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Article

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MANAGEMENT | RESEARCH ARTICLE

Unfolding the ramifications of workplace bullying: An empirical justification of conservation of resource theory in telecommunication sector of Pakistan

Muhammad Shaukat Malik¹ and Shahzadi Sattar^{2*}

Abstract: The current study is an attempt to explore the repercussions of workplace bullying in the telecommunication sector of Pakistan. To be precise, it assesses the influence of workplace bullying on emotional exhaustion resulting in the deterioration of employee performance. Drawing on Conservation of Resource Theory (COR), researchers tested the impacts of workplace bullying and cynicism on employee job performance where emotional exhaustion is the mediator between workplace bullying and employee performance. This study highlights the problematic confrontation by the telecom employees and suggests remedial actions to overcome this. The data is collected from 387 respondents of four telecommunications companies' franchises of southern Punjab Pakistan through a questionnaire-based survey. Purposive sampling is used in order to collect data from respondents encompassing managers and span of control. The data is analyzed using descriptive statistics and SMART-PLS using a bootstrapped moderated mediation method. The findings indicate a significant negative relationship between workplace bullying and employee



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PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

Bullying is usually seen as acts or verbal comments that could psychologically or "mentally" hurt or isolate a person in the workplace. Bullying usually involves repeated incidents or a pattern of behavior that is intended to intimidate, offend, degrade or humiliate a particular person or group of people. It has also been described as the assertion of power through aggression. Bullying and organizational cynicism is a workplace issue. Due diligence means that employers shall take all reasonable precautions, under the particular circumstances, to prevent injuries or incidents in the workplace. The legislation of organizational jurisdiction describes the roles and responsibilities for workplace parties with respect to workplace violence, including developing and implementing policies and programs. However, if few steps are to be undertaken the workplace bullying can be reduced and condemned like talk to peer group, boss or HR manager, resort legal protection against harassment if the fine line between harassment and bullying is crossed.

performance. However, workplace bullying has a significant positive correlation with employees' emotional exhaustion, and when organizational cynicism as a moderator has been introduced, this relationship gets aggravated. The study results focus on the depletion of the psychological resources of employees by workplace bullying and organizational cynicism resulting in poor employee performance. Since employees may lose the psychological resources to cope with the situation, this issue must be addressed to replenish the psychological resources. Hence managers must introduce workplace bullying combating strategies to avoid harmful consequences.

Subjects: Environment & Business; Education - Social Sciences; Cultural Studies

Keywords: Workplace bullying; job performance; emotional exhaustion; organizational cynicism; affective event theory

1.: Introduction

Interactive ferocity has been manifested in human history since beginning. Nevertheless, interpersonal violence has developed into a universal delinquent affecting society as a whole including the employment sector (Smit, 2021). No doubt prevalence of workplace bullying has recently received the attention, it desperately deserves from employers at large and society (Escribano et al., 2019). As a form of interpersonal violence, it has only recently been the subject of a claim by Smit (2021). Worldwide, however, bullying appears to be inspected and laws have been conceded to regulate bullying as a separate cause of action. To curtail down the phenomenon of bullying, efforts are limited and scrappy in most countries, but have increased following the publication of the International Labor Organization (ILO) 2019 report on violence and harassment at work (Ticlea, 2020). Kaltiala-Heino and Fröjd (2011) take a position knowing that depression is the disease of our century, with two drivers, bullying and harassment, being investigated as key factors in depression, while acknowledging that depression can be a bully reason. Workplace intimidation is a new quadruped in the empire of organizational behavior and is attracting much consideration now (Malik & Sattar, 2020).

Moreover, high-power distance societies reflecting a huge gap between high ups and span of control countries like Pakistan, it has never been a witty choice for span of control to demonstrate antagonistic nonconformity; however, slight aberration is projected in developing country culture like Pakistan (Hofstede, 1983; Sarwar et al., 2020). Therefore, workplace bullying has remained an untapped area in organizational behavior. Workplace bullying declines performance and triggers emotional exhaustion in organizations. The spillover effect of bullying causing emotional exhaustion is not refutable (Sarwar et al., 2021). Therefore, organizations should be aware of risk factors that negatively correlate with employee health and ultimately lead to a decline in employee performance (Iftikhar & Beh, 2019).

