
THE IMPACT OF WORKPLACE BULLYING ON ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT AMONG TEACHERS OF PAKISTAN: MEDIATING ROLE OF JOB SATISFACTION

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Abstract

Workplace bullying has negative impacts on the psychological health of employees and results at work. This paper focuses on the effect of workplace bullying on organizational commitment of teachers in the private sector universities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Pakistan, and job satisfaction as a mediator. A quantitative approach was employed in terms of the cross-section where 670 faculty members were surveyed. Findings indicate that workplace bullying has substantial negative correlations on organizational commitment, whereas there is a positive association between job satisfaction and organizational commitment. The bullying and commitment relationship were partially mediated by job satisfaction. The results imply that bullying can be reduced and job satisfaction is enhanced as a way of increasing commitment and retention in schools.

Keywords: Workplace bullying; Organizational commitment; Job satisfaction; Universities in the private sector; Faculty member; Higher education; Pakistan; Khyber Pakhtunkhwa; Mediation analysis.

1. INTRODUCTION

Modern organizations have been highly determined by the quality of work environment in defining the attitude, behavior and performance results of employees in organizations. Workplace bullying is one of the psychosocial threats that have attracted scholars and practitioners more recently because it has widespread and devastating effects at workplaces (Einarsen et al., 2011). Workplace bullying is characterized by negative actions in which a person is subjected to recurring, unremitting adverse behaviors that cause him or her to experience distress and poor health coupled with inability to carry out his or her duties (Einarsen, Hoel, and Notelaers, 2009). In contrast to the single conflict, bullying is a situation that is characterized by power inequality, recurrence, and time and is thus especially detrimental to both organizations and employees.

Workplace bullying is an acute problem in the higher education sector. Universities are historically considered to be thought-provoking and collegial worlds, but rising competition, performance demands, contract labor and hierarchy have augmented the danger of interpersonal abuse (Keashly and Neuman, 2010). Bullying can manifest as bulky workloads, professional sabotage, social isolation, verbal harassment, and unfair assessment among academic employees particularly in the universities of the private sector (Solin, 2003). Not only do such behaviors impact on

individual faculty members, but also contribute towards the institutional effectiveness by undermining organizational commitment.

Organizational commitment is the process which depicts the psychological binding of employees to their organizations and their eagerness to strive in its favor (Meyer and Allen, 1991). Universities need high amounts of commitment among the teaching personnel because teachers who are committed exhibit better teaching performance, increased research interest and reduced turnover intentions (Mowday, Steers, and Porter, 1979). On the other hand, when the members of the faculty feel that there is hostile work environment or unfairness in their workplace, they feel less attached emotionally to the institution, which results in disengagement and withdrawal behaviors (Mathieu and Zajac, 1990).

An emerging body of literature proposes that bullying at the workplace is an important indicator of low organizational commitment (Nielsen and Einarsen, 2012). Bullying contravenes the principle of reciprocity and respect that forms the basis of the employer employee relationship hence destroying trust and loyalty (Blau, 1964). One of the reasons why teachers who are constantly mistreated might develop feelings of depreciation and lack of support is that their belonging to the institution becomes weak. The processes by which bullying impacts commitment have however not been well investigated especially in a non-western academic setting.

Job satisfaction is one of the most important psychological processes that can help explain such a relationship. Job satisfaction is a good mood, which is an outcome of self-assessment of work experiences (Locke, 1976). It represents the perception of the employees towards their working conditions, management, workload, appreciation, and growth prospects (Spector, 1997). Empirical studies always show that bullying leads to decreased job satisfaction through the development of stress, anxiety, and unhappiness over the workplace conditions (Hoel, Sparks, and Cooper, 2010). Meanwhile, job satisfaction has been found as a robust antecedent of organization commitment in all occupational groups, such as educators (Meyer et al., 2002).

Theoretically, one can make use of the social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) when examining these relationships. When employees feel that they are being treated in a supportive and respectful manner, then they will treat in a positive way like being satisfied and committed. On the other hand, bullying is a violation of social exchange that results into negative emotional responses and less attachment to the organization. As well, there are stress strain models (Spector and Jex, 1998) that propose that stressors at work such as bullying cause a psychological strain that is reflected in reduced level of satisfaction and diminished commitment.

Although there has been an increasing literature on workplace bullying all over the world, there are a number of gaps. To begin with, the majority of the empirical research has been done within the Western context with little being done in South Asian nations like Pakistan. Second, there is limited research that specifically targets the private sector universities despite the fact that most of them tend to work under stricter performance pressure and reduced job security as compared to the public universities. Third, not many studies have empirically examined job satisfaction as an intermediate between work place bullying and organizational commitment in academic contexts.

