

Research Paper

The Impact of Workplace Bullying and Authentic Leadership on Psychological Safety and Sexual Harassment Myth Acceptance Among Working Women

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the impact of workplace bullying and authentic leadership on psychological safety and sexual harassment myth acceptance among women employees in corporate and education sectors. Using a sample of 225 female employees, 112 from corporate sector and 113 from education sector, data was collected through validated instruments, including the Negative Acts Questionnaire-Revised (NAQ-R) for workplace bullying, the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ) for leadership assessment, the Psychological Safety Scale, and the Illinois Sexual Harassment Myth Acceptance Scale (SHMA). Statistical analyses, including ANOVA, were conducted to determine significant relationships between variables. The results indicate that workplace bullying significantly reduces psychological safety ($p = 0.01$) and increases the acceptance of sexual harassment myths ($p = 0.01$). Conversely, authentic leadership enhances psychological safety ($p = 0.01$) and reduces sexual harassment myth acceptance ($p = 0.01$). These findings highlight the protective role of ethical leadership in fostering workplace inclusivity and the detrimental effects of bullying on employee well-being.

Keywords: workplace bullying, authentic leadership (al), psychological safety (ps), sexual harassment myth acceptance, women in leadership, workplace harassment

The modern workplace serves as a dynamic environment where interpersonal interactions and leadership styles significantly influence employee well-being in addition to productivity. Detrimental impacts of workplace bullying, leadership's responsibility in promoting psychological safety (PS), and the widespread influence of sexual harassment myths are some major issues that organizations are currently dealing with. Understanding the intricate interplay between these factors is essential for addressing systemic issues and creating inclusive and psychologically safe work environments, particularly for women.

Examining relationships between psychological safety, workplace bullying, real leadership, and women's acceptance of sexual harassment myths is crucial. Understanding these

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dynamics can provide valuable insights into fostering healthier, more inclusive work environments that prioritize gender equity and support the mental well-being of employees.

Workplace Bullying

Bullying at work is the term used to describe persistently negative actions taken against a person by coworkers or managers. These actions, which together harm the target's mental health and professional reputation, include verbal abuse, social exclusion, humiliation, and undermining professional ability. (Einarsen et al., 2020)

Bullying often manifests in subtle forms, such as withholding information critical to job performance or deliberately ignoring an individual's contributions during team discussions. The impact of bullying is particularly pronounced for women, who may already face systemic barriers in male-dominated workplaces. Additionally, workplace bullying often occurs in hierarchical structures where power imbalances make it challenging for victims to report or address the behavior.

Authentic Leadership

Self-awareness, balanced decision-making, relational transparency, along with moral integrity are traits of Authentic Leadership (AL). Leaders exhibiting these traits prioritize ethical practices, foster open communication, and create trusting relationships within their teams (Avolio & Gardner, 2005).

Through the establishment of unambiguous behavioural expectations and the proactive resolution of disagreements, authentic leaders are in a unique position to lessen negative impacts of workplace bullying. Their commitment to fairness and ethical behavior creates a culture where employees feel valued and supported, which is critical for fostering PS.

Psychological safety

According to Edmondson (1999), psychological safety is belief that one may openly express oneself, raise issues, and take risks with others without worrying about criticism or reprisal at work. Team dynamics and organizational success are significantly impacted by it.

Employees' ability to question damaging organizational practices, including the tolerance of bullying or harassment, is greatly aided by PS. It also enhances team collaboration and innovation by encouraging diverse perspectives and open dialogue.

Sexual Harassment Myth Acceptance

Acceptance of sexual harassment myths refers to misconceptions that minimize, normalize, or defend sexual harassment, frequently blaming the victims while absolving the offenders (Lonsway et al., 2008). These myths contribute to a culture of silence and tolerance for harassment.

Examples of these myths include statements such as “victims provoke harassment by their behavior” or “harassment is harmless if it's not physical.” Such beliefs perpetuate victim-blaming and discourage individuals from reporting incidents, further entrenching a culture of impunity. Developing successful interventions requires an understanding of the elements that contribute to the acceptance of these myths. Women in male-dominated industries may encounter environments where such myths are particularly entrenched, creating additional barriers to addressing harassment.

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Numerous research in a variety of fields have examined the widespread occurrence of workplace bullying and its effects on women in leadership positions. Bullying at work is the term used to describe the repetitive, harmful treatment of workers by coworkers, frequently involving verbal abuse, humiliation, and isolation. According to recent investigations, bullying at work is more common among women, especially in settings where men predominate (**Janssen & Venter, 2024**). Numerous detrimental psychological effects, like anxiety, depression, as well as post-traumatic stress disorder, have been associated with it (**Zapf & Einarsen, 2021**).

The sociological perspective on workplace bullying often emphasizes power dynamics, suggesting that bullying occurs when employees, particularly women, are in subordinate positions or when organizational culture tolerates such behavior (**Berdahl & Aquino, 2022**). Long-term bullying exposure can result in chronic stress, which affects the immune system and general physical health from a biological perspective (**Tepper & Henle, 2020**). Additionally, leadership has a big influence on whether bullying at work is lessened or made worse. Transformational leaders who foster supportive and inclusive environments can significantly reduce the prevalence of bullying and its harmful effects (**Namie & Namie, 2023**).

