

# An Investigation into the Relationship Among Employee Voice, Workplace Bullying and Organizational Commitment

Karim Khan<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Nazim Ali<sup>2</sup>, Dr. Shabir Ahmad<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Institute of Management Studies, University of Peshawar, Pakistan.*

[Karim.aftauh@gmail.com](mailto:Karim.aftauh@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup>*Associate Professor, Department of Commerce and Management Sciences, University of Malakand, Pakistan.*

<sup>3</sup>*Assistant Professor, Department of Commerce and Management Sciences, University of Malakand, Pakistan.*

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**Abstract:** The main objective of this research was to investigate the relationship of employee voice with workplace bullying and organizational commitment. Data were collected from two hundred and seventy (270) faculty members of private and public sector universities of KP, Pakistan. Time tested questionnaires were used to collect data from the respected faculty. Correlation and regression were used to analyze the collected data. The results showed a significant positive relationship between employee voice and workplace bullying ( $r=0.40$ ,  $p<.01$ ) and employee voice and organizational commitment ( $r=0.19$ ,  $p<.01$ ). The management of universities should focus on employee voice and workplace bullying to enhance the employees' commitment.

**Key words:** Employee Voice; Workplace Bullying; Commitment; Faculty; Universities; Pakistan.

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## Introduction

Last two decades observed a vast interest from management researchers in employee voice behaviors due to its strong effect on organization's performance (Duan, Li, Xu, & Wu, 2017). For improved performance, organization needs a variety of useful information's sources. A key source of such useful information rests in the employees' voices (Koyuncu, Burke, Fixenbaum, & Tekin, 2013). Employee voice provides better approach for organizational effectiveness as it identifies issues in organization's work procedures and finds solution for them. Therefore, researcher has been giving devoted attention to understanding employees' voice behaviors because it plays crucial role in organization's performance and development (Greenberg & Edwards, 2009).

In the present globalization era, almost all organizations of the world face the prevailing and uncontrollable problem of workplace bullying (Hutchinson, Wilkes, Jackson, & Vickers, 2010). Researcher has been acknowledged bullying's persistent nature and accept the fact that it is spreading in all organization alike

irrespective of their business type (Harvey, Heames, Richey, & Leonard, 2006). It has devastating consequences for both the employee and organization. On organizational basis, workplace bullying results in lack of teamwork, cooperation, communication (Field, 1996), and existence of such type factors decrease productivity of the organization and tarnish its reputation. On individual basis, it promotes feelings of job insecurity, withdrawal, turnover, and burnout (Ashraf, 2018; Naseer, 2015).

Organizations strive for maintaining and boosting their employees' commitment as they have realized it's indispensable connection with organization's performance (Irefin & Mechanic, 2014; Nwankwo, Ivoma, & Ugwu, 2019), employee's turnover intention (Bonds, 2017; Hussain, Khan, & Hussain, 2020), and job burnout (Bte Marmaya, Hitam, Zawawi, & Jody, 2011). It is evident from research that committed employees sustain high level of psychological attachment with the organization (Bartolomé & Evans, 1979). Commitment employees are highly inspired towards goals' achievement and spend their time and energy effectively in achieving them (Hunjra et al., 2010).

Employee voice has constructive consequences for the organization such as positive change, increased efficiency, commitment and high level of job satisfaction (Ashford, Rothbard, Piderit, & Dutton, 1998). It also improves organization's decision making processes, identifies critical problems in the organization and suggests solution for these problems, reduces accidents and errors within the organization, improves organizational learning, facilitates team-work's effectiveness, and consequently, improves employee as well as team performance (Edmondson, 2003; Sherf, Sinha, Tangirala, & Awasty, 2018).

Coping with bullying behaviors at workplace and enhancing employee commitment have been remained center of many studies (Irefin & Mechanic, 2014; Meyer & Allen, 1997; Nwankwo et al., 2019; Park & Ono, 2017; Saunders, Huynh, & Goodman-Delahunty, 2007). Researchers considered a number of variables in relation to workplace bullying (Ayoko, Callan, & Härtel, 2003; Einarsen & Raknes, 1997; Field, 1996; Liang, 2021) and commitment (Bonds, 2017; Bte Marmaya et al., 2011; Hussain et al., 2020). A number of studies examined relationship between employee voice and workplace bullying (Liang, 2021; Liang & Yeh, 2019). The same way, a number of studies considered employee voice in relation with employee commitment (Machokoto, 2019; Nisar, Butt, Abid, Farooqi, & Qazi, 2020; Prasadika & Nishanthi, 2018). According to my knowledge there hardly exist a study that considered relationship of employee voice with workplace bullying and commitment. Therefore, this study investigates effects of employee voice on workplace bullying and commitment in education sector of Pakistan at university level. The study's results will help in coping with workplace bullying and enhancing employees' commitment. Furthermore, it will also add to the existing literature available on employee voice, workplace bullying and commitment relationship.

