

## Research Article

### Workplace Bullying and its Impact on Job Performance

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#### Abstract:

**Introduction:** Workplace bullying is a condition, when it becomes difficult for an employee to defend himself/herself against the harassment which he/she is facing persistently over a prolonged period of time due to imbalance of power. Previous researches showed that workplace bullying increases the chances of decreased work performance, which may then affect the other outcomes of employees.

**Objectives:** This systematic review is aimed to find out the affects of workplace bullying on the job performance of employees.

**Methods:** A systematic approach was used using PRISMA guidelines. Google Scholar PubMed and PakMediNet databases were searched to select 10 articles using Specific Keywords.

**Results:** From the included articles it was found that workplace bullying has a significant impact on job performance either directly or indirectly on the employees' job performance. Mostly it has an inverse relationship with employees' performance.

**Conclusion:** More future research is mandatory in different organizations with different cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds, so that performance of employees should be maximized while keeping their health at top level.

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**Keywords:** Workplace bullying AND job performance.

## INTRODUCTION:

Workplace bullying is a condition, when it becomes difficult for an employee to defend himself/ herself against the harassment which he/ she is facing persistently over a prolonged period of time<sup>1</sup>. Unlike the other conditions of more incidental workplace mistreatment like physical violence and incivility, workplace bullying is not a single act of harassment, bothering, annoying, conflict or irritation, but it is an ongoing repeatedly psychological aggression where an employee finds it difficult to tolerate the abuse<sup>2</sup>. As it is a negative interpersonal behavior it originates when there is a formal or informal imbalance of power<sup>3</sup>. The victims of workplace bullying faces uncertainty of their own ego, individuality and value in these dangerous working environments including their psychological and physical discomfort<sup>4</sup>. The estimates show that the prevalence of workplace bullying is 15%, indicating that as many as 15% employees are exposed to some degree of workplace bullying in their lives<sup>5</sup>. It is justifiable from researches that workplace bullying increases the chances of decreased work performance, which may then affect the other outcomes of employees<sup>6</sup>. Many studies found that impaired mental and somatic health, post-traumatic stress disorder, job commitment and satisfaction, sickness absence & sleep problems are affected by workplace bullying.<sup>7-12</sup>. If the victim tries to complain or make an effort to defend, is most probably met with attack or silence. Workplace bullying is seen as serious work-place violence since its recognition in 1980s<sup>13</sup>. There is a negative outcome of workplace bullying on empl-

oyee's work efficiency and quality leading to a huge damage to the organization and its growth<sup>14-15</sup>.

For better understanding of workplace bullying and its impact on performance of employees, an updated knowledge is mandatory. This systematic review is aimed to find out the impact of workplace bullying on the performance of employees. This systematic review will help the policy makers and employers to get deep insight that how adversely their employee's performance is affected by workplace bullying and which necessary are necessary to alleviate workplace bullying.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS:

Preferred reporting items for systemic reviews and meta-analysis PRISMA checklist 2020 was used for data reporting and analysis<sup>15</sup>. We searched Google scholar, Pub med & PakMediNet database. Search was restricted to publications from January 2013 to June 2023. Search was conducted on 25th July, 2023. We used these keywords and Boolean operators in all the databases (Workplace bullying AND job performance). PRISMA flowchart diagram is shown in table 1.

The following inclusion criteria were used for the articles searched from the relevant databases. The articles published in the last 10years, articles published in any part of the world, articles published in english language, (cross-sectional studies and surveys) are included & articles addressing the impact of workplace bullying on job performance. Following articles were excluded. Systematic reviews, scooping reviews, commentaries, editorials & grey literature. Those articles whose Full text articles were not available are also excluded.

After removing duplicates, the three authors (M.A, N.B, M.S) independently checked the titles and abstracts according to the eligibility criteria. The articles selected were subjected to the next phase, and the Full text was read. The selected articles were read by three authors the independently. In case of confusion, the other authors (A.B, I.H) read the papers to finalize their eligibility. Data Extraction: PRISMA guidelines were used, and a PRISMA flow sheet was developed to extract the material. All the relevant data were extracted according to the selection criteria. The summary table contains information on Authors, publication dates, region and country, study design and sample size. More specifically, the data about the organization, Assessment of bullying, assessment of performance along with other outcomes and their relationship were mentioned. The table format assisted the authors in completing a detailed over-review of the data selected in the first phase.

