Presenteeism as a Consequence of Workplace Bullying: Mediating Role of Emotional Exhaustion and Moderation of Climate for Conflict Management

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Abstract

This study probes the link between workplace bullying, emotional exhaustion and presenteeism in employees of public and private sector service organizations. Based on affective events theory, this study found that emotional exhaustion mediates the relationship between bullying and employee presenteeism. However, the climate for conflict management (CCM) was found to moderate the aforementioned relationship. Data taken from 2250 employees working in health, education and forest departments support the assumptions that workplace bullying and presenteeism are partially mediated by individual's perceived emotional exhaustion and that the CCM moderates this mediated association. This mediated moderation model suggests that workplace bullying emotionally exhausts employees, who despite being present at workplace cannot perform to their full potential. On the other hand, organizations that are active in conflict management practices may be able to prevent and reduce the adverse effects of workplace bullying.

Keywords: workplace bullying, emotional exhaustion, climate for conflict management, presenteeism, conflict management practices.

1. Introduction

Workplace environment plays a pivotal role in employee wellbeing and performance. Organizational researches have highlighted various stressors pertaining to workplace environment which affect the psychological and physical health of employees, such as job pressure, downsizing, workload, job insecurity, workplace bullying, harassment (Leyman, 1996) etc. However, among all stressors, workplace bullying is considered to have a far more crippling effect for workers than all other kinds of work-related stresses put together (Einarsen et al., 2011). This phenomenon attracted attention of the academic community during the 1990s in European working population (Einarsen, 1999), and in the past twenty years, the research reveals that bullying is not confined to specific regions

or profession, and is an issue worldwide. In Great Britain, every 10th worker has reported the existence of workplace bullying (Hoel et al., 2001), whereas another study has reported 3 to 5 cases of presenteeism per 10 employees (Aronsson & Gustafsson, 2005 In Japan, approximately 15% of employees reported bullying incidents (Giorgi et al., 2013) and 0.6 % to 15 % of employees in the European region including Bulgaria, France, Italy and Spain have also reported workplace bullying (Arenas et al., 2015).

Workplace bullying refers to repeatedly harassing, upsetting, socially excluding or targeting someone at the workplace with negative acts for a prolonged period (Leymann, 1996; Baillien et al., 2017). This negativity destroys the morale of the employees, that in turn leads to reduced employee productivity, job losses, exclusion from working life, eventually impeding firm performance and financial projections (Glambek et al., 2018; Ramely & Ahmad, 2017). It is therefore plausible to state that bullying jeopardizes the existence of a healthy and creative workforce, thus, leading to reduced organizational productivity (Bernotaite & Malinauskiene, 2017; Einarsen et al., 2018). In terms of organizational losses, bullying has been recorded to cost heftily (Dollard et al., 2017; McTernan et al., 2013) in the form of increased employee sickness/absence (Ortega et al., 2011), workers' compensation entitlements (Bailey et al., 2015), and higher turnover rates (Hogh et al., 2011). A survey of 9,000 US federal employees in the US reported an annual loss of $180 million in production days (Farrell, 2002). The UK organizations have suffered a loss of approximately $18.52 billion annually on account of bullying (Giga et al., 2008). An Australian study found $36 billion annual loss on account of workplace bullying (Productivity Commission, 2010). On the other hand, losses to organizations worth US$30 thousand to US$100 thousand have been reported for litigation in cases of workplace bullying (Leymann, 1990b).

Furthermore, the adverse outcomes of workplace bullying go beyond the workplace and the victims and affect their families, and ultimately adding on to the societal consequences (Ramely & Ahmad, 2017). Workers who bear stressful situations become unable to cope up with more stress and are led towards progressing negative emotional and psychological reactions (Wright & Hobfoll, 2004; Raza et al., 2019). Empirical outcomes obtained by Miner et al., (2005) that were in line with affective events theory showed that numerous work stressors experienced by workers on a regular basis impact their emotions, and workplace bullying is one such stressing factor. At individual level, workplace bullying causes post-trauma stress, productivity loss, presenteeism, emotional exhaustion and mental health problems (Reknes et al., 2017; Houck and Colbert, 2017; Neto et al., 2017; Conway et al., 2016; Zhou et al., 2016).

Emotional exhaustion (EE) occurs when there is lack of emotional resources that are essentially required in handling interpersonal stressors. It is one of the dimensions of burnout and involves depletion of emotional resources, giving rise to irritation, wearing out, feelings of being used up, loss of concern, trust, spirit and interest (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). This emotional exhaustion in turn may lead to presenteeism—(the antonym of absenteeism), referring to a phenomenon which deals with workers' who despite being present on the job are unable to function well due to their ill health or other conditions like toxic work environment or office politics (Johns, 2010). Presenteeism costs a lot by cutting individual productivity by at least one-third and it is worse than

absenteeism which is apparent and one at least knows that the employee did not show up for work. Whereas, in case of presnteeism, one cannot tell the amount of non-productivity. The employee shows up, but cannot work to the full (Hemp, 2004). Presenteeism is quite common and represents 3 to 5 cases out of 10 employees.