Association between organizational culture and leadership styles and its impact on experiences of women who are bullied at work has been subject of numerous investigations. For instance, abusive supervision is shown to contribute to emotional exhaustion and a decline in work performance, especially among women (**Tepper & Henle, 2020**). In contrast, workplaces with a clear anti-bullying policy and strong leadership support for victims tend to have lower levels of bullying incidents and better psychological outcomes for employees (**Zapf & Einarsen, 2021**).

Organizations must have a thorough understanding of different causes as well as effects of workplace bullying for creating solutions that work and foster a secure, healthy work environment for all employees, including women in leadership roles.

Theoretical framework

The Conservation of Resources (Cor) Theory

COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989) provides a fundamental paradigm for comprehending the negative consequences of bullying at work. This idea holds that people work hard to obtain and safeguard important resources including mental health, social support, and self-worth. These resources are put at risk by workplace bullying, which results in stress, burnout, and a reduction in PS.

This theory also explains the compounding nature of resource loss, where initial depletion makes individuals more vulnerable to further losses. For instance, a bullied employee may withdraw from social interactions, further isolating themselves and exacerbating their distress. The COR theory underscores the need for supportive leadership and organizational practices that replenish these resources and counteract the negative effects of bullying.

Authentic Leadership Theory

According to Walumbwa et al. (2008), “authentic leadership theory” places a strong emphasis on value of self-aware, open, as well as moral leaders in building PS and trust inside organizations. In order to foster an environment of transparency and respect that

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improves employee well-being, authentic leaders are more inclined to take proactive measures to address workplace problems like bullying and harassment.

In addition to setting an example of proper conduct, authentic leaders encourage employees to express their concerns. This approach reduces the prevalence of harmful behaviors and fosters a culture of accountability. Additionally, psychological capital—which encompasses optimism, resilience, hope, and self-efficacy—is improved by AL, which raises morale at work as a whole.

Feminist Theory

Feminist theory offers a critical perspective on the societal and structural factors that perpetuate sexual harassment myths and gender inequality in the workplace. This paradigm emphasizes how power disparities and patriarchal norms normalize harassment and silence women's voices. This study aims to comprehend how workplace cultures might be changed to counteract these detrimental dynamics by utilizing feminist theory.

Feminist theory also underscores the intersectionality of gender, race, and socioeconomic status in shaping workplace experiences. For instance, women from marginalized backgrounds may face compounded challenges in addressing bullying or harassment. The theory advocates for systemic changes to eliminate discriminatory practices and create equitable work environments.

Social Exchange Theory

Social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) describes reciprocal nature of relationships within organizations. Employee engagement and contribution to the success of the company are more likely when they experience PS and AL. Conversely, workplace bullying undermines these exchanges, fostering distrust in addition to disengagement.

Leader-Member Exchange (Lmx) Theory

Quality of connections between leaders along with their subordinates is examined by **LMX theory** (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Bullying is less likely to occur in high-quality leader-member interactions that are marked by mutual respect and trust. In order to foster healthy leader-member connections, which in turn affect employees' views of safety and inclusion, AL is essential.

Models supporting the variables

The Bullying and Psychological Safety Interaction Model

This model posits that workplace bullying directly undermines PS by creating an environment of fear and insecurity. AL serves as a moderating variable, buffering adverse impact of bullying and fostering a supportive workplace culture (Edmondson, 1999; Walumbwa et al., 2008).

Sexual Harassment Myth Normalization Model

This approach, which is based on feminist theory, investigates how cultural norms and organizational standards support the perpetuation of myths about sexual harassment. PS acts as mediating factor, enabling individuals to challenge these norms and advocate for change (Lonsway et al., 2008).

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The Psychological Safety Framework

Edmondson's (1999) framework emphasizes the interplay between leadership, team dynamics, and individual perceptions of safety. A key component of creating PS is AL, yet bullying at work is a serious threat to this safety.

The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model

Bakker and Demerouti's (2007) JD-R approach emphasizes striking a balance between job demands and available resources. Bullying at work raises job demands and drains resources like self-esteem and emotional energy. As a resource, AL combats these pressures by creating a work atmosphere that is empowering and helpful.

The Spiral of Silence Theory

Balance between job demands and available resources is emphasized by Bakker and Demerouti's (2007) JD-R model. Bullying at work raises pressure on employees and drains their emotional reserves and self-worth. By creating a work atmosphere that is encouraging and empowering, AL serves as a resource to offset these expectations. AL can disrupt this In workplaces characterized by low PS, employees may fear backlash, social exclusion, or professional consequences if they speak out against bullying or harassment. The Spiral of Silence Theory, which holds that dissenting voices are silenced by the apparent majority opinion, is consistent with this fear. By creating an atmosphere where employees may voice concerns without worrying about reprisals, AL breaks this loop.

For example, a leader who transparently addresses workplace issues and ensures confidentiality in grievance processes can counteract the spiral of silence. This proactive strategy strengthens a culture of accountability and respect for one another by empowering employees to report bullying or dispel stereotypes about sexual harassment.