## **Literature review**

### **Employee voice:**

Employee voice makes a worker an integral part of the organization and it directly affects organizational performance (Anyango, Ojera, & Ochieng, 2015). Treating workers like stakeholders bring productive results for the organization (Royer, Waterhouse, Brown, & Festing, 2008). Workers who have gained a particular human capital required by the organization are invested in the working organization and thus have the right to voice their demands like other stakeholders. Employee voice encompasses all the opportunities where an employee could have his/her say and exercise some influence on management's decisions (Boxall & Purcell, 2011). According to McCabe and Lewin (1992), employee voice has two

elements: first, the disclosure of grievances or complaints of an employee to the management in an organization's work context, second, an employee participation in the decision making processes or exchange of views between an employee and the manager about an issue on an individual basis or through group consultation.

### **Workplace bullying**

Organizations worldwide confronts workplace bullying behaviors as a key issue (Saunders et al., 2007). Workplace bullying has devastating effects on both the individual being targeted and on the organization (Einarsen & Raknes, 1997; Vartia & Hyyti, 2002). At workplace, bullying is a destructive process and the individual confronted with it becomes victim of negative social acts and often loses his/her membership with the organization. Therefore, it has been attracted more attention of researchers worldwide in recent past and they are trying to find out effective solution for it (Ayoko et al., 2003; Saunders et al., 2007; Spratlen, 1995). Bullying at workplace shows offending, harassing, excluding an individual socially or affecting his/her work's tasks negatively (Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, & Cooper, 2003). Akella (2016) defined workplace bullying as, a continuous hurtful negative acts (these could be verbal, physical or even psychological intimidations) and that involves humiliation and criticism to cause distress, fear or harm the target individual.

### **Relationship between employee voice and workplace bullying**

Employee voice enhances an employee status in the workplace and has strong impact on his/her relationship with other employees (Van Dyne & LePine, 1998). It indicates an employee's willingness towards raising voice on behalf of other employees and to address a particular threat. A number of studies suggest that voicing in the organization could lead to negative impacts on the voicing individual's social status (Seibert, Kraimer, & Crant, 2001). Particularly, when an individual challenges the status quo in the organization, the individuals who oppose the voicing individual starts bullying against that individual and it involves oral violence, physical harassment, and displaying negative behaviors towards the targeted individual (Park & Ono, 2017). Regarding relationship between employee voice and workplace bullying, the available research is relatively small. Liang and Yeh (2019) examined the relationship between employee voice and workplace bullying and found a significant positive relationship between these two variables. Liang (2021) study result was also consistent with the previous study conducted by (Liang & Yeh, 2019). In light of these findings we propose that

H1: Employee voice has significant positive relationship with workplace bullying among faculty members of Universities of PK, Pakistan.

### **Employee commitment**

The concept "Commitment" has been getting attention of researcher due to its crucial role in organization's effective functioning and goals' attainment. Committed employees have strong desire to stay with the organization and exert additional efforts in accomplishing organizational goals (Morrow, 1993). They protect organization's assets and consider organization's goals as of their own (Meyer & Allen, 1997). Committed employees work like a spirit in the organization and it has constructive effects on organization's overall performance (Fornes & Rocco, 2004). Mowday, Porter, and Steers (1982) defined employee commitment as; it is the measure of an employee ability to identify himself with the values and

goals of the organization. According to Muthuveloo and Rose (2005), commitment shows the capacity of an individual to be devoted to the working organization regarding his duty, responsibilities and requirements required for performing the job.

