




Research Article

## Workplace Bullying and non- work related presenteeism: Mediating Role of social comparison emotion (shame)

Dr. Muhammad Faisal Malik<sup>1\*</sup>,  Quratulain Burhan<sup>2</sup>, Urooj Fatima<sup>3</sup>

Author1 Affiliation: Management Sciences, SZABIST, Islamabad, 4400, Pakistan, Orcid ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0143-3628>

Author2 Affiliation: SZABIST, Islamabad

Author3 Affiliation: SZABIST, Islamabad

\*Corresponding Author email: [faisalmaliks@yahoo.com](mailto:faisalmaliks@yahoo.com)

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### ABSTRACT

*The objectives of the current study were to identify the impact of workplace bullying on non-work-related presenteeism not in isolation but taking shame (social comparison emotion) as mediating mechanism in the said relationship. Positivism research philosophy was adopted, followed through the deductive approach. Sample data was collected from the employees working in public sector organizations. 148 respondents participated in the study, and data were collected through a self-administrated questionnaire. Results revealed that workplace bullying has a significant impact on non- work-related presenteeism, and shame is a potential mediator.*

**Keywords:** Workplace Bullying; Non- work-related presenteeism

**JEL Classification:** (Using RI JEL Clsfnction)

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

In the current era, where organizations are keen to keep their workforce motivated and trying to build employees' attitudes in such a way to gain a competitive edge (Malik et al., 2021), some of the organizations are failed to provide a safe workplace to its human resource. Resource Base view of firm and theory broadly explained the importance of the workforce in an organization. For that purpose, organizations are training their human faces (supervisors) to motivate the human resource (Barney, 1996). In this regard, empirical research presents positive work-related mechanisms such as supervisor support, supervisor's humility, supervisors' honesty, organization justice, high-performance work practices, and trust culture (Akhtar et al., 2021). Organizations are also developing positive employee cognitive capabilities; however, literature also talked about the negative constructs and organizations' harmful initiatives, policies, and working

procedures. These negative work-related variables have adverse outcomes such as organizational cynicism, counterproductive work behavior, disengagement, and burnout. Among all other harmful working practices, workplace bullying is identified as the most effective mechanism that causes employee attitude and behavior instead of adverse health-related outcomes (Einarsen et al., 2010). Workplace bullying has far-reaching effects on the employees as it has been defined as the systematic exposure to negative behaviours (Bonde et al., 2016). Numerous studies recorded that workplace bullying arouses anxiety, depression (Einarsen & Nielsen, 2015), and sleep problems (Nielsen et al., 2021). Irrespective of health-related outcomes, victims of bullying also try to implement survival tactics such as leaving the organization (Reknes et al., 2020). However, in the current decade, where organizations are already implementing layoff strategies to overcome financial burdens due to pandemics and jobs are not available in the market, employees are trying to retain their job. In that context, employees do not leave the job but leave their supervisors, specifically in public sector organizations. Employees from public sector organizations have job security, and they put their efforts to remain in the organization even though experiencing bullying practices. They did not leave the organization; instead, they came up with disengagement, deviant behavior, and counterproductive work behavior in organizational settings, but deviant behavior and counterproductive work behavior might negatively impact their job security, and the organization can terminate such employees due to such behaviors. So employees from public sector organizations involved themselves in procrastination and non-work-related presenteeism (Akhtar & Malik, 2016). The background of the study provided clear guidelines and directions to conduct a study to identify the impact of workplace bullying on employee non-work-related presenteeism not in isolation but taking some bridging mechanism. For this purpose, the current study intended to take social emotions such as shame because employees working in collectivist culture organizations are more affected by their supervisors' behavior since they feel shame and guilt in front of their co-workers and colleagues. On the other hand, empirical evidence suggested that this phenomenon was not studied and hence it is required to explore and provide clear guidelines to the organization to avoid such practices in the collectivist culture. In line with the gap identified through rigorous literature review, this study has contributed significantly to literature since limited literature is available on workplace bullying and emotions.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