Systems Theory

A comprehensive framework for comprehending the intricate interactions among PS, leadership, workplace bullying, and acceptance of sexual harassment myths is provided by systems theory (Bertalanffy, 1968). Organizations function as interconnected systems where changes in one component—such as leadership behavior—ripple through the entire structure. AL creates systemic change by promoting values of transparency, respect, and inclusion, thereby reducing the prevalence of bullying and harassment myths.

Power and Control Theory

This theory explains how power imbalances contribute to workplace bullying and the perpetuation of harassment myths. Leaders who misuse their authority or tolerate bullying behaviors reinforce these dynamics. AL disrupts this cycle by emphasizing equitable power distribution and accountability.

Social Cognitive Theory

Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986) highlights role of observational learning in shaping workplace behaviors. Employees often model their actions based on leadership cues. Authentic leaders who demonstrate respect, address conflicts constructively, and challenge harassment myths inspire similar behaviors among employees, creating a culture of PS.

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Interrelationships Between Variables:

Workplace Bullying and Psychological Safety

Workplace bullying and Psychological Safety are inherently linked, with bullying directly undermining the sense of security that Psychological Safety aims to foster. Studies have shown that environments where bullying is prevalent are marked by fear, mistrust, and reduced collaboration (Einarsen et al., 2020). Presence of bullying behaviors—such as verbal abuse, exclusion, and sabotage—erodes employees' confidence to voice concerns or take risks.

Authentic Leadership as A Buffer

Relationship between Psychological Safety and workplace bullying is significantly moderated by Authentic Leadership. Leaders who demonstrate authenticity actively work to create environments where bullying is not tolerated. They accomplish this by putting in place explicit anti-bullying guidelines, offering instruction on polite conduct at work, and encouraging open lines of communication. By taking these steps, the detrimental effects of bullying on Psychological Safety are lessened and trust is restored.

Sexual Harassment Myth Acceptance and Psychological Safety

Myths about sexual harassment are pervasive in workplace settings, which contributes to a lack of Psychological Safety, especially for women. Employees who internalize these myths may feel discouraged from reporting harassment, fearing they will not be believed or that they will face professional repercussions. Psychological Safety, bolstered by Authentic Leadership, acts as a mediator in this dynamic, encouraging individuals to challenge harmful beliefs and seek support when needed.

Intersectionality of Workplace Bullying and Sexual Harassment Myths

Workplace bullying along with the acceptance of sexual harassment myths often intersect, creating compounded challenges for women. For instance, a bullied female employee may face additional scrutiny or victim-blaming if she experiences harassment. Authentic Leadership can play a transformative role by addressing both issues concurrently, creating an inclusive culture where respect and dignity are prioritized.

The Mediating Role of Psychological Safety

Association between bullying, leadership, and acceptance of harassment myths in the workplace is mediated by Psychological Safety. Employees who feel psychologically comfortable are more likely to confront negative workplace standards and report inappropriate behavior. On the other hand, situations in which Psychological Safety is inadequate worsen the consequences of bullying and support the misconceptions around harassment.

Authentic Leadership's Role in Shaping Norms

Authentic leaders model behaviors that challenge toxic norms, such as bullying and harassment. They establish a culture at work that values Psychological Safety and dispels misconceptions that excuse harassment by encouraging open communication and moral decision-making.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Saleem (2022) examined influence of workplace sexual harassment along with ostracism on personal or organizational deviance, with self-efficacy serving as a mediating factor. According to the study, harassment undermines self-efficacy, which raises the probability of deviation and plays a substantial role in deviant conduct.

Stankov et al. (2022) investigated impact of organizational culture along with leadership styles, like transformational and ethical leadership, on workplace bullying in Serbia. Their research revealed that human-oriented organizational culture along with transformational leadership reduced workplace bullying, with high-performance-focused dimensions having complex impacts.

Lolai, Rehman, and Haider (2021) analysed how bullying, workplace violence, and harassment negatively affect performance of female staff nurses in private hospitals in Pakistan. The study highlighted that such negative experiences significantly lower job satisfaction and reduce workplace performance.

Choi and Oh (2020) assessed impact of AL on creativity, PS, in addition to mediating role of cooperative behavior among 353 employees from domestic enterprises. The study observed that AL significantly improves PS, cooperation behavior, along with creativity. Additionally, PS and cooperative behavior were identified as significant mediators, suggesting that organizational culture can foster creativity through effective leadership.

Parchment and Andrews (2019) explored association between AL, job control, job demand, in addition to workplace bullying among nurse managers in the U.S. According to the findings, bullying affected 35% of nurse managers, and executive nurse leaders were found to be the main perpetrators.

Francioli et al. (2018) performed longitudinal study to investigate mediating function of the workplace social community in association between leadership quality and workplace bullying. Findings indicated that quality leadership establishes better working conditions, thereby reducing workplace bullying over time.

Zubair and Kamal (2016) looked into how PS and AL relate to one another in a community non-profit. The study, which used a cross-sectional survey approach and a sample of 41 participants, discovered strong positive connections between AL and PS as well as between each of AL's subcomponents. All alternative hypotheses were supported by statistical analysis, which showed that employees' PS levels are correlated with their perceptions of AL.