## **RESULTS:**

The PRISMA flow diagram in Figure 1 shows the authors' article selection procedure while selecting the articles. The authors searched three databases (Google Scholar, PubMed, and PakMediNet) and identified 1893 articles. From these first records, the authors removed 131 duplicates. Leaving 1762 articles for review. We reduced the total number of articles to 341 after screening titles and abstracts and applying the following exclusion criteria. Articles focusing on workplace violence, stress, burnout and fights. Articles who studied the effects of workplace bullying on anxiety, stress, sickness absenteeism, behaviors & disputes. Articles published in languages other than

English language were also excluded.

The remaining 308 articles were retrieved for full and then finally 308 articles given full reading and the final 10 articles were selected that met the inclusion criteria. The organizations included in these studies are, Hospitals, clinics, healthcare organizations, large-sized retail and wholesale organizations, manufacturing, education, Banking, telecommunication, tourism companies and enterprises. The participants/employees of the studies are doctors, nurses, other hospital staff members, business men, bankers, laborers, educationists and employees from other sectors. Three of the included studies are from Pakistan (Islamabad [20], Lahore [21] and Rawalpindi [25]), One from Caribbean region (Barbados [16]), One from Southeast Asia (Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, Philippines [17], One from Norway [18], One from Midwest, Mid-Missouri, (USA) [19], One from New Zealand [22] and two from China (Tianjin, Jiangsu, and Hainan [24] & Kunming [23]). Seven included studies used negative Acts Questionnaire-Revised (22 items) for assessment of bullying [16, 18-22]. Other studies used Single item with definition [17], Customer Bullying Scale; developed by Shao and Skarlicki (2014) (18 items) [23], The negative behavior questionnaire compiled by Einarsen et al. (2009), revised by Jiang et al. (2011), (4 items) [24] & workplace bullying measured using Brotheridge and Lee's (2010) instrument (43 items) [25]. Different studies used different scales for assessment of job performance and other outcomes. From the included articles it was found that workplace bullying has a negative impact on job performance either directly or indirectly.

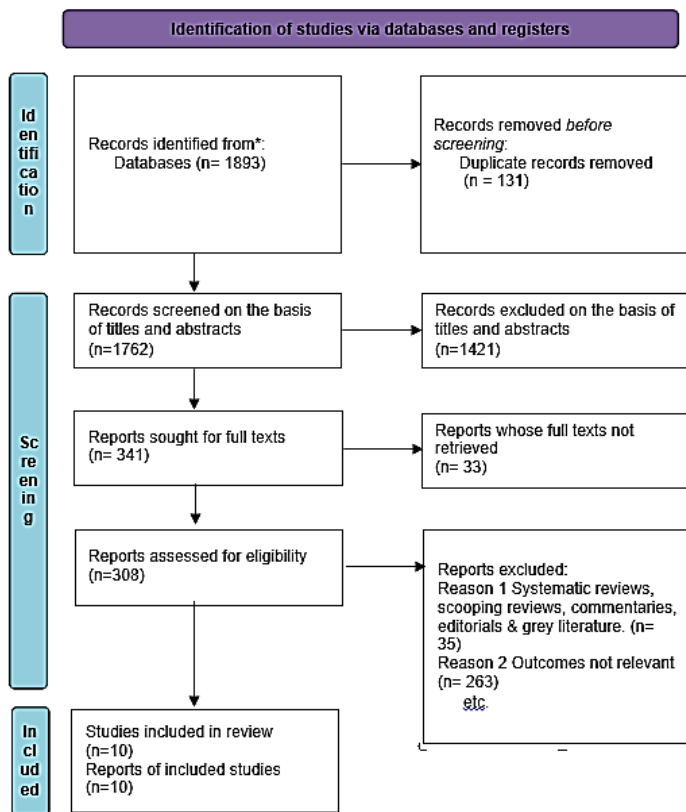


Figure 1: PRISMA flowchart diagram

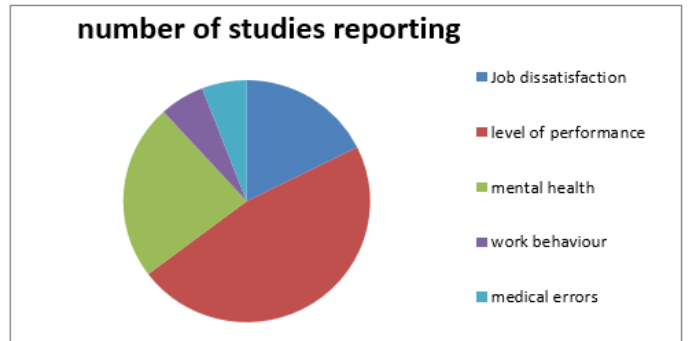


Figure 2: Pie diagram showing Number of studies reporting different outcomes of workplace bullying

