Learning and Training as Moderator of Psychological Risk in Workplace Bullying

Uzma Mukhtar

Abstract—**This paper discusses the understanding of the workplace bullying concept in context of Asian countries and aims to find out relationship of workplace bullying with psychological risk and role of learning and training as moderator for psychological risk reduction caused by workplace bullying. Two hypotheses were formulated based on literature review. In order to test the hypotheses Data were collected from about 250 respondents of government institute based on simple random sampling. Presumption of data collection was based on Altman, B.A. study in which he emphasized and conclude that prior learning about workplace bullying in some shape is necessary [1]. To meet this presumption we filtered the employees by observing their understanding of the workplace bullying. As a result 250 responses were collected. In order to analyze data linear regression was conducted. Results show that workplace bullying is significantly related to psychological risk. In addition, learning and training may act as moderator to moderate the psychological risk due to workplace bullying.**

Index Terms—**Workplace bullying, learning, training, harrasment.**

I. INTRODUCTION

Workplace bullying acts as an organizational cancer, eventually killing the entire firm. [1]

Appelbaum *et al*. [2] in their study highlighted workplace bullying as serious issue . Literature searches for research on workplace bullying reveal surprisingly little attention paid directly to the topic. In the business arena, anecdotal articles generally prevail especially related to workplace bullying. While in the social science literature, school bullying is by far the most dominant topic for report and research. This has been confirmed by our data searches. We searched with keyword of bullying and work place bullying in JSTOR, Science Direct and Emerald, PsycINFO databases and ABI/INFORM Global. We found during article search that major portion of bullying research relates to school bullying. Especially Adult bullying at work presents a less developed field with the most advanced work to be found (e.g. Leymann, [3]; Einarsen and Skogstad, [1]; Bjorkqvist *et al*. [4]). Mukhtar.U and Ramzan. S [5] in their study conducted in Pakistan identify that Bullying is 3 times as prevalent as illegal discrimination and at least 1,600 times as prevalent as workplace violence. WBI [6] identify that while only one employee in every 10,000 becomes a victim of workplace violence, one in six experiences bullying at work. Bullying is a little more common than sexual harassment. Despite to its frequency of occurrence, it is most neglected phenomenon in the realm of employment relations laws. International comparisons show incidence varying between countries, for example Sweden at 15% (Olweus, [7]), UK at 23% and Irish at 17% (O' Moore *et al*. [8]). Rayner & Hoel [9] highlights in a survey that 53% of the respondents have identified the workplace bullying with 78% witness to be happened with others. Mukhtar. U and Ramzan. S [5] highlight in survey of different sector of Pakistan prevalence rate of 69% of workplace bullying. Whereas Pinula & Zabala (as cited in Moore *et al*) [8] report 16 Percent of workplace bullying. Hence, considering the importance of workplace bullying and high frequency of its occurrence in the organization, the main aim of this study is that whether training and learning can reduce the workplace bullying or not .In order to find the answer of this question, this paper is constructed in such a way that the first section of this study comprise of literature review and hypotheses formulation. Second section will discuss the research methods followed by results and discussion. Last section will discuss the conclusion.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

This study conducted literature review in three stages for three different concept of workplace bullying and Psychological risk, learning as moderator of workplace bullying and Training intervention.

Workplace bullying is counterproductive in organizations. In addition to our study Mukhtar. U and Ramzan. S [5] that find quitting the jobs as most frequent behavior, we searched with keyword of bullying and its psychological risk in JSTOR, Science Direct and Emerald, PsycINFO databases and ABI/INFORM Global without any date brackets. As results of finding few Researchers (e.g., Einarsen *et al*. [1]; Rayner and Hoel [9]) indicate that the phenomenon of workplace bullying is marked by the characteristic features of frequency, intensity, duration, and power disparity , with the power disparity being between the individual performing the bullying actions and the person to whom the actions are directed.

Einarsen *et al*. [1] define workplace bullying as the repeated actions and practices that are directed to one or more workers, which are unwanted by the victim, which may be done deliberately or unconsciously, but clearly cause humiliation, offence and distress, and that may interfere with job performance and/or cause an unpleasant working environment.

However, following Research studies have identified various psychological risks to occupation and health of the employees (e.g., depression, cut off from peers, turnover,

heart diseases, quitting the jobs etc.):

Bryant and Buttigieg [10] find bullying directly correlated with low job satisfaction, high employee turnover, increased absenteeism, and decreased levels of organizational commitment.