## 2.1. WORKPLACE BULLYING, SHAME, AND NON- WORK RELATED PRESENTEEISM

Affective event theory recorded a significant contribution to explaining emotions' causes and outcomes at workplace setting (Glaser et al., 2011). Limited literature is available that lacks which type of work event might influence negative and positive affective reactions. On the other hand, some studies explored that negative work events may arouse negative emotions and contribute to negative work-related attitudes and behavior (Basch & Fisher, 2000). Workplace bullying in the context of affective event theory is identified as a negative work event that can impact job-related variables such as job satisfaction (Hauge et al., 2010), low organization commitment (Hubert et al., 2001). Workplace bullying is also a job stressor that significantly impacts personal efficacy, cynicism, and exhaustion (Leiter & Maslach, 2004). Maslach et al., (1997) also concluded that victims involved in withdrawal working activities such as non- work related presenteeism due to bullying practices. Researchers (e.g. Finne et al., 2011; Niedhammer et al., 2011) identified that bullying creates depression, distress, and anxiety that drove the victim to be involved in non- work related presenteeism activities. Hogh and Mikkelsen (2005) explained that bullying evoked negative feelings or emotions that hindered organization productivity (Sliter et al., 2012) because employees did not actively participate in work-related activities. Kim et al., (2011) also investigated and reported that shame directly impacts depressive symptoms, so victims may involve in negative work-related attitude. Bullying practices can potentially impact an individual's self-esteem, specifically in the collectivist culture, and it is further converted to anger that have negative outcomes in work-related activities (Kerr et al., 2016). Ersoy et al., (2021) previously investigated that every organization have some working norms and if the employees are having the awareness that their supervisors violate this norm, they feel shame that further lead to withdrawal behavior such as involved in procrastination and non- work-related presenteeism.

***H1: Shame mediates the relationship of workplace bullying and non- work related presenteeism***

## 3. METHODS

### 3.1. STUDY DESIGN

The study's objectives were to identify the impact of workplace bullying on non- work related presenteeism through social comparison emotion i.e. shame. To meet the objectives of the study, positivism research philosophy followed

through deductive approach have been used. Hence, the study is causal since it identifies the cause and effective mechanisms.

### 3.2.PARTICIPANTS

Sample data was collected from the employees working in public sector organizations. The sample size of the study was 148 employees. Purposive sampling technique was used to collect data through self-administrated questionnaire.

### 3.3.INSTRUMENTATION

This study comprises a structured questionnaire that consists of two different sections. 'I' is the demographics having age, gender, experience, education, and organization. Section 'II' is comprised of the questions. Each item of the different variables was used to measure the respondents' responses. The five Likert scales (Likert, 1967) is used. Workplace bullying was assessed by using 12 items adopted from the study of Einarsen et al., (2005). The reliability of the scale is  $0.93 > 0.60$ . 10 items scale adopted from the study of Bosch et al., (2020) to measure the shame emotions and the reliability of the scale identified as 0.85. For measuring a dependent variable, i.e. Non-work-related presenteeism, 8 items scales of Wan et al., (2014) was used and reliability of the said scale is 0.91.

## 4. RESULTS

### 4.1.DEMOGRAPHICS

148 responses were selected for the study. The demographic profile revealed that 99 respondents reported their age between 20-30 years, 31 respondents fell between 31-35 years, and 18 respondents mentioned their age between 36-40 years. Most of the respondents reported their highest qualification as graduation (136), and remain employees acquired Master's and above degrees. Among 148, 130 were male 87%, and 18 were female employees.