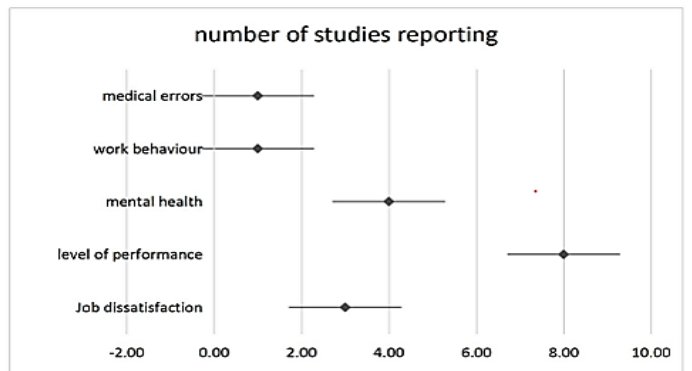


Figure 3: Forest plot of the included studies

Table: 1 Summary of selected 10 studies

	Author, year, reference number	Region, Country	Study design (time-lag)	Assessment bullying	Assessment performance & other outcomes	Sample size and type	Reverse relationship examined	Organization
1	Devonish D, 2013, [16]	Barbados, Caribbean region	cross-sectional self-report survey	Negative Acts Questionnaire-Revised (22 items)	Job satisfaction (3 item) Work-related depression (6 item) individual-targeted organizational citizenship behavior (OCB-I) (7 item) interpersonal counterproductive work behaviors (CWB-P) (19 items) in-role or task-related behaviors (IRB) (7 item)	Random N= 262 M=52% F= 48% Age 19-34y= 65% >35y= 35%	Higher levels of workplace bullying were associated with lower levels of job satisfaction, task performance, higher levels of work-related depression & higher levels of interpersonal counterproductive work behaviors.	large-sized retail and wholesale organizations
2	Hewett R et al, 2016[17]	Southeast Asia 1.Vietnam 2.Cambodia 3.Thailand 4.Philippines	cross-sectional studies (May 2012 and March 2013)	Single item with definition	Negative acts; The Negative Acts Questionnaire-Revised (22 items) Coping strategies; Copenhagen Psychosocial Questionnaire (10 items) Subjective wellbeing, Warr's scale (15 items) Psychological strain; General Health Questionnaire (12 items) Performance; performance questionnaire ( 2 items)	(total N = 3,217); Vietnam (N = 1,044), Cambodia (N = 821), Thailand (N = 800), Philippines (N = 552) The mean age was 31.6 years (SD = 9.59) with a range of 18 to 70 F=46.5%	when 'self labeled as being bullied' acts as a moderator between workplace bullying and performance. those employees who labeled themselves as being bullied reported lower performance, while those who did not reported higher levels of performance,	key industry sectors; education, healthcare, manufacturing, and hospitality