The literature also provides evidence that emotional exhaustion may predict decreased productivity loss due to presenteeism (Ferreira et al., 2019). Therefore, it makes sense for organizations to develop strategies to curb workplace bullying and to mitigate its consequences. However, to date, fewer studies have explored the possible proactive approaches (Hodgins et al., 2014) or controlling mechanisms (Bond et al., 2010). In his research on workplace bullying, Brodsky (1976) proposed the significance of organizational culture in promoting/encouraging or preventing bullying behaviors.

Following this line of thought, Einarsen et al. (2011) advanced the theory of bullying based on culture and proposed that culture plays a vital role in prevalence or prevention of bullying, because culture of ignoring and letting bullying episodes go unchecked will convey a wrong message to the workforce paving way for more incidents. Therefore, a conducive environment needs to be maintained to prevent toxicity and resolve conflicts (Ashraf and Ahmed, 2019). According to the literature, Climate for Conflict Management (CCM) specifically introduces conflict management practices in order to prevent and control negative behaviors in the organizations that may adversely affect employees (Rivlin, 2001). We suggest that CCM can be a pertinent solution to the problem of emotional exhaustion leading to presenteeism. This is because CCM provides enough confidence to the employees that the organization is interested in settling their disputes and also provides value by assuring justice at all levels of employment (Einersen et al., 2018). It raises the morale by showing that the employers are concerned about these issues and are keen on taking preventive as well as corrective measures.

On the basis of the above arguments, the current study aimed at exploring the intervening role of emotional exhaustion between workplace bullying and presenteeism, whereas Climate for Conflict Management (CCM) was taken as a moderator that reduces the negativity. Utilising a mediated moderation model, the study investigates if CCM moderates the likely impact of workplace bullying by reducing victims' emotional exhaustion. To completely understand the emotional dimension of workplace bullying, particularly related to emotional exhaustion (EE), we have developed and tested a model grounded on affective events theory (Branch et al., 2013; Coyne et al., 2017). In short, we have employed an individual level analysis to examine a mediated-moderation model to understand the link between bullying and presenteeism. Investigation of the buffering role of CCM is also a significant contribution to the bullying literature, particularly in the context of education sector (Sharma, 2017; Yubero et al., 2017) and health industry (Laschinger & Fida, 2014).

2. Literature and Hypothesis

Based on a vast range of theoretical perspectives, the literature on workplace bullying covers numerous aspects. Beyond the boundaries of deficit resources, conflict escalation, and social exchange process; bullying can be a process with its slow poisoning impact of

emotions. According to the definition, bullying is a repetitive process and prevails over a long period, so every event of bullying effects emotions; increasing employee's sensitivity for negative reactions. So, the most recent and stimulating conceptual expansion is the investigation of emotional dimension in the research related to bulling, particularly, under the affective events theory(AET) that was proposed by Weiss & Cropanzano (1996), sand its extensive use in antisocial research, highlights that individuals often react emotionally to events which tend to affect their consequent behaviors. Therefore, in organizations, events like workplace bullying are considered affective events (Brotheridge & Lee, 2010).

A research study relating AET with workplace bullying, Brotheridge & Lee (2010) investigated the linkage of particular bullying behavior with emotional reactions, hypothesizing that each bullying incidence will generate an emotional reaction. The authors examined that letting down individual's effort; verbal abuse and aggression were linked with negative emotions of restlessness, anger, confusion, and sadness. This research also indicated multiple bullying events can sensitize the victims to more negative events, thus enhancing the degree of emotions experienced.

Therefore, the current study also examines the adverse impact of bullying on EE, and how as a result EE affects employee presenteeism particularly in the context of Pakistan, a developing country. Furthermore, the study explores the moderating effect of CCM on workplace bullying and EE. Adding on to it, the study explores the following research questions; Does workplace bullying bullying cause EE and eventually presenteeism Whether EE links workplace bullying and presenteeism? And How does the CCM moderate bullying-exhaustion relationship?

2.1 Presenteeism

Presenteeism has received attention due to its adverse impact on employee's productivity (Ferreira, 2019). Following the European and US behavioral approaches, presenteeism refers to employees' presence at work, when in fact taking a leave would have been a better option as, presenteeism is believed to cause productivity loss when employees are unable to perform to their fullest due to illness or any other condition (Mattila et al., 1997; Johns, 2010). It was once thought that that "80% of success in life can be attributed to simply showing up", however, this is not true for workplace because employees lose at least one third of their productivity if not fully functioning (Hemp, 2004). Studies have associated sickness presenteeism with poor physical health (McKevitt et al., 2009; Gustafsson & Marklund, 2011), as well as mental and psychological health issues, exhaustion and burnout (Demerouti et al., 2009; Lu et al., 2013). In case of sickness presenteeism, stepwise decline in productivity (Burton et al., 2001), moderate to severe difficulty on the job (Lerner et al., 2000), productivity loss among almost 13% of the workforce (Stewart, 2003), work limitation faced by 40% of employees (Munir et al., 2005), unproductive 2.3 hours per workday (Lamb et al., 2006), and 2.4 hours to16.6 hours per week of work loss (Wahlqvist et al., 2006) have been reported. Besides negative outcomes at individual level, presenteeism has also been a subject of exploration for economic consequences for the employers/organizations due to employees' productivity loss (Janssens et al., 2016). According to a study, costs due to

lesser productivity varied between 18% to 89% of total costs including osts incurred on health care (Goetzel et al., 2004) and in another study, 6.8% of the total labour costs were found to be associated with work impairment (Collins et al., 2005).