Telecommunication industry is the fastestgrowing industry (Ur Rehman et al., 2015). Telecommunications sector of Pakistan mainly comprises of the MNCs i-e out of four (Jazz, Zong, Telenor, and Ufone), only a single telecommunication firm Ufone has the domestic orientation. This sector primarily offers subcontracted and temporary jobs and introduces job insecurity proliferating to induce undesirable behaviors like bullying among workers. The Telecom industry reportedly highlights workplace bullying as an industrial and professional hazard with substantial magnitude (Ahmed & Sattar, 2018). The current study is conducted on the telecommunication sector of Pakistan and it is revealed that even though the SOPs exist in the telecom sector, still people become the victims of the vicious circle of workplace bullying and organizational cynicism where organizational betrayal stimulates emotional exhaustion. As a result of these negativities, employees get emotionally exhausted, resulting in declined employee performance.

Bullying and emotional exhaustion is mostly handled in silos. This article aims to demonstrate the complex and delicate relationship between bullying, emotional exhaustion, and organizational cynicism as workplace evils, therefore employers, employees, and policymakers need to recognize this vicious circle. The paper also aims to raise awareness of the ill effects of bullying and organizational cynicism as forms of interpersonal violence and causes of depression and poor performance. It is aimed at academics, practitioners, and policymakers in the twenty-first century, addressing not only the legal aspects, but also the socio-legal issues that this triad presents in the workplace. Second, the interplay between bullying, organizational cynicism, and emotional exhaustion was highlighted as a potential double punch for employees, leading to worst employee performance. Third, the article questions whether Pakistani laws adequately accommodate employees who experience bullying at work.

2.: Literature review

2.1. Workplace bullying

Victimization is a state where employees are subjected to aggressive and hostile behavior in the workplace (Tag-Eldeen et al., 2017). Einarsen et al. (2009) stated that common examples are humiliating, intimidating, punishing, or intimidating victims, which can cause severe harm and social pressure. Workplace bullying is the continuous abuse of another person by an employee, leading to bodily and psychological health complications. Chia and Kee (2018) stated that low morale, undesirable emotions, and legitimate issues reflect that workplace bullying is just conflict-oriented phenomenon. Smith and Coel (2018) suggest targets refer to bullying as a venomous amalgamation of ruthless societal exclusion, interactive intimidation, and other disruptive communications that undermine the organization and the wellbeing of employees. There are many reasons for bullying in the workplace. It may be institutional, including leadership style, mismanagement, and peer group competition. Another cause may be the persona traits of the perpetrator-which may include managing with the opposite gender, grumpiness, antagonism, and emotional disorders (Savaşan & Özgür, 2018). Hershcovis et al. (2015) stated that workplace bullying has multiple repercussions. The writer's view refers to the trickle-down effect, which directs that whenever the employees are traumatized, they will transfer this aggressiveness to their dependents. This span of control is more likely to transmit this aggressiveness towards their subordinates and subsequently to others.

2.2. Job performance

Work performance is defined as successfully reciprocating to the high-ups, subordinates, co-workers, and customers in organizations of and accomplishing specified organizational objectives (Mohammed et al., 2018). The workers' performance plays an active part in attaining the corporate goals. What the company's employees do or don't do at work is counted under Job performance. Organizational scholars call it the amount and worth of the organizational output provided by the employees. Muntazeri and Indrayanto (2018) recommended that to measure work performance, efficiency and effectiveness are considered. Employee performance is the energy and time a worker exerts at the workplace. In a positive work environment, employees always perform better. The researchers had divided work performance into a task and contextual work performance. The core technical process is the task performance related to output produced in the organization. While contextual performance is the performance that the company does not need, it helps shape its social and psychological background (Ramzy et al., 2018). To obtain thoroughgoing output, the organization must consider the performance of employees and assign tasks consequently. Ajayi et al. (2018) described that employee performance is the ultimate requirement of organizational progress but also the development of workers.