3	Olsen E et al, 2017[18]	Norway	cross-sectional web based survey design. October 2014	Negative Acts Questionnaire-Revised (NAQ-R) (12 items)	institutional stress ; Cooper's Job Stress Questionnaire (CJSQ) (5 items) competence development; COPSOQ-instrument (4 items) social support from colleagues (3 items) task oriented leadership (6 items) job performance; QPS Nordic (4 items) job satisfaction ( 4items) work ability ( 2items)	N=2946 F= 90.3% M=9.7% 47% were up to 40 years old	Job demands, institutional stress and dilemmas, increase bullying and reduce job satisfaction and job performance	Registered Nurses from four public Norwegian hospitals
4	Wright W et al, 2015[19]	Midwest , Mid-Missouri, (USA)	Survey conducted via e-mail system.	Negative Acts Questionnaire-Revised (22 items)	job performance; Rosenstein and O'Daniel's (2008) modified scales (14 items)	N=241	Person- related bullying have a strong relationship with behavioral/psychological responses and medical errors	Nurses from hospitals
5	Naseer S et al, 2018[20]	Islamabad, Pakistan	cross-sectional studies	Study 1; shortened version of the Negative Acts Questionnaire (NAQ) (8 item) Study 2; Negative Acts Questionnaire (NAQ) (22 items)	Perceived organizational support; developed by Eisenberger et al. (1986) ( 8 item) Organizational citizenship behaviors; developed by Williams and Anderson (1991) ( 7 items) Organizational retaliatory behaviors; developed by Aquino et al (1999) (7 item) Job performance; measured using Williams and Anderson's (1991) (7 item)	Random Study 1; N= 478 employee-peer dyads M= 73% F= 27% Mean age= 31.7 years (SD = 7.45) Study 2; N=395 M=64% F=36% Mean age=30.6years (SD = 7.74)	Negative relationship between bullying and job performance is high when POS is low than when POS is high.	Banking, telecommunication & education sectors
6	Robert F, 2018 [21]	Lahore, Pakistan	cross-sectional study	Negative Acts Questionnaire-Revised (22 items)	Job performance; developed by Williams and Anderson (1991) ( 7 items) Job stress; developed by Crank et al (1995) (5 items)	Convenience sampling N= 250 M= 62.8% F= 37.2% Upto 35 years old: 78% Above 35 years old: 22%	workplace bullying has no impact on job performance, however, it has a negative effect on job stress	6 private banks of Lahore
7	Cooper-Thomas H et al, 2013 [22]	New Zealand	computer-based survey	Negative Acts Questionnaire-Revised (22 items)	Constructive leadership; developed from Ekvall and Arvonen's (1991) (6 items) Perceived organizational support; developed by Eisenberger et al. (1986) ( 7 item) Effectiveness of organizational initiatives against bullying; developed by Ferris (2004) (13 items) Wellbeing; developed by Warr's (1990) (15 items) Psychological strain; general health questionnaire developed by Goldberg (1972) (12 items) Self-reported performance; developed by Kessler et al, (2003) (3 items)	convenience sample N=727 M=16% F=84% Mean age= 46 years	Performance of employees decreases at high levels of bullying when there is no organizational support, however the performance of employees remained unchanged at same levels of bullying when organizational supports are effective.	Nine New Zealand healthcare organizations
8	Gao H et al, 2019 [23]	Kunming, China	cross-sectional study	Customer Bullying Scale; developed by Shao and Skarlicki (2014) (18 items)	job satisfaction index scale developed by Schriesheim and Tsui (1980); (6 items) Employee's Job Performance Scale; developed by Borman and Motowidlo (1993) ( 8 items) Locus of Control (LC) Scale developed by Spector (1982) (16 items)	random sampling N= 420 F= 69.8% M=30.2% Age= 20-29 years	customer bullying decreases job satisfaction and job performance.	Chinese tourism companies

9	Wu M et al, 2020[24]	Tianjin, Jiangsu, and Hainan; China	online questionnaires, cross-sectional study	The negative behavior questionnaire compiled by Einarsen et al. (2009), revised by Jiang et al. (2011), (4 items)	the state-trait anxiety questionnaire revised by Spielberger et al. (1983) (4 items) Job Performance: organizational citizenship behavior by Williams and Anderson (2016) (21 items) The revised State-Trait Anxiety Scale (Spielberger et al., 1983) of Li and Qian (1995) (4 items)	N= 248 M= 57.66% average age 33.61 years (SD = 7.44),	Inverse relationship of workplace bullying with job performance.	Organization type included public institutions, state-owned enterprises, joint ventures, and private enterprises.
10	Ashraf F et al. 2013[25]	Islamabad and Rawalpindi ; Pakistan	cross-sectional study	workplace bullying measured using Brotheridge and Lee's (2010) instrument (43 items)	Job performance measured using Blickle et al's (2009) (5 items) Emotional intelligence measured using Petrides and Furnham's (2001) (10 items)	N= 242 M= 132 F= 110 < 30 years= 132 >30 years= 110 a convenience sampling technique	Although bullying negatively impacted job performance, the harmful impact was lower for those high on EI and higher for those low on EI.	doctors employed in five hospitals and six clinics

## DISCUSSION:

The results of the study show that workplace bullying affects the job performance of employees either directly or indirectly. Many studies in this systematic review have revealed that moderators also play a role among them.

