2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Engagement

2.1.1 The Background

The concept of engagement came into the field of management from the field of sociology. In his ‘Encounters: Two studies in the sociology of interaction’, Goffman (1961) discussed the relation between the self of an individual and the role that the individual has to perform. He noted that the existence of two extreme forms of the relation. On the one hand, there was “role embracement” which was defined as “to disappear completely into the virtual self available in the situation, to be fully seen in terms of the image, and to confirm expressively one’s acceptance of” the role (Goffman, 1961, p. 94). On the other hand, there was “role distance” which was defined as the phenomenon in which “the individual is actually denying not the role but the virtual self that is implied in the role for all accepting performers” (Goffman, 1961, p. 95).

Building on these arguments of Goffman (1961) and extending them to the context of organizations, Kahn (1990) developed the ideas of personal engagement and personal disengagement. Personal engagement meant “the harnessing of organization members’ selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances” while personal disengagement meant “the uncoupling of selves from work roles; in disengagement, people withdraw and defend themselves physically, cognitively, or emotionally during role performances” (Kahn, 1990, p. 694).

The interaction between the self and the role was elaborated further by Kahn (1990). “Self and role exist in some dynamic, negotiable relation in which a person both drives personal energies into role behaviours (self-employment) and displays the self within the role (self-expression)” (Kahn, 190, p. 700).
Table 2.1. Definitions of different types of engagement and scales used capturing it in various studies

<table>
<thead>
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<th>S.No.</th>
<th>Studies</th>
<th>Definition used</th>
<th>Scale used</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Personal Engagement</strong></td>
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<td>1.</td>
<td>Kahn (1990)</td>
<td>The harnessing of organization members’ selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances.</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>Luthans and Peterson (2002)</td>
<td>The harnessing of organization members’ selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances.</td>
<td>Gallup Workplace Audit</td>
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<td><strong>Employee Engagement</strong></td>
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<td>1.</td>
<td>Harter, Schmidt &amp; Hayes (2002)</td>
<td>An individual’s involvement and satisfaction with as well as enthusiasm for work.</td>
<td>Gallup Workplace Audit</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>Cartwright and Holmes (2006)</td>
<td>The harnessing of organization members’ selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances.</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Bhatnagar (2007)</td>
<td>The harnessing of organization members’ selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances.</td>
<td>Gallup Workplace Audit</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>Crawford, Lepine and Rich (2010)</td>
<td>1) The harnessing of organization members’ selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances. 2) A positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption. 3) As feeling responsible for and committed to superior job performance. 4) A broad construct consisting of state, trait, and behavioral forms that connote a blend of affective energy and discretionary effort directed to one’s work and organization.</td>
<td>The meta-analysis used studies which had used Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES)</td>
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5. Gruman & Saks (2011) The harnessing of organization members' selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances.

**Job Engagement**


**Work Engagement**

1. Bakker, & Demerouti (2008) A positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption.
2. Bakker, Hakanen, Demerouti and Xanthopoulou (2007); Bakker, Schaufeli, Leiter and Taris (2008); Hakanen, Bakker, and Schaufeli (2006); Hakanen, Schaufeli, and Ahola (2008); Halbesleben, Harvey and Bolino (2009); Langelaar, Bakker, Van Doornen and Schaufeli (2006); Salanova, Agut, and Peiró (2005); Schaufeli, Bakker, and Salanova (2006); Schaufeli, Bakker, and Van Rhenen (2009); Schaufeli, Taris, and Van Rhenen (2008); Sonnentag (2003) A positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption.

UWES
2.1.2 Personal/Employee Engagement

Personal engagement is defined by Kahn (1990) as “the simultaneous employment and expression of a person's 'preferred self' in task behaviours that promote connections to work and to others, personal presence (physical, cognitive, and emotional), and active, full role performances” (Kahn, 1990, p. 700) while personal disengagement is defined as “the simultaneous withdrawal and defence of a person's preferred self in behaviours that promote a lack of connections, physical, cognitive, and emotional absence, and passive, incomplete role performances” (Kahn, 1990, p. 701). The above defined concept of 'personal engagement' (Kahn, 1990) has been used in the literature as employee engagement (He, Zhu, & Zheng, 2014).

2.1.3 Work/Job Engagement

Another type of engagement defined in the literature is work engagement. It has been defined as “a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption” (Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá, & Bakker, 2002, p. 74). Work engagement has been labelled as job engagement in the literature (Rich et al., 2010). Job engagement has often been defined as employee engagement (Rich et al., 2010). Crawford, Lepine, and Rich (2010) also noted these different definitions of engagement. They started off with the definition given by Kahn (1990) which has been used as the definition of employee engagement and then included the definition of work engagement given by Schaufeli et al. (2002). In the present study the focus is on work engagement.

Saks and Gruman (2014) argued that further progress in the research on engagement has been stalled by the fact that there are differing definitions of engagement in the extant literature and researchers have not been able to come to a conclusion as to what the concept of engagement actually means; a problem that has been noted by researchers for some time now (Bakker, Albrecht, & Leiter, 2011; Cole, Walter, Bedeian, & O’Boyle, 2012).
Different groups of researchers have given different names to the concept. Although Shakespeare had remarked, “What's in a name? That which we call a rose, by any other name would smell as sweet”, this advice is not of any use when we are out to ‘describe the truth’, as Einstein liked to say. The concept of engagement has been given the names of job engagement (Rich et al., 2010); personal engagement (Kahn, 1990); and work engagement (Schaufeli et al., 2002).

We need to have a clear and precise definition of concepts so that their conceptual boundaries can be demarcated, and potential confounding with other concepts can be avoided. As a result of not having clear defining boundaries, there is a problem of conceptual overlap of the concept of engagement with other concepts like job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and job involvement (Cole et al., 2012; Saks, 2006; Shuck, Ghosh, Zigarmi, & Nimon, 2013).

There has been another perspective for visualizing engagement, where engagement has been seen as the opposite of burnout. According to this perspective, engagement is “an energetic state of involvement with personally fulfilling activities that enhance one’s sense of professional efficacy” (Maslach & Leiter, 2008, p. 498). The core dimensions of burnout (exhaustion and cynicism) are found to be opposites of the core dimensions of engagement (vigor and dedication) (Gonzalez-Roma, Schaufeli, Bakker, & Lloret, 2006). Saks and Gruman (2014) argue that the conceptualization of engagement by Schaufeli et al. (2002) resembled that of burnout and that it called into question the distinctiveness of engagement as a concept.