Gary Namie [6] along with Zogby International, find interesting results that post-traumatic-stress-disorders' (PTSD) symptoms appeared indicating high levels of trauma for the victims. These findings were supported by study of Leymann [3].

Zapf's [11] study also identified that victims of workplace bullying displayed higher levels of anxiety and depression as well as lower levels of reported self-esteem and lead victims to leave an organization to find a job elsewhere.

Appelbaum *et al.* [2] suggest that ''employees might suffer from psychological effects, such as; impaired judgment, irritability, anxiety, anger, an inability to concentrate and memory loss''

Claybourn's research [12] indicates that employees portraying high tendencies for moral disengagement were more likely to report having been subjected to workplace harassment. Moral disengagement in turn affected job satisfaction and lead employees to ''justifying harming others more readily, which in turn lead to increased levels of harassment''.

Thus based on the above studies this study formulates following Hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: There is a positive and significant relationship between workplace bullying and Psychological risk.

As second stage of literature search in addition to find out the role of learning as mediator of workplace bullying , we searched with keyword of bullying and learning in JSTOR, Science Direct and Emerald, PsycINFO databases and ABI/INFORM Global, we find no earlier study that had discussed the learning intervention to reduce the psychological risk due to workplace bullying. However, Rayner and Hoel [9] discussed and finds that one can change the behaviors of one's own bullying through learning about bullying behaviors. Altman, B.A. [13]discussed the Novak's theory of learning and training. Novak[14] in a study sketches three requirements for meaningful learning: 1) pre-existing knowledge held by the learner that is related to the new knowledge; 2) the new information to be learned must be conceptually significant and relate to the pre-existing knowledge; 3) the learner must actively choose to connect the new knowledge with the pre-existing knowledge.

Sheehan and Jordan [15] in their study outline about the application of Senge's learning organization concepts can to reducing workplace bullying. Sheehan and Jordan also support the application of Argyris and Schon's concept of double loop learning to reduce the workplace bullying, with special focus on the attitudes and emotions that lead to the workplace bullying action .

Thompson [16] supports a training intervention related to workplace bullying by putting value on the learners' prior Knowledge

Hoel *et al* [17] conclude that the training seem to have some effect to reduce workplace bullying, although different interventions also may work better within different context.

Crawford [18] also provides a number of recommendations for the intervention of the structured training about workplace bullying

Literature search related to training identifies that a number of authors (e.g., Harvey *et al.* [19]; Meglich- Sespico *et al.* [20]; McKay *et al.* [21]; Hoel *et al.* [17]; Thompson. C [16]; Saunders *et al.* [22]) in their studies recommend training intervention in workplace bullying to reduce psychological risk.

Based on above literature review the proposed model (see Fig. 1) in this study assumes that learning and training about workplace bullying may act as moderator in Psychological risk reduction. Hence following hypotheses have been formulated:

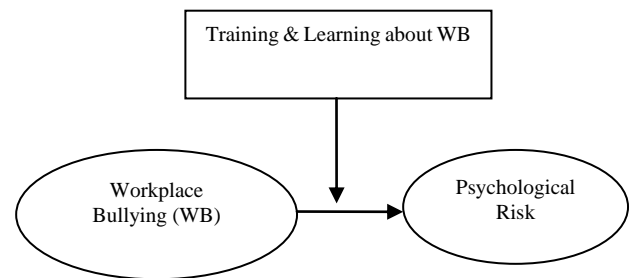Hypothesis 2: Training and learning about workplace bullying may reduce the Psychological risk.

Fig. 1. Conceptual framework.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Quantitative Research methods have been used in this study to test the both hypotheses. To test first hypotheses we simply used regression analysis to find the relationships between the variables. In second hypothesis, this study used the learning and training as moderator. A moderator is a variable that specifies conditions under which a given predictor is related to an outcome. The moderator explains 'when' a DV and IV are related. Moderation implied an interaction effect, where introducing a moderating variable changes the direction or magnitude of the relationship between two variables. A moderation effect could be (a) Enhancing, where increasing the moderator would increase the effect of the predictor (IV) on the outcome (DV); (b) Buffering, where increasing the moderator would decrease the effect of the predictor on the outcome; or (c) Antagonistic, where increasing the moderator would reverse the effect of the predictor on the outcome. Therefore, we tested moderation effect using the linear regression in SPSS. For this purpose we used dummy code categorical variables in creating the interaction effect.

