MECHANISM BETWEEN ETHICAL LEADERSHIP AND WORKPLACE BULLYING: MEDIATING ROLE OF RESILIENCE AND MODERATING ROLE OF ISLAMIC WORK ETHICS

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Abstract:*The purpose of this study is to examine the mediating role of resilience and moderating role of Islamic work ethics between ethical leadership and workplace bullying. The study collected data from 284 nurses of both public and private sector hospitals through a questionnaire-based survey. Hypotheses of the study were examined through structural equation modeling using AMOS and the results revealed a negative impact of ethical leader on bullying. In addition, resilience was noted as explanatory variable and Islamic work ethics was noted to weaken the association between ethical leader and bullying. The findings of the study suggest management to work on supervisor's ethical leadership style and Islamic work ethics of the nurses to reduce workplace bullying in healthcare sector. This study is unique as Islamic work ethics has not previously been studied in this perspective.*

Keywords*: Islamic Work Ethics, Ethical Leadership, Bullying, Resilience*

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Introduction

Workplace bullying (WB from here to onward), sometimes called workplace harassment or emotional abuse comprised of rude, threatening, aggressive or insulting behaviors that makes others feel disgraced, affronted or chastened (D'Cruz, 2015; Islam et al., 2019a). Bullying has become the major challenge for all the organizations across the globe and costs around17-36 million US dollars. However, the issue is more prominent in case of healthcare. Literature in the field of healthcare has reported that 33% nurses in Canada, 80% in UK and 70% in North America have reported of being bullied (Islam et al., 2019a). However, the situation is not different in Pakistan (Ali et al., 2019).

Bullying negatively impact on the employees' work-related outcomes (Ali et al., 2019). More specifically, victims of mistreatment and WB are less likely to satisfied with their job, have low commitment towards their organization, perform low, have more work-related stress, and have greater turnover intention (D'Cruz&Noronha, 2018; D'Cruz, 2015), these can negatively impact hospital's image and overall performance. Therefore, policymakers and management need to focus more towards WB. According to Islam et al., (2020a) leaders have ability to influence their subordinate's behaviors which ultimately contribute organizational performance. Kaufman et al., (2014) and Islam et al., (2013) added that leaders are responsible for a strong organizational culture which ultimately influence its employees work-related behaviors (i.e. WB), however, the mechanism between the same need further investigation (Islam et al., 2019a). To this backdrop, this study proposed that leaders by demonstrating

ethical values (i.e. ethical leader) can control WB. Ethical leader (EL from now to onward) demonstrate ethical values and behaviors through equity, justice, trust, reinforcement, communication and participation in decision-making and considered as a role model by their subordinates (Brown et al., 2010). As EL treat all its subordinates with honesty and equity, thereby discourage mistreatment and WB.Literature on the mechanism between EL and WB are scant (Ahmad et al., 2020; Islam et al., 2019a), therefore, this study considered resilience as a mediating variable and Islamic work ethics (IWE from here to onward) as a moderating variable.

Resilience is "an individual's ability to rebound from disruptive challenges with good outcomes" (D'Cruz& Noronha, 2018, p.140). It can be inferred that resilience is important to reduce negative work-related behaviors (i.e. bullying in this study). Individuals need various resources at their workplace to get flourish, and when found show resilience (Ungar, 2013). In addition, social support, emotion-focused and problem-focused coping further enhance resilience (Polk, 1997). Therefore, this study argues that ethical leaders by providing resources to their subordinates can enhance their resilience and individuals with resilience likely to discourage bullying. Further, the concept of IWE is derived from the teachings and practices of Islam, that discourage negative behaviors (i.e. WB) and promote positive behaviors at the workplace (Islam et al., 2020b). Therefore, it is likely that individuals with IWE may strengthen the negative association (Islam et al., 2020a, b) between EL and WB.

This study contributes to the existing literature in a number of ways. First, it

highlights the importance of resilience in reducing negative workplace behaviors. Second, this study is an attempt to examine the moderating role of IWE on the association between EL and WB and finally, this study contributes to social learning theory (SLT) that individuals learn by observing their managers and colleagues at the workplace and behave accordingly.