Presenteeism is a relatively new phenomenon and the costs are high for businesses. It basically impacts productivity of employees due to their physical or psychological illness. To overcome the costs associated with presenteeism, organizations need to make efforts to firstly identify its antecedents in order to find long term solutions (Johns, 2010). When investigated it was revealed that along with contextual and organizational factors, certain personal factors were also responsible for presenteeism behavior. Various antecedents have so far been identified, such as exhaustion and job demands (Brborović et al., 2017), work environment, work-life balance, health status, professional identity(Rainbow and Steege, 2017), to get important work done or to support colleagues (Johns, 2010), personality, financial need, occupation, job design, workload, and teamwork (Ruhle, and Süß, 2019). However, going through the literature on presenteeism, only a few studies could be identified that examined workplace bullying as an antecedent of presenteeism. Why do workers prefer to be at work despite the toxic environment? Conway et al. (2016) resolve the puzzle and suggest that the victims of workplace bullying resort to presenteeism as a strategy to avoid escalation of bullying. Moreover, exposure to workplace bullying also increases sickness presenteeism because bullying victims are more likely to succumb to illness as compared to non-victims.

Presenteeism is also said to be a severe psychosocial circumstantial work condition due to workplace bullying, however this association has not been explored up to a satisfactory level yet (Janssens et al., 2016). Few studies argue that bullying is and most studies have measured the associations workplace bullying and frequency of presenteeism using a one item measure for both (Conway et al., 2016). Neto et al. (2017) also found the impact of bullying behavior on employee presenteeism with the mediation of psychological well-being. However, this research has investigated the impact of bullying behavior on presenteeism with the measure of lack of concentration and incomplete work based on six items. Workplace bullying has also been found to lead to sickness absenteeism through presenteesim (Eriksen et al., 2016). According to Ose (2005), a bad work environment wrought with bullying is bound to affect physical and mental health, and which calls for a deeper exploration of the association, which leads to the following study hypothesis;

➤ **H₁:** Workplace bullying is positively associated with presenteeism.

2.2 Emotional Exhaustion

Due to its prevalence and costs attached, presenteeism has become an emerging construct in organizational psychology that describes and explains the psychological or emotional state underlying reduced work productivity levels (Ferreira et al, 2019). It is categorized as a psychological or emotional phenomenon because it affects employee well-being at work, with long-term effects on physical and mental health, employee productivity and company performance (Ferreira & Martinez, 2012). The more an employee is mentally, emotionally or physically exhausted, the more his presence at work becomes meaningless. Emotional Exhaustion (EE) is a dimension of burnout which indicates the

loss of concern for others and gradually enhances the feelings of insufficiency and disappointment (Maslach, 2017). An individual suffering from it tends to fatigue, sideways with emotionally exhausted feelings (Wright & Cropanzano, 1998). EE is generated through individual and contextual variables (Marek et al., 2017), wherein, individual variables include personality traits (Zellars et al., 2000), demographic characteristics like; age, gender or marital status (Billingsley & Cross, 1992), and alleged self-efficacy (Dick & Wagner, 2001), while lack of resources, role stressor, working environment, and social support are the contextual variables characteristics such as (Abel & Sewell, 1999).

Einarsen (1999) identified four stages wherein at the first stage, victim suffers aggressive behavior which becomes bullying when repeated frequently. Then comes the stage of stigmatization which eventually turns into severe trauma. Initially, negative behaviors are taken as indirect aggression, which are negative behaviors are covert and difficult to challenge (Adams, & Bray, 1992), and most often the victim is unable to pin point (Leymann, 1996). Thereafter, with increased frequency these negative behaviors start causing a sense of humiliation and ridicule, pushing the victim into isolation (Leymann, 1990b, 1996). Consequently, the victim starts feeling stigmatized and defenceless and undergoes severe trauma (Einarsen, 1999).

Repetitions of bullying trials may alert the victims to more negative events by increasing the level of emotional regulation (Brotheridge & Lee, 2010), whereas repetition of less intensive yet stressful events over a long period of time may leave the victim unaware of what is happening. So, an individual previously undergoing a strain may not have the emotional strength to react effectively in the face of workplace bullying (Fuller et al., 2003). The AET literature also signifies the validation of intensity and duration of bullying events rather than the event itself as determinants of victims' reactions (Ayoko et al., 2003). Thus, the negative cycle of intense bullying events may lead to EE, providing the following study hypothesis;

➤ **H₂:** Workplace bullying increases emotional exhaustion.

2.3 Emotional Exhaustion as a Mediator

Workplace bullying is associated with severe negative outcomes which could be psychological, physical, physiological or emotional, including; anger, depression, and anxiety which leads to suicidal incidents (Einarsen & Mikkelsen, 2003). Notably, at individual level, workplace bullying causes post-trauma stress, productivity losses, presenteeism, emotional exhaustion and mental health problems (Conway et al., 2016; Houck & Colbert, 2017; Neto, et al., 2017; Reknes et al., 2017). Furthermore, bullying is also associated with failure to concentrate, mood swings, anxiety, sleep problems, fear, and gloomy as well as psychosomatic symptoms such as headaches, respiratory and cardiac complaints, hypertension, and hypersensitivity to sounds (Devonish and Devonish 2017; Karatza et al., 2016; MacIntosh, 2016;Verkuil et al., 2015). This study investigates the indirect effect of bullying through emotional exhaustion on employees presenteeism which is the novelty of this study.

