



Role of Workplace Bullying in Self-determination Needs among University Teachers

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HIGHLIGHTS

- Personal bullying significantly negatively correlated with autonomy, competence, and overall self-determination needs except for relatedness.
- Work-related bullying, physical intimidation, and overall workplace bullying are significantly negatively correlated with autonomy, competence, relatedness, and overall self-determination needs.
- Workplace bullying emerged as a significant predictor of self-determination needs, which explains 8.0. per cent of the total variance in explaining self-determination needs.

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ABSTRACT

Workplace bullying is a pervasive issue that significantly affects the professional performance of university teachers. This research explores the relationship between workplace bullying and the fulfilment of self-determination needs specifically autonomy, competence, and relatedness among university faculty. The study's sample comprised 333 faculty members from the University of Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, India. Data were collected during 2023 using the Negative Act Questionnaire-Revised (NAQ-R) to assess workplace bullying and the Intrinsic Need Satisfaction Scale (INS) to measure self-determination needs. Before analysis, the basic assumptions of statistical methods were verified. The data were then analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson's product-moment correlation, and simple linear regression (SLR) through SPSS. The findings revealed a significant negative correlation between workplace bullying and the satisfaction of self-determination needs at a 0.001 significance level. Additionally, workplace bullying was identified as a significant predictor, accounting for an 8 per cent variance in self-determination needs. In conclusion, workplace bullying undermines intrinsic motivational needs-autonomy, competence, and relatedness. The study also discusses limitations and suggests future directions to improve the work environment.

INTRODUCTION

Workplace bullying is defined as repeated, health-harming mistreatment by one or more persons (e.g., colleagues, or administrators) through verbal abuse, or offensive behaviors (Einarsen et al., 2011). In the teaching profession, bullying can take many forms, including undermining a teacher's authority, spreading rumors, and isolating them from colleagues (Riley et al., 2010).

Workplace bullying has been shown to have profound impacts on employees' mental and physical health, leading to stress, anxiety, depression, and even post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Einarsen et al., 2011). Moreover, the presence of bullying in the workplace often correlates with lower job satisfaction, reduced organizational commitment, and higher turnover intentions (Hoel et al., 2010). Workplace bullying or bullying or cyberbullying has become a significant concern across various professional settings,

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with teachers due to the unique pressures of the educational environment (Vishwakarma et al., 2024).

From the perspective of SDT, workplace bullying can be understood as a threat to the satisfaction of the basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Autonomy, the need to feel in control of one's actions and decisions, is often undermined in bullying situations where individuals may feel powerless or coerced. Competence, the need to feel effective in one's activities, is compromised when bullying leads to public humiliation or undermines an individual's confidence in their abilities. Finally, relatedness, the need to feel connected to others, is damaged when bullying creates a hostile or isolating work environment (Van den Broeck et al., 2016). The long-term consequences of workplace bullying on teachers' self-determination needs can be profound. Teachers who experience prolonged bullying may develop chronic stress, anxiety, and depression, which can lead to increased absenteeism and, in some cases, the decision to leave the profession altogether (MacIntosh, 2005). This affects the individual teacher and has broader implications for the school, including a loss of experienced educators, reduced staff morale, and a negative impact on student learning outcomes (Glambek et al., 2015). Additionally, when teachers' self-determination needs are consistently thwarted, it can lead to a culture of fear and mistrust within the school. Such an environment can stifle innovation, reduce collaboration, and ultimately undermine the school's mission to provide high-quality education (Collie et al., 2016).

This paper examines the role of workplace bullying in influencing the self-determination needs of teachers, which include autonomy, competence, and relatedness, as outlined by Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Understanding this relationship is crucial for addressing well-being and motivation, ultimately impacting the quality of education. Research indicates that teachers are at a heightened risk of experiencing workplace bullying due to factors such as hierarchical organizational structures, high levels of stress, and the competitive nature of some educational environments (Devine & Harney, 2016). The impact of such bullying can be profound, affecting not only the targeted individuals but also the broader academic community by fostering a toxic work environment (De Wet, 2010).