Hypotheses Development

Literature is clear about the deleterious consequences of WB, coping this issue researchers have suggested management strengthening leadership. In line with social learning perspective, this study argues that, followers at the workplace learn through observing their managers. Ethical leaders demonstrate moral values, ethical standards, integrity and treat their subordinates fairly (Brown et al., 2005), perceiving same followers consider them honest and trustworthy. According to Islam et al., (2019a), EL behave ethically in their work as well as personal life. As EL promote and encourage fair treatment, thereby considered as role model by their followers. According to Bandura (1977), individuals learn new attitudes, behaviors and values by observing their role models (ethical leaders). Baillien et al., (2009) commented that, encouraging or discouraging bullying entirely depends upon leader's style, and in case of ethical leaders bullying is discouraged as it is follower centric leadership. Given that, in a recent study Islam et al., (2019a) conducted a study on employees of healthcare sector in Pakistan and note EL discouraging bullying. They further suggested that, in Pakistan many of the nurses didn't talk about bullying as it is a male dominant country, therefore, there is still need to

understand this association. Based on these arguments, this study hypothesized:
H1: EL negatively influence WB.

Resilience is least studied variable in the field of leadership and is defined as "the capability of individuals to cope successfully in the face of significant change, adversity, or risk. This capability changes over time and is enhanced by protective factors in the individual and environment (Stewart et al., 1997, p. 22)". According to Rutter (1987), resilience allows an individual to plan their environment so that negative consequences may be reduced. Thus, it is positive psychological capital that allow an individual to cope with the setback, hardships and conflicts and behave positively (Luthans et al., 2007). According to Luthans et al., (2007) resilient people have greater ability to behave positively even in difficult situations. Literature has identified its positive association with satisfaction, citizenship behavior and commitment, and negative association with deviant behavior and turnover intention. However, its impact on WB needs to be examine. Resilient people have positive energy and attitude towards difficult situations, thereby behave positively (i.e. reduced WB here). This study argues that EL demonstrate ethical values, are trustworthy and discourage negative workplace behaviors, which also are the basis of resilience. Therefore, it can be inferred that EL further enhance resilience which trigger the positive behaviors and reduce the negative workplace behaviors. Based on these arguments, this study hypothesized:
H2: Resilience mediates the association between EL and WB.

The concept IWE was introduced by Ali (1988), it means following the teachings and practices of Quran and Prophet (SAW). Islam is the second largest religion of the world that comprised of 22.5% of the world's population (Javed et al., 2019). There are two basic domains of ethics in Islam i.e. towards ALLAH almighty and towards humans. According to Ali and Al-Owaihan, (2008), IWE motivate individuals to behave positively with their colleagues and management at the workplace (Islam et al., 2020b). Therefore, this study argues that individuals with IWE moderate the negative association between EL and WB.

IWE is individual's moral obligation to behave ethically with other colleagues and dedication with work, even if someone create hurdles in work. Islam always motivate and teach to tolerate others instead of taking revenge (Javed et al., 2019). Particular to organizations, individuals have to work with variety of colleagues and sometimes get annoyed, in this case individuals with high IWE are supposed to work with patience, tolerate and discourage revenge (Murtaza et al., 2016). Individual with IWE more likely to exhibit positive workplace behaviors instead of negative thereby discourage bullying. Based on these arguments, it is hypothesized:

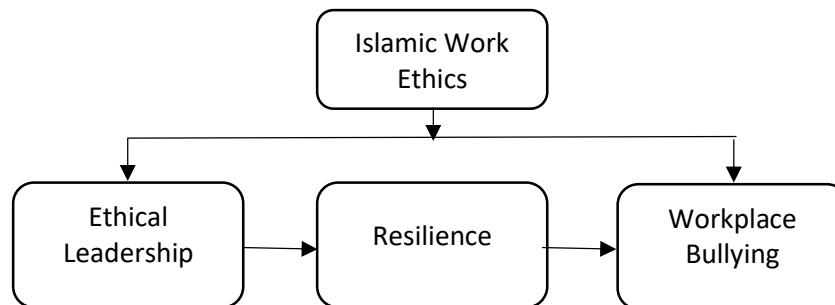H3: IWE moderates the negative association between EL and WB.

Figure 1: Conceptual Model

Methods

The data for this study was collected from the nurses working in the hospitals of Punjab. Punjab is the largest province of Pakistan and people from all other provinces work here. The study used a questionnaire-based survey method to distribute 350 questionnaires among nurses between June-August 2019, from which, only 284 were used in the final analysis. One of the reasons for less responses is that Pakistani healthcare sector has shortage of nurses and doctor/nurse ratio in the country is 1:5, so collecting data from them is not an easy task. Nurses were approached on convenience basis and before collecting data they were well informed about the purpose of this study (Islam & Irfan, 2020c).

Measures

The study adapted scales and responses were collected on a 5-point Likert scale. A 10-item scale of Brown et al., (2005) was used to examine ethical leader with a sample item, "My manager sets an example of how to do things the right way in terms of ethics".