2.3. Emotional exhaustion

Emotional exhaustion is defined as prompted stress when employees are incapable of fulfilling the needs of family and organization (Nart & Batur, 2014). It commonly finishes with grievances, business calamities, and absenteeism. Yongkang et al. (2014) said that Emotional exhaustion is

also called occupational stress, caused by workplace tasks and related factors. According to a plethora of studies, it is a provocative construct, while others consider it a reaction construct. There is a mismatch between the worker's skill, possessions, and desires with the job demands. Then it will produce an adverse psychological, and physical reaction called work stress. In addition to medical reports, work-related stress results from organizational philosophy, pathetic managerial programs, vague responsibilities and roles, insufficient support, and an uncomfortable work environment. The impact of work pressure may be emotional, including melancholy, inaccessibility, nervousness, etc. It may be bodily, including annoyances, acid reflux accompanied by stomach disorders, shivers, vomiting, etc. Lastly, it may include drug use, unusual sleep patterns, eating disorders, and much more (Mathur et al., 2018).

2.4. Organizational cynicism

Naseer et al. (2020) stated that organizational cynicism is when employees believe that the organizations dearth in integrity and customarily engage in deceptive behavior. The undesirable influences of organizational cynicism on attitudes confined to work have been demonstrated in various researches (Dean et al., 1998). For example, research has shown that organizational cynicism has adverse effects on some employees' perceptions, attitudes, emotions, and behavioral outcomes like job satisfaction, organizational commitment, poor interactive connections, and diminished wellbeing and health conditions (Neves, 2012); time theft, increased turnover intention and change inertia accompanied with declined in and extra-role performance (Lorinkova & Perry, 2017). The research on organizational cynicism and destructive behaviors confined to work is quite rare (Judge et al., 2006). A popular meta-analysis by Chiaburu et al. (2013) depicts that the connection between organizational cynicism and employee performance exists. Recent studies have recognized several studies that have examined the role of cynicism in eliciting emotional exhaustion (Gkorezis et al., 2018). The researchers broaden the scope of the current study by propositioning that organizational cynicism is manifested in decreased employee performance through emotional exhaustion.

2.5. Workplace bullying and employee performance

A wide variety of stress theories and models describe workplace bullying and performance according to their own perspectives. Spector and Fox (2002) acquainted the people with emotion-centric employee behavior. They categorically revealed the stressors that influence the employee performance like the role conflicts, social stressors and interpersonal conflicts. The psychological work environment is affected through a social stressor like workplace bullying and its hazardous effects are long lasting just as any other kind of the stressor (Hauge et al., 2010). Organizational entities who give the damn care towards the employees' interest may find the vice versa results (Awan et al., 2013). So far as the previous research is concerned, impaired job performance is the ultimate result of workplace bullying that damages employee outcomes (Jackson et al., 2002). The meta-analysis done from the perspectives of the repercussions of workplace bullying, harassment, victimization, and traumatization are connected with the declined employee performance (Bowling and Beehr, 2006). Therefore, it can be hypothesized as

Hypothesis 1: Workplace bullying has a significant relationship with Employee performance

2.6. Work place bullying and emotional exhaustion

Emotional exhaustion is defined by the way an individual assumes his experiences of melancholy, anxiety and injured self-esteem (Van Horn et al., 2004). It may be work-related depression or the work-related satisfaction. So far as the satisfaction is concerned, it is reflected through enjoyment at work, amusement at rendering responsibilities and positive vibes confined to the job (Spector, 1997). While the employees confronted with the job-related depression are led by low morale, declined self-worth, self-confidence and deprived feelings (Warr, 1990). The job-related stress led by emotional exhaustion is theorized as the mediator in between the bullying and performance.

Undoubtedly, the state of mental health mediates between the bullying and employee performance. Conservation Of Resource (COR) theory formulated by Hobfoll is both a motivational and stress theory that delineates how individuals are got impacted by stressful circumstances and the way they garner and protect their resources at work. The loss of psychological resources like energy, confidence, morale, and stimulation is critical stress. To limit the resource loss is a must step to be taken by organizations for successful prevention of stress and improvement of employee performance (Westman et al., 2004). Plethora of the studies has established the links between the emotional exhaustion and the employee performance. According to Einarsen (2003) and Hauge et al., (2010) it is proven through longitudinal and cross-sectional research studies that there is a link between workplace bullying, emotional exhaustion and job performance. However, the other researches also depict that job-related depression is the determinant of the employee performance (Dalal, 2005).

Therefore, it can be hypothesized as

Hypothesis 2: Workplace bullying has a significant relationship with Emotional Exhaustion.

