

Problems at home impact employee creativity more than problems at work

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Feeling ostracised by family members has a negative effect on employee creativity, more so than feeling ostracised at work, finds new research from Nazarbayev University (https://nu.edu.kz/?utm_source=bluesky) Graduate School of Business.

Feeling ignored or excluded by family members is more prevalent than imagined – past research reveals around 60% of individuals report being ostracised by their partners. Given the increase in working from home due to the COVID-19 pandemic, research into the impact of family and home experiences on employees is vital.

Associate Professor Mayowa Babalola and colleagues investigated what happens when employees feel alienated by loved ones at home. Participants were all married and from various professions that required creativity, including advertising, sales and marketing, consulting, IT, engineering, finance, and healthcare.

They collected data on the participants' need for affiliation, perceived family ostracism, strain-based family-to-work conflict (strain in the family that interferes with work responsibilities), and creative process engagement. Finally, supervisors evaluated their employees' creativity.

The study found that feeling excluded by family creates stress which the individual then takes to work. This results in lower creative process engagement, which ultimately inhibits creativity. Employees with a greater need for affiliation at home were more susceptible to these negative effects. Their results also showed that the impact of family ostracism on creativity is more significant than the impact of workplace ostracism.

Professor Babalola says,

“Employee creativity is central to the success, growth, and survival of organisations. Leaders can play a crucial role in stimulating creativity in their employees, but its development can be limited by the effects of family ostracism, so they should encourage awareness of the effects of family-related issues on creativity and develop initiatives to help individuals deal with family-based stressors. Possible approaches include developing employee mindfulness and psychological capital, and building a supportive work climate.”

These findings show that negative experiences at home can be part of the environment that affects employee creativity and those excluded and ignored by their families are more negatively affected than those experiencing the same from colleagues. Therefore, organisations should help employees cope with both work and family-related stressors and support them in dealing with negative interpersonal relationships.

These findings were published in the Journal of Organizational Behaviour.

For more information, a copy of the research paper, or to speak with Professor Babalola, please contact

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