

Original Article

# Workplace Isolation and its Impact on Job Performance and Productivity of Women Teachers

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**Abstract:** The present study aims to examine the impact of workplace isolation on women teachers' job performance and job productivity. Workplace isolation refers to the feeling and perception of being excluded or neglected in the workplace. It is a condition in which employees feel that they are not part of the organisation and do not receive the social support they require, or they are excluded from significant work-related relationships and decision-making processes. On the other hand, job performance and productivity are concepts that reflect an employee's overall efficiency and contribution to the achievement of organisational objectives. The data for this study were collected from 335 women teachers working in colleges of Dakshina Kannada and Udupi districts of Karnataka, selected through random sampling. The General Linear Model was performed to analyse the data using SPSS. The findings indicate that feelings and perceptions of workplace isolation have a harmful impact on women teachers' job performance and productivity, reducing their teaching and research efficacy. Promoting and improving more social networking, collegial relationships, interdepartmental cooperation and communication and offering mentorship and emotional support for teachers may effectively enhance teamwork, reduce feelings of isolation, and improve teachers' job performance.

**Keywords:** Workplace Isolation, Job Performance, Job Productivity, Women Teachers.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Inclusion and involvement of women in the academic field have expanded remarkably in recent years, and more women are now involved in teaching and research. The fact that more and more women have entered the academic world shows that social values are changing, and the process proves their important role in the future of education. Women researchers and scholars, in particular teaching professionals, have contributed immensely to the development of educational practices and how people are imparted with knowledge. Despite the fact that the roles of women in education have been enhanced, women teachers continue to struggle with problems that potentially impair performance. The issue of isolation in the workplace, particularly for female teachers in a university or work environment dominated by males with a strict company culture, is one such topic that has not been adequately researched.

The isolation of women employees in the workplace is usually subtle and multidimensional. It can be due to a lack of professional contacts, organisational support and participation in the decision-making process, or low collegiality (Sahai et al., 2022). Nevertheless, the isolation is not only due to physical distance. A lack of good communication, support from a supervisor and an unfriendly work environment may isolate even individuals working in the same building, making them feel that they are not part of the organisation (Marshall et al., 2007). These aspects not only cause visible barriers to professional development of women but also lead to some forms of isolation in the workplace, which restricts inclusion, recognition, and overall performance.

Workplace isolation refers to the sense of being excluded or omitted in the workplace. It is a psychological condition in which workers feel that they are not part of the organisation, they do not receive the social support they require, or they are excluded from significant work-related relationships. Researchers in this field consider workplace isolation a perception, based on employees' feelings about their relationships in the workplace, rather than just their physical proximity to others (Marshall et al., 2007).

According to Marshall et al. (2007), there are two types of isolation at work: colleague isolation, which refers to the degree of social support an employee gets from co-workers. It indicates the presence of colleagues with whom employees can discuss work-related issues, share their concerns and develop friendly relationships. The absence of such interaction and support from co-workers can cause feelings of isolation in the workplace. Organisational isolation refers to the degree of work-based support and mentoring that employees receive from their supervisor and the organisation. Both types are important because they lower a worker's sense of belonging, decrease their chances of learning, receiving assistance, or having their work



recognised (Marshall et al., 2007; Bentley et al., 2016). Isolation may have a specific negative effect on professional development and performance of employees, especially in academic settings, where teamwork, mentoring, and sharing of knowledge are highly valued.

Job performance and productivity are closely related concepts that reflect an employee's overall effectiveness, efficiency, and contribution to the achievement of organisational objectives. It has been emphasised that job performance is a critical factor that can determine the effectiveness of organisations and personal performance (Campbell, 1990; Sonnentag & Frese, 2002). In education, the performance and productivity of teachers are central to upholding academic standards, facilitating learning outcomes, and upholding the reputation of institutions. For women teachers, social interaction, relationships with colleagues and integration into the workplace are crucial to their job performance. Job performance is defined as how well a person performs the duties, responsibilities and tasks involved in the job (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993). With respect to teachers, job performance includes lesson preparation, teaching, student assessment, research and involvement in institutional tasks. The work performance of a teacher, therefore, includes both academic and non-academic contributions to their institution (Darling-Hammond, 2000), whereas productivity is the quantity and quality of contributions in teaching, research, and service activities (Blackburn & Lawrence, 1995). A positive and encouraging work environment can make employees more engaged, satisfied and committed to work. Institutions that develop an environment that fosters the mental and emotional well-being of lecturers through workload management, establishment of strong working relationships, and implementation of well-being programs will result in higher productivity and a healthier academic environment (Uyeri, 2024).