METHODOLOGY

The study involved 333 university teachers, consisting of 60.4 per cent males ($n = 201$) and 39.6 per cent females ($n = 132$). It focused on two key variables: workplace bullying (predictor variable) and self-determination needs (criterion variable). Data were collected using a self-prepared survey with demographic questions and a validated questionnaire. A random sample was selected from the Varanasi district, taking into account factors like gender, family type, institution area, and institution levels. The study used the

22-item Negative Act Questionnaire (NAQ) by Einarsen and Raknes (1997) to measure workplace bullying across three dimensions: personal bullying (7 items), work-related bullying (12 items), and physical intimidation (3 items). Responses were rated on a five-point Likert scale. The NAQ showed strong reliability in the study, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from 0.865 to 0.867. The study measured self-determination needs using the 21-item Intrinsic Need Satisfaction Scale, which assesses autonomy (7 items), competence (6 items), and relatedness (8 items). Responses were given on a five-point Likert scale, with 9 items reverse-coded. The scale demonstrated acceptable reliability, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from 0.683 to 0.686.

The study explored the relationship between workplace bullying and self-determination among university teachers. To ensure accurate responses, informed consent was obtained, and clear instructions were provided. Participants could withdraw at any time and complete the questionnaire at their convenience. Anonymity was guaranteed, and data were used solely for research. The responses were scored according to the manual and analyzed statistically.

The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson's product-moment correlation, and simple linear regression (SLR) through SPSS. Before conducting these analyses, the basic assumptions were checked: a linear relationship between the predictor (workplace bullying) and the criterion (self-determination), absence of extreme outliers to prevent distortion of results, and independence of observations to ensure responses were not correlated. The normality of residuals was verified to ensure the errors followed a normal distribution, while homoscedasticity confirmed that the variance of residuals remained consistent across levels of the independent variable. Once these assumptions were met, descriptive statistics provided an overview of the data, Pearson's correlation measured the strength and direction of the relationship between workplace bullying and self-determination, and SLR was used to predict the impact of workplace bullying on self-determination needs.

RESULTS

Preliminary data analysis: check the assumptions of simple linear regression

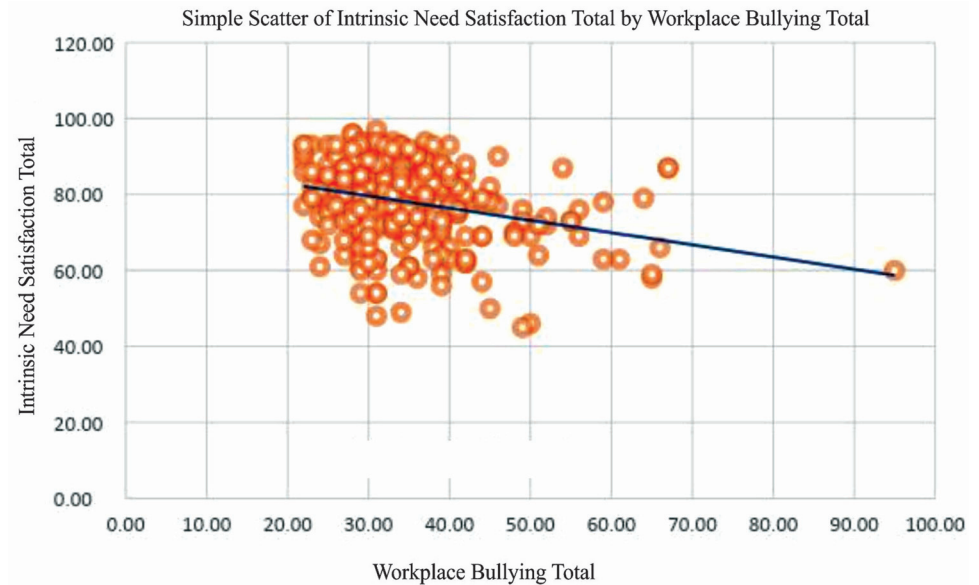
Before analyzing a simple linear regression model, verifying that its assumptions are met is important to ensure the data's suitability. This graph presents the linearity between workplace bullying and intrinsic need satisfaction, clearly showing the negative relationship. It is allowed to check other basic assumptions of simple linear regression (Table 1 and Figure 1).