### 4.2.CORRELATION ANALYSIS

**Table 1.**Correlation analysis

	1	2	3
Workplace Bullying	1		
Shame	.356**	1	
Non- Work Related Presenteeism	.259**	.249**	1

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

### 4.3.REGRESSION ANALYSIS

**Table 2.**Direct Hypothesis Testing

Hypotheses	IV	DV	R2	F	$\beta$	t	p
1	Workplace Bullying	*NWRP	0.03	9.08	0.18	3.01	0.00
2	Workplace Bullying	Shame	0.09	24.30	0.30	4.93	0.00
3	Shame	NWRP	0.13	38.57	0.36	6.21	0.00

\*NWRP= Non- Work Related Presenteeism

**Table 3.**Mediation Hypothesis Testing

	Effect	SE	T	p	LLCI	ULCI
Total effect of WB on NWRP	0.157	0.0523	3.014	0.002	0.0546	0.2605
Direct Effect of WB on NWRP	0.071	0.051	1.388	0.166	-0.03	0.173
Indirect Effect of WB on NWRP	0.085	0.027	3.643	0.00	0.039	0.149

\*\*WB: Workplace Bullying, NWRP: Non- Work Related Presenteeism

The results revealed that workplace bullying has insignificant impact on Non- Work Related Presenteeism in the presence of Shame, so there is a full mediating role of shame in the defined relationship.

## 5. DISCUSSION

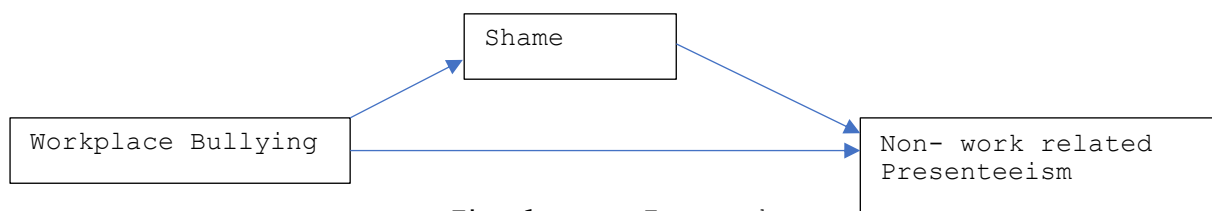
The finding supports that workplace bullying leads towards the non- work-related presenteeism. Empirical evidence suggests that victims of bullying think they have been targeted to continued and persistent destructive behaviors from their supervisors. The behavior is challenging to prevent, or maybe not possible to withstand or respond to, the bad behaviors (Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996; Olweus, 1993). Based on the lousy reciprocity norm in the affective event and social trade theory (Gouldner, 1960), personnel who is dealt with unfairly may refuse to contribute and seek revenge at the wrongdoer (Vie et al., 2012; Said & Tanova, 2021). The result of the current study also supports these arguments. It is found that the more bullied a worker is, the more withdrawal behavior will a worker follow (Kerr et al., 2016). This assumption made by empirical evidence is now being supported by the finding of this work, especially in the Pakistani context and collectivist culture. Because of the supervisor's behavior, one can feel ashamed and hence be involved in non-work-related presenteeism since data revealed a significant correlation of workplace bullying and non- work-related presenteeism with the mediating role of shame (Keashly, 2021). Kang (2018) also identified that workplace bullying has the highest correlation with psychological withdrawal and Niedhammer et al. (2011) found that due to bullying, one can experience negative emotions at the workplace that further lead to negative work-related outcomes such as withdrawal and deviant behavior. The current study results also validated the previous studies and tested with the affective event theory. According to the literature and

theory, the results suggested that workplace bullying arouse shame emotion in the victim, leading to withdrawal.

### 5.1.LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The study has some limitations firstly, the data was collected from the public sector organizations because of its objectives. Future studies should take the private sector and conduct a comparative analysis to identify the true impact of the model. Secondly, the sample size was small; therefore, larger samples can be used in the future for workplace bullying, shame, and non- work-related presenteeism. Thirdly, the model did not take collectivism as a moderating variable despite conducting and supporting that this aspect might have the strength to alter the relationship. So future studies should take collectivism as moderating variable in the defined relationship.

### FIGURES



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