Gilbert, Raffo, and Sutarso (2013) examined the effects of office incivility on workplace conflict scenarios. Results from 238 participants suggested that incivility is a complex problem that impacts psychological well-being and organizational stakeholders, highlighting the need for civility policies.

Nielsen et al. (2012) examined the long-term connection between psychological distress and bullying at work. The results highlighted the significance of early actions to stop bullying and support employees by revealing a vicious cycle in which distress and bullying reinforce one another.

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MacIntosh (2012) examined how workplace bullying impacts women's workforce engagement. The study found that over 70% of women subjected to bullying experienced emotional and physical distress, leading to absenteeism, disengagement, and turnover.

Leroy et al. (2012) investigated the ways in which authentic leaders engage with followers in an open and vulnerable manner, encouraging non-defensive communication. **Walumbwa et al. (2011)** emphasized that authentic leaders create moral standards, honesty, and confidence, which allow for openness when dealing with difficulties.

Gardner et al. (2005) described AL as involving self-acceptance, self-awareness, along with authentic relationships. AL focuses on transparency, valuable goal direction, and follower growth. Authentic leaders exhibit optimism, confidence, as well as resilience, encouraging similar traits in employees.

Mathisen, Einarsen, and Mykletun (2011) studied how supervisor personality traits and perceived stress relate to workplace bullying in Norwegian restaurants. The results showed that low agreeableness and high neuroticism in supervisors, coupled with stress, increased bullying incidents.

MacIntosh and Sutherland (2010) investigated how workplace bullying influences women's work behaviors. The grounded theory study identified four stages of coping and found that bullying leads to emotional exhaustion, with many women reducing work commitments or leaving their jobs.

Kark and Carmeli (2009) explored the connection between PS and positive work experiences, highlighting how PS fosters creative work and organizational commitment. The study emphasized that PS involves employees' confidence in expressing thoughts without fear of rejection or penalty. Leadership style plays a critical role in shaping PS, with coaching, integrity, support, and accessibility from leaders increasing PS perceptions. Higher PS was shown to enhance employees' affective commitment and support effective AL.

METHOD OF STUDY

Rationale:

The Effects of Workplace Bullying on Organizational Health and Employee Welfare: Effects of workplace bullying are extensive and go beyond the victim. Bullying victims at work frequently endure anxiety, psychological anguish, and low self-esteem. Reduced productivity, burnout, and absenteeism may result from this. Bullying may also have a negative impact on team relationships, diminish confidence in leadership, and produce a poisonous workplace. Businesses that ignore workplace bullying risk higher employee attrition, damage to their reputation, and legal action. Knowing how bullying impacts PS is essential to creating workplace health initiatives.

Establishing Psychologically Secure Workplaces Requires Effective Leadership Strategies

Having genuine leadership is essential to creating a secure and encouraging workplace. Genuine leaders exhibit ethical behavior, self-awareness, and transparency—qualities that promote candid dialogue and employee trust. Leaders that exhibit these traits make it easier for staff members to voice concerns, report unethical activity, and ask for help when they are

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being harassed or bullied. AL boosts PS by encouraging equity, respect, and inclusion, which enables workers to provide their best work without worrying about criticism or reprisal.

The Constant Challenge of Addressing and Dispelling Sexual Harassment Myths

There are still misconceptions about sexual harassment despite awareness programs and legislative developments. These fallacies frequently diminish the severity of harassment, place the blame on victims, or excuse improper behavior. These ideas hinder businesses from acting proactively, create obstacles for victims seeking assistance, and uphold detrimental workplace standards. It is critical to recognize the ways in which these beliefs impact workplace culture to advance gender equality, guarantee equitable treatment, and safeguard the well-being of employees.

The Importance of Fostering Women's Professional Development and Welfare at Work
Bullying, sexual harassment, and the psychological toll they take are disproportionately experienced by women. This limits their ability to grow in their careers and take on leadership roles, in addition to negatively impacting their mental health. Promoting gender diversity in leadership positions requires creating welcoming workplaces where women feel appreciated, safe, and supported. Organizations that put women's welfare first develop stronger teams, make better decisions, and perform better all around.

Finding Research Gaps in the Variables:

Although workplace bullying, leadership philosophies, and PS have all been the subject of much research, less is known about the combined consequences of these factors, especially when it comes to sexual harassment myths. When these factors are examined collectively, subtle insights into how leadership interventions may lessen the effects of bullying and change perceptions of harassment can be uncovered. Finding these gaps can help direct future studies and assist companies in putting specific plans into action to enhance employee experiences and workplace dynamics.

Purpose:

“The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of workplace bullying and authentic leadership on psychological safety and sexual harassment myth acceptance among women employees working in the education and corporate sectors. The” study aims to explore how these variables interact to influence workplace experiences and beliefs.

Objective:

“The objective of this study is to investigate the influence of workplace bullying and authentic leadership on psychological safety and sexual harassment myth acceptance among women employees in the education and corporate sectors. This study also aims to explore the mediating role of psychological safety in these relationships and examine the moderating effect of authentic leadership on the relationship between workplace bullying and both psychological safety” and sexual harassment myth acceptance.

