

# Workplace Bullying and Its Impact on Job Performance: Empirical Evidence from the Public Sector in Malaysia

Kuldip Singh., Elizabeth Caroline Augustine., Nur Aida Binti Kipli., Nur Farhani Binti Samasu., Fairuz Hidayat Merican Bin Wan Merican., Rozalia Ingai

Faculty of Administrative Science and Policy Studies Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Sarawak Branch, Malaysia

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## ABSTRACT

Workplace bullying is a pervasive issue that affects numerous individuals across various industries and organizations. A study conducted by the Workplace Bullying Institute in the United States found that 19% of American workers had experienced bullying at some point during their careers. Similarly, a meta-analysis of studies from various countries revealed an overall prevalence rate of 14% for workplace bullying. Over the years, workplace bullying has been a huge concern among the top management. Employee's welfare is said to be affected due to this workplace bullying. A study is conducted in Malaysia found out that 39.1% of employees from 47 companies in Malaysia stated that they have been bullied in the workplace. Workplace bullying has a direct effect on employee job performance because, when bullying occurred their work motivation will decrease. This will eventually slow down their productivity and causing them failure in delivering work performance at their full potential. This study aims to examine the relationship between workplace bullying and job performance in the public sector. A survey using questionnaire was carried out on a sample of 266 employees in a public agency. The findings showed that level of workplace bullying was medium. However, a weak positive correlation was found between workplace bullying and job performance. There was no significant difference in workplace bullying based on demographic characteristics such as gender, marital status and age. But a significant difference in workplace bullying was found for work experience. Results showed that person related bullying is the main predictor of job performance followed by work related bullying. The study provides insights into negative effects of workplace bullying on employees' job performance in the public sector.

**Keywords:** Workplace Bullying, Job Performance, Public Sector, Person Related Bullying, Work Related Bullying.

## INTRODUCTION

A robust public sector plays a crucial role in achieving the strategic and economic goals set by the Sarawak State Government. These objectives establish clear expectations regarding the public sector's functions and operational approaches to ensure that community needs are met while delivering services effectively and efficiently. Research has consistently shown that employees who are engaged and satisfied with their work tend to perform better and provide higher-quality services. (Harter, & Hayes, 2002). Creating a positive work environment requires strong leadership, effective management, and a collective commitment from all employees to foster inclusivity and a sense of belonging. (Robinson & Edmondson, 2021). Additionally, organizations must address negative workplace behaviors promptly to prevent them from escalating.

Bullying in the workplace is a significant disruptor of productivity and can severely impact employee engagement and well-being if left unaddressed. (HR Vision Event 2024). Preventing inappropriate behaviors, such as bullying, is a fundamental responsibility under Malaysia's work health and safety policies. Under Malaysia's Occupational Safety and Health Act 1994 (OSHA), employers are legally required to provide a safe working environment, including protection from bullying. Complaints can be escalated to the Department of Occupational Safety and Health (DOSH) if internal resolution fails. The Code of Ethics strictly prohibits

bullying and fostering a workplace culture that promotes respect, and positivity is essential in preventing such behaviors. (American Psychological Association, 2017). Employers have a duty to establish environments where employees feel motivated, valued, and supported in performing their best work. Human resources and workplace safety professionals play a key role in assisting leaders in cultivating such environments and identifying potential psychosocial hazards, such as workplace stressors. Furthermore, all employees, regardless of rank, should be held to the same behavioral standards.

The performance of government employees is critical, as it directly influences public perception of government efficiency and effectiveness. Higher levels of job performance enhance public trust in government institutions (Kaifeng & Marc, 2006). Strong performance is linked to factors such as quality of work, productivity, cooperation, reliability, and creativity in task execution. Employee competency is a key determinant of job performance, with those possessing advanced skills demonstrating higher success rates. For instance, employees with extensive job knowledge, specialized expertise, intelligence, and effective work strategies are more likely to excel in their roles. In the public sector, employee performance reflects overall government efficiency, making it a focal point for both administrators and researchers. A decline in employee skill levels can adversely impact performance outcomes (Salleh, Yaakub & Dzulkifli, 2011).