Data Collection: Data were collected from the government sector institute of Pakistan during Dec 2014-April, 2015. Presumption of data collection was based on Altman, B. A [1] study in which he emphasized and conclude that prior learning about workplace bullying in some shape is necessary . For this purpose we asked the administration to help provide the record and official reach to the employees. To meet this presumption we filtered the employees by observing their understanding of the workplace bullying .Almost 65% of the workforce was not known about

the term workplace bullying, most of them were aware with harassment but couldn't distinguish the workplace bullying and harassment. Hence it was a kind of limitation too. About 35 % of them was near to understanding the term of workplace bullying. So we took them as sample to test their perception that learning and training may moderate the relationship between workplace bullying and psychological risks. Hence, as a result total of 300 respondents were asked to fill out the survey questionnaire. From these 300 respondents, 250 respondents returned the questionnaire. Profile of data depicts that 20% of these 250 were females and 80% were male, age ranges from 30-60 years. 65% were of grade -16 &17 officers, 20 % were G-19 and 10% were G-20 and 5% were G-21. Government Institute name has been kept confidential as part of terms of condition for data collection.

Measurement of IV and DV: Workplace Bullying as Dependent variable was measured by using Likert 5-scales asking them that " Humiliation is common in the organization," you often face backbiting from the colleague/Boss," your colleague keep your bad names, your colleagues yell at you , your colleague/boss physically abuse you. Psychological risks as independent variable was measured using likert 5-scales by asking the respondents that " You feel stress due to attitude of the colleagues, you don't want to work in this organization, you want to leave this job, sometime you feel like to cry due to attitude of colleagues, you feel dissatisfaction and happiness while coming from home.

IV. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Cronbach's Alpha test was conducted to test reliability of dependent and independent variable. Results indicate that Cronbach's Alpha test for Independent variables is 0.75 and Dependent variable is 0.80.

Later, regression analysis was conducted. Following Table I shows model summary of both hypotheses. Table I shows that Model 1 stating the significant and positive relationship between workplace bullying and psychological risk with Adjusted R square 0.709 and significance is less than 0.001.

Thus, Table I indicate the positive and significant relationship between workplace Bullying and psychological risks associated with it. Hence first hypotheses of the study has been accepted in Model 1.

TABLE I: MODEL SUMMARY

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.843[a]	0.71	0.709	1.33537
2	.856[b]	0.733	0.73	1.28549
a. Predictors: (Constant), PR				
b. Predictors: (Constant), PR, intervention				

Similarly Model 2 in above Table depict the significance of second hypotheses that learning and training moderate the relationship of workplace bullying and psychological risk

with Adjusted R Square 0.730 and significance level is less than 0.001 (Table II).

TABLE II: ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1083.682	1	1083.682	607.716	.000[a]
	Residual	442.234	248	1.783		
	Total	1525.916	249			
2	Regression	1117.755	2	558.877	338.206	.000[b]
	Residual	408.161	247	1.652		
	Total	1525.916	249			

a. Predictors: (Constant), PR

b. Predictors: (Constant), PR, intervention

Following coefficient table also support the above findings and show that hypotheses have been proved to be significant. (Table III).

TABLE III: COEFFICIENTS

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.875	0.393		7.31	0.000
	PR	0.567	0.023	0.843	24.652	0,000
2	(Constant)	0.617	0.625		0.987	0.325
	PR	0.527	0.024	0.783	22.104	0.000
	Moderator	0.234	0.051	0.161	4.541	0.000

a. Dependent Variable: WB

Summing up the results this study find significant relationship between workplace bullying and psychological risk .In addition learning and training act to moderate the relationship between workplace bullying and psychological risk hypotheses have been proved significant.

V. CONCLUSION

Workplace Bullying is gaining much attention now a days due to its psychological risk. This study aims to find out the relationship between workplace bullying and psychological risk and also tested the intervention of learning and training as moderator for psychological risk reduction. Findings show that workplace bullying is associated with psychological risk. Further, this study finds that learning and training about workplace bullying helps in reducing the psychological risks by reducing the workplace bullying incidents. Hence, this study may help the HR managers, Administrators and management to give considerable attention on this new phenomena and formulate strategies to control this in organizations. In addition, this study recommends trainings and learning about workplace bullying in organizations. Prior learning about workplace bullying may also help reducing psychological risks and bullying itself. This study also recommends that Asian Government or other Governments of under developed countries must take initiative like European and Australian countries to formulate the proper legislation to stop bullying at workplace.

