

Emotional Intelligence of University Employees: Role of workplace bullying and psychological distress

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Abstract

The study of workplace bullying and its outcomes has remained point of interest amongst researchers in last two decades. The impact of workplace bullying on emotional intelligence is one of the perspectives that has been less explored. The existence of psychological distress among employee's behaviour and performances in organizations is one of the factors. Moreover, psychological distress is overlooked in its mediating role in enhancing the impact of workplace bullying on the relevant constructs of emotional intelligence which are Self-awareness, Self-management, Social-awareness and Relationship-management. This research has been undertaken to investigate the mediating effect of psychological distress in the relationship between workplace bullying and emotional intelligence. It is hypothesized in this research that exposure to workplace bullying is negatively associated to emotional intelligence through enhanced levels of psychological distress. The philosophical basis of this quantitative study is positivist and has been undertaken through adopted questionnaires. The data is collected from the sample of 203 female employees working in universities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad. The findings suggest that workplace bullying has a negative correlation with four dimensions of emotional intelligence. Furthermore, these four dimensions are important for the positive performance of employee. Eradicating workplace bullying from organizational cultures may yield in more optimized job outcomes. This study also extends the scope for a more diversified horizon for future researches by increasing sample size, multi-sectors and by inducing more prevailing mediators other than psychological distress

Key Words: *Emotional Intelligence, Psychological distress, Workplace bullying*

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Introduction

Emotional intelligence (EI) is described as “the capability to view an individual’s emotional state and feelings, to distinguish between them and to custom this evidence to direct and describe individual’s thoughts and practical actions (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Emotional intelligence term was invented by Payne in 1985, but still in this current era researchers considers this term as indefinable and consider this as more significant debatable area (Ashkanasy and Daus, 2005). The discussion environs the critical conventions related with emotional intelligence. Joseph and Newman (2010) argue that in spite of comprehensive agreement on the value of emotional intelligence, extensive discrepancy available about the measurement of emotional intelligence. Recently research explored that employee report greater levels of psychological distress who perceived larger experience at place of work (Giorgi et al. 2016). Association at place of work could connect to expansion of EI like a thin model; that would be imperfect (Cherniss and Goleman 2001). Many researchers have discussed the workplace bullying, (Bernotaite & Malinauskien, 2017). Research on Workplace bullying started from more than 30 years ago and still it continues and become an increasing interest of (Paull & Omari, 2016; Hurley, Hutchinson, Bradbury, & Browne, 2016). Study of emerging body proposes that reactions of employees to situations of workplace changes based on the resources availability (Lam et al., 2010; Kay et al., 2008; Hobfoll, 1989). Giorgi and Majer (2008) Employees get support from emotional intelligence in efficiently managing the workplace bullying and occupational stress. Significant relationship between workplace bullying and personality factors highlighted by many studies (Giorgi et al. 2016). In developing and developed economies workplace bullying is considered as severe issue (Devonish,, 2014), that leads to major economic, psychological and social loss to various employees and employers. In the In light of above mentioned apprehensions, workplace bullying, as research topic, has attained extensive attention in health literature, for instance work stress, conflict, and aggression areas. The current study will investigates negative impacts of workplace bullying on well-being and health of employee. The subsequent section will present a discerning appraisal of new conceptualizations and operationalization’s office bullying, worldwide occurrence rates, a latest academic viewpoint and experiential research on office bullying.(Devonish, 2016).

Literature Review

Hauge et al., (2010) & Fox and Stallworth (2010) exposed that office intimidation is the most unacceptable phenomena in the workplace. Glasø et al. (2007) established that few sufferers of workplace bullying counted

lesser on carefulness, which is conceptualized as component of self-management capability (emotional intelligence). Recently research explored that an unintended association among contact to office intimidation and self-management aptitude, completely clarified by emotional suffering. Henceforth, it appears that sorrow from cerebral healthiness complications that rise due to experience to office intimidation, dwindle the expressive aptitude of self-management. (Giorgi et al. 2016).