Workplace bullying is defined by the Workplace Bullying Institute as repeated mistreatment of an individual through work-related disruptions, intimidation (both verbal and non-verbal), humiliation, threats, or verbal abuse (Raypole, 2019). In professional settings, bullying is an undesirable behavior often characterized by an imbalance of power, which can have serious consequences for both employees and the organization. Negative workplace behaviors are linked to poor performance, making bullying a critical issue for organizations to address. Employees who experience bullying are at risk of stress and mental health challenges, which can significantly hinder their job performance. In Malaysia, workplace bullying is an emerging issue. A 2020 survey found that approximately 54% of public sector workers in Malaysia reported experiencing workplace bullying, which is lower than the 68% reported in the private sector. Verbal abuse was the most common form, followed by psychological and physical abuse. Women were more likely to be bullied (70%) compared to men (58%) across sectors. Research by Kwan et al. (2014) highlights that bullying is ingrained in the workplace culture of many Malaysian organizations, where it is often perceived as a demonstration of power and authority. As a result, employees may feel compelled to tolerate bullying behaviors. Given these concerns, this study aims to explore the relationship between workplace bullying and job performance within the public sector.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Job Performance

The concept of job performance remains a widely debated topic as one of the most significant dependent variables studied across businesses, government institutions, educational sectors, and society. For decades, researchers have examined and refined the definitions and conceptual frameworks surrounding individual job performance. In general, job performance refers to how effectively an employee carries out their assigned duties (Murphy, 1989; Rotundo, 2000). Rather than focusing solely on outcomes, job performance should be understood in terms of behaviors. This aspect is critical for both employees and employers, as it directly influences decisions related to promotions, terminations, salary increments, and bonuses (Caillier, 2010).

Historically, much attention has been given to the organizational perspective, but administrative theorists have extensively explored individual job performance. The study of job performance can be traced back to the early 1900s, when Frederick Taylor proposed that organizations could enhance employee productivity by identifying and structuring the most efficient work schedules. However, his study faced criticism for emphasizing "mechanization" over the humanistic aspects of workplace management (March & Simon, 1958).

Borman and Motowidlo (1993) later proposed that job performance could be categorized into two broad dimensions: task performance and contextual performance. Task performance, also known as in-role performance, refers to an employee's proficiency in carrying out duties that are officially recognized as part of their job. These activities directly contribute to the organization's core functions, either by facilitating

technical processes or indirectly by providing necessary support, such as materials and services (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993). In contrast, contextual performance, also referred to as extra-role performance, includes discretionary behaviors that may not be explicitly required but contribute to the overall social and psychological environment of the organization. Examples of contextual performance include volunteering, persistence, assisting colleagues, cooperating, and adhering to organizational rules (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993). Both aspects of job performance are recognized as essential, although their emphasis may vary depending on the nature of the assigned job.

## Workplace Bullying

Workplace bullying is a prevalent issue across various organizations, regardless of their industry or function. It refers to the persistent mistreatment of employees by either their superiors or colleagues, often manifesting in forms such as harassment, threats, or ridicule, which can negatively affect job performance (Hussain & Aslam, 2015). Employees subjected to workplace bullying are forced to navigate hostile and aggressive behaviors, which can severely impact their work environment. While bullying frequently stems from power imbalances within the workplace, it can also occur among employees at the same hierarchical level (Matthiesen & Einarsen, 2010). Fisher-Blando (2010) characterizes workplace bullying as a series of deliberate, harmful, disrespectful, or exclusionary actions—whether intentional or unintentional—aimed at an individual. Such behavior is often perceived as an attempt to dominate, harm, or pressure an employee into resigning. In some cases, bullying is evident in the misuse of authority, where subordinates are subjected to harassment by their superiors.

Einarsen (2005) highlighted in his research that bullying presents a serious ethical concern and a workplace hazard, as it can cause employees to experience difficulties in coping with challenges, leading to developmental struggles. The study also noted that victims of workplace bullying may suffer from low self-esteem, ultimately affecting overall organizational efficiency. Townend (2008) supported this view, asserting that bullying has detrimental effects on both employees and organizations.

According to Adams and Bray (1992), workplace bullying is a sustained pattern of mistreatment that may include verbal criticism or direct personal attacks aimed at humiliating or belittling others. Attell et al. (2017) further noted that bullying in the workplace can cause employees to question their self-worth, leading to psychological distress and even physical harm.