Existing research provided a ground that EE not only affects individual well-being and health, but also escalates negative consequences for organizations (Kenworthy et al.,

2014). Herein, emotions are reflected as a reaction, produced from work stress (Spector & Fox (2005), so when employees face EE, they feel lack of energy to respond to negative events as a consequence of workplace bullying (Wright & Hobfoll, 2004). This lack of energy inevitably also affects work performance, and employees, despite being on the job, fail to perform to their full capacity. This leads to our hypotheses;

➢ **H$_3$:** There is significant positive association between emotional exhaustion and presenteeism.

➢ **H$_4$:** Emotional exhaustion mediates the relationship between workplace bullying and presenteeism.

2.4 Climate for Conflict Management

According to literature, there is an association between interpersonal conflicts and bullying victimization (Baillien et al., 2014). Interpersonal conflict gradually escalates into bullying where frequent, uni-dimensional occurrences for a longer duration and power imbalance exists between both sides (Baillien et al., 2014). So, the occurrence of interpersonal conflicts can accelerate into workplace bullying, if poorly coped (Leymann, 1990). Therefore, a strong climate for conflict management (CCM), might might have the potential to prevent isolated conflict episodes from turning into importunate bullying. Herein, CCM is defined as, a culture where employees genuinely believe that their organization manages interpersonal conflicts in a fair and just manner (Rivlin, 2001). Furthermore, Leon-Perez et al. (2015) found that conflict escalation turns into bullying, and the presence of a vigorous problem-solving conflict management system restrains conflicts. In another study, it was found that at the departmental level presence of a positive social climate was linked with fewer bullying incidents (Skogstad et al. (2011). The description of these findings suggests that the perception of fair procedures and social interaction among employee-manager relation minimizes the conflict escalation and hence bullying.

Therefore, in this study, we have examined whether the perception and practises of fair dealings and organizational involvement in handling conflict management prove out to be helpful in decreasing the incidence of bullying. We also assume that a resilient CCM may decrease the damaging effect of bullying by giving individuals a channel, through which, they can express their grievances and frustration concerning their work environment and behaviors of their colleagues/seniors/juniors. They are likely to be more involved in problem-solving activities when they perceive a safe organizational environment, instead of fretting about the negativity.

2.5 CCM as a Moderator

Surveying a sample of 805 teachers not only instituted a negative relationship between student behavior issues and teachers EE level, but also investigated that the management support, recognition, supportive working climate and information flow had a moderating impact on this association. So, the greater level of resources lessens the negative relationship between observed issues and their outcomes like strong perception about CCM, surety about the active involvement of management in arising conflicts among

employees and fair procedures (Rivlin, 2001). Such surety results in an enhanced control over the employees because they do not need to worry about their own conflict management styles or that of other colleagues

Having resilient CCM, employees may get advice and support from colleagues and managers in a complicated situation which enhances their control over self and the available resources (Einarsen et al., 2018). In turn, it is believable that such control over self and available resources shall prevent the positive association between workplace bullying and EE by tumbling the extent of practice stress in this situation. With the help of the supporting literature, an Affective Events model has been designed in this study, wherein, CCM may be beneficial in reducing emotional stress and exhaustion as an outcome of bullying, thus the following study.

> **H$_5$:** CCM moderates the relationship between workplace bullying and emotional exhaustion e where the relationship will get weak when CCM is strong.

3. Theoretical Framework

The discussion in the sections above lead to the theoretical framework given in Fig. 1, according to which workplace bullying is a stressor that emotionally exhausts employees. In such cases, employees in order to avoid the negativity, may either prefer to remain absent from work or they may resort to presenteeism. Presenteeism refers to the phenomenon wherein employees' are physically present at work, but do not find the strength to perform to their full potential. The come to work but are emotionally strained to the level that incapacitates them and they do not find the strength or will to work. Under these circumstances, climate for conflict management in organizations has the potential to uplift employees' spirits. When employees know that their organization will support them and will not allow toxicity to prevail, they will have better emotional control enabling them to confront workplace bullying at least to the extent that their performance will not be affected as much.
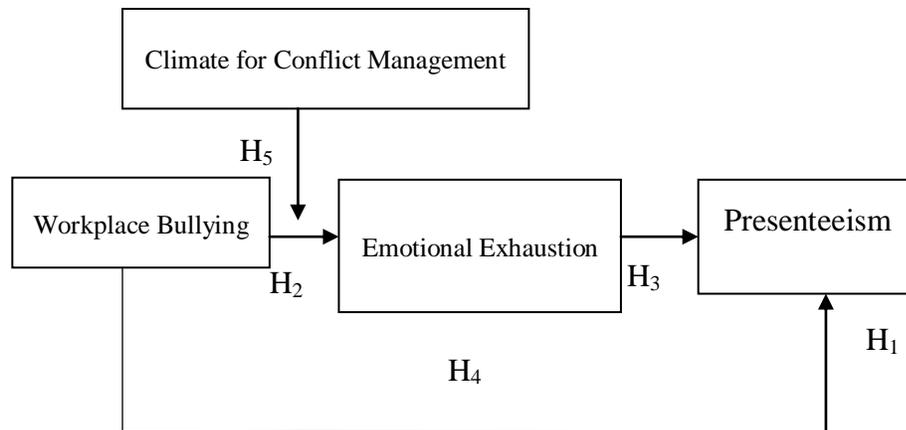