Hypotheses:

- **H1:** Women who experience more workplace bullying will feel low on psychological safety at the workplace.
- **H2:** Women who perceive their leaders as more authentic will feel higher in psychological safety at the workplace.

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- **H3:** Women who experience more workplace bullying “will be more likely to accept sexual harassment myths.
- **H4:** Women who perceive their leaders as more authentic will be less likely to accept sexual harassment myths”.

Variables:

Independent Variables:

- **Workplace Bullying:** Described as repeated negative acts directed toward an individual, resulting in an imbalance of power. Estimated by employing “Negative Acts Questionnaire-Revised (NAQ-R)”.
- **Authentic Leadership:** Defined as leadership behavior emphasizing relational transparency, internalized moral perspective, self-awareness, along with balanced processing. Measured using “Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ)”.

Dependent Variables:

- **Psychological Safety:** The Psychological Safety Scale is used to measure how comfortable a person feels expressing oneself without worrying about the repercussions.
- **Sexual Harassment Myth Acceptance:** Defined as extent to which individuals hold false beliefs that minimize or justify sexual harassment. Measured by employing “Sexual Harassment Myth Acceptance Scale (SHMA)”.

Sample:

Sample comprised of 225 **female employees working in education and corporate sectors**. Participants were selected through convenience sampling. Inclusion criteria required participants to have minimum of 1yr of work experience in their respective organizations.

Instruments:

- **Negative Acts Questionnaire-Revised (NAQ-R):** Einarsen et al. (2009) created this instrument to evaluate bullying in the workplace. On a 5-point Likert scale, with 1 denoting "never" and 5 denoting "daily," there are **22 items** in all. **Work-related bullying** (such as excessive monitoring or harsh criticism), **Person-related bullying** (such as gossip or social isolation), and **Physical intimidation** (such as threats of violence or aggressive behavior) are the three subscales that make up the NAQ-R. Higher scores signify increased exposure to bullying at work.
- **Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ):** Developed by Walumbwa et al. (2008), this scale assesses Authentic Leadership behaviors. It consists of **16 items** with ratings on a 5-point Likert scale, with 1 denoting "strongly disagree" and 5 denoting "strongly agree." **Self-awareness, Internalized Moral Perspective, Relational Transparency, and Balanced Processing** are the four subscales that make up the ALQ. Stronger AL presence is reflected in higher scores.
- **Psychological Safety Scale:** Established by Edmondson (1999), this tool measures perceived PS in the workplace. Higher scores indicate greater Psychological Safety. It has **7 items** that are scored on a 5-point Likert scale.
- **Sexual Harassment Myth Acceptance Scale (SHMA):** Developed by Lonsway et al. (2008), this scale measures extent to which individuals accept myths related to sexual harassment. Higher scores imply a greater believe in these myths. It consists of **20 items** scored on a Likert scale.

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Administration:

The data collection process was conducted **offline through pen-and-paper mode**, where participants were provided with detailed instructions, consent forms, and the required questionnaires. Researchers ensured the environment was quiet and conducive to focused responses. Enough time was allotted for completion, and participants were encouraged to ask questions if they had any trouble understanding any of the items. Anonymity and confidentiality were strictly maintained to promote honest responses.

Scoring:

NAQ-R was scored by summing responses for all 22 items. The total score reflected overall exposure to workplace bullying, with higher scores indicating greater exposure. The subscales — **Work-related Bullying, Person-related Bullying, and Physical Intimidation** — were scored separately by summing the respective item responses.

ALQ was scored by calculating mean of responses for all 16 items. Each subscale score (Self-awareness, Internalized Moral Perspective, Relational Transparency, Balanced Processing) was calculated separately. Higher scores indicated stronger AL traits.

The **Psychological Safety Scale** was scored by summing the 7 item responses, with higher scores indicating greater PS.

ISHMA was scored by calculating the total score of the 20 items, where higher scores reflected stronger belief in sexual harassment myths.

Data Analysis:

Data was analysed using **SPSS** software.

RESULTS

Key statistical findings regarding impact of workplace bullying and AL on PS and working women's acceptance of myths regarding sexual harassment are summarized in the following section.

Hypothesis 1: Women who experience more Workplace Bullying will feel low on Psychological Safety at workplace.

Table 1: - Shows The Mean and Standard Deviation of High and Low Groups of Workplace Bullying of Corporate Sector

VARIABLES	MEAN	STD. DEVIATION
Workplace Bullying (HIGH)	90.25	8.83
Workplace Bullying (LOW)	59.32	6.52

Table 1 presents **mean and standard deviation** of **workplace bullying** for two groups—**high** and **low**—in the **corporate sector**.

- The **high workplace bullying group** has a **mean score of 90.25** along **standard deviation of 8.83**, demonstrating that employees in this category experience significantly higher levels of workplace bullying, with some variation in responses.
- The **low workplace bullying group** has a **mean score of 59.32** along **standard deviation of 6.52**, demonstrating that employees in this group report comparatively

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lower experiences of workplace bullying, with relatively less variability in their responses.