Despite different research conducted on the issue of isolation and performance of employees in different organisational settings, very little attention has been given to exploring the effect of isolation on job performance and productivity of women teachers, especially in colleges. In this regard, the present research aims to investigate workplace isolation and its effects on job performance and productivity among women teachers, with the hope that the contributions of the study will deepen understanding of the topic and foster inclusive work practices in institutions.

#### **A) Objectives of the Study**

1. To examine the impact of workplace isolation on the job performance of women teachers.
2. To examine the impact of workplace isolation on the job productivity of women teachers.

#### **B) Research Hypothesis**

- $H_0$ : Workplace isolation has no significant impact on the job performance and job productivity of women teachers.
- $H_1$ : Workplace isolation has a significant impact on the job performance and job productivity of women teachers.

## **II. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Isolation at work has become a significant psychosocial problem in modern organisations that impacts employees' attitudes, behaviour, and performance. It is the feeling of an employee that they are not involved in significant social and professional interactions at the place of employment. Workplace isolation is a two-dimensional construct including organisational isolation and colleagues' isolation. Organisational isolation refers to the absence of support and guidance provided by supervisors and organisations for employees, the lack of appreciation for their contributions and insufficient inclusion in organisational networks. Colleague isolation, on the other hand, is a sense of loneliness in the workplace where employees lack the possibility of informal contacts, friendship, peer learning, and togetherness with fellow employees (Marshall et al., 2007).

The organisational context plays a significant part in developing a feeling of isolation among employees. A negative work environment and the absence of collegial support are significant predictors of loneliness at work (Wright, 2005). Furthermore, work environment factors have a direct impact on employee performance and productivity (Gunaseelan & Ollukkaran, 2012). With the help of the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, Chen and Kao (2012) studied the implications of burnout and isolation among flight attendants and found that colleague isolation is associated with low job resources and high job burnout, resulting in decreased job performance. In other words, colleague support and career development programs significantly contribute to reducing the perceptions of isolation among employees, while colleague isolation in turn has a direct impact on job performance. According to Bauer and Silver (2018), isolation is a powerful predictor of burnout, job dissatisfaction, intention to leave and feelings of efficacy among school principals, meaning that isolation is a significant predictor of leadership retention.

As far as women faculty members are concerned, Wasburn (2007) argues that women faculty benefit from fewer mentorships and experience more professional isolation, a slower rate of promotion, and a higher chance of leaving institutions before achieving tenure compared to their male counterparts. The study suggested a model of strategic collaboration mentoring that focuses on peer-based mentoring networks as a means to mitigate isolation and improve career advancement. Similarly, Tindall (2006) states that strong family support, father, colleagues and administrative mentorship, collaborative research and

publication opportunities play a very critical role in the academic achievement of women, emphasising the significance of professional networking. According to Smith and Calasanti (2005), the extent of feeling institutional and social isolation varies among faculty based on their gender, race and ethnicity. In particular, women faculty reported greater social isolation compared to male faculty, even though their academic accomplishments were similar. Ademe and Singh (2015) also found that women in higher education institutions do not have sufficient representation in leadership positions and are not habitually included in decision-making, which also leads to institutional isolation. In order to remove the structural obstacles preventing women from advancing and to improve the representation and inclusion of women in organisations, inclusive institutional initiatives and transformation are required. The initiatives should include a wide range of programs, including career development programs, professional and academic training related to teaching and research, leadership training and showcasing women leaders (Bilimoria et al., 2008).

### III. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a quantitative research design to examine the impact of workplace isolation on the job performance and productivity of women teachers working in colleges in Dakshina Kannada and Udupi districts of Karnataka, India. The survey method was deemed to be suitable because it allows for obtaining standardised information from a relatively large sample size and makes it easier to conduct statistical analyses of relationships and cause-and-effect between variables. Therefore, the data were collected through a survey questionnaire constructed after a thorough literature review and consultation with experts. Before administering the questionnaire to the entire sample, a pilot study was conducted with 40 respondents to test the reliability and validity of the questionnaire. Performing the pilot study, the questionnaire was found to be reliable and valid.