## Relationship Between Workplace Bullying and Job Performance

Research on workplace bullying and job performance has demonstrated a significant relationship between the two, with findings indicating a negative correlation between workplace bullying and job performance (Said, Zaidee, Zahari, Ali, & Salleh, 2015). Evidence suggests that workplace bullying adversely affects employee performance. For instance, unfair treatment of employees has been shown to leave a negative impact on their work output (Ndegwa & Makori Moronge, 2016). Studies conducted among public sector employees also support the conclusion that workplace bullying leads to diminished job performance (Obicci, 2015; Devonish, 2013). Researchers consistently highlight that bullying in the workplace negatively influences job satisfaction, while also affecting employees' physical and emotional well-being, ultimately resulting in a decline in productivity. This issue presents multifaceted challenges for organizations, including ethical, financial, emotional, and physical implications (Yahaya et al., 2012).

Several studies have examined the relationship between workplace behavior, job performance, and bullying. Many of these studies document the detrimental impact of bullying on employee behavior and performance. Ikyanyon and Ucho (2013) assert that the nature of bullying directly influences job performance, with hospital employees subjected to lower levels of bullying demonstrating better performance compared to those exposed to severe bullying. Similarly, Yahaya et al. (2012) found that workplace bullying affects task performance within organizations. Rooyen and McCormack (2013) emphasized that employees perceive bullying as harmful to performance, particularly when not properly addressed by management.

The first research effort to assess the link between workplace bullying and individual job performance was conducted by Ashton, Briney, and Heppenheffer (2007). Their study found that employees who experienced bullying were less likely to report organizational success in national quality surveys. A meta-analysis by Lantigua and Barton (2002), which reviewed 21 studies, also concluded that bullying negatively impacts employee productivity, causing disengagement and reduced commitment to work. Similarly, Chen and Blackburn (2010) analyzed 70 studies and found that workplace bullying not only harms employee performance but also affects their overall well-being. Their findings revealed that bullied employees take longer to make decisions at work due to stress and mental preoccupation. Bullying has been widely recognized as a disruptive factor that hinders employee performance (Yahaya et al., 2012; Ndegwa & Moronge, 2016; Mete & Sökmen, 2016; Carroll & Lauzier, 2014).

Moreover, research suggests that increased instances of bullying in the workplace correlate with greater disruption and decreased employee productivity, particularly in individual task performance (Obicci, 2015; Ndegwa & Moronge, 2016; Yahaya et al., 2012; Devonish, 2013; Chesler, 2014). However, some studies, including those by Majeed and Naseer (2019), Samnani et al. (2013), and Sidle (2009), have identified a positive relationship between bullying and performance. Interestingly, Pradhan and Joshi (2019) found that in certain cases, workplace bullying can enhance employee performance.

Contradicting this, several studies argue that workplace bullying has an overwhelmingly negative effect on performance (Ashraf & Khan, 2014; Devonish, 2013; Nwaneri et al., 2013; Olaleye et al., 2021). Lutgen-Sandvik et al. (2007), as cited by Samnani et al. (2013), introduced the concept of "developmental stage bullying," wherein persistent criticism is directed at highly optimistic employees, potentially improving work efficiency. A positive correlation between workplace bullying and job performance can arise when bullying is strategically employed by superiors for personal gain, such as coercing subordinates into working long hours with the promise of promotions or using intimidation tactics. In such cases, employees may perceive bullying as work-driven rather than personal, which can result in increased productivity (Liefoghe & Davey, 2001; Samnani et al., 2013).

### **Workplace Bullying and Demographic Variables**

In general, the data show women are bullied more than men in the workplace to varying degrees (Hoel and Cooper 2001; Lewis and Gunn 2007; Quine 2002; Salin 2003; 2021). A systematic review of the literature by Feijio et al. (2019) found that of the fifty-one included studies in the review, thirteen showed that women were more likely to be bullied than men, two found no gender associations, and two found men were more likely to be bullied. Moayed et al. (2006) found in their systematic review that only two of seven studies showed gender differences (both found women to be more likely targets).