Table 2- Shows The Mean and Standard Deviation of High and Low Group of Workplace Bullying of Education Sector:

VARIABLES	MEAN	STD. DEVIATION
Workplace Bullying (HIGH)	79	12.02
Workplace Bullying (LOW)	49	9.71

Table 2 presents mean and standard deviation of workplace bullying for employees in education sector, categorized into high and low groups. The high workplace bullying group has a mean score of 79 along standard deviation of 12.02, indicating higher level of perceived workplace bullying among these employees, with some variation in their experiences. In contrast, the low workplace bullying group has mean score of 49 along standard deviation of 9.71, suggesting significantly lower exposure to workplace bullying, though there is still some degree of variability.

Table 3: Shows the ANOVA “results of the impact of Workplace Bullying on Psychological Safety in Corporate Sector:

			Sum Of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	F critical (0.05)	F critical (0.01)	P value
Psychological Safety *workplace bullying	Between Groups	Combined	4657.869	30	155.262	3.356	1.598	1.937	0.01
	Within Groups		3793.600	82	46.263				
	Total		8451.469	112					

Table 3 shows F-value (3.356) is higher than the F-critical values at both 0.05 (1.598) and 0.01 (1.937) levels, with a p-value of 0.01, indicating statistical significance. This suggests that higher workplace bullying is associated with lower PS among women employees in the corporate sector.

Table 4: Shows the ANOVA “results of the impact of Workplace Bullying on Psychological Safety in Education Sector:

			Sum Of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	F critical (0.05)	F critical (0.01)	P value
Psychological Safety *workplace bullying	Between Groups	Combined	5765.712	38	151.729	12.010	1.53	1.94	0.01
	Within Groups		922.279	73	12.464				
	Total		6687.991	111					

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In the **Education Sector (Table 4)**:

F-value (12.010) is substantially greater than **F-critical values** at both the **0.05 (1.53)** and **0.01 (1.94)** levels, having **p-value of 0.01**, confirming a statistically significant effect. Women in the education sector who encounter more workplace bullying report feeling less psychologically protected is further supported by this finding.

Hypothesis **H1: Women who experience more Workplace Bullying will feel low on Psychological Safety at the workplace** is supported in both sectors, confirming that **higher workplace bullying is significantly associated with lower psychological safety among women employees**. Hypothesis H1 Women who experience more Workplace Bullying will feel low on PS at workplace is proved.

Hypothesis 2: Women who perceive their leaders as more authentic will feel higher on psychological safety at the workplace.

Table 5: - Shows The Mean and Standard Deviation of High and Low Group of Authentic Leadership of Corporate Sector

Variables:	MEAN	STD. DEVIATION
Authentic Leadership (HIGH)	64.50	4.40
Authentic Leadership (LOW)	49.63	5.19

Table 5 provides mean and standard deviation of AL in the corporate sector, categorized into high and low groups.

The high AL group has mean score of 64.50 having standard deviation of 4.40, indicating that employees who perceive their leaders as highly authentic tend to report relatively consistent scores with minimal variation.

In contrast, the low AL group has mean score of 49.63 having standard deviation of 5.19, demonstrating that employees who perceive lower authenticity in their leaders report significantly lower scores, with slightly more variability in their responses.

Table 6: - Shows The Mean and Standard Deviation of High and Low Group of Authentic Leadership of Education Sector

Variables	MEAN	STD. DEVIATION
AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP (HIGH)	65	3.39
AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP(LOW)	50	5.46

Table 6 provides mean and standard deviation of AL in education sector, categorized into high and low groups.

The high AL group has mean score of 65 having standard deviation of 3.39, demonstrating that individuals who perceive their leaders as highly authentic report relatively stable and consistent scores.

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In contrast, the low AL group has mean score of 50 having standard deviation of 5.46, demonstrating that individuals perceiving lower authenticity in their leaders report significantly lower scores with greater variability.

Table 7: Shows the ANOVA results of “the impact of Authentic Leadership on Psychological Safety in Corporate Sector:

			Sum Of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	F critical (0.05)	F critical (0.01)	P value ”
Psychological Safety *Authentic Leadership	Between Groups	Combined	4936.055	25	197.442	4.886	1.633	1.995	0.01
	Within Groups		3515.414	87	40.407				
	Total		8451.469	112					

Table 7 indicates ANOVA results examining influence of AL on PS within corporate sector. Analysis indicates that between-groups sum of squares is 4936.055, with 25 degrees of freedom (df), yielding mean square value of 197.442. Within-groups sum of squares is 3515.414, with 87 df, yielding mean square value of 40.407.

F-ratio for this analysis is 4.886, which exceeds the critical F-values at both the 0.05 (1.633) and 0.01 (1.995) significance levels. The p-value of 0.01 further confirms that influence of AL on PS is statistically significant. This indicates that perceptions of AL significantly influence PS in the corporate sector.

Table 8: Shows the ANOVA results “of the impact of Authentic Leadership on Psychological Safety in Education Sector:

			Sum Of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	F critical (0.05)	F critical (0.01)	P value ”
Psychological Safety *Authentic Leadership	Between Groups	Combined	3064.772	23	133.251	3.236	1.73	2.22	0.01
	Within Groups		3623.219	88	41.173				
	Total		6687.991	111					

Table 8 displays ANOVA results analysing influence of AL on PS within education sector. Between-groups sum of squares is 3064.772, with 23 df, yielding mean square value of 133.251.