2.7. Workplace bullying, emotional exhaustion and employee performance

Bruk-Lee and Spector (2006) identified the fact that while expressing unproductive work behaviors, there is a significant influence of stress. Employees retaliate when they experience negative emotions and dissatisfaction. They express unproductive behavior as the hostile agent towards performance. Zellars et al. (2002) found that if in an organization workplace bullying exists then there would be a decline in productive organizational behavior. However, this study directly studies the influence of workplace bullying on employee emotional exhaustion and employee performance. Nielsen and Einarsen (2012) assume that whenever the employees are exposed to the traumatization and victimization it affects the work and health related issues i-e amplified psychological and health problems associated with more burnout and decreased job commitment and satisfaction. Finne et al., (2011) assumes that personnel may suffer from high levels of psychological, physical, and mental indications like hopelessness and depression while confronting with stressful conditions at work. However, the victim's enactment may rise or decline depending on; either the victim interprets the offender's motivation or intention negatively or positively (Samnani et al., 2013).

Hypothesis 3: Emotional exhaustion mediates Workplace bullying and Employee Performance

2.8. Organizational cynicism, workplace bullying and emotional exhaustion

Organizational cynicism is a deleterious attitude, described as a person's perception that the organization is deficient in truthfulness and uprightness (Dean et al., 1998). James (2005) pointed out that a person's negative attitude towards the organization of employment, are characterized by negative philosophies, approaches and conducts. These are the personal responses towards the organization Brandes (1997) identified the aspects of organizational cynicism the increase in negative attitudes due to personal error accompanied by the feeling that the organization will no longer prosper. Abraham (2000) believes that organizational cynicism befalls when leaders in an organization are deprived of uprightness, trustworthiness, impartiality, and genuineness because management cares about their own interests. Andersson (1996) attributed it to employees have high expectations of the organization and the organization fails to meet these expectations. Cole et al. (2006) pointed out that although optimistic experiences in the organization like enthusiasm, gratification, positive feelings and better understanding of work, etc., reduce the organization's cynicism. While the negative experiences like tautness, nervousness, lack of confidence, trauma and frustration will increase its occurrence (Johnson & O'Leary-Kelly, 2003). Lobnikar and Pagon (2004) found a significant relationship between violent attitudes at the

workplace and organizational cynicism. However in between workplace bullying and emotional exhaustion, the intervention of organizational cynicism is still untapped. This is the novelty of the research.

Hypothesis 4: Organizational Cynicism moderates the relationship between the workplace

Bullying and Emotional Exhaustion

2.9. Linkage among the workplace bullying, emotional exhaustion, organizational cynicism and employee performance

Studies have shown there is a positive relationship between workplace bullying, and organizational cynicism. Andersson and Bateman (1997) established a negative relationship between poor organizational performance and organizational cynicism. Organizational cynicism is a potential constraint which has many negative maneuvering and social returns (Nemr & Liu, 2021). Individuals, who are highly rated on the scale of cynicism, develop undesirable sensations, such as tension, embarrassment, and hatred for the business that makes them lack resources. In order to exhaust their frustrations and undesirable emotions these suspicious workers may steal, reduce their efforts and discredit their organization. We recommend that cynical employees suffer loss of resources. Therefore, they take action to help to avoid more obstruction caused by cynicism. Due to their cautious attitude towards the business, they may adopt undesirable activities to make them satisfied that they retaliate for the organization's betrayal. Therefore, the following hypothesis is deduced.

Hypothesis 5: Workplace bullying influences the Employee Performance with Emotional Exhaustion as the mediator and indirect effect will be stronger at different levels of Organizational Cynicism.