Figure 1: Theoretical Model of Workplace Bullying and Presenteeism

4. Methodology

4.1 Sample and Procedure

The hypotheses of the study have been tested by conducting a survey, while the survey instrument was developed using predefined measures. Data gathering from different organizations was done, wherein, employees working in different organizations in the service sectors i.e. forestry, education and health, were contacted, through both, online and offline survey questionnaires. The online survey was done using Google forms, wherein, the survey was kept open for three months. Hard copies were given to other participants. A total of 5000 participants were contacted out of which 3000 survey questionnaires were returned; where 2250 were selected for data entry using SPSS, while others were found incomplete and unfit for inclusion, which makes the response rate almost 60%. Out of the total 2250 respondents, 1050 were males, making up 46% of the sample, while 1200 were females, making up 53% of the sample. The average age of the respondents was between 21-30 years, whereas 52% of the respondents were married. The average job tenure of the respondents was 1-5 years. It is notable to mention that the data was gathered from both public (58.2%) and private sector (41.8 %) organizations, which were selected through convenience sampling based on the availability of personal contact, such as family, friends, and colleagues. The reason behind selecting the respondents from diverse range of service sector organizations was to fetch maximum information relatable at a wider scale. However, within organizations, the respondents were selected through simple random sampling using sampling frame provided by each organization.

4.2 Measures

4.2.1 Bullying Behavior

To measure bullying, participants were given Einarsen and Skogstad (1996)'s definition of bullying according to which: "Bullying takes place when one or more persons, systematically and over time, feel that they have been subjected to negative treatment on the part of one or more persons, in a situation in which the person(s) exposed to the treatment have difficulty in defending themselves against them. It is not bullying when two equally strong opponents conflict with each other."

Aligned with the above mentioned definition of bullying, the participants were asked whether they had been bullied or not during the last six months" and their response was measured on five point Likert scale, ranging from 1-5, where 1 = No, and 5 = Yes, many times a week; in between, the scale asked for once or twice, now and then, and once a week 75% of the participants specified that they had suffered bullying in the last six months.

In addition to the definitional measurement used to check prevalence of bullying, another measure known as the negative acts questionnaire (NAQ-R) was used to check for the frequency and intensity of various types of bullying behavior. This most widely used measure was developed and revised by Einersen et al. (2009). It comprises 22 questions

measuring three dimensions of workplace bullying: work-related bullying, person related bullying and physical intimidation. Responses were measured with 5 points Likert scale ranging from 1 = Never, and and 5 = daily.

To avoid the exaggerated objective responses, only those respondents were categorised as 'bullied' who felt they were bullied as per the definition and had also experienced 30% of negative acts given in the NAQs at least once a week A twofold variable was generated coded as 1 for respondents who reported themselves as victims and 0 for otherwise. Application of this cut-off minimized the percentage of people who experienced workplace bullying from 75% to 61%, which is also an indication of consistency between two measures. This method of twofold variable generation was also used by (Sheehan et al., 2018). The use of both negative acts and definition method reduced the presumed difficulty associated with measuring workplace bullying (Samnani & Singh, 2012; Sheehan et al., 2018).

4.2.2 Presenteeism

To measure Presenteeism, Stanford's presenteeism scale developed and revised by Koopman et al., (2002). It comprises six items with two dimensions; lack of concentration and non-completed Work, each with three items. The sample item is "Because of emotional exhaustion; the job stresses were difficult to handle." The response rate was measured on 5 points Likert scale ranging in a way that, 1= strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3= neutral, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree.

4.2.3 Climate for Conflict Management

The climate for conflict management was measured using a scale on fairness of dispute resolution developed by Rivlin (2001), which was alsoused by Einarsen et al.(2018). This measure consisted of four questions. The sample item is "My superiors deal with conflicts in a good manner." The responses were measured on a 5-points Likert scale, ranging from 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree.

4.2.4 Emotional Exhaustion

Emotional exhaustion is one of the three dimensions of burnout and was measured by using the developed scale of Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter (2001). It comprises 9 items, with the sample item being, "I feel emotionally drained from my work." The responses were measured on a 5-points Likert scale, wherein, the response range was measured as 1) Never, 2) Almost never, 3) Sometimes, 4) Fairly often, 5) Often.

4.3 Controls

Four normally used individual-level workplace bullying controls were also used in this study (Sheehan et al., 2018; Houshmand et al., 2012): age (21-30, 31-40, 41-50), gender (male=1, female=2), marital status (single, married, divorced or widowed) and job tenure (0-5, 6-10, 11-15, 16-20, 21-25).

4.3.1 Analytical Strategy

The hypothesized structural model was established through structural equation modelling by using statistical software SPSS version 24 and Amos. Measurement model was tested

by testing the reliability (Cronbach alpha), convergent validity (Average variance extracted), and discriminant validity (Fornell–Lracker Criterion). To obtain results, a Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was run, accompanied by mediation and moderation analysis. Hypotheses were tested through structural equation model.

4.3.2 Common Method Variance

Different procedural medications may be used to reduce common method variance among the independent and dependent variables. This study used Harman's single factor test as a statistical therapy to measure the common method biases (Podsakoff et al., 2003), solitary factor displayed only 27% of the total variance which assured that our data is free from common method variance. As existing research found that if a solitary factor shows greater than 50% of the variance in items than biases would be an issue, otherwise not (Mattila & Enz 2002).