Rich et al. (2010) noted that engagement represented the fundamental choice to invest the three aspects of the self, i.e. cognitive, emotional, and physical, in a holistic and connected manner. It provides a more comprehensive explanation for job performance than do concepts of involvement, satisfaction, and intrinsic motivation; which depict the self
narrowly. Involvement represents the investment of the cognitive self into one’s job. Satisfaction represents the affective part and intrinsic motivation represents the physical energies invested in the job (Rich et al., 2010). The self is taken to a system, in that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

2.1.4 Antecedents of Engagement

Job resources were found to be positively related to engagement as they create an atmosphere in which it is easy to invest oneself in one’s role. Job resources such as autonomy or job control, supportive co-workers, coaching, feedback, and opportunities for development are positively relationship to employee engagement (Bakker et al., 2011; Bakker, Hakanen, Demerouti, & Xanthopoulou, 2007; Mauno, Kinnunen, & Ruokolainen, 2007; Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2009a). Schaufeli, Bakker, and Van Rhenen (2009) found that changes in job resources also had a positive relationship with engagement.

The relationship between, job demands and engagement, and job demands and burnout gives a hint of the complicated relationship between engagement and burnout. Job demands have a strong positive relationship with burnout but the relationship between job demands and engagement is ambiguous (Crawford et al., 2010). To make sense of this ambiguous relationship, job demands were distinguished as perceived hindrances or perceived challenges (Crawford et al., 2010). Challenge demands which included job responsibility, time urgency, and workload had a positive relationship with engagement while hindrance demands which included administrative hassles, emotional conflict, organizational politics, resource inadequacies, role conflict, and role overload had a negative relationship with engagement.

Several aspects of leadership have been identified as important antecedents of employee engagement, particularly transformational leadership, empowering leadership, and leader–member exchange (LMX) (Bakker et al., 2011; Macey & Schneider, 2008). Macey
and Schneider (2008) argued that differences in the personalities of the individuals also predicted employee engagement. Studies have shown that core self-evaluations, conscientiousness, positive affect, and proactive personality have a positive relationship with engagement (Bledow, Schmitt, Frese, & Kuhnel, 2011; Rich et al., 2010; Saks & Gruman, 2011).

In addition to job resources, personal resources such as self-efficacy, organization-based self-esteem, and optimism have a positive relationship with engagement and they play a mediating role in the relationship between job resources and engagement (Xanthopoulou et al., 2009a; Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2009b).

2.1.5 Consequences of Engagement

Engagement has a positive relationship with job satisfaction, organizational commitment, job performance, and organizational citizenship behavior (Bakker & Bal, 2010; Hakanen, Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2006; Rich et al., 2010; Saks, 2006). Engagement is positively related with health and well-being (Cole et al., 2012; Crawford et al., 2010); and negatively related with turnover intentions (Saks, 2006; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). The results of the study by Halbesleben (2010) reiterated these findings. Halbeslan (2010) found out that engagement is related to higher commitment, health, performance, and lower turnover intentions. Employee engagement also has negative consequences in the form of work-family interference as found out by Halbesleben, Harvey, and Bolino (2009). As engagement is considered the opposite of burnout, it should have positive health outcomes. While engagement has a positive relationship with self-report and subjective measures of health and well-being, no significant relationships between engagement and objective measures of health and well-being have been found (Bakker et al. 2011).

Bakker, Demerouti, and Sanz-Vergel (2014) suggested that although there is extensive knowledge on work engagement, still there are several unanswered questions. They
further suggested that research and practice should continue to uncover processes related to work engagement, as it explains a great deal of the variance in organizational behavior.

2.2 Related Constructs: Work Engagement, Job Involvement, and Organizational Commitment

“Although the labels of engagement, involvement, and commitment have been used interchangeably in the literature, “work engagement, job involvement, and organizational commitment are clearly differentiated concepts, each with specific trademarks” (Hallberg & Schaufeli, 2006, p. 119).

Work engagement emphasizes ‘optimal functioning’ at work in terms of well-being. It has a resemblance with ‘flow’ (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997). While flow is a peak experience, work engagement is a comparatively stable experience of a longer duration. Work engagement is “described as the opposite of burnout (feeling drained of energy and fed up with work)”, its primary feature “is the presence of energy and content” (Hallberg & Schaufeli, 2006, p. 120).

Hallberg and Schaufeli (2006) noted that there was some amount of conceptual confusion if one traced the history of job involvement. There were two approaches in the literature—one that focused on the influence of one’s job on one’s self-esteem (Lodahl & Kejner, 1965) and another that focused on the influence of one’s job on one’s identity (Lawler & Hall, 1970). However, the “clearest and most precise contribution of the construct” (Brown, 1996, p. 236) was provided by Kanungo (1979). Kanungo (1979) emphasized a cognitive, psychological identification with work and the notion that work may satisfy salient needs and expectations. However, as per Brown (1996), job involvement appeared to be unrelated to role perceptions.

The research and literature on organizational commitment mostly concerns the attitudinal, affective aspects. This is the emotional bond that employees develop with their organization. Morrow (1983) found that this type of organizational commitment depends
more on job characteristics than on personal factors, implying lesser connections with intrinsic motivation than with extrinsic motivation.

Hallberg and Schaufeli (2006) established that work engagement, job involvement, and organizational commitment were three empirically distinct constructs. The significant difference between job involvement, organizational commitment, and work engagement is “the strong and consistent associations with health complaints which underlie the health component of work engagement” (Hallberg & Schaufeli, 2006, p. 125).

Hallberg and Schaufeli (2006) further noted

Work engagement and organizational commitment are more closely related than work engagement and job involvement…With previous work (Lawler & Hall, 1970; Lodahl & Kejner, 1965) indicating that job involvement is primarily a function of the individual and organizational commitment a function of the situation (Meyer & Allen, 1997), the most obvious interpretation is that job involvement should be considered as an independent variable whereas work engagement and organizational commitment should be viewed as dependent variables in work/organizational research models (p. 125).