We checked the Linearity assumption before we conducted our regression analysis, but now we need to check the remaining assumptions of simple linear regression.

Table 1. The residual statistics of the simple linear regression

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Predicted Value	58.7140	82.1578	78.0601	2.82824	333
Residuals	-31.26750	19.29386	.00000	9.58650	333
Std. Predicted Value	-6.840	1.449	.000	1.000	333
Std. Residual	-3.257	2.010	.000	.998	333

Figure 1. Linearity between variables

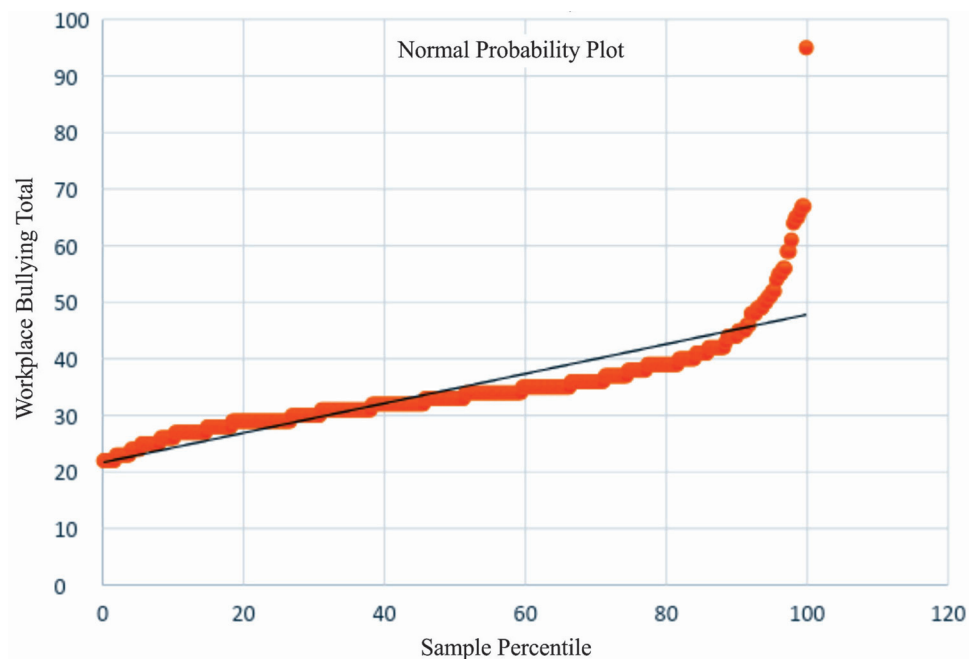


Since extreme outliers might affect regression analysis, we want to ensure that our data set is free of them. Examining the Minimum and Maximum columns of the Standard Residual row in the Residuals Statistics table can help us do this. An outlier is often defined as a data point having a standardized residual more extreme than ± 3.29 . The data set does not contain any severe outliers, as indicated by the Table 2 maximum value of 2.010 and minimum value of -3.257.

Table 2. The independence of observations of the simple linear regression

Model	R	R Square	Model Summary		
			Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.283	.080	.077	9.60097	1.904

Figure 2. Presentation of data normality through P-P plot



Check the value of the Durbin-Watson statistic in the Model Summary table to determine whether your data satisfies the assumption of independence of observations. Values between 1.5 and 2.5 are normally considered to meet this assumption. Table value of 1.964 falls well within this range.