4.3.4 Confirmatory Factor Analysis

To measure the construct validity, confirmatory factor analysis has been used. Anderson & Gerbing (1988) declared measurement as a pre-requisite of confirmatory factor analysis for structural testing model. Model fitness of measurement model was achieved after many attempts of CFA, but no item was found to be deleted because of collinearity issue.

4.4 Measurement Model

Data fit indices predicted measurement model. Standard values for measurement model must follow the required range ($\chi2$/df< 3, RMSEA<0.08, CFI>0.95, NNFI>0.95) (Browne, Cudeck, Bollen, & Long, 1993). The values of fit indices for the present study meet the standard criteria. The acceptable range for reliability α should be > 0.70 (Kline (2005). All values met the standards and given in the table.

Construct validity was measured by convergent and discriminant validity. Discriminant validity was measured by Fornell-Larcker criterion method. Values of AVE are greater than (AVE ≥ 0.5), and meet the required criteria. Means and SD values for variables are as under:

Table 1: Means, St Deviation Reliability, Validity

Variables	Means	Std. Deviation	CR > 0.7	AVE	Square root AVE
1.BB	2.2184	.64246	0.822	0.502	0.708
2.EE	2.3995	.75126	0.892	0.624	0.775
3.CCM	4.0722	.75671	0.902	0.704	0.807
4.P	3.7622	.67232	0.878	0.648	0.789

4.5 Discriminant Validity

According to the results, significant positive association was found between workplace bullying and EE (r =0.295, p <.01), workplace bullying and CCM (r =0. 317, p <.01), and significant negative association was found between workplace bullying and presenteeism

(r = -0.245, p <.01). Moreover, EE was found to be associated negatively with presenteeism (r =0. -.223, p <.01) and CCM was found negatively associated with EE (r = 0.-211, p <. 01), both associations being significant as well. The correlation values show that the expected relationships are in the right directions and data is fit for theoretical model and results would be accurate for final models. None of the correlation value was above .53 which shows our data have no multicollinearity issue.

Table 2: Discriminant Validity

Variables	CR > 0.7	AVE	1	2	3	4
1.BB	0.822	0.502	0.524			
2.EE	0.892	0.624	.295**	0.514		
3.CCM	0.902	0.704	.317**	.211**	0.645	
4.P	0.878	0.648	.245**	.223**	-.215**	0.745

4.6 Structural Model (Hypotheses Testing)

Using structural modelling hypotheses were tested and the values of fit indices revealed a good fit ($\chi2$ = 1155.612, df = 590, $\chi2$/df = 1.959, RMSEA= 0.065, CFI=0.948, GFI=0.987).

Table 3: Results of Structural Model

Hypotheses	Hypothesized Paths			Standardized Regression Weights (β)	t-value	P-value	Results
H_1	P	←	BB	.212	2.990	***	Accepted
H_2	EE	←	BB	0.310	3.969	***	Accepted
H_3	P	←	EE	0.381	5.906	.001	Accepted
*** Significance at p<0.001 ** significance at p<0.01 * significance at p<0.05							

Hypothesis 1 proposed that workplace bullying was negatively linked with presenteeism. The results for dichotomous (1 = bullied, 0= not bullied) by Amos has found a negative linkage with the possibility of being bullied(β= -0.212, p<0.001), which means that bullying causes 21% presenteeism among employees , thus, H_1 was supported. Hypothesis 2 posits that bullying is significantly related with EE and results for dichotomous (1 = bullied, 0= not bullied) by Amos has found a significant positive linkage with the possibility of being bullied, with (β= 0.310, at p<0.001, implying that 31% of variation in emotional exhaustion is due to workplace bullying; thus, H_2 was also supported. Hypothesis 3 postulates that emotional exhaustion increases presenteeism, and with β= .381, at p<0.01, our hypothesis is supported and 38.1% of EE can be assigned to workplace bullying which supports our H_3.

4.7 *Emotional exhaustion as a Mediator*

For assessing mediation analysis, two structural models were tested: one dealing with the direct path from bullying to presenteeism, and second, as suggested by Iacobucci, Saldanha, and Deng (2007), the indirect path with EE as the intervening variable.

4.7.1 Mediation Model 1

In structural model 1, the values of fit indices revealed aworthy appropriate fit ($\chi 2$ = 1155, df = 532, $\chi 2/df$ = 2.171, RMSEA = .061, GFI = .914, CFI = .945). The results further show that Bullying behavior was directly related to presenteeism with r= 0.043 at p>0.05), and indirect effect of bullying with the mediation of emotional exhaustion was 0.074 at p>0.05.