The sample size for this study includes 335 women teachers selected from colleges in Dakshina Kannada and Udupi districts of Karnataka. The respondents were selected using a random sampling method. Random sampling was used because it was essential to give all population members an equal chance of being selected, thereby increasing the representativeness and minimising selection bias. The colleges from which the data were collected have been selected on the basis of various criteria such as geographical location (urban and rural areas), type of institutions (government and private), and the diverse academic programs (e.g., education, arts, science, commerce, management, and engineering) to have a representative sample across different institutional settings. The colleges of both districts, Dakshina Kannada and Udupi, were selected to maintain workplace diversity.

The research aims to examine the impact of feelings of workplace isolation and perceptions of workplace isolation on the job performance and job productivity of women teachers. Therefore, in this research, feelings of workplace isolation and perceptions of workplace isolation are considered as predictor/independent variables, and job performance and job productivity are outcome/dependent variables. To measure feelings of workplace isolation among women teachers, 14 Likert-scale statements were designed. The items were accompanied by five-point response options, including never, rarely, occasionally, often, and always, to understand how frequently women teachers feel isolated. To measure perceptions of workplace isolation among women teachers, 17 Likert-scale items with six response options, ranging from strongly disagree = 1 to strongly agree = 6, were developed. Some items were selected and adapted from those used in the original 65-item Workplace Isolation Inventory created by Marshall et al. (2007). Moreover, there were 17 Likert scale statements with six response options regarding job performance and job productivity. The statements were designed to measure respondents' perspectives on whether workplace isolation negatively impacts enthusiasm for teaching, professional growth, creativity, motivation, confidence in performing job tasks, teachers' ability to mentor students effectively, organisational commitment, research and teaching productivity and their ability to complete their assigned tasks and responsibilities. The selection of statements was made based on their relevance and applicability to the research objectives and target population.

Cronbach's alpha was used to check the reliability and internal consistency of the items/statements. The Cronbach's Alpha value for questions related to feelings of workplace isolation was .702, and for statements related to perceptions of workplace isolation, was .827. Furthermore, the Cronbach's Alpha values for statements related to job performance and job productivity were .952 and .852, respectively. The Cronbach alpha values indicate a high reliability and internal consistency of the items of each of the above constructs. In the next step, the statements in each category were transferred to composite variables, namely, feelings of workplace isolation, perceptions of workplace isolation, job performance and job productivity.

To examine whether the independent variables have any significant impact on the aforementioned dependent variables, the General Linear Model (GLM) was found to be the most suitable statistical analysis. The General Linear Model is used to explain whether explanatory variables predict the dependent variables. The data was analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

**IV. RESULTS**

Using SPSS, a General Linear Model was performed to understand whether feelings and perceptions of workplace isolation among college women teachers impact their job performance and productivity. The following tables present the results.

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics**

Dependent Variables	Mean	SD	N
Job performance	4.01	1.09	335
Job Productivity	3.99	1.15	335

*Note: Independent variables are feelings of workplace isolation and perceptions of workplace isolation*

Table No. 1 demonstrates that the mean score for the impact of feelings and perceptions of workplace isolation on job performance is 4.01 (SD = 1.09) and for job productivity is 3.99 (SD = 1.25).

**Table 2: GLM Outcome on the Impact of Feelings and Perceptions of Workplace Isolation on the Combination of Job Performance and Job Productivity**

Effects		Value	F	df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Intercept	Pillai's Trace	.005	.770	2	331	.464	.005
	Wilks' Lambda	.995	.770	2	331	.464	.005
	Hotelling's Trace	.005	.770	2	331	.464	.005
	Roy's Largest Root	.005	.770	2	331	.464	.005
Feelings of Workplace Isolation	Pillai's Trace	.071	12.607	2	331	.000	.071
	Wilks' Lambda	.929	12.607	2	331	.000	.071
	Hotelling's Trace	.076	12.607	2	331	.000	.071
	Roy's Largest Root	.076	12.607	2	331	.000	.071
Perceptions of Workplace Isolation	Pillai's Trace	.041	7.004	2	331	.001	.041
	Wilks' Lambda	.959	7.004	2	331	.001	.041
	Hotelling's Trace	.042	7.004	2	331	.001	.041
	Roy's Largest Root	.042	7.004	2	331	.001	.041