To fill these gaps, the current research examines the effects of workplace bullying on organizational commitment through job satisfaction as a mediator variable among 670 teachers who are employed in the universities of the KP in the private sector in Pakistan. Through these relationships the study helps to fill the gap in the literature by providing context-specific evidence by higher education in a developing nation. In a practical way, the findings will be of value to university administrators and policymakers interested in creating healthier workplaces, improving faculty commitment, and organizational commitment.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Workplace Bullying

Workplace bullying has been identified as a significant organizational issue that has extensive implications both on the employees and organizations. According to Einarsen et al. (2009), workplace bullying refers to frequent exposure to adverse behaviors like harassment, intimidation, or social exclusion and the victim in such a case is unable to protect himself. Such behaviors can be either work-based (e.g., unrealistic deadlines, too much control) or person-based (e.g., mocking, verbal abuse). It has been found out that bullying is not an isolated case especially in hierarchical and competitive institutions such as universities (Keashly and Neuman 2010).

Empirical literature always shows that bullying at workplace is linked to negative psychological and attitudinal effects such as stress, anxiety, emotional burnout and low job satisfaction (Nielsen and Einarsen, 2012). In most institutions of learning, bullying can be due to power differences between the senior and junior college faculty, the performance appraisal system and insecure employment agreements (Salin, 2003). This is particularly common in the universities under the private sector where job insecurity and pressure to perform are common.

2.2 Workplace Bullying and Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment indicates the level of identification and emotion attachment of employees to their organization (Meyer and Allen, 1991). Many studies have developed negative relationship between workplace bullying and organization commitment. Indicatively, Hoel et al. (2010) established that affective commitment was

significantly lower in bullied employees than in non-bullied employees. In a similar fashion, Nielsen et al. (2017) also established that bullying undermines the loyalty of employees and heightens their intentions to leave the organization. On the social exchange theory, bullying brings about an absence of organizational support and fairness and thus, employees start to become psychologically detached to the organization (Blau, 1964). On the academic front, bullied teachers might find themselves believing that their institution does not recognize their work and hence having less emotional attachment and moral responsibility to be dedicated. With this evidence, workplace bullying will have a negative impact on organizational commitment.

2.3 Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is a core concept in organizational behavior and the general rating of the employees in terms of their job experiences (Locke, 1976). Spector (1997) also made the concept of job satisfaction to be multidimensional which included pay, promotion, supervision, work load and work environment. Job satisfaction is associated with teaching effectiveness, research productivity and student outcomes in higher education among members of the faculty (Judge et al., 2001).

It has been found that workplace bullying is one of the major antecedents of job dissatisfaction. Bullying leads to the unfriendly work environment, diminished professional identity, and increased psychological stress, which are all unfavorable to the satisfaction (Zapf et al., 2003). Investigations of industries demonstrate the low satisfaction of employees with their job, supervisor, and organization when they have been exposed to bullying (Hoel et al., 2010).

2.4 Job Satisfaction and Organizational Commitment

The connection between job satisfaction and organizational commitment is not new in the literature. According to meta-analytical evidence, there is a likelihood that a satisfied employee would form strong emotional attachment to organization (Mathieu and Zajac, 1990). Faculty members who are satisfied in the academic context are found to be more committed, engaged and willing to contribute more than what is required in the formal job description (Meyer et al., 2002).

Job satisfaction is an affective basis of commitment because, when there are positive experiences at the job, there will be a sense of gratitude and commitment towards the company. Teachers are more likely to be loyal and committed when they feel that their working conditions are conducive and that they are rewarded.

2.5 Mediating Role of Job Satisfaction

Recent studies have also focused relatively more on understanding how job satisfaction plays a mediating role in the relationship between workplace stressors and organizational outcomes. The stressors, including bullying, however, affect the affective states of employees, which in turn leads to the attitudinal outcomes, such as commitment, according to the stress strain theory (Spector and Jex, 1998). This mediation mechanism has been found to be supported by empirical studies in multiple organizational settings (Nielsen and Einarsen, 2012).

Nevertheless, there is little study that has investigated this mediation in higher education especially in the developing nations. As the teachers of the privately-owned universities in Pakistan have a distinct set of challenges, job satisfaction will probably serve as a key to converting the adverse workplace experience into the commitment-related outcomes. Thus, the present research suggests that job satisfaction intermediates the connection between organizational commitment and workplace bullying.