Table 4: Results of Mediation Model

Predictor	Direct effects	Indirect effects via EE	Total effects
BB	0.043 (significant) at p>0.05	0.074(significant) at p<0.05	0.117

The path coefficients in the table support the presence of direct effect of bullying on Presenteeism is significant, and a significant negative impact on Presenteeism through an indirect effect of EE can also be seen. Therefore, we can say that EE partially mediates the relationship between bullying and presenteeism, thus, supporting H_4.
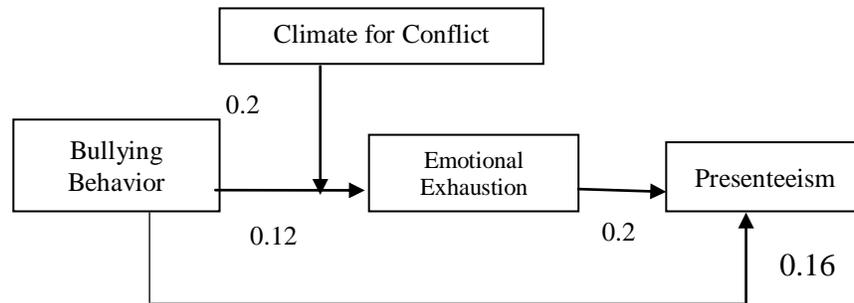

Figure 2: Moderated Mediation Model

4.7.2 Moderation Analysis

Moderation was checked through Baron & Kenny (1986) method. A structural model with iteration has been designed. In moderation model, the values of fit indices revealed a good fit ($\chi 2$ = 1155.612, df = 590, $\chi 2/df$ = 1.959, RMSEA = .051, GFI = .942, CFI = .982).

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Table 6: Moderation Model

Hypotheses	Hypothesized Paths			Standardized Regression Weights (β)	t-value	P-value	Results
H₅	EE	←	BB	.24	3.53	***	Accepted
	EE	←	CCM	-.34	-7.85	.001	
	EE	←	Interaction	-.33	-7.01	***	
*** Significance at p<0.001 ** significance at p<0.01 * significance at p<0.05							

H₅ posits that CCM moderates the bullying-exhaustion relationship, i.e. a stronger climate for conflict management, will weaken the association of bullying behavior with EE, and results supported the hypothesis. The value of interaction is -.33 as seen in Table 6, which is substantial and shows that 33% CCM reduces the impact of bullying on emotional exhaustion with t= -7.012, at p<0.001, and the moderation graph shows CCM to weaken the strength of relationship between bullying-exhaustion.

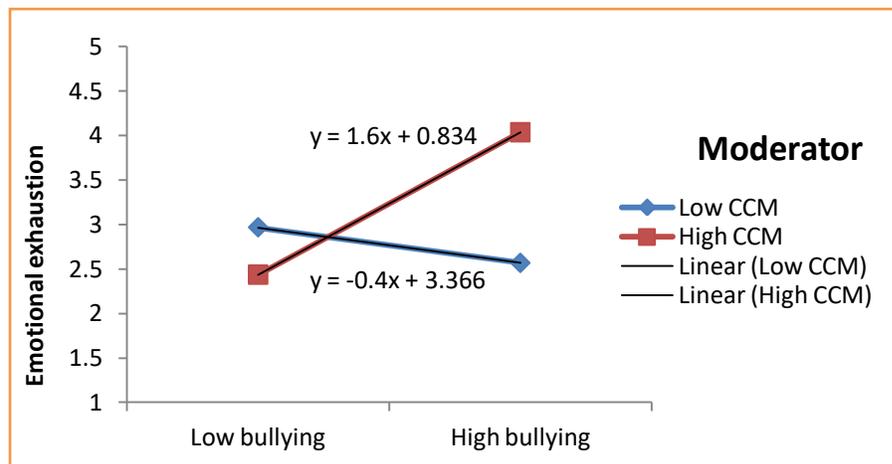**Figure 3: Moderation Graph**

5. Discussion

Various researches have been conducted on workplace bullying with different outcomes; however, there is less literature that has explored the relationship between bullying, presenteeism and emotional exhaustion. Therefore, we investigated the direct negative impact of bullying on presenteeism. Moreover, grounded on affective events theory, emotional exhaustion was examined as a mediating variable between bullying and

employee presenteeism , along-with the moderating effect of climate for conflict management on bullying- presenteeism association. Data supported all the study hypotheses, and found negative association between bullying- and presenteeism (H_1), positive association between bullying and emotional exhaustion (H_2), positive association between emotional exhaustion and -presenteeism (H_3), an indication of partial mediation (H_4) and finally the moderation (H_5).

The outcomes of this research extend the existing literature and provide new insight into workplace bullying and consequences thereto (Conway et al., 2016). Accordingly, this study examined the role of workplace bullying in concentration loss and non-completed tasks due to presenteeism. In previous researches, this relationship has mostly been tested with sickness presenteeism. Furthermore, workplace bullying was also found to increase emotional exhaustion in employees, which is in line with the theoretical explanation grounded on affective events theory put forth by, by Branch et al. (2013) in their study. The results are also in sync with Neto et al. (2017), who tested workplace bullying and presenteeism relationship through the mediating effect of psychological well-being.. The fourth hypothesis of the study referring to partial mediation of emotional exhaustion between bullying and presenteeism, is also supported along with the direct link between bullying and presenteeism which indicates that bullying leads to emotional exhaustion which eventually results in presenteeism. However, the prevailing culture of conflict management in an organization is also found to have the tendency to reduce emotional exhaustion and hence the reduced presenteeism when the employees perceive that CCM is highly effective, minimum bullying issues will arise and the negative relationship with employee presenteeism would also be reduced. CCM was also found to be the moderating link between workplace bullying and work engagement in a recent study by Einarsen, et al. (2018).