Luthans et al's (2007) three-item scale of resilience was used with a sample item, "When I have a setback at work, I easily recover from it, and move on". Einarsen et al's (2009), seven-item scale of bullying was used with a sample item, "Being ignored or excluded from work related social gatherings". Finally, IWE was measured with a four-item scale of Islam et al., (2020b) with the sample item, "Justice and generosity in the workplace are necessary conditions for society's welfare".

Results and Discussion

Hypotheses of the study were tested using structural equation modeling in AMOS. First, assumptions were ensured, where data regarding normality, missing values, outliers, and reliability was examined (Ahmad & Islam, 2019). In addition, model of this study was supported by social learning theory and the study used "$\chi^2/df \leq 3.0$, TLI $\geq$ 0.90, CFI $\geq$ 0.90, RMSEA $\leq$ 0.08" indices for the values of model fit (Islam et al., 2019b, d). Moreover,

following the standard values of Hair et al., (2010) the study examined reliability (i.e. $\geq$ 0.70), composite reliability (i.e. $\geq$ 0.60) and average variance extracted (i.e. $\geq$ 0.50).

While examining confirmatory factor analysis the values of model fit were found within the standard range i.e. $\chi^2/df = 2.59$, TLI = 0.92, CFI = 0.94, RMSEA = 0.07, and the values of factor loading were well above 0.50. The than examined Cronbach alpha, AVE and CR values and all were found to be well above the standard values (see Table 1). Regarding correlation, EL was noted to positively relate with resilience (r=0.43, P<0.01) and IWE (r=0.21, P<0.01), whereas negatively relate to WB (r=-0.37, P<0.01). Further a negative correlation between resilience and WB was identified (r=-0.35, P<0.01). The nurses were agreed about EL, IWE and resilience (Mean = 3.82, 4.11 & 4.01), however, were neutral regarding bullying (Mean = 3.01).

Table 1: Correlation, Reliability and Descriptive analysis

variables	1	2	3	4	Mean	SD	AVE	CR
1-EL	(0.77)				3.82	0.58	0.62	0.78
2- Resilience	0.43**	(0.85)			4.01	0.67	0.63	0.81
3- WB	-0.37**	-0.35**	(0.76)		3.01	0.69	0.59	0.76
4- IWE	0.21**	0.19*	-0.07	(0.81)	4.11	0.48	0.68	0.73

"Note: EL = ethical leader, WB = workplace bullying, IWE = Islamic work ethics, AVE = average variance extracted, CR = composite reliability, () = Cronbach Alpha, ** P < 0.01, * P < 0.05"

We examined the measurement model and the values of fit were noted well above the standard values i.e. $\chi^2/df = 2.88$, TLI = 0.89, CFI = 0.91, RMSEA = 0.06. The values generated from measurement model are given in Figure 2. The study noted that EL negatively impact WB (β=-.35, P<0.01), which support H1 of the study. Mediating hypothesis was examined using direct and indirect paths

where indirect path was examined by multiplying beta coefficients of EL-Resilience (which is 0.34) and Resilience-WB (which is -0.28). Hence, Indirect effect of EL on WB through resilience was noted as 0.10, P<0.05 with 18% of variance (H2 was accepted). The moderating role of IWE was examined through an interactional term between independent and moderating variables (i.e. EL×IWE) and its

impact on bullying was noted as significant (β=-.19, P<0.01), which means that IWE

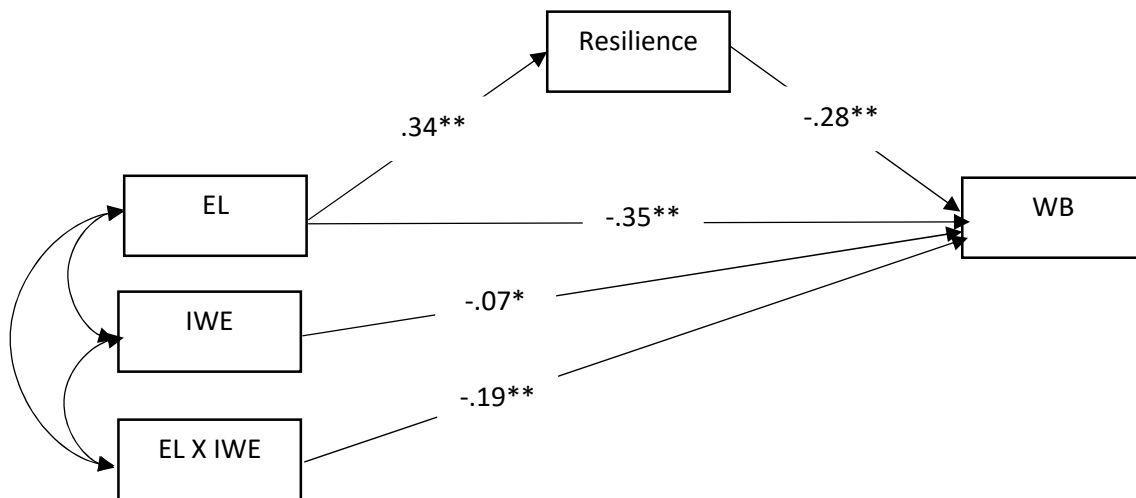trigger the negative association between EL and WB (see Figure 3, H3 was accepted).