3. Methodology

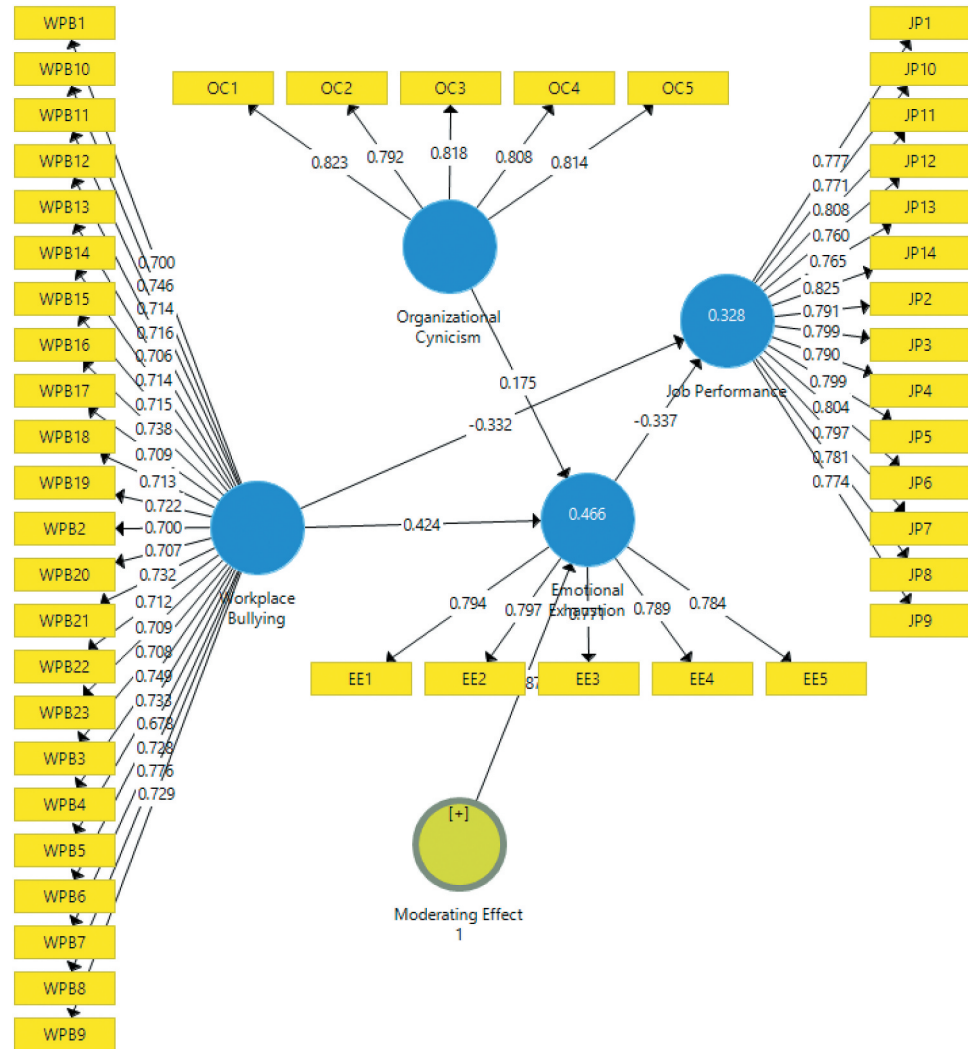
The original data set consisted of a survey of 450 respondents from South Punjab (Pakistan) Telecom Franchises. Nearly 86% of the respondents completed the survey through one-to-one correspondence with the researcher while others submitted their responses to the researcher within the specified time frame. However, 63 surveys were removed from the study due to missing values caused by incomplete responses, so it reduced the data set to 387 questionnaires to reflect the large sample size. The unit of analysis consists of franchise managers and their span of control. The eradication of the incomplete surveys didn't affect the results. Purposive or Judgmental sampling or subjectivesampling is used in the current study. One of the advantages of judgmental sampling is execution through less time, with a series of responses that are predominantly suitable for quantitative and qualitative research with cost-effectiveness. However, the questionnaires are completed through self-managed surveys. This study uses the PLS-SEM structural equation model to explain the relationship between various variables. PLS-SEM is mainly composed of two sub-models, namely the measurement model (also called the external model) and the structural model (the internal model) (Hair et al., 2014). In PLS-SEM, the relationship between manifest variable blocks or latent variables is checked through an external model, and the relationship between latent variables is evaluated through a structural model

4. Measures

4.1. Workplace bullying

The Revised Negative Act Questionnaire (NAQ-R) devised and validated by Johan Hauge et al. (2007) contains 23 items. This Revised Negative Act Questionnaire (NAQ-R) has been used in the current study. Nielsen et al. (2020) have also validated this (NAQ) R in the latest study.

Figure 1. PLS Algorithm.



