables.

To detect common method variance problems, “Harman’s Single Factor Test” was first performed. As a result of this test, the total variance value was calculated as 41.92%. This value being below 50% (Aguirre-Urreta and Hu, 2019) and the VIF value (VIF=1.10) being less than 3.4 (Kock, 2015) indicate that there is no common method variance problem.

4.4 Structural Equation Model

In the first stage, the measurement model was tested. At this stage, factor loadings and model fit indices were examined. The factor loadings in the model were found to be distributed significantly between 0.513 and 0.922, and the values were determined to be “statistically sufficient.” The fit indices for the model ($X^2/sd=2.455$; RMSEA=0.060; GFI=0.894; CFI=0.958; NFI=0.931; TLI=0.952) were determined to be at an “acceptable fit” level, and the measurement model was validated. In the second stage, the structural equation model was tested. To improve model fit, covariances were specified between selected error terms on the basis of modification indices and theoretical justification. When establishing modifications between error terms, the following considerations were taken into account for the observed variables associated with the relevant error terms, their ability to measure the same dimension, their interchangeability, the possibility of participants assigning similar or identical meanings to them (Meydan and Şeşen, 2015), as well as theoretical foundations. Figure 5 shows the model.

The values related to the structural equation model are shown in Table 3.

According to Table 3, 44.2% ($R^2=0.442$) of the variance in the ambivalent identification variable can be explained by the supervisor support and organizational ostracism variables, while 10.3% ($R^2=0.103$) of the variance in the organizational ostracism variable can be explained by the supervisor support variable. Additionally, supervisor support was found to have negative and significant effects on perceptions of organizational ostracism ($\beta=-0.321$; $p<0.001$) and organizational ambivalent identification ($\beta=-0.383$; $p<0.001$), while perceptions of organizational ostracism had a positive and significant effect on organizational ambivalent identification ($\beta=0.435$; $p<0.001$).

In examining the mediation effect, the structural equation model was tested using the Bootstrap method (95% confidence interval, 5000 resamples) as it provides more reliable results than the Baron and Kenny and Sobel tests (Hayes, 2018).

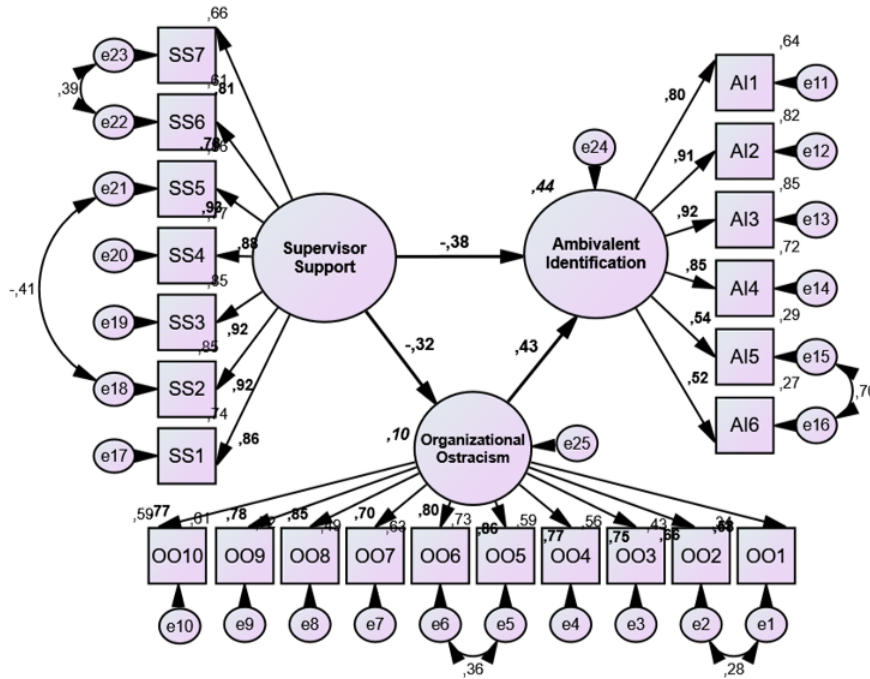


Figure 5: Structural Equation Model

Table 3: Parameter Estimation Values for SEM Analysis

| Dep. Variable | | Ind. Variable | R ² | β | S.E. | C.R. | p |
|---------------|---|---------------|----------------|--------|-------|--------|-----|
| OO | ← | SS | 0.103 | -0.321 | 0.023 | -5.804 | *** |
| AI | ← | SS | 0.442 | -0.383 | 0.033 | -8.323 | *** |
| AI | ← | OO | | 0.435 | 0.099 | 7.750 | *** |

* β = Standardized beta coefficient, direct effect; S.E.= Standard error; C.R.= Critical ratio; p= Significance; n=404
 ** X²/sd=2.459; RMSEA=0.060; GFI=0.893; CFI=0.957; NFI=0.930; TLI=0.952
 *** Significant effect at the level 0.001 (p<0.001).