The theoretical explanations for this mediated moderation model are various. First, an organization where employees observe that CCM is actively playing its role in managing workplace conflicts, they will eventually start believing their managers to be competent enough to control circumstances when there is bullying. They will also be sure about resolving conflicts and not letting them turn into severe workplace bullying. Second, CCM will provide sufficient support to the sufferers of trauma. Workplace events like bullying cause an emotional response which in turn shapes the individual's attitudes and behaviors. Furthermore, the emotional exhaustion has the tendency to be initiated with even a low level of discomfort, and the confusion in pre-bullying stage leads to high-level feelings of discontentment and shame as the time proceeds (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2008). The consequences of intensifying bullying behavior destabilizes the victim's self-identity, so he/she remains unable to bounce back between attacks.

The second theoretical aspect of this study is, institutional theory; which can help provide an explanation for institutional decisions and activities. To reduce workplace bullying in the education sector, it is needful to incorporate a climate with conflict management practices by trained supervisors, Head of departments (HOD) and administrative staff may provide timely solutions for conflicts arising from bullying. It is equally important to convey institutional decisions regarding bullying to workforces to eradicate this psychosocial problem. Thus, institutional theory postulates that social relations are

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moulded and piloted by institutions and societies which provide the norms and guidelines (Scott, 1995). Similarly, CCM across various institutions differ substantially due to which the impact of bullying also varies. Most of the existing research about CCM has usually been conducted in advanced countries of the West (Einarsen et al., 2018). Therefore, the third theoretical contribution of this study is that it sheds light upon mediation with emotional exhaustion in the context of a South Asian developing country i.e. Pakistan.

5.1 Practical Contribution

Workplace bullying has a negative impact on employees during their working life (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2008), therefore, workplace bullying is a major distress for the supervisors/executives/HOD's. Supervisors/Executives/HOD's should guarantee a bullying free work environment, which is not possible without implementing anti-bullying policies and slogans like, "managing with respect", "active monitoring for negative behavior" or "zero tolerance policy for bullying at the workplace (Lewis & Rayner, 2003). Specifically, a strategy to deal against bullying, and a clearly written method should be communicated to every employee, addressing on how to lever complaints against bullying and punishment for not following the standard behaviors (Vartia & Leka, 2011). By providing better understanding about bullying, supervisors / executives / HOD's shall be better able to minimize its consequences. Therefore, universities should conduct seminars on bullying awareness to make the workforce aware about their rights and making them believe that if any activity of this nature is observed, the institution shall provide them with proper support to reduce its harmful impacts.

Literature supported that conflict is a latent predecessor of workplace bullying. High intensity of conflict produces negative emotional reactions and managing these negative emotions emotionally exhausts the victims. Improving psychosocial work environment can be a good remedy in plummeting the risk of workplace bullying. Therefore, providing CCM could be another remedy to minimize the occurrence of workplace bullying. Implementation of different training programs at all employee levels enhance the leader's awareness about workplace bullying (Rai & Agarwal, 2017) and also increase the combating capacity of employees against bullying. Initial employee development trainings and personality development trainings based on ethics and moralities should be provided to avoid indulging into bullying

Therefore, employers should timely recognise and intervene bullying situations and should provide adequate resources to employees, consolidating their resources such as personality development, as these resources may buffer the negative outcomes of bullying (Harvey et al., 2007). It is supervisors/executives/HOD's responsibility to provide employees with ample social support to survive with hostile workplace behaviors (Duffy & Sperry, 2012). Interventions based on maintaining and promoting social support at work should be provided (Leiter et al., 2011). Employee counselling is another remedy for managers which may reduce the harmful effects of bullying (Trépanier et al., 2013).

5.2 Limitations of the Study

This study collected data through a self-reported questionnaire and according to Spector & Fox (2005), 'the best way to acquire precise information about internal states, such as mood and emotions is self-reporting'. Use of quantitative measure, and not the qualitative

measures may be a limitation which can be a basis for future research. The study has only investigated the existence of bullying, but not the reasons for victimization or perpetration. Future research could focus on individual and organizational reasons for bullying and specific personality traits which provide instincts for bullying.

Furthermore, in this study, the data has been collected through one time visit, future research could be operationalized by acquiring the data during various time intervals, and experimental/longitudinal studies could be designed to check for bullying prevalence. Currently, three sectors have been focused for data collection, however, for future, data from other service and manufacturing sectors could be utilized to explore the perspectives. Last but not the least, this study is based on individual-level analysis, while for future research, dyads/groups/organizational level analysis could also be conducted.

5.3 Conclusion

The existing literature has majorly focused on bullying outcomes, only a few studies have investigated the mediated moderation model mechanism. Moreover, very limited studies have stressed upon the importance of emotions to be studied in context of bullying behavior (Branch et al., 2013) and also the literature has rarely discussed the importance of CCM as a remedy for bullying behavior (Einarsen et al., 2018). The results of the present study have revealed that EE mediated the relationship between workplace bullying and presenteeism. The relationship between workplace bullying-exhaustion may significantly boost where the organization is providing a culture of conflict management(CCM). Therefore, significant addition to the existing literature has been made by highlighting moderation through CCM and thereby contributing to both affective events theory and conservation of resource theory. This study was conducted in health, education and forest department of the service sector, therefore, it has highlighted the existence of high level bullying, while suggesting that CCM reduces the level of EE faced by the employees after they have experienced bullying at the workplace.

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