Devonish D (2013) proposed that Job satisfaction plays a mediated role in the relationship between workplace bullying and the performance of tasks, depression is a mediator between workplace bullying and organizational citizenship behavior while job satisfaction and depression both plays a mediated role between workplace bullying and interpersonal counterproductive work behavior<sup>16</sup>. These findings are consistent with previous researches who found that workplace bullying as a stressor influences employees' work behavior, which can sequentially lead to job dissatisfaction, non-productive work climates, anxiety/depression or negative behaviors<sup>26</sup>. Hewett R et al, 2016 divided negative acts into five clusters viz targeted with work-related bullying, persistently targeted, frequently targeted, sometimes targeted and not targeted. When they directly examined the relation-

ship between these negative acts clusters found that, lower levels of performance and well-being was reported from those who experienced more frequent negative acts. When they examined the same relationship with 'self-labeled as being bullied' found that lower levels of well-being and performance was associated with those who experienced more frequent negative acts, when the self-labeled as being bullied, while higher levels of performance was reported from Persistent targets<sup>17</sup>. This proves to be an important investigation as it was in line with the previous logic that negative acts encountered at the workplace can be seen as an important developmental or performance enhancers but only in those situations when employees have a trust that these acts are not deliberate or not taken to harm them<sup>27</sup>. Oslen E et al, 2017 Proposed that institutional stress, job demands and dilemmas increases the level of bullying and have negative impact on job performance and satisfaction<sup>18</sup>. It was evident that bullying for a long time has a negative impact on health outcomes of employees, which then severally impairs the employees' performance<sup>28</sup>.

Wright W et al, 2015 argued that Person- related bullying have a strong relationship with behavioral/psychological responses and medical errors<sup>19</sup>. It can be justified from researches that when more tasks are assigned with no appreciation, it leads to low morale and job dissatisfaction which in turn affects the quality of care<sup>29</sup>. Naseer S et al, 2018 conducted a study in Pakistan on two different populations which revealed that workplace bullying affects job performance in only one population while in second it does not<sup>20</sup>. This can be explained by difference of power in different cultural contexts. Where there is a great power difference, bullying becomes a routine matter for people and they perceive it as normal. Hence it does not impact on their job performance. Moreover this research also declared that the relationship of bullying and job performance varies when it is studied with perceived organizational support as a moderator. The inverse relationship of workplace bullying and job performance is low when there is a moderator of perceived organizational support<sup>20</sup>. This statement is in accordance with “conservation of resources theory”, which assumes that when a person has resources, it gives him/her a chance to cope with demands and thus reducing the negative outcomes<sup>30</sup>. This study also conducted in Pakistan in banking sector which states that workplace bullying has no impact on job performance, however, it has a negative effect on job stress. Although it cannot be ignored completely as workplace bullying can affect the health of employees in terms of mental or physical health<sup>21</sup>. Cooper-Thomas H et al, 2013 Concluded that anti-bullying actions by organizations lessen the impact of

workplace bullying on organizational liability and wellbeing, furthermore, the impact of bullying on performance decreases due to perceived organizational support. In addition, performance of employees decreases at high levels of bullying when there is no organizational support. In contrast, the performance of employees remained unchanged at same levels of bullying when organizational supports are effective<sup>22</sup>. Thus, the Organizations can decrease the impact of workplace bullying by adopting a less formal way of perceived organizational support. Gao H et al, 2019 Studied the impact of customer bullying on job satisfaction and performance of tourism company employees and found that there is reverse relationship between them, however, the impact is comparatively reduced when there is a moderator role of ‘job satisfaction’ among the other two variables. It is also evident from this study that those employees who have internal locus of control experiences more job dissatisfaction from customers bullying, owing to the fact that they have high levels of self-awareness<sup>23</sup>. Ashraf F et al.2013 also concluded that job performance is impaired by workplace bullying of doctors. They also proposed a new interesting fact that those employees who have high emotional intelligence are better able to cope with bullying and thus have better performance<sup>25</sup>.

## **CONCLUSION:**

The findings of this study suggest that workplace bullying have a direct or indirect impact on employee’s job performance either with mediators or without mediators. Most studies concluded that workplace bullying had an inverse relationship with job perfor-

mance while some studies are in the favour that it rather increases the work performance of employees. Thus, more future research is mandatory in different organizations with different cultural and socio-economic backgrounds, so that performance of employees should be maximized while keeping their health at top level.

### **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:**

We would like to express our sincere gratitude and appreciation to Dr. Saira Afzal for their unwavering support and assistance in this research work. Their valuable guidance and input have been instrumental in ensuring the success of our publication. We are truly grateful for their contributions.

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