In a 2018 face-to-face interview study of over 4,500 German workers, Lange et al. (2019) found no difference in bullying prevalence across gender. In addition to gender, race, and ethnicity, age as well as the amount of time working in a particular field or institution are important factors when considering the prevalence of bullying in the workplace. Data exist that point toward younger workers experiencing bullying at higher rates than their older counterparts, but results are unclear and inconclusive. Lange et al. (2019) found that amongst a sample of workers between the ages of 31 and 60, younger workers experience significantly more severe bullying from superiors than older workers. These findings are consistent with those of Hoel and Cooper (2001), who identified significant differences between bullying risk for younger and middle-aged workers and that for older workers over a five-year period.

Furthermore, of the eighteen studies identified by Feijo et al. (2019) that explored an association between age and bullying, eight found that younger workers were more likely to be the targets of bullying, one found that older workers were more likely targets, and nine found no association. There is little literature on the association between length of service in an organization and exposure to workplace bullying. Glambek, Einarsen, and Notelaers (2023) posit a complicated relationship between length of time within an organization and bullying. In their study of over 1,000 Norwegian workers, the researchers identified a mediation effect of job dissatisfaction that links exposure to workplace bullying and turnover intentions (i.e., workers' intent to



leave the organization), with the strongest effect applying to short-term employees (two and a half years or less).

The researchers conclude that long-term service acts as a resource for resilience when faced with bullying, which also could explain why the literature across age-related workplace bullying leans in the same direction—generally, workers who have spent longer amounts of time in an organization are also older. Additionally, the response to bullying exposure from older workers differs from younger workers—older workers are more likely to take no action in response as opposed to engaging with a coping strategy such as seeking help or avoidance (Jóhannsdóttir and Ólafsson 2004). Thus length of service in an organization is positively associated with resilience when experiencing bullying. In other words, workers may have learned coping skills to mediate a certain amount of impact from negative acts. It also echoes Freedman and Vreven's (2016) finding that those working in a library for four to seven years' experience more exposure to negative acts in the workplace compared to those who have worked more than twenty-one years.

The association between marital status and bullying also varied between studies. Four studies reported no association between workplace bullying and marital status (Lange et.al, 2019, Carretero, et.al, 2013, Bilgel et.al, 2006, Bayramoglu, et.al, 2007). On the other hand, three studies reported that single, separated, divorced, and widowed workers were more likely to suffer from bullying at work (Khubchandani, et.al, 2015, Keuskamp et.al, 2012, Sahin et.al, 2012) while one study found a higher risk of bullying among married workers (Picakciefe et.al, 2017). Another study by Dominic et al. (2012) showed that separated, divorced or widowed workers reported greater exposure to bullying than married or never-married workers.

Studies by Einarsen & Skogstad (1996), Leymann (1992); and Vartia (1996) which state the difference between gender and bullying in the workplace where victims ratio between male and female are the same. Trijueque and Gomez (2010) also uncovered similar findings that a significantly higher percentage of women experience workplace bullying. Research by Hoel, H., & Cooper, C. L. (2000) claims that age seems to be of little importance regarding the prevalence of bullying. This is further stressed by Quine, L. (2001) whose study on nurses exposed to bullying stated that there were no differences by age or gender in reports of bullying. Quine, L. (2001) reported that nurses who worked full time were more likely to be bullied than those who worked part time, indicating that those who have been in the industry longer were more susceptible to bullying.

Based on the above empirical studies, several hypotheses were tested:

H1: There is a negative relationship between workplace bullying and job performance.

H1a: There is a negative relationship between person related bullying and job performance

H1b: There is a negative relationship between work related bullying and job performance

H2: There is no significant difference in workplace bullying based on gender

H3: There is no significant difference in workplace bullying based on age

H4: There is no significant difference in workplace bullying based on marital status

H5: There is no significant difference in workplace bullying based on work experience.

H6: Work- related bullying is the main predictor of job performance.

## **Underpinning Theories**

Conservation of Resources (COR) theory is often applied to understand how workplace bullying affects job performance. According to COR theory, employees experiencing bullying perceive a threat to their physical and psychological resources (e.g., emotional stability, mental health). To conserve these resources, they may

adopt passive coping strategies such as employee silence, which reduces engagement and productivity, thereby negatively affecting job performance.

Another relevant theory is the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, which explains that bullying depletes employees' emotional and mental resources, leading to burnout and diminished productivity. This resource depletion directly harms job performance. Complementing this, Social Exchange Theory highlights how bullying damages workplace relationships, reducing trust, commitment, and job satisfaction, which further undermines performance.