2.3 Workplace Ostracism

Workplace ostracism refers to the extent to which individuals perceive that they are ignored or excluded by other employees in the workplace (Ferris, Brown, Berry, & Lian, 2008). Ostracism has been shown to negatively affect the four basic human needs: the need for self-esteem, the need to belong, the need for control, and the need for a meaningful existence (Williams, 1997). Further, it has been suggested that ostracism interferes with one’s ability to self-regulate and to follow the norms for appropriate behavior (Baumeister et al., 2005).
Now, organizations serve a need fulfilling purpose for the basic needs of an individual and the self-regulating ability of the employees are essential for the success of any organization; thus it seems that ostracism is bound to affect the organizations and their employees significantly (Ferris et al., 2008).

2.3.1 Antecedents of Workplace Ostracism

An ambiguity inherent in the phenomenon of workplace ostracism was pointed out by Robinson, O’Reilly, and Wang (2012). Workplace ostracism is ambiguous in that it may be construed to be purposeful or non-purposeful and the discernment of which is difficult for the ostracized individual. Robinson et al. (2012) identified the organizational antecedents of purposeful ostracism as low task interdependence, and flat hierarchical structure; they also identified the organizational antecedents of non-purposeful ostracism as high stress environment, geographical dispersion, and weak culture.

2.3.2 Consequences of Workplace Ostracism

Ferris et al. (2008) expressed their surprise at the lack of research into the phenomenon of ostracism at the workplace. They found that workplace ostracism was negatively related to the four basic needs, well-being, work attitudes, and productivity.

The life of any working person is lived in primarily two spheres; at the workplace and at home. The negative effects of workplace ostracism are likely to spill over from the workplace to home. Liu, Kwan, Lee, and Hui (2013) investigated the effects of workplace ostracism on family satisfaction of employees in China. They took workplace ostracism as a stressor and proceeded to find out its effects on the family life of the employees. They proposed that work-to-family conflict (WFC) mediated the relationship between workplace ostracism and family satisfaction. They also proposed that work-home segmentation preferences moderated the relation between workplace ostracism and work-to-family conflict.
The impact of workplace ostracism on workplace contributions along with the need to belong was investigated by O’Reilly and Robinson (2009). Employee contributions can be categorized into three types: in-role performance, extra-role performance, and contributing while being in the organization (Katz, 1964). O’Reilly and Robinson (2009) hypothesized that ostracism will be negatively related to each of the three types of employee contributions and that each of the three relations will be mediated by a thwarted need to belong. The findings of the study supported these hypotheses. It was noted that “When one perceives they are ostracized at work, their sense of belonging is likely undermined, which in turn, can reduce both their ability and motivation to contribute to the organization” (O’Reilly & Robinson, 2009, p. 6). Workplace ostracism was also found to have a unique and a more negative effect on the need to belong and the three types of employee contributions than other forms of social mistreatment. Robinson et al. (2012) identified the positive behavioral outcomes of workplace ostracism like job performance and organizational citizenship behaviors and negative behavioral outcomes of workplace ostracism like withdrawal and workplace deviance.

The comparative frequency and impact of ostracism and harassment in organizations was explored by O’Reilly, Robinson, Berdahl, and Banki (2014). They noted two significant differences between ostracism and harassment. One was that “ostracism involves the omission of behavior, or directing no behavior toward the target, in contrast to harassment, which involves acts of commission, or directing hurtful behavior toward the target” (O’Reilly et al., 2014, p. 775); and the other was regarding the underlying motive. The underlying intention of harassment was to cause harm whereas this was not necessarily the case with ostracism. They found out that, as compared to harassment, employees perceived ostracism to be more socially acceptable, less psychologically harmful, and less likely to be prohibited in their organization. Further their findings revealed that, as compared to harassment, ostracism
was more strongly and negatively related to employees’ sense of belonging at work, their personal well-being, their work-related attitudes, and turnover.

2.4 Related Constructs: Social Isolation, Social Exclusion, Social Rejection, Ostracism

2.4.1 Social Isolation and Social Exclusion

Social isolation is defined as the “phenomenon of non-participation (of an individual or group) in a society’s mainstream institutions” while the term social exclusion is used “for the subset of cases in which social isolation occurs for reasons that are beyond the control of those subject to it” (Barry, 1998, p. 1).

The boundary between the concepts of social isolation and social exclusion is demarcated by the will of the individual subject to social exclusion or social isolation. “Social isolation is thus defined so that it may be either voluntary or involuntary. In other words, social isolation encompasses social exclusion but is not confined to it” (Barry, 1998, p. 4).

2.4.2 Social Exclusion, Social Rejection and Ostracism

Social exclusion is defined “as being excluded…sometimes with explicit declarations of dislike, but other times not” (Williams, 2007, p. 429) while social rejection is defined as “an explicit declaration by an individual or group that they do not (or no longer) want to interact or be in the company of the individual” (Williams, 2007, p. 429).

Ostracism is defined as “being ignored and excluded, and it often occurs without excessive explanation or explicit negative attention” (Williams, 2007, p. 429).

Social isolation may be voluntary or involuntary. When it is involuntary, it is called social exclusion. Now, social exclusion may be explicit or implicit. When it is explicit, it is called social rejection.

2.5 Ostracism

The term ‘ostracism’ comes from the Greek word, ostrakismos, a practice in which citizens voted for exiling someone from the state (Zippelius, 1986). Ostracism is a way of
ensuring conformity to the established norms. “Government, cultures, religions, tribes, military institutions, small groups and even individuals practice ostracism as a response to individuals or groups who deviate from acceptable expectations” (Williams, 2002). Pathan tribes of the North Western Frontier Province of Pakistan and the Slavic tribes of Montenegro ostracize individuals who deviate from the norms of the tribe in order to uphold the norm of the respective tribes (Boehm, 1986; Mahdi, 1986). Gruter (1986) noted the prevalence of ostracism in the Amish community in the form of practice called Meidung. As per the practice of Meidung, the members of the community and even the members of the family are not allowed to talk to the ostracized individual. They too risk being similarly ostracized if they disobey. As a consequence of this, the ostracized individual is not able to maintain the necessary relationships to ensure his or her survival. This disciplining aspect of ostracism may also be seen to exist in rural India.

As Prakash (2007) points out

In our rural society, fellow feeling is embodied in the act of all families drawing water from a common well, and by the men-folk passing the same hookah from hand to hand when they gather in the evenings. The most serious punishment that can be meted out to a delinquent in the village is exclusion from both these activities, or Hookah pani band, as it is called (p. 208).