### **Relationship between Employee voice and commitment**

In the current competitive world, organization depends on employees' commitment for its progress and survival (Prasadika & Nishanthi, 2018). They further suggest that to get their commitment, organization should give due consideration to employees' viewpoints and suggestions. Employee voice presents all the possible occasions where they have the authority to raise their voice against the management's decision which could affect them directly or harm their interests (Farndale, Van Ruiten, Kelliher, & Hope-Hailey, 2011). Employees' voice has strong connection with their commitment towards the working organization (Holland, Cooper, & Sheehan, 2017). Therefore, organizations should consider employees' voice in their decision making processes as it affects employees' commitment towards the organization. Regarding the relationship between employee voice and commitment, Prasadika and Nishanthi (2018) found a significant positive association between employee voice and commitment in manufacturing organization's workers in Sri Lanka. The next studies conducted on the relationship between these two variables were also consistent with the previous study (Machokoto, 2019; Nisar et al., 2020). In light of these studies' findings, we propose that

H2: Employee voice has significant positive relationship with employee commitment faculty members of Universities of PK, Pakistan.

## **Methodology**

### **Sample and Data Collection Procedure**

The targeted population for this study was the teaching faculty of private as well as public sector universities of KP, Pakistan. Three hundred and twenty questionnaires (320) along with a covering letter explaining the purpose of the study were distributed to the faculty members of both sector universities. Two hundred and eighty (280) questionnaires were received within 30 days after only one reminder to the respected faculty. Only ten questionnaires were found to have incomplete information. Therefore they were not used for research purpose. A total of 270 questionnaires were hundred percent complete.

## **Measurement**

### **Organizational Commitment Scale**

Organizational commitment was measured by eight items scale (Porter et al. (1974). For recording the responses of the participants, 5 point likert scale was used (strongly disagree to strongly agree).

### **Employee Voice Scale**

Employee voice was measured by using 6 item scale (Van Dyne and LePine, 1998) Sample items included "I am willing to propose suggestions at work to affect the department's future development" and "I take initiative in voicing and encouraging colleagues to participate and affect change for the department's future development."

### **Workplace Bullying Scale**

Workplace bullying was measured by 10 items taken from Negative Acts Questionnaire (NAQ; Einarsen and Raknes, 1997). Sample items included “ridicule or insulting teasing” and “being ignored or excluded.”

**Results**

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics**

GENDER	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (Approx.)
Male	201	74
Female	69	26
	<b>270</b>	<b>100</b>
MARITAL STATUS		
Single	55	20
Married	215	80
	<b>270</b>	<b>100</b>
AGE		
20-30	60	22
31-40	80	30
41-50	77	29
51-60	52	19
	<b>270</b>	<b>100</b>
EXPERIENCE		
1-10	106	39
11-20	96	36
Above 20	68	25
	<b>270</b>	<b>100</b>
QUALIFICATION		
Master	43	16
M.Phil/MS	113	42
PhD	114	42
	<b>270</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 2: Reliability of Scales**

	No of Items	Cronbach’s Alfa
Employee Voice	06	.91
Workplace Bullying	22	.83
Organizational Commitment	08	.95

**Table 3: Relationship of Employee Voice with Workplace Bullying and Organizational Commitment**

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	Employee Voice
Workplace Bullying	0.40**
Organizational Commitment	0.19**

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The results showed a significant relationship between employee voice and workplace bullying ( $r=0.40$ ,  $p<.01$ ) and employee voice and organizational commitment ( $r=0.19$ ,  $p<.01$ ). The coefficient of determination showed that 12 % variance in workplace bullying can be accounted for by employee voice, while 22 % variance in organizational commitment can be accounted for by organizational commitment. All values are within the acceptable range. Both of the following hypotheses were accepted:

H1: Employee voice has significant positive relationship with workplace bullying among faculty members of Universities of PK, Pakistan.

H2: Employee voice has significant positive relationship with employee commitment faculty members of Universities of PK, Pakistan.

### Conclusion and Recommendation

The main objective of this research was to investigate the relationship of employee voice with workplace bullying and organizational commitment. Data were collected from two hundred and seventy (270) faculty members of private and public sector universities of KP, Pakistan. Correlation and regression were used to analyze the collected data. The results showed a significant positive impact of employee voice on workplace bullying and organizational commitment. As there is a significant positive relationship among employee voice, workplace bullying and organizational commitment, it is strongly recommended to the management of private and public sector universities of KP, Pakistan to focus on employee voice and workplace bullying so as to enhance employees' commitment.

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