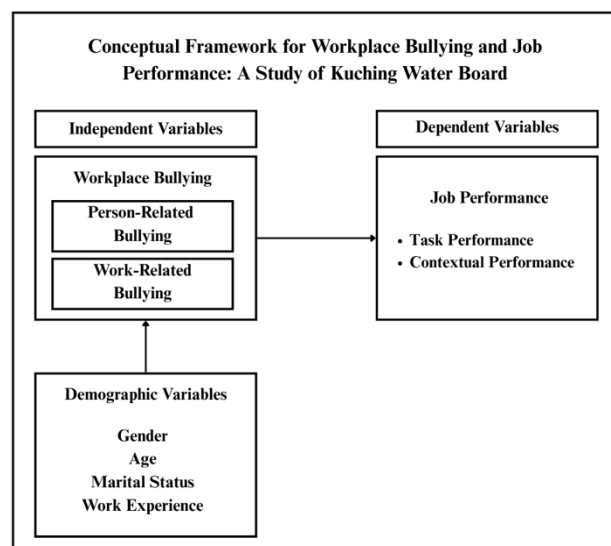


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework for Workplace Bullying and Job Performance (Adopted from Einarsen, Hoel & Notelaers, 2009)

## METHODOLOGY

This study used survey data to investigate the impact of workplace bullying on job performance amongst public sector employees. The study adopted a quantitative research design using a survey questionnaire as the primary tool for data collection. The sampling technique used was convenience sampling. In this study, the population for the study was 535 employees according to the Human Resource Unit of the selected public agency. The proposed sample size for this study is 226 as proposed by Krejcie and Morgan (1970) as quoted by Sekaran & Bougie (2010). The survey questionnaire was comprised of two parts: (a) personal information, including gender, age, ethnicity, educational qualifications and work experience (b) questions related to workplace bullying and job performance. The questionnaire was pilot tested among thirty participants to ensure clarity and comprehensibility. Total of 188 questionnaires were returned giving a response rate of 83%.

The study adopted the Negative Acts Questionnaire-Revised (NAQ-R) that was used for measuring the independent variable workplace bullying. There are 22 items in the NAQ-R, measured using a five-point Likert scale proposed by Einarsen, Hoel, and Notelaers (2009). The questionnaire used five-point Likert scale answerable by 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) which provided greater uniformity of responses as such data was easily processed. The questionnaire previously showed an appropriate internal consistency (Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficient = 0.89) with subscales: Person-related bullying ( $\alpha$  = 0.85), Work-related bullying ( $\alpha$  = 0.82.)

The measurement for job performance consisted of ten-items referring to the task and contextual performance developed by Williams and Anderson (1991). All the items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale with ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The example of an item is 'Adequately complete assigned duties.' The Cronbach' Alpha for job performance is 0.91. The reliability of questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach's alpha formula. If the reliability was greater than or equal to 0.70, Cronbach's alpha was deemed to be acceptable.

## RESULT

Both descriptive and inferential analysis was performed on the data collected. The number of respondents who responded were 181 giving a response rate 803%. The sample consisted of 119 male respondents (67.3%) and 69 female respondents (36.7%), with a majority (67%) falling in the age range of 31- 50 years old. In terms of working experience, majority had 6 to 20 years (61.3%) followed by over 20 years (27%). Regarding marital status most of them were married (79.3%). As for respondents' ethnicity, (38.5%) Malay, (19.7%) Iban, (23.4%) Bidayuh (23.4%), and others (18.1%). More than half of the respondents (59.6%) hold SPM, followed by a diploma (14.4 %). Majority of the respondents were familiar or somewhat familiar with workplace bullying (67.6%). Regarding experience of bullying at the workplace 77.1% said Yes and 22.3 % said No. As for witnessing workplace bullying in the workplace 56.4 % reported No. Regarding how many times have you witnesses bullying incidents at your workplace majority of the respondents reported as none (71.8%) and about 20.3% of respondents reported 1 to 5 times. Majority of the respondents (92.6%) had never attended any workshop on workplace bullying.