The General Linear Model was performed to examine whether workplace isolation affects the job performance and job productivity of women teachers. The multivariate test analysis (Pillai's Trace, Wilks' Lambda, Hotelling's Trace, and Roy's Largest Root) reveals a statistically significant effect of feelings of workplace isolation on the dependent variables, including job performance and job productivity among women teachers. Particularly, the Pillai's Trace = .071,  $F(2, 331) = 12.607$ ,  $p = .000$ , with an effect size of .071, shows a statistically significant effect of feelings of workplace isolation on the two combined dependent variables. The analysis also confirmed a statistically significant effect of perceptions of workplace isolation on the combination of two dependent variables, including job performance and job productivity, Pillai's Trace = .041,  $F(2, 331) = 7.004$ ,  $p = .001$ , with an effect size of .056. The analysis indicates that feelings of isolation and perceptions of isolation in the workplace affect job performance and job productivity. Because the effect of feelings and perceptions of workplace isolation on the two combined dependent variables is significant, it is worth checking the test of between-subjects effects to examine the effect of each predictor variable on each individual outcome variable, including job performance and job productivity. The result of the between-subjects effect is presented in Table No. 3.

**Table 3: Tests of between-Subjects Effects of Feelings and Perceptions of Workplace Isolation on each Dependent Variable**

Sources	Dependent Variable	Type III SS	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	Job performance	23.539	2	11.769	10.341	.000	.059
	Job Productivity	31.448	2	15.724	12.652	.000	.071
Intercept	Job performance	.845	1	.845	.743	.389	.002
	Job Productivity	.156	1	.156	.125	.724	.000
Feelings of Workplace Isolation	Job performance	23.466	1	23.466	20.619	.000	.058
	Job Productivity	31.395	1	31.395	25.262	.000	.071
Perceptions of Workplace Isolation	Job performance	14.797	1	14.797	13.002	.000	.038
	Job Productivity	16.767	1	16.767	13.491	.000	.039
Error	Job performance	377.845	332	1.138			

	Job Productivity	412.605	332	1.243			
Total	Job performance	5798.988	335				
	Job Productivity	5790.063	335				
Corrected Total	Job performance	401.384	334				
	Job Productivity	444.053	334				

1. R Squared for Job Performance = .059 (Adjusted R Squared = .053)
2. b. R Squared for job productivity = .071 (Adjusted R Squared = .065)

**A) The Impact of Workplace Isolation on Job Performance**

The Tests of between-subjects effects reveal that feelings of workplace isolation have a statistically significant harmful impact on job performance, with  $F(1, 332) = 20.619, p = .000$  and an effect size (Partial Eta Squared) of .058, which falls under the range of medium effect. It was also found that perceptions of workplace isolation harmfully affect job performance,  $F(1, 332) = 13.002, p = .000$ . The partial eta squared ( $\eta^2 = .038$ ) suggests a small to moderate effect. Therefore, the analysis provides enough evidence to conclude that workplace isolation harmfully affects the job performance of women teachers. It is worth noting that based on the analysis, the combined predictor variables (feelings of isolation and perceptions of isolation) explain a small portion of the variance in the outcome variable (job performance), with  $R^2 = .059$  (5.9%) and Adjusted  $R^2 = .053$  (5.3%). There are several factors and reasons that can negatively impact job performance, and isolation at work is one of them. In other words, job performance is not merely impacted by only one factor; therefore, it is quite reasonable that isolation at work explains a small portion of variance in job performance.

**B) The Impact of Workplace Isolation on Job Productivity**

The finding demonstrates a statistically significant harmful impact of feelings of workplace isolation on job productivity of women teachers,  $F(1, 332) = 25.262, P = .000$ , with an effect size of  $\eta^2 = .071$ , which falls in the range of medium effect. Likewise, perceptions of workplace isolation were also found to reduce job productivity among employees,  $F(1, 332) = 13.491, p = .000$ . However, the effect size ( $\eta^2 = .039$ ) indicates a small effect. Hence, the research found that both feelings of isolation and perceptions of isolation have a harmful impact on job productivity, but the impact of feelings of isolation is greater than perceptions of isolation. Furthermore, the two predictor variables explain 6.5% of the variance in the outcome variables, with  $R^2 = .071$  (7.1 %) and Adjusted  $R^2 = .065$  (6.5%).