Figure 2: Structural Model

Discussion and Implications

This study attempted to examine the moderating effect of IWE and mediating effect of resilience between EL and WB. The results identified that EL discourage bullying at the workplace. This finding is not new a many of the past researchers have also claimed about the association between leadership and bullying. Particular to the association between EL and WB the findings are in line with the findings of Islam et al., (2019a) who noted that nurses when perceive their leaders/supervisors ethical less likely to engage in WB. Second, the study found resilience as a mediating variable between EL and WB. Literature about the mediating role of resilience is scant.

D'Cruz, and Noronha, (2018) commented that individuals with the ability to rebound themselves always positively paid-off to their organization as such individuals discourage negative workplace attitudes and behaviors. According to Ungar (2013) resilience can be enhanced by providing resources that are necessary to perform tasks and behaving ethically. When individuals at the workplace would see their leaders and colleagues behaving ethically, would exhibit more resilience and behave the same with their colleagues (i.e. reduce bullying). This finding can further be backed by social learning theory that "individuals not only learn from the behaviors of their seniors but also behave the same".
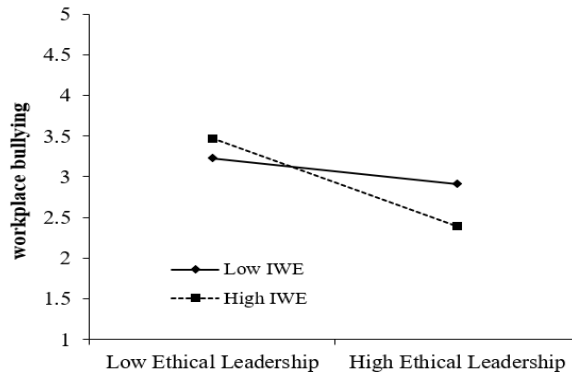
Figure 3: Slope of moderation

Finally, the study noted IWE strengthening the negative association between EL and WB. This is perhaps the first attempt to examine the moderating role of IWE between EL and WB. In a recent study Javed et al., (2019) examined the moderating role of IWE between abusive supervision and workplace deviant behavior and concluded that, individuals with IWE are less likely to deviate from their work. Similarly, Islam et al., (2020a) noted IWE buffering the negative effect of abusive supervision on knowledge sharing. This is because Islam always teach not to take revenge even with those who are not good with you. On similar grounds, this study also suggest management and adds to the existing literature on IWE that, individuals with IWE are more likely to discourage bullying at the workplace.

Limitation and future direction

Data for this study was collected from a single province of a developing country. As WB is the issue of developed countries as well, therefore, future researchers need to conduct the same in developed countries and in various sectors so that results may be generalized. This study considers resilience from positive organizational psychology as the mediating variable, future studies need to consider compassion, hope and other variables to further explore this mechanism. Finally, studies on IWE are scant, therefore these needs further generalization.

Conclusion:

Workplace bullying has become a major challenge for the organizations across the globe as it relates to the long-term negative workplace outcomes. Past studies have identified leadership as a predictor of reducing workplace bullying, however, studies on the mechanism between the same are scant. Therefore, drawing from social learning theory, this study was an attempt to understand how ethical leaders (through their moral values) help nurses to reduce workplace bullying. The study further, respond to future calls and attempted resilience as mediating, while Islamic work ethics as moderating mechanism between ethical leadership and bullying. This purpose was fulfilled by collecting data from nurses working in the hospitals of Punjab. The collected data was analyzed through structural equation modeling. The results revealed that employee when perceive their leaders as ethical, demonstrate less bullying, which is further

explained by resilience. Finally, individuals with high Islamic values weaken the said association. This study suggest management to work on the ethical style of the leaders to reduce health sector's workplace bullying.

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