### Reliability Analysis

Before the questionnaires can be used for this study and distributed to all the respondents, the reliability test for the questionnaires must be conducted to see whether the questions are reliable or not. Pilot study was conducted to do examine the reliability analysis for all the questions. Results of pilot study found reliability for workplace bullying was 0.876 and for job performance was 0.782. Consequently, for actual study was 0.876 and 0.809 respectively demonstrating high internal consistency for the survey instrument. (Nunnally, 1978).

### Level Of Workplace Bullying

The first research objective was to determine the level of workplace bullying. Mean and standard was used to determine the level of workplace bullying. The level of workplace bullying is moderate (Mean= 3.24, SD 1.12). This finding shows that the level of workplace bullying is medium. (Tekin, 2014).

### Relationship Between Workplace Bullying and Job Performance

The second research objective is to examine the relationship between Workplace bullying and Job performance. Correlation analysis was used to examine the relationship Workplace bullying and Job performance. A weak positive relationship was found between Workplace bullying and Job performance ( $r=.262$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Thus, higher workplace bullying is associated with lower job performance. Thus, H1 was not supported. Weak positive correlation was found between person related bullying ( $r=.287$ ,  $p<.001$ ) and work-related bullying ( $r=.193$ ,  $p <.001$ ). Thus, H1a and H1b were not supported.

### Workplace Bullying and Demographic Variables

There was no significant difference in workplace bullying based on sample characteristics such as gender, age and marital status ( $p>0.05$ ). Thus H 2,3 and 4 was supported. However, a significant difference was found in workplace bullying based on work experience. ( $p<0.05$ ). This is summarized in Table 1 below. Thus, H5 was not supported.

Table 1: T- Independent and Anova one way of Workplace Bullying and Demographics

| Variables     | N   | Workplace bullying Mean | SD   | F or T | Anova or T-test Test value | p-value |
|---------------|-----|-------------------------|------|--------|----------------------------|---------|
| <b>Gender</b> |     |                         |      |        |                            |         |
| Male          | 112 | 3.26                    | .568 | T      | -0.176                     | .861    |

|                        |     |      |      |   |       |      |
|------------------------|-----|------|------|---|-------|------|
| Female                 | 69  | 3.22 | .581 |   |       |      |
| <b>Age</b>             |     |      |      |   |       |      |
| Below 30 years old     | 23  | 3.83 | .598 | F | 1.417 | .239 |
| 31-40 years old        | 55  | 3.83 | .511 |   |       |      |
| 41-50 years old        | 66  | 3.95 | .546 |   |       |      |
| Above 50 years old     | 37  | 4.05 | .669 |   |       |      |
| <b>Marital status</b>  |     |      |      |   |       |      |
| Single                 | 38  | 3.90 | .571 |   |       |      |
| Married                | 143 | 3.85 | .569 | T | -.116 | .908 |
| <b>Work experience</b> |     |      |      |   |       |      |
| Below 5 years          | 35  | 3.82 | .601 |   |       |      |
| 6 to 10 years          | 31  | 3.94 | .559 | F | 2.55  | .030 |
| 11-15 years            | 28  | 3.75 | .536 |   |       |      |
| 16-20 year             | 33  | 3.98 | .541 |   |       |      |
| above 20 years         | 49  | 4.06 | .595 |   |       |      |

The regression analysis in Table 2 displays person related bullying as the main predictor of job performance ( $\beta=.689$ ,  $p=0.000$ ) followed by work related bullying ( $\beta=-.439$ ,  $p=0.017$ ). Thus, H6 was not supported. The predictors explain 11.4 % of the variance in job performance.

Table 2: Regression Analysis of Workplace Bullying and Job Performance

| Model                               | Un-standardized Coefficients |                  | Standardized Coefficients | t      | Sig  |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------|---------------------------|--------|------|
|                                     | <b>B</b>                     | <b>Std.Error</b> | <b>Beta</b>               |        |      |
| (constant)                          | 3.546                        | .127             |                           | 27.880 | .000 |
| Person Related Bullying             | .336                         | .089             | .689                      | 3.777  | .000 |
| Work Related Bullying               | -.216                        | .090             | -.439                     | -2.407 | .000 |
| Dependant Variable: Job Performance |                              |                  |                           |        |      |
| R-square                            | .114                         |                  |                           |        |      |
| F Statistic:                        | 10.518                       |                  |                           |        |      |
| P-Value                             | <.0001                       |                  |                           |        |      |



## DISCUSSION

The aim of this study was to examine the relationship between workplace bullying and job performance in the public sector. The findings of the study confirmed that workplace bully and job performance was significantly correlated. The study found a weak positive correlation between workplace bullying and job performance in the public sector. This is consistent with findings by previous researchers who found a positive link between workplace bullying and employee performance. Studies by Majeed and Naseer (2019), Samnani et al. (2013), and Sidle (2009) have supported a positive relationship between the two variables.