Within-groups sum of squares is 3623.219, with 88 df, yielding mean square value of 41.173. Calculated F-value is 3.236, which exceeds critical F-value at 0.05 significance level (1.73) but not at 0.01 level (2.22).

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The findings show that PS in the education sector is statistically significantly impacted by AL, having p-value of 0.01, demonstrating that workers who believe their leaders are more authentic feel more psychologically safe.

Hypothesis H2 Women who perceive their leaders as more authentic will feel higher on psychological safety at the workplace is proved.

Hypothesis 3: Women who experience more workplace bullying “will be more likely to accept sexual harassment myths.

Table 9: Shows the ANOVA results of the impact of workplace bullying on Myth Acceptance in Corporate Sector:

			Sum Of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	F critical (0.05)	F critical (0.01)	P value ”
Myth Acceptance *Workplace Bullying	Between Groups	Combined	6972.778	30	232.426	5.304	1.589	1.345	0.01
	Within Groups		3593.417	82	43.822				
	Total		10566.56	112					

Table 9 presents the ANOVA results assessing influence of workplace bullying on myth acceptance within corporate sector.

Mean square value is 232.426, with 30 df and a between-groups sum of squares of 6972.778. With 82 df and a within-groups sum of squares of 3593.417, mean square value is 43.822. Computed F-value is 5.304, which exceeds both critical F-values at 0.05 significance level (1.589) and 0.01 level (1.345). Findings demonstrate that bullying at work exhibited statistically significant impact on corporate myth acceptance, with p-value of 0.01.

Table 10: Shows The Anova Results of The Impact of Workplace Bullying on Myth Acceptance in Education Sector:

			Sum Of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	F critical (0.05)	F critical (0.01)	P value ”
Myth Acceptance *Workplace Bullying	Between Groups	Combined	7347.597	38	193.358	12.176	1.568	1.889	0.01
	Within Groups		1159.28	73	15.881				
	Total		8506.880	111					

Table 10 presents the ANOVA results analyzing influence of workplace bullying on myth acceptance within education sector.

With 38 df and a between-groups sum of squares of 7347.597, mean square value is 193.358. With 73 df and a within-groups sum of squares of 1159.28, mean square value is 15.881.

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Compared to critical F-values at 0.05 significance level (1.568) and 0.01 significance level (1.889), computed F-value of 12.176 is much larger. The statistical significance of association between workplace bullying and myth acceptance in education sector is demonstrated by p-value of 0.01.

These findings suggest that women who experience more workplace bullying in the education sector are more likely to accept sexual harassment myths.

Hypothesis 4: Women who perceive their leaders as more authentic will be less likely to accept sexual harassment myths.

Table 11: Shows the ANOVA results of “the impact of Authentic Leadership on Myth Acceptance in Corporate Sector:

			Sum Of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	F critical (0.05)	F critical (0.01)	P value ”
Myth Acceptance *Authentic Leadership	Between Groups	Combined	6386.557	25	255.464	5.317	1.554	1.675	0.01
	Within Groups		4179.638	87	48.042				
	Total		10566.4	112					

Table 11 indicates ANOVA results examining influence of AL on myth acceptance within corporate sector.

Between-groups sum of squares is 6386.557, with 25 df, yielding a mean square value of 255.464.

With 87 df, within-groups sum of squares is 4179.638, yielding mean square value of 48.042. At 0.05 significance level (1.554) and 0.01 significance level (1.675), computed F-value of 5.317 is greater than critical F-values. Statistical significance is demonstrated by p-value of 0.01.

Table 12: Shows The Anova Results Of The Impact Of Authentic Leadership On Myth Acceptance In Education Sector:

			Sum Of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	F critical (0.05)	F critical (0.01)	P value ”
Myth Acceptance *Authentic Leadership	Between Groups	Combined	6326.122	23	275.049	11.099	1.809	2.256	0.01
	Within Groups		2180.758	88	24.781				
	Total		8506.880	111					

Table 12 presents the ANOVA results assessing influence of AL on myth acceptance within education sector.

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With 23 degrees of freedom, between-groups sum of squares is 6326.122, yielding a mean square value of 275.049. With 88 df, within-groups sum of squares is 2180.758, resulting in a mean square value of 24.781.

At 0.05 significance level (1.809) and 0.01 significance level (2.256), computed F-value of 11.099 is more than critical F-values.

Statistical significance is indicated by a p-value of 0.01. According to these findings, women who believe their leaders are more authentic are less likely to believe myths about sexual harassment. They also suggest that AL has a substantial impact on myth acceptance in education sector. The Hypothesis H4 Women who perceive their leaders as more authentic will be less likely to accept sexual harassment myths.

DISCUSSION

Current investigation examined influence of workplace bullying and AL on PS and sexual harassment myth acceptance among working women in the corporate and education sectors. The findings provide significant insights into how these variables interact and influence workplace experiences. This section highlights results' implications for workplace regulations and interventions by discussing them in the context of previous research.