Williams (2002) noted that “it appears as though the primary function of ostracism is to bring the target back into the fold or expel him or her altogether. Either outcome strengthens the ostracizing group’s cohesiveness” (p. 11). Ostracism may be good for the cohesiveness of the ostracizing group but it also entails some pitfalls. Such group cohesiveness may result in groupthink which prevents the group from being aware of the possible drawbacks in the norms of the group. People who deviate from the norm and fail to adhere to the expected rules of conduct are often ostracized by the group. People often are
afraid of being ostracized by the other members of the group if they voice their concerns about the ethicality of the actions of the group.

Ostracism has been found to have negative effects on its targets. Being ostracized was found to affect the immune system of the individual, and lead to increased aggression and depression (Kling, 1986; Raleigh & McGuire, 1986); stomach ulcers (Gruter, 1986); fear of public gatherings and loss of tribal leadership (Boehm, 1986). Mcguire and Raligh (1986) noted the higher incidence of psychotic behaviors in prisoners subjected to solitary confinement. The literature on solitary confinement has been treated in a later section.

Ostracism undermines an individual’s sense of belongingness (Williams, 1997). Bastian and Haslam (2010) explored the dehumanizing effects of ostracism. According to them, “being ignored and treated with indifference appear to be central to both dehumanization and social ostracism” (Bastian & Haslam, 2010, p. 107). They also found that when the experience of being ostracized led people to consider themselves and the ostracizer as less human. It appears that being connected to others is held to be a basic human attribute.

The level of social anxiety in an individual also had an impact on the effects of ostracism on him or her. The persistence of the negative effects of ostracism among high and low socially anxious individuals was investigated by Zadro, Boland, and Richardson (2006). They found that although both were affected negatively, the effects lingered longer in case of high socially anxious individuals. They also found out that the highly socially anxious individuals who were ostracized tended to interpret ambiguous situations in a threatening manner.

Ostracizing someone can be a difficult task which can be a source of stress for the ostracizer (Ciarocco, Sommer, & Baumeister, 2001). A pair of studies was carried out to
demonstrate this fact. These findings are significant in that they show that ostracism proves harmful even for the ostracizer and not only the person who is ostracized.

Being ostracized, even by a computer, is found to negatively affect the four basic human needs, that is, the need for self-esteem, need to belong, need for control, and the need for a meaningful existence (Zardo, Williams, & Richardson, 2004). Zardo et al. (2014) also found out that the effects of ostracism were still negative even when the people being ostracized were told that the one ostracizing them had been specifically told to do so. Further, Gonsalkorale and Williams (2007) explored whether ostracism by a despised out-group could affect the basic human needs and the mood of the ostracized individuals. They found that being ostracism, even by a despised out-group, led to lower levels of belonging, self-esteem, control, and meaningful existence, and led to a more negative mood among excluded individuals. They found out that being ostracized by a despised out-group was as distressing as being ostracized by any other group.

2.5.1 Social Exclusion

Experiments to test the social reconnection hypothesis were carried out by Maner, DeWall, Baumeister, and Schaller (2007). Their experiments were meant “to test the hypothesis that social exclusion stimulates the desire to reconnect with the social world” (p. 42). The findings from the experiments supported the hypothesis and “provide important confirmation that the so-called need to belong operates like many other motivations, at least in the sense that when it is thwarted, people look for new ways to satisfy it” (p. 52). The results also “confirmed not only a desire to reconnect but also a tendency to view other people as friendly and nice” (p. 52). The research findings show that although the excluded person is willing and eager to explore the potential for social reconnection, he is very cautious in doing so. The individuals who were excluded are very open towards social connections which seem promising but not towards all.
Social exclusion was found to lead to aggressive behaviour in the excluded individuals (Twenge, Baumeister, Tice, & Stucke, 2001). The effect of social exclusion on prosocial behaviours was investigated by Twenge, Baumeister, DeWall, Ciarocco, and Bartels (2007). The authors argued that prosocial behaviour is a result of the belief that “one is part of a community in which people mutually seek to aid, to support... [and that]…-when people feel excluded, their inclination to perform such behaviors should be reduced or eliminated” (p. 56). The findings show that social exclusion caused a substantial reduction in prosocial behaviour. Socially excluded people were found to donate less money to a student fund, did not volunteer for further lab experiments, were less helpful after a mishap, and exhibited less cooperation in a mixed-motive game with another student.

Zhong and Leonardelli (2008) explored whether the fact of being socially excluded felt cold i.e. had any effect on the body temperature of the excluded person. They found out that being socially excluded lowered the body temperature. Consistent with the theories of embodied cognition, these findings suggest that people’s social experience is not independent of their bodily perceptions (Barsalou, 1999). Further, they emphasize the significance of the metaphors in sense-making of the world (Bargh, 2006; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

2.5.2 Solitary Confinement

The concept of solitary confinement for convicts arose with the Auburn and Pennsylvania model of prisons in the 1820s which sought to rehabilitate the convicts through isolation (Smith, 2006). Under the Auburn system, the inmates worked together during the day but they were not allowed to interact with each other. Under the Pennsylvania model, there was complete isolation of the inmates and they worked and spent all of their time in their respective cells. The Pennsylvania model was imported to Europe and implemented in many countries therein (Morris & Rothman, 1998; Johnston, 2000).
Solitary confinement is an extremely unpleasant experience, even for someone who is observing prisoners subjected to it. The famous English author Charles Dickens was deeply perturbed on seeing prisoners in solitary confinement. The pain inflicted by such a treatment may be gauged by the words of the author himself.

Dickens (1985) noted that

I believe that very few men are capable of estimating the immense amount of torture and agony which this dreadful punishment, prolonged for years, inflicts upon the sufferers; and in guessing at it myself, and in reasoning from what I have seen written upon their faces, and what to my certain knowledge they feel within, I am only the more convinced that there is a depth of terrible endurance in it which none but the sufferers themselves can fathom, and which no man has a right to inflict upon his fellow-creature. I hold this slow and daily tampering with the mysteries of the brain, to be immeasurably worse than any torture of the body (p. 146).

Similar thoughts were voiced by another well-known writer, Hans Christian Andersen, who described the dreadful conditions of solitary confinement.