Hypotheses:

1. H1: Workplace bullying has a negative impact organization commitment.
2. H2: Work place bullying has negative effects on job satisfaction.
3. H3: Job satisfaction has a positive impact on organizational commitment.
4. H4: Job satisfaction mediates the relationship between workplace bullying and organizational commitment.

3. METHODOLOGY

The quantitative research design, which was used in this study, was a cross-sectional study design to evaluate the effect of workplace bullying on organizational commitment and whether job satisfaction mediates the effect of bullying in teachers of the KP, Pakistan. The target group was the full time faculty members operating in established private universities within the province. The stratified random sampling method was applied to select the participants so that proportional representation of the participants in terms of academic ranks and disciplines was achieved. A total of 700 questionnaires were sent out of which 670 were valid returned responding to 95.7 percent.

The information was gathered via a questionnaire which was structured and self-administered. Negative Acts Questionnaire-Revised (NAQ-R) by Einarsen et al. (2009) was used to measure bullying at the workplace. Job satisfaction was measured using Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS) by Spector (1985) and organizational commitment using three component organizational commitment scale by Meyer and Allen (1991). The rating was done on a five-point Likert scale of one (strongly disagree) to five (strongly agree).

The SPSS version 25 was used to analyze data. Reliability analysis, descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation and hierarchical regression were conducted. The testing of the mediation was conducted with the help of PROCESS macro (Model 4) by Hayes (2018). Ethical aspects, such as anonymity and voluntary involvement were highly adhered to.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Demographic Characteristics

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Sample (n = 670)

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	357	53.3%
	Female	313	46.7%
Age (years)	≤30	98	14.6%
	31–40	243	36.3%
	41–50	215	32.1%
	>50	114	17.0%
Academic Rank	Lecturer	309	46.1%
	Assistant Prof	226	33.7%
	Associate Prof	93	13.9%
	Professor	42	6.3%

The demographic table shows a balanced sample (670) of KP private university teachers. The males were slightly more than the females (53.3% vs. 46.7%), which is an indication that there was a fair representation of genders. The majority of the participants (36.3 percent) were aged 31-40, then 41-50 (32.1 percent), indicating that the sample was mostly made up of mid-career professionals. Lecturers were the most prevalent among the academic ranks (46.1%), which is typical of the faculty distribution pattern in the case of a private university, and professors were the least prevalent (6.3%). This heterogeneity in terms of age and rank increases the generalizability of results at different stages of the career in private higher learning institutions.

4.2 Reliability Analysis

Table 2. Scale Reliability Statistics

Scale	Cronbach's α
Workplace Bullying (NAQ-R)	0.92
Job Satisfaction (JSS)	0.88
Organizational Commitment	0.91

Statistic of reliability displays the high internal consistency of all scales. There was high reliability of NAQ-R when using workplace bullying ($\alpha = 0.92$), which is a high item coherence. The Job Satisfaction Survey was found to be reliable (0.88), which justifies the applicability of the survey in measuring satisfaction among the academic personnel. The level of organizational commitment was also found to have an excellent reliability ($\alpha = 0.91$), which validated the fact that the items were always covering the construct. In general, these high Cronbach alpha value exceeds the widely acknowledged critical value of 0.70 (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994), which gives the measures of these instruments credibility and at the same time, the further correlation, regression and mediation analysis will be carried out on sound data.

4.3 Correlation Analysis

Table 3. Pearson Correlation Matrix

Variable	1	2	3
1. Workplace Bullying	1		
2. Job Satisfaction	-0.45**	1	
3. Organizational Commitment	-0.39**	0.57**	1

Note: $p < .01$

The findings of correlation indicate that there are major associations between important variables. Job satisfaction is

negatively correlated with workplace bullying ($r = -0.45, p < .01$), implying that the more the bullying, the less the satisfaction. Equally, there is a negative relationship between workplace bullying and the organizational commitment ($r = -0.39, p < .01$), which confirms the hypothesis that organizational commitment and loyalty to the faculty is undermined because of bullying. Job satisfaction is also positively associated with organizational commitment ($r = 0.57, p < .01$), which indicates that the more satisfied teachers are more likely to demonstrate organizational commitment. These trends substantiate the theoretical relations that were expected and precondition mediation analysis in which job satisfaction can be the reason that a portion of the bullying-commitment association can be explained.