4.2. Emotional exhaustion

Maslach and Jackson (1981) developed the General Survey of Maslach Burnout Scale to assess the magnitude of emotional exhaustion. To assess the employee emotional exhaustion, this five-item scale is used. Therefore, recent studies like Anasori et al. (2020) again validated a similar scale.

4.3. Organizational cynicism

Dean et al. (1998) developed a scale to assess organizational cynicism. It is a five-item scale. Specifically, these items are designed to measure the organization’s belief in lack of integrity. Ak (2020) adapted the five-item scale of Dean et al. (1998) to use the same scale

4.4. Job performance

For measuring in-role job performance five-item scale is developed by Podsakoff and MacKenzie’s (1989). However, Janssen, 2001) nine-item measures innovative or extra-role job performance.

Table 1. The demographic profile of the respondents of telecommunication firms is as follows

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	81	20.9
	Male	306	79.1
	Total	387	100.0
Experience	Less than a year	73	18.9
	1-3 year	100	25.8
	4-6 years	88	22.7
	7-10 years	66	17.1
	More than 10 years	60	15.5
	Total	387	100.0
Age	20 or under	87	22.5
	21-30	114	29.5
	31-40	123	31.8
	41-50	63	16.3
	Total	387	100.0
Managerial Position	Yes	97	25.1
	No	290	74.9
	Total	387	100.0

Table 2. Construct reliability and validity

	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted
EE	0.847	0.891	0.620
JP	0.953	0.958	0.623
OC	0.870	0.906	0.658
WB	0.958	0.961	0.519

Table 3. Fornell-larcker criterion

	EE	JP	OB	WB
EE	0.787			
JP	-0.492	0.789		
OC	0.229	-0.210	0.811	
WB	0.470	-0.490	0.212	0.720

Podsakoff and MacKenzie (1989) developed a five-item scale to measure in-role-job performance. The nine items of Janssen (2000, Janssen, 2001) are used to measure the extra role job performance or innovative job performance. Figure 1

5. Data Analysis

5.1. Survey profile

In the franchises of all the four different telecommunication firms, the total number of respondents is 387 out of which 81 are female, and 306 are male staff members. Knowing about the

Table 4. Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT)

	EE	JP	OC	WB
EE				
JP	0.547			
OC	0.265	0.226		
WB	0.518	0.508	0.229	

perquisites like experience was the prerequisite since bullying is determined by the consecutive six months of consistent belittling.

Ringle et al. (2015) view that Partial Least Square version 3.2.6 is the software for the second-generation multivariate analysis and is used for theory prediction and theory building. The current study has all the reflective constructs since PLS-SEM can handle both reflective and formative measurement models (Hair et al., 2014, 2016); therefore, it is employed here. The measurement model is used to assess the reliability and validity of the data. The structural model is used to estimate the path coefficient and its significance. Discriminant Validity, convergent validity, indicator reliability, internal consistency are the criteria for testing the reliability and validity of the reflective measurement model. To test internal consistency, Cronbach’s alpha value is used. The threshold value of alpha is 0.7, and in the current study in Table 2 it is ranged as Emotional Exhaustion 0.847, Job Performance 0.953, Organizational Cynicism 0.870, Workplace Bullying 0.958, and the present study efficaciously meets the internal consistency criterion. The standardized range of composite reliability (CR) is 0.7 or more than the threshold value. The composite reliability is also depicted in Table 2. However, the internal consistency of the studied constructs is Emotional Exhaustion, which is 0.891; job performance, which is 0.958; organizational cynicism, which is 0.906 and workplace bullying, which is 0.961. Average variance extracted (AVE) (Fornell and Larcker 1981) suggests that the average variance extracted (AVE) to predict convergent validity. The factor loading and AVE of all latent variables was used to establish the convergent validity. The value of average variance extracted should be higher than 0.50 (Hair et al., 2014). The demographic profile of respondents is given in Table 1

5.2. Discriminant validity

The validity of the construct is determined through the measurement model, which state that every construct is structured differently than other variables (Bagozzi et al., 1991). The Fornell-Larcker test is used to evaluate the discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2011; Hair et al., 2014) and the (HTMT) heterotrait-monotrait trait ratio (Henseler et al., 2015) and cross-loadings. According to the standard of Fornell-Larcker test, to test discriminative validity, the square root of the AVE value must be greater than the correlation between all research variables (Fornell & Larcker’s, 1981). Table 3 reflects the same; therefore, this study established discriminative validity.