Andersen (1851) remarked

A silence deep as the grave rests over it. It is as though no one lived there or it was an abandoned house in time of plague. . . . Galleries run along the various storeys and, at the hub, the chaplain has his pulpit; where he holds his Sunday sermons for an invisible congregation. Door upon door of the cells is half-opened to the gallery. The prisoners hear the chaplain, but they cannot see him, nor he them. It is all a well-built machine, a nightmare for the spirit (p. 29–33).

Several studies have brought out the negative effects of solitary confinement on inmates. Volkart, Rothenfluth, Kobelt, Dittrich, and Ernst (1983) analysed patients coming to a psychiatric clinic. Out of the 203 patients studied, 102 were inmates of a prison. Volkart et
Volkart, Ditrich, Rothenfluth, and Paul (1983) compared inmates of a prison under solitary confinement with other inmates of the prison who were not under solitary confinement. They found that inmates who were under solitary confinement “showed considerably more psychopathological symptoms than the control group . . . [and these] effects were mainly caused by solitary confinement; age, schooling, duration of detention and personality turned out to be of subordinate importance” (Volkart et al., 1983, p. 44).

In a longitudinal study of pre-trial detainees, isolated prisoners were faced with a greater amount of psychiatric problems as compared to prisoners who were not isolated (Andersen, Lillebæk, Sestoft, & Gabrielsen, 1994). The prisoners who were subjected to solitary confinement suffered from psychiatric morbidity to a greater extent as compared to those not subjected to solitary confinement. The study also found that the mental health of the prisoners not subject to solitary confinement demonstrated a gradual improvement in this pre-trial imprisonment whereas the mental health of those in solitary confinement improved only when the condition of solitary confinement was lifted.

2.6 Social Isolation

Social isolation is the “objective physical separation from other people” (Tomaka, Thompson, & Palacios, 2006, p. 360). Loneliness is different from social isolation in that loneliness is the “subjective feeling state of being alone, separated, or apart from others” (Tomaka et al., 2006, p. 360). On the relation between social isolation and loneliness, Tomaka et al. (2006) remarked “objective isolation may lead to feelings of loneliness in some individuals, whereas some objectively isolated people may never experience loneliness”
However, at several places in the literature, social isolation and loneliness have been treated as though they were interchangeable.

Tomaka et al. (2006) defined social support as “the reality or perception that one is part of a social network” (p. 361). They noted that most of the extant research linking social isolation, loneliness, and social support to health outcomes had been done on Caucasian populations and so decided to carry out their research on Hispanic populations since the Hispanics were the largest minority population in the United States and because social support is expected to play a larger role in Hispanics since their families and extended families play a significant role in their life. Tomaka et al. (2006) examined these issues in a random sample of southwest seniors comprised of significant subsamples of Hispanic and Caucasian populations. Subjective loneliness was a better predictor of disease in Hispanic sample as compared to Caucasians. There was limited evidence for the argument that family support and belongingness support would play different roles in predicting disease in the two subsamples.

The relation between social isolation and health was investigated by Cornell and Waite (2009) by studying two forms of isolation at once: social disconnectedness defined as “a lack of social relationships and low levels of participation in social activities” (p. 32); and perceived isolation defined as “loneliness and a perceived lack of social support” (p. 32). They seem to have confounded the boundaries between social isolation and loneliness. Cornwell and Waite (2009) used the data for their study from the National Social Life, Health, and Aging Project (NSHAP), a nationally representative, population-based study of community-residing older adults. Older adults are significant in that, with age, retirement from work or the death of a family member result in the loss of social roles (Ferraro, 1984; Weiss, 2005), and increasing health worries may lead to a decline in social participation (Li & Ferraro, 2006; Thoits & Hewitt, 2001). The results from the study demonstrated that the
two indicators used for measuring social isolation have independent and different associations with physical and mental health.

The mechanisms by which perceived social isolation affects health were discussed by Cacioppo and Hawkley (2003). The mechanisms considered were—attractiveness, health behaviour, stress, and repair and maintenance. They measured perceived social isolation as loneliness. They noted that they “focused here on perceived social isolation, as measured by the UCLA loneliness scale, rather than social isolation per se” (p. S48). Their study found that “neither attractiveness nor health behaviors differ as a function of social isolation, but stress and repair and maintenance do seem to be factors” (p. S39). Further, Cacioppo and Hawkley (2009) noted the negative effects of perceived social isolation (which they equated with loneliness) on cognition. They contended that human beings, being a social species, were worse off when isolated.

Social isolation was also found to be responsible for physical aggression in cohabiting couples (Stets, 1991). Cohabitation is defined as “two people currently living together (as a couple) without being married” (Stets, 1991, p. 669). It was proposed that co-habitors were more socially isolated than people who were married because of the social stigma attached with their pattern of living. The results of the study did not support this reasoning. It was further proposed that the lack of social support and the lack of social control in the case of co-habitors, was responsible for aggression. The lack of social control was found to be directly related to aggression; however, lack of social support was only indirectly related to aggression.

The relation between the social isolation of blacks and the rates of urban violence committed by them in America was examined by Shihadeh and Flynn (1996). According to the authors, “black isolation exists when the degree of potential contact between blacks and whites, is low” (p. 1329). They found that the social isolation of blacks was the major
predictor of homicide and robbery among the blacks. Social isolation was found to be especially dangerous for young people.

Hazler and Denham (2002) argued their case as

Young people struggling to become social beings and unique individuals at the same time are in particular need of the various forms of social support. When that support is missing, the resulting isolation from others increases the potential for progression from normal youthful dissonance toward more dangerous consequences that can include death or lifelong social and emotional disturbances (p. 403).

They examined the effect of social isolation on peer-on-peer abuse, on adult abuse of youth, and on youth suicide. They end their study with some implications for counselling.

2.7 Workplace Isolation

Workplace isolation is defined as “a psychological construct that describes employees’ perceptions of isolation from the organization and from co-workers” (Marshall, Michaels, & Mulki, 2007).

Increasing competition is forcing organizations especially sales organizations to become virtual by eliminating traditional centralized offices and locating their employees in the field closer to customers in order to reduce costs and enhance the effectiveness of interactions with the customer (Anderson, 1996; Cascio, 2000). In the changing business environment of today, salespeople have to constantly coordinate their activities with the other members of their organization and thus, the support of their co-workers is instrumental to their performance (Dixon, Gassenheimer, & Barr, 2002). The unavailability of this support, which happens in the case of workplace isolation, leads to negative feelings in the salespeople.