4.4 Regression Analysis

Table 4. Hierarchical Regression Predicting Organizational Commitment

Predictor	B	SE	β	p
Step 1: Bullying	-0.32	0.04	-0.39	<.001
Step 2: Bullying & Satisfaction				
Bullying	-0.18	0.04	-0.22	<.001
Job Satisfaction	0.51	0.03	0.54	<.001

The regression analysis supports the assertion that an organization can notably predict low organizational commitment by workplace bullying ($= -0.39, p < .001$). Once job satisfaction is introduced in the model, the impact of bullying is lessened ($-0.22, p < .001$) and instead, job satisfaction proves to be a significant positive predictor of commitment ($0.54, p < .001$). These results indicate that job satisfaction has significant variance in organizational commitment and is partially a reason behind the negative influence of bullying. The fact that the direct impact on bullying of including satisfaction is reduced, shows that it is partly mediated, which fits the requirements of Baron and Kenny (1986). In such a way, favorable working conditions that encourage satisfaction might cushion the detrimental effects of bullying.

4.5 Mediation Analysis

Table 5. Mediation of Job Satisfaction

Path	Effect	SE	95% CI
Total Effect (c)	-0.39	0.04	[-0.47, -0.31]
Direct Effect (c')	-0.18	0.04	[-0.26, -0.10]
Indirect Effect (ab)	-0.21	0.03	[-0.27, -0.16]

It was shown that mediation analysis with the help of PROCESS proves that job satisfaction plays a significant role in mediating the connection between workplace bullying and organizational commitment. The overall impact of bullying on commitment is negative ($-0.39, p < .001$). When job satisfaction is adjusted for, the direct effect is also large but less important (-0.18), and the indirect effect through job satisfaction is also large (-0.21 ; 95% CI does not include zero), which proves mediation. This implies that bullying reduces job satisfaction which reduces commitment. The partial mediation of the negative impact of bullying through job satisfaction improvement indicates the significance of interventions in higher education institutions, which may be practicable.

5. DISCUSSION

The results support every hypothesis. Bullying has an adverse effect on job satisfaction and organizational commitment, which is in line with the findings reported in the literature that bullying has a negative effect on the attitude and commitment of employees (Nielsen and Einarsen, 2012; Hoel et al., 2010). Job satisfaction has a positive effect on commitment, and this is in line with the current literature (Meyer et al., 2002; Spector, 1997). The results of the bullying-commitment relationship are partially mediated by job satisfaction, which implies that organizational strategies of enhancing job satisfaction would reduce the negative impact of bullying. The mediation analysis conducted using PROCESS reveals the job satisfaction significantly mediates the relationship between bullying in the workplace and organizational commitment. The overall impact of bullying on commitment is negative ($-0.39, p < .001$). When job satisfaction is controlled, the direct effect is also noteworthy, albeit less strong (-0.18) whereas the indirect effect mediated by job satisfaction is also noteworthy (-0.21 ; 95 percent CI does not include zero), which is the mediation case. This is an indicator that bullying reduces job satisfaction which subsequently reduces commitment. The partial mediation demonstrates the necessity of improving job satisfaction to mitigate the adverse consequences of bullying with references to practical interventions in colleges and universities.

6. Limitations and Future Research

The cross-sectional design does not allow making causal inferences. Findings could be verified in the future through longitudinal studies and intervention research. It should include public universities and other regions in order to increase generalizability.

7. CONCLUSION

This research has explored the effect of bullying at work on organizational commitment among the teachers in the universities of the private sector in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan and explored the presence of job satisfaction as a mediator. The results give significant empirical evidence that bullying at the workplace is a serious demeanor that compromises job satisfaction and commitment to the organization. When faculty members feel negative behaviors recurrently in the workplace, they have higher chances of being dissatisfied with their jobs and being emotionally disinterested in their institutions. These findings support the fact that bullying is an important psychosocial risk, which is not only an individual distress but a danger to the stability and effectiveness of the institution.

Notably, the research shows that organizational commitment in relation to workplace bullying is mediated by job satisfaction to some extent. This implies that bullying lowers the commitment levels in the organizations both directly and indirectly by lowering the satisfaction that teachers have in their jobs. Coupled with the realization that their working environment is hostile or unsupportive, the academic staff experiences a diminished positive emotional attachment to the university that results in low commitment and increased chances of withdrawal behaviors.

In general, this research demonstrates the fundamental necessity of encouraging respectful, supportive, and inclusive workplace in privately owned institutions of higher learning. Workplace bullying and job satisfaction should also be addressed as imperative measures to maintain commitment of the faculty, retention, and long-term sustainability and academic excellence of Pakistani universities.

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