Table 4: Parameter Estimation Values Regarding the Mediating Effect

| Ind. Var. | Med. | Dep. Var. | β | | | Conf. Interval | | p |
|-----------|------|-----------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|--------|------|
| | | | β _t | β _d | β _i | LLCI | ULCI | |
| SS | OO | AI | -0.522 | -0.383 | -0.139 | -0.198 | -0.088 | 0.00 |

* β_t = Standardized total effect ; β_d = Standardized direct effect ; β_i = Standardized indirect effect

According to Table 4, the total effect of supervisor support on ambivalent identification was larger in magnitude than the direct effect, indicating a significant indirect effect through organizational ostracism (β_d=-0.383; β_t=-0.522); in other words, organizational ostracism perceptions played a mediating role in the effect of supervisor support perceptions on ambivalent identification (β_i=-0.139). The

confidence interval values for the mediation effect (LLCI = -0.198, ULCI = -0.088; p = .000) do not include zero, indicating that this effect is statistically significant (Hayes, 2018).

According to Zhao and colleagues (2010, p. 201), “when evaluating mediation effects, if path c (the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable)

is significant and the product of paths a (the effect of the independent variable on the mediator variable), b (the effect of the mediator variable on the dependent variable), and c is positive, it indicates complementary mediation; if negative, it indicates competitive mediation". Within the framework of the findings presented in Tables 3 and 4, the conditions for complementary mediation were met.

5 Conclusion

This study provides an in-depth perspective on the effect of supervisor support on ambivalent identification and the mediating role of organizational ostracism in this relationship. The hypotheses of the study, which was built on the foundations of Social Exchange Theory and Social Identity Theory, were tested with data collected from 404 employees working in one of Türkiye's critical industrial zones. The analyses revealed that supervisor support had negative effects on both ambivalent identification and organizational ostracism. Another result showed that organizational ostracism had positive effects on ambivalent identification. Furthermore, the study determined that organizational ostracism plays a complementary mediating role in the effect of supervisor support perceptions on ambivalent identification. The analysis revealed that both the direct effect and the indirect effect are significant and point in the same negative direction. According to the typology established by Zhao and colleagues (2010), this indicates a complementary mediation. This suggests that supervisor support mitigates ambivalent identification through two consistent pathways: Directly by affirming the employee's status, and indirectly by reducing the toxic dynamics of organizational ostracism. The total effect of supervisor support on ambivalent identification was larger in magnitude than the direct effect, indicating a significant indirect effect through organizational ostracism. Within this framework, H1, H2, H3, and H4 are supported.

6 Discussion

Since no empirical research examining the relationship between supervisor support and ambivalent identification was found in the literature, the findings of this study are discussed within the context of research results focusing on the relationship between supervisor support and organizational identification. In this regard, the finding regarding the negative effect of supervisor support perceptions on ambivalent identification is consistent with previous literature. For example, Kazmi and Javaid (2022) reported that perceived supervisor support had a significant effect on organizational identification. van Knippenberg et al. (2007) confirmed that supervisor support positively influenced employees' identification with their organization. Uzun (2018) stated that supervisor support significantly

increased identification. Supervisor support, which can be considered a prerequisite for organizational identification, also appears as an important catalyst in coping with uncertainty. Supervisor support should be recognized as a crucial mechanism that provides employees with the strength to cope with difficulties when they experience ambivalent identification.

Similarly, since no empirical research examining the relationship between organizational ostracism and ambivalent identification was found in the literature, the findings are evaluated within the context of studies on the relationship between organizational ostracism and organizational identification. The obtained finding is consistent with previous literature. For instance, Howard et al. (2020) found a negative relationship between organizational ostracism and identification. Wu et al. (2016) associated organizational ostracism with decreased identification. Zhang et al. (2023) noted that employees' ostracism damages their sense of belonging as an interpersonal stress factor. Fuller et al. (2006) stated that being respected signifies acceptance within the organization and found a close relationship between this acceptance and identification. When individuals feel they belong to a group, they associate themselves with their organization and experience identification. However, when this sense of belonging is not felt and the individual is ostracized, they experience ambivalence about identification. The literature suggests that the relationship between organizational ostracism and identification is stronger in collectivist contexts (Li et al., 2021). In this regard, the sample selected from Türkiye, which has a collectivist structure, appears meaningful. In a collectivist context such as Türkiye, employees who are ostracized may be especially likely to experience ambivalent identification.