Evolutionary psychology provides us with a reason why such perceptions of physical and social separation would lead to negative feelings. Such a separation would have been
detrimental to our survival since they represent deprivation of support and protection (Buss, 1996). Although virtual offices may have their benefits, there are potential disadvantages inherent. Employees working in virtual offices may develop perceptions of isolation from the organization, which may lower their job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Kirkman et al., 2002; Wiesenfeld et al., 2001).

Such perceptions of isolation often get intensified for field salespeople because their primarily connection with the traditional office is through electronic communication such as email and telephone (Anderson, 1996). These forms of electronic communication are devoid of the richness and social presence associated with face-to-face communication (Andres, 2002; Scott & Timmerman, 1999). Information richness is defined as “the potential information carrying capacity of data” (Daft & Lengel, 1983, p.7).

Marshall et al. (2007) developed a ten item scale for measuring workplace isolation which taps into two dimensions of perceived isolation; one from the colleagues and one from the company. The colleagues subscale measures the “co-workers’ social support and measures employee perceptions relating to having co-workers for working through problems, discussing issues, and developing friendships” (Marshall et al., 2007, p. 211). The company subscale measures the “workplace-based support and measures employee perceptions relating to integration within the company/network, being informed about company events and being involved in same, knowledge/recognition of employee accomplishments, and connection to the company or departmental network” (Marshall et al., 2007, p. 211).

Since the conventional mechanisms of hierarchy and control are absent in virtual settings, trust is the force that binds the members of the organization (Jarvenpaa, Knoll, & Leidner, 1998; Kasper-Fuehrer & Ashkanasy, 2001). Research has shown that trust plays a key role in predicting employee’s ability to adjust to virtual work (Raghuram, Garud, & Wiesenfeld, 2001). It has been found that trust in a supervisor and among co-workers

Mulki, Locander, Marshall, Harris, and Hensel (2008) investigated the interrelationships among workplace isolation, trust in supervisor and co-workers, satisfaction with supervisor and co-workers, organizational commitment, and job performance for salespeople in virtual settings. The results of their study show that perceptions of workplace isolation have a negative effect on the trust in supervisor and co-workers.

2.8 Related Constructs: Solitude, Aloneness, Loneliness, and Alienation

Koch (1994) noted that the literature from the field of philosophy points towards three characteristics of solitude: “physical isolation”, “social disengagement”, and “reflectiveness” (p. 13).

Long and Averill (2003) had conceptualized solitude as

A state characterized by disengagement from the immediate demands of other people a state of reduced social inhibition and increased freedom to select one’s mental or physical activities. Such a state is typically experienced when a person is alone. However, aloneness is not a necessary condition for solitude: A person can experience solitude while in the presence of others, as when “alone” in the company of strangers or when an intimate couple seeks solitude for togetherness (p. 22).

Akrivou, Bourantas, Mo and Papalois (2011) also noted that “aloneness [was not]… a necessary condition for solitude” (p. 122-123). Koch (1994) defined loneliness as “the unpleasant feeling of longing for some human interaction” (p. 31).

Koch (1994) distinguished between solitude and loneliness as

Solitude… is not an emotion. Even if a solitude and a loneliness lasted for the same amount of time, they are not logically the same sort of thing. For solitude does not
entail any specific desires, feelings or attentional sets: it is an open state receptive to every variety of feeling and reflection (with the possible exception, as will appear, of overpowering desires for other people). Most importantly, whereas loneliness is intrinsically painful, solitude is equally open to both pleasant and painful feelings (p. 33).

Alienation is “a painful, unhappy condition imposed upon a victim, a condition felt within a society” (Koch, 1994, p. 38).

2.9 Relation between Workplace Ostracism and Work Engagement

Engagement represents the fundamental choice to invest the three aspects of the self (cognitive, emotional, and behavioural) in a holistic and connected manner (Rich, Lepine, & Crawford, 2010). Engagement is significantly related to many organizationally relevant variables and there has been a call for further research into the area of engagement in the literature (Bakker, Demerouti, & Sanz-Vergel, 2014). Workplace ostracism has been argued to a pervasive workplace phenomenon (Ferris, Brown, Berry, & Lian, 2008) and despite the call for greater research into this area (O'Reilly, Robinson, Berdahl, & Banki, 2014), workplace ostracism has not been given much attention by the researchers as a potential antecedent of engagement.

Ostracism negatively affects the need for self-esteem, the need to belong, the need for control, and the need for a meaningful existence (Williams, 1997). However, research has shown that among these, the need to belong is most directly and consistently affected by ostracism (Blackhart, Nelson, Knowles & Baumeister, 2009; Gerber & Wheeler, 2009). O’Reilly, Robinson, Berdahl and Banki (2014) suggested a reason for this. They argued that the need to belong is special in that it is almost entirely a function of our interaction with others. By thwarting this need to belong, ostracism at the workplace negatively affects the extent of employees’ contribution (O’Reilly & Robinson, 2009). Since engagement is a direct
measure of an employee’s contribution, it seems that ostracism at the workplace will have a negative relation with it.

Further, while discussing the phenomenon of low engagement of employees at work, Ryan and Deci (2000) suggested turning to Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which points towards examining the immediate social contexts of the individuals to find out the extent to which their needs for relatedness are being or have been thwarted. They came to the conclusion that by failing to provide supports for relatedness of employees, the socializing agents as well as the organizations contribute to alienation and ill-being, thus leading to apathy on the part of the employees and consequently their low engagement. Echoing similar thoughts, Seijts and Crim (2006) also found that being cared about by colleagues was a strong predictor of employee engagement. They found out that when employees work in teams and have the trust and cooperation of their team members, they performed better than individuals and teams which did not have trust and cooperation among them.

Ostracism has a negative relationship with cognitive performance (Baumeister, Twenge & Nuss, 2002), and it also leads to negative affect in the ostracized individuals (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Thus since ostracism has negative relations with the cognitive and affective aspects of the self of an individual, it can be argued that it is negatively related to engagement with work, a construct which represents the holistic nature of the self (Rich, Lepine, & Crawford, 2010).

On the basis of the above arguments, we hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis 1: Workplace ostracism is negatively related to work engagement.