Psychological distress

Psychological distress progresses as an outcome of demanding involvements, like office intimidation (Finne et al., 2011), which at that time inculcates augmented petulance, reduced executive, absence of understanding (Arnsten et al., 2015). There is an ancillary relationship among exposure to workplace bullying and self-management ability, fully clarified by psychological distress. Therefore, it is very clear that the issues relevant with the mental health including anxiety and sense of insecurity, they come up with the experience to office intimidation, and further it makes the emotional capability of self management very weak (Goldmid and Howie, 2013), hence, it is a propensity inclining to an inverse attributional style that would rise the risk of emotional suffering in targeted individual of bullying. In addition to feelings, effective states of other individual including emotional suffering, job gratification, job engagement, in-service sadness, emotional commitment, psychological needs need for retrieval and worry and expressive tiredness), reasoning national (job security), separate natures and care have been revealed as mediator to the bullying–outcome relationships. Bullying nurtures negative states (psychological distress, emotional exhaustion and negative emotions) in workers, as personnel observe bullying actions to be stimulating and intimidating, which over a retro of period get altered into unwanted attitudinal and interactive consequences (Agarwal and Rai, 2018).

Relationship between Workplace intimidation, psychological distress and EI

The literature is evident that psychological distress is connected with the precipitate attitude of an individual that shaken the self management capability of the person (Elkington et al., 2010). Similarly, experimental studies and results revealed that there is a connection among psychological distress and general emotional intelligence (Karim, 2009). Giorgi et al. (2016) showed in a thorough research that there is a arbitrating role of psychological distress in the association of intimidation and self-management capability. There are number of studies on

workplace bullying concluding that employees confronting the experience of bullying face an extensive range of psychosomatic and psychological health issues (Einarsen and Nielsen, 2015). Few other studies, including Magee et al. (2015) and Rodríguez Muñoz et al. (2011) revealed that there is arbitrating parts of need for retrieval and concern and emotional suffering amid the relationship of office intimidation and slumber excellence. The study underlined results that significance of intellectual beginning is associated with the study of bullying and health related issues. Earlier researches have exposed that mental suffering is connected to spontaneous and perilous attitude that hinders the self-management aptitude, for instance, risky sensual performance (Elkington et al., 2010).

Objectives

In response, the research questions of this study following objectives of the study are set:

1. To investigate the impact of work place bullying on self-awareness.
2. To investigate the impact of work place bullying on self-Management.
3. To investigate the impact of work place bullying on social awareness.
4. To investigate the impact of work place bullying on emotional relationship.
5. To investigate the impact of increasing level psychological distress on the relationship of workplace bullying and emotional Intelligences.

Research Question:

Following research questions are articulated:

- 1 Does exposure to workplace bullying has influence on emotional self-awareness?
- 2 Does exposure to workplace bullying has influence on emotional self-management?
- 3 Does exposure to workplace bullying has influence on emotional Social awareness?
- 4 Does exposure to workplace bullying has influence on emotional Relationship Management?
- 5 Does psychological distress mediates the relationship between exposure to workplace bullying and emotional intelligence?

Research Hypothesis

H_{1a}: Exposure to workplace bullying is negatively associated to self - awareness

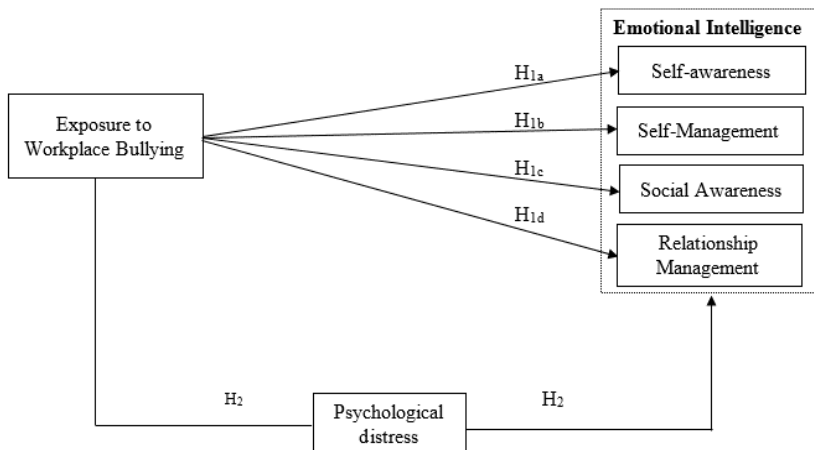
H_{1b}: Exposure to workplace bullying is negatively associated to self-management.