**Table No. 4: Parameter Estimates of Feelings and Perceptions of Workplace Isolation on Each Dependent Variable**

Dependent Variables	Parameter	B	Std. Error	t	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval		Partial Eta Squared
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound	
Job performance	Intercept	.675	.784	.862	.389	-.866	2.217	.002
	Feelings of Workplace Isolation	.649	.143	4.541	.000	.368	.930	.058
	Perceptions of Workplace Isolation	.420	.116	3.606	.000	.191	.649	.038
Job Productivity	Intercept	.290	.819	.354	.724	-1.321	1.900	.000
	Feelings of Workplace Isolation	.750	.149	5.026	.000	.457	1.044	.071
	Perceptions of Workplace Isolation	.447	.122	3.673	.000	.207	.686	.039

The unstandardized regression coefficients (B) suggest that for every 1-unit increase in self-reported feelings and perceptions of workplace isolation, respondents' agreement that the independent variables negatively influence job performance increases by .649 and .420, respectively. Likewise, the analysis shows that for every one-unit increase in self-reported feelings of workplace isolation and perceptions of workplace isolation, their perceived negative effect on job productivity increases by .750 and .447, respectively.

The result provides enough statistical evidence to reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis, suggesting that workplace isolation harmfully affects the job performance and productivity of women teachers.

**V. DISCUSSION**

The extant literature indicates that workplace isolation impacts different aspects of employees' personal lives and work. The impact ranges from attitude, behaviours, job performance, wellbeing, job satisfaction, organisational commitment, turnover intention, motivation and more (Sahai et al., 2020). The current study was conducted to examine the impact of workplace isolation on the job performance and job productivity of women teachers. The study found that feelings and

perceptions of workplace isolation among women teachers significantly impact job performance and job productivity. It harmfully impacts teachers' job performance in many ways, including reducing enthusiasm for teaching, hindering professional growth, reducing creativity and motivation, decreasing confidence in performing job tasks and limiting teachers' ability to mentor students effectively. Furthermore, feelings and perceived isolation in the workplace harmfully impact the job productivity of women teachers, including their research and teaching productivity and make it difficult for them to complete their assigned tasks and responsibilities. The finding is consistent with Chen & Kao (2012), who found that colleague isolation directly affects job performance, while colleague support and professional development opportunities reduce employees' perceptions of isolation. Loneliness or isolation significantly reduces employees' job performance as it harms their psychological well-being and emotions (Uslu, 2021). Golden et al. (2008) also found a negative relationship between professional isolation and job performance. Isolation reduces the productivity of employees. The present research also found that for every one-unit increase in self-reported feelings of workplace isolation and perceptions of workplace isolation, their perceived negative effect on job performance and job productivity also increases. In other words, as women teachers feel more isolated, their job performance and job productivity are harmfully affected and reduced.

To effectively cope with feelings of workplace isolation and improve job performance and productivity among female teachers, colleges need to take steps to promote more networking and social gatherings to enhance collegial relationships. Professional mentorship and emotional support can also be offered to women teachers to help them feel part of their organisation and increase their sense of belonging. Improved interdepartmental cooperation and improved institutional communication channels may also promote teamwork, reduce professional isolation, and increase organisational efficacy.

## VI. CONCLUSION

Workplace isolation among women employees is multifaceted and multidimensional. There are many factors that contribute to a feeling of workplace isolation, including a lack of professional contacts, organisational support and participation in decision-making processes, as well as low collegiality (Sahai et al., 2022). It is not merely due to physical or geographical distance. A lack of fair and inclusive communication and an unfriendly work environment may isolate even employees working in the same building, making them feel they are not part of the organisation (Marshall et al., 2007). The feeling of workplace isolation has various harmful impacts on employees' personal and professional lives. The present study was conducted to examine the impact of workplace isolation on the job performance and productivity of women teachers working in colleges in the Dakshina Kannada and Udupi districts of Karnataka. The finding suggests that feelings and perceptions of workplace isolation harmfully impact women teachers' job performance in many ways, including reducing enthusiasm for teaching, hindering professional growth, reducing creativity and motivation, decreasing confidence in performing job tasks and limiting teachers' ability to mentor students effectively. Furthermore, feelings and perceptions of isolation in the workplace harmfully impact the research and teaching productivity of women teachers.

To address workplace isolation and improve job performance and productivity of women teachers, colleges need to promote social networking, enhance collegial relationships, offer mentorship and emotional support and improve interdepartmental cooperation and communication. These strategies will effectively enhance teamwork, reduce professional isolation, and improve the job performance and productivity of teachers.

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