5.3. Heterotrait-onotrait ratio (HTMT)

Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio is used to estimate correlation between constructs. HTMT values must be below 1, which reflects constructs are dissimilar from each other (Haider et al., 2018). Therefore, Kline (2011) termed the ultimate cutoff of .85. Results in Table 4Table 5 of the present study show that all values are below 0.85; therefore, the discriminant validity is demonstrated here as per the said criteria.

5.4. Outer loadings

Outer loading of the studied constructs is assessed to evaluate the factor loading of individual items. However, the cut-off value to retain the individual items in a construct is greater than and equal to 0.7 except WB6, that yielded the value as 0.678. Still, it does not make any difference to analysis. Therefore, it is retained, which indicates that all measures are reliable.

Table 5. Outer Loadings Of Constructs

	Emotional Exhaustion	Job Performance	Organizational Cynicism	Workplace Bullying
EE1	0.794			
EE2	0.797			
EE3	0.771			
EE4	0.789			
EE5	0.784			
JP1		0.777		
JP10		0.771		
JP11		0.808		
JP12		0.760		
JP13		0.765		
JP14		0.825		
JP2		0.791		
JP3		0.799		
JP4		0.790		
JP5		0.799		
JP6		0.804		
JP7		0.797		
JP8		0.781		
JP9		0.774		
OC1			0.823	
OC2			0.792	
OC3			0.818	
OC4			0.808	
OC5			0.814	
WB1				0.700
WB10				0.746
WB11				0.714
WB12				0.716
WB13				0.706
WB14				0.714
WB15				0.715
WB16				0.738
WB17				0.709
WB18				0.713
WB19				0.722
WB2				0.700
WB20				0.707
WB21				0.732
WB22				0.712
WB23				0.709
WB3				0.708
WB4				0.749
WB5				0.733
WB6				0.678

(Continued)

	Emotional Exhaustion	Job Performance	Organizational Cynicism	Workplace Bullying
WB7				0.728
WB8				0.776
WB9				0.729

Table 6. R- square

	R Square	R Square Adjusted	P-Values	Assessment
EE	0.466	0.462	0.000	Medium
JP	0.328	0.325	0.000	Medium

5.5. R square

Second, the path coefficient of the hypothetical relationship is calculated by the PLS algorithm, and the bootstrap standard error is applied to obtain significance. The correlation is significant when the t-value is higher than 1.96 ($p < .05$). The coefficient of determination (R^2) is obtained in the next step. Table 6 demonstration of R^2 represents level of variance explained by the exogenous variable. Therefore, weak, medium, and substantial R^2 values (Hair et al., 2014) are 0.25, 0.50, and 0.75, respectively. The current research shows that the model explains a moderate level of variance.

6. Results

Table 7 reflects the complete illustration of the direct and indirects effects of the constructs. Bullying in the workplace can have a negative impact on employees' job performance. The

Table 7. Total effects (direct and indirect)

	(O)/ Beta Values	Sample Mean (M)	(STDEV)	T Statistics	P Values
Moderating Effect 1 -> Emotional Exhaustion	0.487	0.482	0.045	10.879	0.000
Workplace Bullying -> Emotional Exhaustion	0.424	0.428	0.047	9.038	0.000
Workplace Bullying -> Job Performance	-0.332	-0.332	0.068	4.886	0.000
Moderating Effect 1 -> Emotional Exhaustion -> Job Performance	-0.164	-0.162	0.031	5.217	0.000
Workplace Bullying -> Emotional Exhaustion -> Job Performance	-0.143	-0.144	0.027	5.320	0.000