H_{1c}: Exposure to workplace bullying is negatively associated to social awareness.

H_{1d}: Exposure to workplace bullying is negatively associated to relationship management.

H₂: Exposure to workplace bullying is negatively associated to emotional intelligence ability through increased levels of psychological distress

Research Model



Research Methodology

Current study is conducted to examine the impact of workplace bullying on emotional intelligence among the female employees serving HEC recognized universities of the twin cities, Rawalpindi and Islamabad. The increasing level and mediating role of psychological stress in the relationship of workplace bullying and emotional intelligence and its dimensions are explored in this research work conducted. Following the Positivist Philosophy, the research design is cross sectional and quantitative in nature. Population for the current research was female of employees serving HEC recognized universities of the twin cities, Rawalpindi and Islamabad's with sample size is 206. The adopted questionnaire was used to validate the purposed model. Used 17 item for Explore workplace bullying adopted from Giorgi et al, 2011. Psychological

distress was measured through Goldberg,1992 using 12 item. 16 items used to assess emotional intelligences.

Correlations and regression

Table 1 The correlation between workplace bullying and self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship

| Variables | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---|
| 1 Work Place Bullying | 1 | | | | |
| 2 Self-awareness | -0.24** | 1 | | | |
| 3 Self-Management | -0.11* | 0.11* | 1 | | |
| 4 Social awareness | -0.38** | 0.15* | 0.65** | 1 | |
| 5 Relationship Management | -0.16** | -0.29** | -0.38** | -0.29** | 1 |

The Above table shows the correlation between the workplace Bullying, Self-awareness, Self-management, Self-awareness and Relationship Management. Result show that work Place Bullying has moderate negative effect on self-awareness. Workplace bullying has shown negative impact on self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship management.

Table 2. The correlation between workplace bullying and emotional intelligence via psychological distress

| Variables | 1 | 2 | 3 |
|--------------------------|---------|--------|---|
| 1 Work Place Bullying | 1 | | |
| 2 Psychological Distress | -0.42** | 1 | |
| 3 Emotional intelligence | -0.33** | 0.27** | 1 |

Table 3. Regression analysis

| Variable | Self-awareness | | | | |
|------------------------------------|-----------------|----------|----------|----------|-------------------|
| | β | t- stats | R square | F- stats | Sig |
| Constant Work Place Bullying | -0.184 | -64.124 | | | |
| | -0.650 | -116.041 | 0.77 | 1240.113 | .000 ^b |
| Variable | Self-Management | | | | |
| | β | t- stats | R | F- stats | Sig |

| | | | | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| | | | square | | |
| Constant Work Place Bullying | -213 | -4.141 | | | |
| | .810 | -95.268 | 0.600 | 11458.154 | .000 ^b |
| Variable | Social awareness | | | | |
| | β | t- stats | R square | F- stats | Sig |
| Constant Work Place Bullying | 7.621 | 4.444 | | | |
| | -.868 | -31.164 | 0.71 | 784.125 | .000 ^b |
| Variable | Relationship Management | | | | |
| | β | t- stats | R square | F- stats | Sig |
| Constant Work Place Bullying | 84.024 | 67.844 | | | |
| | -.510 | -18.106 | 0.84 | 124.112 | .000 ^b |

Here, overall regression analysis of this study is mentioned in the table 3 above. It is clear from the data that work place bullying and self-awareness are negatively related with each other. As for as variance patterns are concerned, change in one unit in the work place bullying will bring an increase of .65 in self-awareness which is insignificant at 5 % level of significance. Next to this, 77 percent self-awareness is effected by workplace bullying and it is shown by R². Additionally, F- stats value of (1240.113) is representing the overall model as a best fit. Table 3 also shows the overall regression analysis where the work place bullying and self-management are negatively related with each other. Any change of even one units occurring in the work place bullying will result the self-management to increase .81 which is insignificant at 5 % level of significance. R² is showing that Work place bullying effect the self-management 60 percent. Again, the value of F- stats (11458.154) is enough to make the model as a best fit as per the values mentioned. Table 1 is also showing the overall regression analysis of this research work where the work place bullying and social awareness are negatively related with each other. If one unit change occurs in the work place bullying then social-awareness will increase .86 which is insignificant at 5 % level of significance. R² shows that Work place bullying effect the social-awareness 71 percent. Moreover, the value of F- stats (784.125) shows that overall model is best fit. Table 3 reflects the overall regression analysis of this study, in which work place bullying and relationship management are negatively related with each other. If