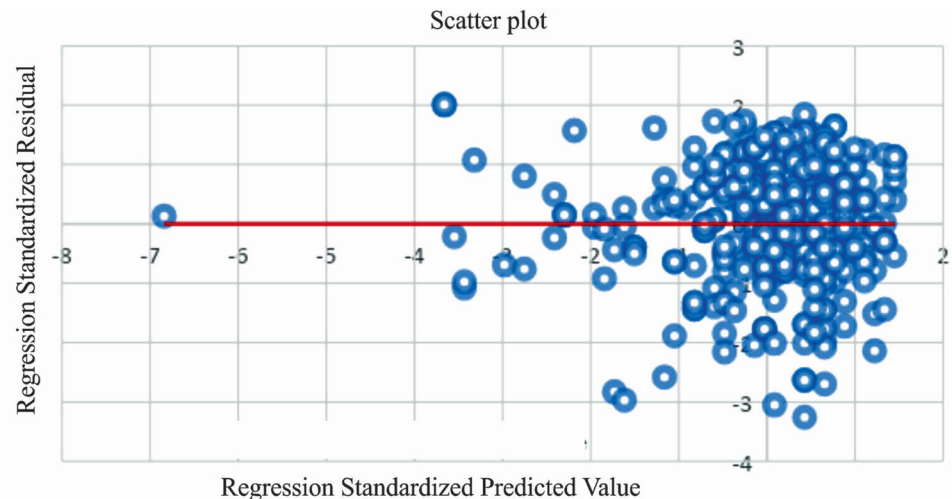
Normality

The Normal Probability plot may be used to test the normality assumption in simple linear regression. This assumption is met if the dots on your probability plot are on, or close to, the diagonal line, as in our example in Figure 2.

Homoscedasticity

The above Figure 3 shows that data is not homoscedasticity which means data is heteroscedasticity. It's also clear by the

Figure 3. Presentation of homoscedasticity through a scatterplot



Breusch-Pagan test for heteroscedasticity where a significant value was found .013 which is less than 0.05 concluding that data is heteroscedasticity. The data violate the assumption of homoscedasticity, but all other assumption is not violated so further analysis can be done.

Final data analysis

The results of the correlational analysis of self-determination and all its dimensions with well-being (dimensions and overall) are presented in the following in Table 3.

Results presented in Table 3 reveal that personal bullying was found significantly negatively associated with autonomy ($r = -.260$, $p < 0.01$), competence ($r = -.261$, $p < 0.01$), and overall intrinsic need satisfaction ($r = -.246$, $p < 0.01$). Work-related bullying was also found to be significantly negatively correlated with autonomy ($r = -.235$, $p < 0.01$), competence ($r = -.236$, $p < 0.01$), relatedness ($r = -.123$, $p < 0.05$), and overall intrinsic need satisfaction ($r = -.256$, $p < 0.01$). Physical intimidation behavior was also found to be significantly negatively correlated with autonomy ($r = -.214$, $p < 0.01$), competence ($r = -.165$, $p < 0.01$), relatedness ($r = -.125$, $p < 0.05$), and overall intrinsic need satisfaction ($r = -.216$, $p < 0.01$). Workplace bullying total was also found to be significantly negatively correlated with autonomy ($r = -.279$, $p < 0.01$), competence ($r = -.272$, $p < 0.01$), relatedness ($r = -.125$, $p < 0.05$), and overall intrinsic need satisfaction ($r = -.283$, $p < 0.01$).

Table 4 shows that the independent variable of workplace bullying significantly predicts self-determination needs ($R = .283$, $R^2 = .080$, $p < .001$) negatively. Looking at the standardized β (Beta) values, the workplace bullying of teachers meaningfully predicts self-determination at $\beta = -.321$, $P < .001$ level. The workplace bullying variable predicts that self-determination is 8.0 per cent significantly.

DISCUSSION

This correlational study investigated the relationship between workplace bullying and self-determination, verified by bivariate correlation and simple linear regression. Primarily, item analysis was done to measure the internal consistency of scale items in the current sample. For this purpose, a reliability test was conducted to find out that the Cronbach alpha value is calculated for both scales. The workplace bullying scale found a 0.867 Cronbach alpha value on 22 items which indicates good reliability while the intrinsic need satisfaction scale found a 0.686 Cronbach alpha value on 21 items which indicates questionable reliability or might be acceptable in some cases (George & Mallery, 2003).