We decided to analyze the part played by a role-level variable, a job-level variable and an organizational-level variable in our proposed relationship. Role ambiguity was taken as a role-level variable, psychological meaningfulness was taken as a job-level variable, and perceived organizational support was taken as an organizational-level variable.
2.10 Role Ambiguity

Role ambiguity is significant variable because the jobs now days are becoming increasingly ambiguous (Ellis, Bauer, Mansfield, Erdogan, Truxillo, & Simon, 2015), making role ambiguity a focus of renewed research. Rizzo, House, and Lirtzman (1970) defined role “as a set of expectations about behavior for a position in a social structure... [These expectations] serve as standards for evaluating the worth or appropriateness of behavior, and they tend to condition or determine such behavior” (p.155).

Rizzo et al. (1970) noted that there was no explicit definition of role ambiguity in the literature. They defined role ambiguity “in terms of the [unpredictability] of the outcome or responses to one’s behavior and the [non-existence of or unclear] behavioral requirements, often in terms of inputs from the environment, which would serve to guide behavior and provide knowledge that the behavior is appropriate” (p. 155-156).

The study by Rizzo et al. (1970) found out that role ambiguity and role conflict were “factorially identifiable and independent” (p. 150). Role ambiguity was found to have higher correlations than role conflict with the different variables measuring satisfaction (advancement opportunity, autonomy, intrinsic job, job security, pay recognition, personal recognition, and pleasantness).

In a meta-analysis of correlations between role ambiguity and job performance conducted by Tubre and Collins (2000), role ambiguity was found to have a negative relationship with job performance. These findings are in line with the fact that “role ambiguity represents a lack of information about what behaviors are appropriate, and role ambiguity weakens the links between effort-to-performance and performance-to-reward contingencies” (Tubre & Collins, 2000, p. 164).

Pettijohn, Schaefer, and Burnett (2014) examined the effect of the ambiguity in the role of a salesperson on his performance, customer satisfaction, and customer orientation.
The results of the study showed that role ambiguity was negatively related to the salesperson’s performance, customer satisfaction, and customer orientation. Salespersons are the ones who perform boundary spanning roles (Thompson, 2011) and a certain amount of ambiguity is likely to be present in their roles. Pettijohn et al. (2014) concluded that the level of ambiguity in the role of the salesperson should be kept as low as possible for better performance and better customer satisfaction and that this may be achieved by imparting proper training to the salesperson.

Ostracism “is defined by acts of omission rather than commission; that is, it results from the purposeful or inadvertent failure to act in ways that socially engage another” (Robinson, O’Reilly, & Wang, 2012, p. 6). Since ostracism is a perceptual phenomenon, Robinson, O’Reilly, and Wang (2012) further argued that such an act of omission created ambiguity “about not only why it happened but also, more important, whether it even happened at all” (p. 6). This ambiguity results in constant thinking over the ‘act’ (of omission) and leading to emotional distress (Nolen-Hoeksema, 2000).

Now, role ambiguity is defined as the “uncertainty regarding what is expected on one’s job” (Beehr, 1976, p. 35). Role ambiguity is itself a stressor which adversely affects the engagement of the employees. If an employee is facing exclusionary behavior at the workplace, as argued, he/she is already facing an ambiguous situation. On top of that, if he/she has to cope with ambiguity in his/her role at work, we can safely argue that engagement levels will be further hit. The presence of role ambiguity will heighten the negative effects of workplace ostracism. Thus we are led to hypothesize:

_Hypothesis 2: Role Ambiguity moderates the relation between workplace ostracism and work engagement such that the relation is more negative for higher values of role ambiguity._
2.11 Work Experience at the Current Workplace

When people work at a certain place, they invest their selves to some extent. They invest their energies and time with the other people working there and this investment increases as the time spent at the workplace increases. The social exchange between people who have been in contact for long is qualitatively different from the social exchange between people who have not been in contact for that long. With time, the person’s self-esteem may become closely embedded in the social fabric at the workplace (Van Dyne, Vandewalle, Kostova, Latham, & Cummings, 2000; Pierce & Gardner, 2004). On the basis of the above arguments, we may propose that the perception of being excluded or ignored will be more devastating for individuals with longer tenure in the workplace under consideration as compared to others. Thus, we may hypothesize:

Hypothesis 3: Work experience at the current workplace moderates the relation between workplace ostracism and work engagement such that the relation is more negative for people with higher work experience at the current workplace.

We decided to test psychological meaningfulness as a work level factor (May, Gilson, & Harter, 2004) and perceived organizational support as an organizational level factor (Allen, Shore, & Griffeth, 2003). The possibility that psychological meaningfulness and perceived organizational support, respectively moderate the relationship between workplace ostracism and work engagement was checked and it was found that they did not moderate the relation.

2.12 Psychological Meaningfulness

Kahn (1990) defined psychological meaningfulness as "a feeling that one is receiving a return on investments of one’s self in a currency of physical, cognitive, or emotional energy" (p. 703-704). Frankl (1992) argued that individuals strived to seek meaning in their work. Meaningfulness is the “value of a work goal or purpose, judged in relation to an individual’s own ideals or standards” (May, Gilson, & Harter, 2004, p.14).
May et al. (2004) noted that aspects of the workplace have an impact on psychological meaningfulness. They considered job enrichment, work-role fit, and co-worker relations in their study. Characteristics of one’s job have a significant impact on the meaningfulness experienced by an individual (Kahn, 1990). Johns, Xie, and Fang (1992) found that the meaningfulness experienced by the employees can be increased by enriching their jobs in the five dimensions suggested by the Job Characteristics Model (Hackman & Oldham, 1980).

Shamir (1991) argued that a perceived ‘fit’ between the self-concept of an individual and the role which he/she has to perform on the job would increase the feeling of meaningfulness experienced as such a fit will be conducive for the individual’s authentic expression of his/her self. The quality of the interpersonal relations of an individual has a significant effect on the experience of himself/herself. May et al. (2004) noted “When individuals are treated with dignity, respect and value for their contributions, and not simply as the occupant of a role, they are likely to obtain a sense of meaningfulness from their interactions” (p. 15). Research has time and again proven that meaningfulness depends on the quality of co-worker relations that one has. This has been proven as a result of quantitative (May, 2003) as well as qualitative (Isaksen, 1995; Kahn, 1990) studies.