REFERENCES

[1] S. Einarsen, B. I. Raknes, and S. B. Matthiesen, "Bullying and harassment at work and its relationship with work environment quality: An exploratory study," *European Work and Organizational Psychologist*, vol. 4, pp. 381-401, 1994

[2] S. H. Appelbaum, G. Semerjian, and K. Mohan, "Consequences and control of workplace bullying," *Industrial and Commercial Training*, vol. 44, no. 4, pp. 204-210, 2012.

[3] H. Leymann, "The content and development of bullying at work," *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, vol. 5, pp. 165-184, 1996.

[4] K. Bjorkqvist, K. Osterman, and M. Hjelt-Back, "Aggression among university employees," *Aggressive Behavior*, vol. 30, pp. 173-184, 1994.

[5] U. Mukhtar and S. Ramzan, "Pervasiveness of workplace bullying in Pakistan," *European Journal of Social Sciences*, vol. 38, no. 2, 2012.

[6] G. Namie and R. Namie, *The Bully-free Workplace: Stop Jerks, Weasels and Snakes from Killing Your Organization*, John Wiley & Sons, Hoboken, NJ, 2011.

[7] D. Olweus, *Bully/victim Problems Among Schoolchildren: Basic Facts and Effects of a School-Based Intervention Program*, 2005.

[8] M. O'Moore , J. Lynch, and N. Nic Daeid, "The rates and relative risks of workplace bullying in Ireland, a country of high economic growth," *International Journal of Management and Decision Making*, vol. 4, pp. 82-95, 2003.

[9] C. Rayner and H. Hoel, "A summary review of literature relating to workplace bullying," *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology*, vol. 7, pp. 181-91, 1997.

[10] M. Bryant and D. Buttigieg, "Poor bullying prevention and employee health: some implications," *International Journal of Workplace*, vol. 2 no. 1, pp. 48-62, 2009.

[11] D. Zapf, "Organizational, work group related and personal causes of mobbing/bullying at work," *International Journal of Manpower*, vol. 20, no. 1/2, pp. 70-85, 1999.

[12] M. Claybourn, "Relationships between moral disengagement, work characteristics and workplace harassment," *Journal of Business Ethics*, vol. 100, pp. 283-301, 2011.

[13] B. A. Altman, "Workplace bullying: Application of Novak's," *Learning Theory and Implications for Training, Employ Response Rights*, vol. 22, pp. 21-32, 2010.

[14] J. D. Novak, *Learning, Creating, and Using Knowledge: Concept MAPSTM as Facilitative Tools in Schools and Corporations*, Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1998.

[15] M. J. Sheehan and P. J. Jordan, "Bullying, emotions and the learning organization," *International Perspectives in Research*.

[16] C. Thompson, *Part I: Busting 101: Workplace Bullying Between Men, The Diversity Factor*, vol. 1, no. 12, pp. 22-25, 2003a.

[17] H. Hoel, S. I. Giga, and B. Faragher. (2006). Destructive interpersonal conflict in the workplace: The effectiveness of management interventions. [Online]. Available: www.bohrf.org.uk/content/comprojs.html#conflict

[18] N. Crawford, *Organisational Responses to Workplace Bullying, Building a Culture of Respect: Managing Bullying at Work*, London: Taylor & Francis, pp. 21-31, 2001.

[19] M. G. Harvey, J. T. Heames, R. G. Richey, and N. Leonard, "Bullying from the playground to the boardroom," *Journal of Leadership and Organizational Studies*, vol.12, no. 4, pp.1-11, 2006.

[20] P. Meglich-Sespico, R. H. Faley, and D. E. Knapp, "Relief and redress for targets of workplace bullying," *Employee Responsibilities and Rights Journal*, vol. 19, no. 1, pp. 31-43, 2007.

[21] R. McKay, D. H. Arnold, J. Fratzl, and R. Thomas, "Workplace bullying in academia: A Canadian study," *Employee Responsibilities and Rights Journal*, vol. 20, no. 2, pp. 77-100, 2008.

[22] P. Saunders, A. Huynh, and J. Goodman-Delahunty, "Defining workplace bullying behavior professional lay definitions of workplace bullying," *International Journal of Law and Psychiatry*, vol. 30, no. 4–5, pp. 340, 2008.

Uzma Mukhtar is currently working as an assistant professor in the Department of Commerce University of Balochistan, Pakistan. She completed her PhD from Asian Institute of Technology, Thailand. Her specialization is in HRM and organizational behavior. Her area of interest and earlier research covered topics of organizational conflict, organizational effectiveness, HRM practices, workplace bullying , export promotion zones, educational administration. She has experience of working in diversified work environment.