This correlational study explored the relationship between workplace bullying and self-determination, using bivariate correlation and simple linear regression analyses. To ensure the reliability of the measurement tools, a reliability test was conducted. The Cronbach's alpha for the Workplace Bullying Scale was 0.867

Table 3. Summary of the result of Correlation coefficients of workplace bullying and self-determination need (dimensions and overall)

	Autonomy	Competence	Relatedness	Total
Personal Bullying	-.260**	-.261**	-.076	-.246**
Work-related Bullying	-.235**	-.236**	-.123*	-.256**
Physical Intimidation Behaviour	-.214**	-.165**	-.125*	-.216**
Workplace Bullying Total	-.279**	-.272**	-.125*	-.283**

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed); *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Table 4. The simple regression model between workplace bullying and self-determination

The Independent Variable	B	Standard Error	β	T	P	F	R	R^2
Workplace Bullying	-.321	.060	-.283	-5.367	.000	28.810	.283	.080*

The dependent variable: Emotional Intelligence * $p < .001$

across 22 items, indicating good reliability. The Intrinsic Need Satisfaction Scale, yielded a Cronbach's alpha of 0.686 across 21 items, suggesting questionable reliability, though this may be acceptable in some contexts (George & Mallery, 2003).

The study's findings revealed that the first dimension of workplace bullying, personal bullying, was significantly negatively associated with autonomy, competence, and overall intrinsic need satisfaction except for relatedness. This suggests that relatedness may be less affected by personal bullying, warranting further investigation. A loss of autonomy can reduce intrinsic motivation and lead to burnout (Nielsen & Einarsen, 2012). Similarly, the second dimension, work-related bullying, and the third dimension, physical intimidation, were both found to have significant negative correlations with autonomy, competence, relatedness, and overall intrinsic need satisfaction. Overall, workplace bullying was significantly negatively correlated with all aspects of self-determination needs.

Workplace bullying has a profound impact on employees' psychological well-being by thwarting their self-determination needs (Deci & Ryan, 2000). When these psychological needs are unmet, it can result in decreased motivation and well-being. Research indicates that bullying behaviors, such as unjust criticism or excessive monitoring, directly impede an employee's autonomy (Baillien et al., 2011), while public humiliation or unwarranted criticism undermines their sense of competence (Skarlicki et al., 2016). Moreover, bullying damages the need for relatedness by fostering a hostile work environment, leading to social isolation and strained relationships with colleagues (Einarsen et al., 2011).

Simple regression analysis confirmed that workplace bullying significantly predicts diminished self-determination needs. In essence, increased workplace bullying leads to a significant decrease in self-determination. This finding aligns with previous research showing that bullying often strips individuals of their decision-making power, reducing job satisfaction and motivation (Van den Broeck et al., 2016). The study contributes to the existing literature by empirically supporting the application of Self-Determination Theory (SDT) in the context of workplace bullying. Understanding how bullying undermines self-determination can help develop interventions to reduce bullying behaviors and mitigate their impact on employees. For example, organizations and policymakers can focus on creating work environments that support psychological needs, which may buffer against the negative impacts of bullying (Gagné & Deci, 2005; Gupta et al., 2023). Additionally, effective skill development training programs can enhance motivation and self-efficacy (Arunkumar et al., 2021).

CONCLUSION

Workplace bullying directly undermines the basic psychological needs outlined by self-determination theory, leading to decreased motivation, well-being, and job satisfaction. Addressing bullying in the workplace is essential for fostering an environment where employees' self-determination needs are met, ultimately leading to better individual and organizational outcomes. Bullying and workplace bullying is a critical issue that not only affects individual employees but also the overall health of organizations. By applying the self-determination theory, this study sheds light

on the psychological mechanisms through which bullying exerts its harmful effects. Measurement challenges, contextual factors, causal ambiguity, and longitudinal research gaps are limitations and challenges for future researchers. Future research should continue to explore these relationships and test interventions designed to protect employees' psychological needs in the workplace.

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