2.12.1 Relation between Psychological Meaningfulness and Workplace Ostracism

Ostracism has a negative effect on a person’s sense of meaningfulness (Baumeister, 1990, 1991; Zadro et al., 2004). Stillman, Baumeiste, Lambert, Crescioni, DeWall, & Fincham (2009) argued that “it seems likely that people find meaning in their social relations. Unlike most other animals, humans obtain much of what they need from their social group, rather than directly from the natural environment” (p. 686). As a result, ostracism may threaten its targets to such an extent that it may negatively affect one’s sense of meaning.
According to Renn and Vandenberg (1995), an individual derives meaning from his/her job if he/she believes that his/her job is important with respect to his/her value system. Chalofsky (2003) noted that work “brings a sense of fulfillment to our lives. The literature on this topic indicates that meaningful work can be a significant contributor to meeting one’s purpose in life” (p. 73-74). It may be argued that when people are able to derive meaning from their work, they are less likely to be bothered by the behavior of others around them. Thus, the individual who finds his/her work psychologically meaningful is likely to attach less weight to perceptions of being excluded or ignored by the co-workers. The work itself covers so much of the existential space that the individual is not concerned with the perceptions of ostracism. In other words such perceptions don’t matter to him/her. Thus we may hypothesize:

**Hypothesis 4:** Psychological meaningfulness is negatively related to workplace ostracism.

### 2.13 Perceived Organizational Support

Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, and Sowa (1986) referred to perception of organizational support by the employees as the extent to which they felt that the organization valued their contributions and cared about their well-being. They found out that perceived organizational support reduced absenteeism among the employees.

Employees perceive the actions of the agents of the organization as that of the organization itself; they have a tendency to personify the organization (Levinson, 1965). The positive effects of a support from the organization occur only if the support is perceived to be sincere (Blau, 1964). Attribution of the causes of the benefits received has a significant effect on the perceived support.

Eisenberger *et al.* (1986) noted that

…increases in material rewards and the symbolic rewards that the employee attributes to the organization’s own disposition [as though the organization were an individual]
would increase perceived support. The same rewards, if attributed to external factors as a strong labor union or the threat of unionization, would reduce perceived support (p. 504-505).

Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) reviewed more than 70 studies on perceived organizational support. Their meta-analysis led them to propose some antecedents and consequences of perceived organizational support. They noted three antecedents of perceived organizational support—fairness in distribution of resources, supervisor support, and organizational rewards and job conditions.

The proposed consequences of perceived organizational support were—increased affective organizational commitment, increased job satisfaction, increased job involvement, improved performance, reduced stress, and reduced withdrawal behaviors. (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). These relations are dependent on the functional platform provided by the organization support theory (Eisenberger et al., 1986). It was noted that “Organizational support theory supposes that employees personify the organization, infer the extent to which the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being, and reciprocate such perceived support with increased commitment, loyalty, and performance” (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002, p. 711-712).

Wayne, Shore, and Liden (1997) explored the relationship between perceived organizational support and leader-member exchange; the two constructs based on social exchange theory. The results of the study showed that perceived organizational support and leader-member exchange were distinct constructs. However, it was found that “they are related and influence each other” (Wayne et al., 1997, p. 104). Leader-member exchange had a larger effect on perceived organizational support.

Wayne et al., (1997) found a distinct pattern of antecedents and consequences for perceived organizational support and leader-member exchange. Developmental experiences,
that is, participation in training and development programs and the frequency of promotions were positively related to the perceived organizational support. Leaders’ liking for the followers and their expectations of the leaders from their followers were positively related to leader-member exchange. Perceived organizational support was positively related to affective organizational commitment, organization citizenship behaviors (OCB) and negatively related to intentions to quit. Leader-member exchange was positively related to performance, OCB, and doing favors for the leaders.

2.13.1 Relation between Perceived Organizational Support and Workplace Ostracism

Eisenberger et al. (1986) argued that perceived organizational support addressed the needs for respect, caring and approval in the workplace. Perceived organizational support has an uplifting effect on the self-esteem of the employees (George, Reed, Ballard, Colin, & Fielding, 1993) by signaling that the organization cares about their well-being.

Man, being a social animal engages in social exchange with his environment. At the workplace, employees may be assumed to engage in three broad categories of social exchange. These social exchanges will be with their co-workers, their supervisor, and the organization in general. Their social exchange with their co-workers is non-existent in the case of workplace ostracism. It may be argued that if the an employee feels that the organization values his/her contribution and cares about his/her well-being, his/her needs for social exchange are likely to be met by the organization (Eisenberger et al., 1986) and he/she may not ascribe much significance to the perceptions of his/her being excluded or ignored by the coworkers. Hence we hypothesize:

Hypothesis 5: Perceived organizational support is negatively related to workplace ostracism.

We have earlier argued that psychological meaningfulness decreases the salience of the perception about others’ attitudes and behaviors towards oneself, thus reducing the perceptions of workplace ostracism. Reduced perceptions of ostracism are likely to lead to an
increase in work engagement of the individuals. Thus we may argue that psychological
meaningfulness positively affects the work engagement of the employees by affecting the
perceptions of ostracism at the workplace. So we hypothesize:

**Hypothesis 6: Workplace ostracism mediates the relation between psychological
meaningfulness and work engagement.**

The perception of a supportive organization by the individuals is likely to make up for
the lack of social exchange with the co-workers, in fulfilling the needs for respect, caring, and
approval (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Thus perceived organizational support is likely to lead to
reduced perceptions of ostracism. These reduced perceptions of ostracism are likely to lead to
an increase in work engagement of the individuals. Thus we may argue that perceived
organizational support positively affects the work engagement of the employees by affecting
the perceptions of ostracism at the workplace. So we hypothesize:

**Hypothesis 7: Workplace ostracism mediates the relation between perceived organizational
support and work engagement.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis 1</th>
<th>Workplace ostracism is negatively related to work engagement.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hypothesis 2</td>
<td>Role Ambiguity moderates the relation between workplace ostracism and work engagement such that the relation is more negative for higher values of role ambiguity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypothesis 3</td>
<td>Work experience at the current workplace moderates the relation between workplace ostracism and work engagement such that the relation is more negative for people with higher work experience at the current workplace.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypothesis 4</td>
<td>Psychological meaningfulness is negatively related to workplace ostracism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypothesis 5</td>
<td>Perceived organizational support is negatively related to workplace ostracism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypothesis 6</td>
<td>Workplace ostracism mediates the relation between psychological meaningfulness and work engagement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypothesis 7</td>
<td>Workplace ostracism mediates the relation between perceived organizational support and work engagement.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>