Because supervisors are assumed to act as social defenders in their organizations and exhibit a buffer effect against ostracism, the negative impact of supervisor support on perceptions of organizational ostracism was anticipated. This finding is similar to Ferris et al.'s (2008) findings that leader support reduces social ostracism and Shoss et al.'s (2013) findings that supportive leadership prevents bullying and ostracism. Additionally, the results are consistent with Hitlan et al.'s (2006) findings that low supervisor support increases ostracism.

Supervisor support reduces employees' organizational ambivalent identification both "directly" by making them feel more valued and secure, and "indirectly" by reducing feelings of ostracism, which in turn reduces these feelings. The findings revealed a complementary mediation mechanism: Perceived supervisor support reduces ambivalent identification both directly and indirectly by mitigating organizational ostracism. These results are in the same direction as Eisenberger et al.'s (2014) findings that the effect of perceived organizational support increases when social stressors are controlled.

The findings of the research need to be assessed in relation to the previously mentioned theories. At the heart of Social Exchange Theory lies the assumption that the relationship between employees and organizations is based on an exchange of effort and loyalty for various benefits including wages and support (van Knippenberg et al., 2007). In this exchange relationship, what is called organizational support - defined as the degree to which the organization values employee contributions and cares about their well-being - gains acceptance (Tavares et al., 2016). According to the results obtained in the study, employees who perceive supervisor support reciprocate this support in an exchange relationship and appear to reduce their ambivalence about identification. On the other hand, Social Identity Theory characterizes social identity as the aspect of an individual's self-concept that comes from their awareness of being part of a social group, along with the importance and emotional weight associated with that membership (Tajfel, 1978). Employees who are ostracized experience damage to their sense of belonging, and this situation impairs their social identity. Employees with impaired social identity appear to experience ambivalent identification. Additionally, the negative effect of supervisor support on organizational ostracism is consistent with Social Exchange Theory and Social Identity Theory. Research based on these theories shows that as supervisor support increases, the probability of employees' social acceptance within the team increases (Eisenberger et al., 2002) and that leader support increases conformity to group norms and reduces ostracism (Robinson and O'Leary-Kelly, 1998).

Finally, the findings need to be discussed within the cultural context. The findings of this study gain particular significance when interpreted through the lens of Türkiye's collectivist and high power-distance culture (Hofstede, 2011). In collectivist settings, where in-group belonging is a core survival mechanism, the psychological cost of ostracism is amplified, explaining the strong impact on ambivalent identification. Furthermore, in the Türkiye's industrial context, supervisors are often viewed as paternalistic figures (Aycan, 2006). Their support acts not merely as a functional resource but as a symbolic 'social shield,' actively reducing the prevalence of ostracism and reaffirming the employee's organizational membership. This cultural dynamic validates our mediation model, where the supervisor serves as the primary agent in regulating social inclusion.

7 Recommendations for Practitioners

Wu et al. (2016), from the perspective of Social Identity Theory, stated that different forms of organizational aggression such as ostracism affect employees' attitudes and behaviors. Especially considering the problems that

potential ambivalences may cause in organizational functioning, supervisors have important duties at this point. For example, adopting an inclusive and supportive management style that values employees' ideas, practices active listening, and reinforces the sense of identification within the team; strengthening bonds between employees through collaborative projects or social activities; detecting employees' experiences of ostracism through open communication and effective feedback mechanisms and providing early intervention; and creating an organizational climate where failures or mistakes are seen as learning opportunities and employees can freely share their ideas without feeling ostracized.

8 Limitations and Further Research

Ambivalent identification is stronger in environments with a high competitive psychological climate. The sample obtained from one of the country's important organized industrial zones appears appropriate. In this regard, the findings of the study contribute to the literature. Additionally, the study expands the literature on ambivalent identification both theoretically and empirically. Furthermore, by testing the research model for the first time, it fills a methodological gap. However, the study is not without limitations. Data obtained from a single city and a limited sample may be insufficient for generalizing the results. In this regard, testing the model with different samples would be beneficial. Additionally, comparing results obtained from institutions with different organizational structures (e.g., public or healthcare institutions) with the current results would also be useful. Adding different variables to the model and examining their mediator or moderator effects is thought to enrich the literature both qualitatively and quantitatively.

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