negative beta value $\beta = -0.337$ describes the inverse relationship between the two variables. Robert (2018) believes that when the target faces bullying, it may lead to low job satisfaction, absenteeism, and ultimately lower-than-standard job performance. This relationship is significant in terms of t value = 6.175 and p-value = 0.000. Thus, the hypothesis is supported. However Workplace bullying triggers the emotional exhaustion in employees of telecom franchises since the $\beta = 0.424$ which reflects that due to workplace bullying the emotional exhaustion is increased in the franchise employees. The relationship is significant since the t values = 9.038 is higher than the threshold value of 1.96, and the p-value is 0.000, reflecting that it is below the standard value in the acceptable range. Anasori et al., (2020) reiterate the fact that emotional exhaustion gets deep down into employees' nerves when bullying becomes the custom of organization. Høgh et al. (2021) categorically emphasized on the fact that there are several other ways through which workplace bullying deteriorates employee psychological health. The third important hypothesis is about the phenomenon that in between the workplace bullying and employee job performance, emotional exhaustion is serving as the role of a mediator. However, in order to test the mediation, the four different popular approaches have been used till now. Several requirements have been laid out to form a true mediation relationship. Another test also known as a specialized t-test with the critics is the Sobel Test devised by Sobel (1982). Preacher and Hayes bootstrapping, however, does not encroach upon the assumptions of normality (Hayes, 2009). However, the most refined and contemporary school of thought about mediation process in PLS -Sem is provided by Hair et al. (2017). So far as the hypothesis above is concerned it is also significant since t-value 5.320 > 1.96 accompanied with the significant p-value 0.000. Peng et al.'s (2016) findings are compatible with the phenomenon that emotional exhaustion mediates between workplace bullying and employee performance. So far as Organizational Cynicism is concerned, it is an interacting variable/moderator between workplace bullying and emotional exhaustion. The said relationship is also positively associated since the beta values clearly reflect the positive β value 0.487 that depict the positive association between workplace bullying and emotional exhaustion triggered at different levels of organizational cynicism. Lastly, organizational cynicism acts as the moderator and this moderated mediation is proved with the significant t-values = 5.320 and p-value = 0.000. Since the last couple of hypotheses are the novelty of the research and no studies have been done to test this phenomenon, the researchers have also tried to bridge the gap of literature in the current study. Langfred (2004) conceptualized moderated mediation by using multiple regression. However, three conducts are proposed by Muller et al. (2005) in which moderated mediation can occur. Preacher et al. (2007) have formed an SPSS macro with bootstrapping estimations. By the time macro became obsolete with the release of PROCESS for SPSS and SAS (Hayes, 2013). However, PLS bootstrapping has lent the ease to calculate the indirect effects (Hair et al., 2017).

7. Conclusion

The devastating literature confined to workplace bullying, work trauma, emotional exhaustion, and work-related demands have a comprehensive impact on workplace outcomes. It is the ultimately abandoned and underrated reality in Pakistani context it will take time for the concept of workplace bullying to penetrate slowly. Act 2010 is only act focusing on this issue, which was amended in 2014 to cover both genders on workplace bullying. However, suppose few steps are to be undertaken. In that case, workplace bullying can be reduced and condemned like talking to peer group, boss or HR manager, resort legal protection against harassment if the fine line between harassment and bullying is crossed. Women can go for the legal proceedings, but they should take the policy principle so far as the men are concerned. In Penal Code of Pakistan 1980, certain sections like 510, 509, 294 are there for the sheer punishments to the culprits. The Pakistani government needs further strong insights to reduce its impact in organizations through further legislation to produce better performance results. The following study revealed the harmful implications of emotional exhaustion on employees' physical and psychological health. This research will undoubtedly encourage further studies of maltreatment in the workplace to mitigate its adverse effects to restore the psychological resources of employees. Productive employee performance is not possible without identifying and addressing this chronic disease in the organization. Managers in organizations should believe in integrative

justice. The perpetrator must be identified and seen as a symbol of stigma in the work environment. Organizations must appropriately observe subjective norms in the organization. Managers must introduce organizational silent checks such as surveillance cameras in the organization. By law, the composition of a harassment committee should be mandatory. Where management ensures the psychological safety of whistleblowers, organizations should also use whistleblowers to detoxify the organization.

8. Limitations & future recommendations

The current research has certain limitations; firstly, the current research data is collected from the telecommunication franchises in southern Punjab, Pakistan through non-probability judgmental sampling techniques. The future population may come from sectors other than the service industry. Secondly, since the data is collected through a cross-sectional research design, information is collected at a specific time that yields the results. In the future, longitudinal research must be carried out before and after the introduction of management policies. This study adds to the existing literature of workplace bullying and it provides new avenues for future investigation. The current study may be replicated with different results in different contexts.

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