However, Pradhan and Joshi (2019) discovered that workplace bullying can also improve employee performance.). According to Lutgen-Sandvik et al. (2007), as cited by Samnani et al. (2013), "a typology of target attributions about workplace bullying," developmental stage bullying involves persistent criticism targeting individuals with high levels of optimism, which can result in improved work efficiency. The positive association between workplace bullying and employee performance is likely when bullying motives include self-gain by superiors, using bullying to deceive subordinates into working excessive hours by promising promotions or using fear and intimidation. This occurs when the target perceives the conduct as work-driven, person-driven, and positive (Liefoghe & Davey, 2001; Samnani et al., 2013). This supports that person related bullying is the main predictor of job performance.

On the other hand, the results of the present study contradicts several studies that have asserted an adverse effect of bullying on employee performance (Ashraf & Khan, 2014; Devonish, 2013; Nwaneri et al., 2013; Olaleye et al., 2021). The present research findings disagreed with the research findings of Namie (2003) and Judith (2008) as bullying acts have a negative impact on employees' job performance due to the stressful working atmosphere for and the creation of job dissatisfaction and consequently the loss of productivity for the organisation.

The study found no significant difference in workplace bullying based on gender, age and marital status and work experience. This finding contradicts studies by Einarsen & Skogstad (1996), Leymann (1992); and Vartia (1996) which state that there the difference between gender and bullying in the workplace where victim's ratio between male and female are the same. Trijueque and Gomez (2010) also uncovered similar findings that a significantly higher percentage of women experience workplace bullying. The findings of the current study were consistent with those of Hoel, H., & Cooper, C. L. (2000) who claims that age seems to be of little importance regarding the prevalence of bullying.

This is further stressed by Quine, L. (2001) whose study on nurses exposed to bullying stated that there were no differences by age or gender in reports of bullying. The present study is not consistent with findings by Dominic et al. (2012) which showed that separated, divorced or widowed workers reported greater exposure to bullying than married or never-married workers. The present study supports findings by Quine, L. (2001) who reported that nurses who worked full time were more likely to be bullied than those who worked part time, indicating that those who have been in the industry longer were more susceptible to bullying. Moreover, the present research findings also contradict with the findings of Yahaya, Ing, Lee, Yahaya, Boon, Hashim, & Taat (2012) which indicated that person-related bullying influences negatively employees' productivity level.

## CONCLUSION

The main aim of this study was to examine the relationship between workplace and job performance in the public sector. The results showed a significant weak positive relationship between workplace bullying and job performance. In addition, no significant difference was found in workplace bullying based on gender, age and marital status except for work experience. Moreover, person related bullying was the main predictor for job performance. This study has merit, but there are also some limitations. First, because the study was cross-sectional in nature, it was not possible to draw any conclusions about the causal links between the factors examined. Second, this investigation relied specifically on samples drawn from the one public agency.

Therefore, the current study's findings cannot be generalized to employees in other public agencies. The resulting findings contribute to the growing body of literature on workplace bullying and job performance in

the Malaysian context. There are implications for research, practice, and policy from the current study. By establishing more effective workplace bullying programs and policies in their organizations it would enhance and maintain the job performance of their personnel. Further study might be done to enhance and develop an even deeper understanding of the workplace bullying problem, which would provide a direction for future research.

The study can also explore other variables such as moderator or mediating variables. It is advised that a qualitative study be conducted to gain a more in-depth understanding of how workplace bullying can impact job performance among Malaysian public servants. In summary, workplace bullying is a significant issue in Malaysia's public sector, particularly in healthcare, with over half of public sector employees affected. It negatively impacts job performance through increased psychological stress and burnout, contributing to lower productivity and morale. Despite legal protections, underreporting remains a challenge, underscoring the need for stronger organizational measures to address bullying and support employee well-being.

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