we attempt to change one unit in the work place bullying, the resultant increase in the relationship management is .51, which is insignificant at 5 % level of significance. R2 is demonstrating that Work place bullying effect the relationship management 84 percent. Here also, the value of F-stats (124.112) justifies the model as the overall best fit.

Table 4.: Mediation Analysis, Direct, Indirect and Total Effects Meditation

| IV | Effect of IV on M | Effect of M on DV | Direct Effect | Total Effect | Bootstrapping result for indirect effects | |
|--------------------|-------------------|-------------------|---------------|--------------|---|---------|
| | | | | | LL | UL |
| | | | | | 95% | 95% |
| | | | | | CI | CI |
| Workplace Bullying | - 0.6009*** | 0.1678*** | - 0.5410 | - 0.6419*** | - .1813 | - .0536 |

Discussion

The hypothesis of the research is tested through computing correlation analysis.. The relationship among the variables of the study is explored through correlation analysis. While going into details, the first hypothesis of all this research strive showed that the workplace bullying is negatively associated with self-awareness which is a sub-component of emotional intelligence. Obtained results of this research validate this hypothesis and it is explored that a significant negative correlation exists between workplace bullying and self-awareness. More specifically, the outcomes of the study endorsed the first four hypotheses of the study and it has been found that workplace bullying is negatively associated with the other four components of the emotional intelligence which are self-management, social awareness, social awareness and relationship management. It has also been found in this study that workplace bullying has negative correlation with overall emotional intelligence. Findings of this study are also endorsed by the previous literature and in line with the previous literature. As argued by Branch et al (2012) that workplace bullying and emotional intelligence is negatively correlated with each other. Similarly it has also been confronted that the development of emotional intelligence is of vital importance for prevention of bullying at

workplace (Sheehan, 1999). The study hovers around the hypothesis drawn to reach the conclusion based on the EI and its dimensions and the mediating role of psychological distress

Conclusion

Emotional Intelligence is an important aspect of the human personality and its development is comprised of four components which include self-awareness, self-management, social-awareness and relationship management. The current study successfully clarifies that workplace bullying has a negative correlation with all of these four components and according to the literature these four components are crucial for the job performance of an employee (Ashraf & Khan, 2014). In this study it has also been found that workplace bullying has a significant positive relationship with psychological distress which means that employees which face bullying at workplace has higher level of psychological distress too. These findings are also endorsed by the study of Nielsen & Einarsen (2012) in which they argued that individuals experienced bullying at workplace have higher level of psychological distress. Moreover they also argued that the all four sub-components of emotional intelligence are essential and equally important for better job performance and negatively affected by the workplace bullying and psychological distress. Karim (2009) also interpreted in a study that emotional intelligence and psychological distress are negatively correlated

Limitations of the research

Along with all significance and scope this study also has some limitations which include:

- Sample size which was less with respect to the population of female employees in twin cities. Researchers can opt for a more versatile and a larger sample to get more extensive data.
- This study utilized only quantitative method of research which alone cannot clear the whole picture. In order to enhance practical implication, a pragmatic approach can be adopted measure and comprehend such an important phenomenon.
- The harassment is not only faced by the women in education sector but also in other professions as well. Until there is a lack of study in all dimensions of this research in other sectors, any holistic conclusion to execute for practical purposes is not feasible to exercise.
- This study only included the females to measure the harassment but it is also evident in literature that men also face harassment.

Relative, comparative and proportional analysis of both the genders is needed to make any actionable policies.

- There are limited mediator and moderators in this study and the relationship can increase or decrease through indulging other moderators and mediators.

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