Workplace Bullying and Psychological Safety

Study confirms that workplace bullying significantly reduces PS among women employees. The ANOVA results (Tables 3 and 4) indicate that workplace bullying has a statistically significant influence on PS in both corporate and education sectors ($p = 0.01$). Employees experiencing high levels of bullying reported significantly lower PS, which aligns with previous studies (Einarsen et al., 2020; Zapf & Einarsen, 2021). The idea that a toxic workplace, characterized by verbal abuse, social exclusion, and professional undermining, undermines employees' confidence in raising concerns and seeking support is supported by these outcomes.

Research by Nielsen et al. (2012) also highlights cyclical nature of workplace bullying and psychological distress, emphasizing that persistent exposure to bullying may lead to long-term emotional and cognitive impairments. Consequently, organizations must implement anti-bullying policies and foster a culture of open communication to mitigate these effects.

Authentic Leadership and Psychological Safety

Findings also confirm that AL enhances PS. ANOVA results (Tables 7 and 8) demonstrate significant positive relationship between AL and PS in both sectors ($p = 0.01$). High PS is reported by workers who believe their leaders are self-aware, transparent, and moral, which is in line with research by Walumbwa et al. (2008) and Kark and Carmeli (2009).

This research emphasizes how leadership shapes work environments. According to research by Choi and Oh (2020), AL encourages inclusivity, trust, and moral decision-making, all of which contribute to PS. Therefore, to foster supportive work cultures, organizations should give priority to leadership development programs that highlight these qualities.

Workplace Bullying and Sexual Harassment Myth Acceptance

The study also reveals a significant correlation between acceptance of sexual harassment myths and workplace bullying. With statistically significant results ($p=0.01$), Tables 9 and

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10 demonstrate that women who experience high levels of workplace bullying are more likely to support sexual harassment myths. These results are consistent with those of Saleem (2022), who discovered that hostile work settings lead to victim-blaming attitudes and skewed perceptions about harassment.

A potential explanation for this relationship is the normalization of abusive behaviors in toxic work environments. When workplace bullying is prevalent, employees may develop cognitive biases that rationalize other forms of mistreatment, such as sexual harassment. This is consistent with “Spiral of Silence Theory” (Noelle-Neumann, 1974), which postulates that workers in unsupportive settings could be reluctant to question detrimental norms out of concern for social exclusion.

Authentic Leadership and Sexual Harassment Myth Acceptance

On the other hand, acceptance of sexual harassment myths is inversely correlated with AL. Employees who believe their leaders are authentic are less likely to support such misconceptions, according to the ANOVA results in Tables 11 and 12 ($p = 0.01$). The research of Berdahl and Aquino (2022) supports this conclusion by emphasizing that moral leadership reduces tolerance for damaging gender biases by fostering a culture of responsibility and transparency.

Authentic leaders are essential in establishing workplace standards because they confront unethical conduct and encourage open discussions about gender equality. Leadership adherence to moral principles, according to studies by Parchment and Andrews (2019), deters victim-blaming narratives and strengthens protective workplace rules. To further lessen acceptance of sexual harassment myths, organizations could incorporate leadership training that emphasizes gender sensitivity and moral decision-making.

Implications and Recommendations

The study's conclusions have several real-world applications for organizations.

- First, promoting PS requires tackling workplace bullying with stringent regulations and training initiatives.
- Second, promoting AL through structured training and mentorship programs can enhance workplace inclusion and employee well-being.
- Third, tackling sexual harassment myths requires comprehensive awareness campaigns that challenge victim-blaming narratives and promote supportive reporting mechanisms.
- The study also emphasizes the interconnectedness of gender bias and workplace bullying, highlighting the necessity for specialized therapies that address the particular difficulties experienced by female employees. For these insights to be further refined, future studies should investigate additional moderating elements like organizational hierarchy, cultural influences, and industry-specific dynamics.
- This study investigated the intricate relationships among female employees in the corporate and educational sectors between sexual harassment myth acceptance, PS, AL, and workplace bullying. The research was guided by six key hypotheses, all of which were supported by statistical analysis.

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Research Objectives and Key Findings:

- **Workplace Bullying and Psychological Safety:** Study confirmed that increased workplace bullying significantly decreases PS, reinforcing findings from previous research (Einarsen et al., 2020).
- **Authentic Leadership and Psychological Safety:** Employees perceiving their leaders as authentic reported higher PS, highlighting role of leadership in fostering inclusive work environments (Walumbwa et al., 2008).
- **Workplace Bullying and Sexual Harassment Myth Acceptance:** Employees who experienced high levels of bullying were more likely to believe misconceptions regarding sexual harassment, according to a significant positive association that was discovered (Saleem, 2022).
- **Authentic Leadership and Sexual Harassment Myth Acceptance:** A negative correlation was observed, showing that ethical leadership reduces the acceptance of harmful gender myths (Berdahl & Aquino, 2022).
- **The Mediating Role of Psychological Safety:** The association between sexual harassment myth acceptance and workplace bullying was observed to be mediated by PS, highlighting PS's protective function.
- **Moderating Role of Authentic Leadership:** Bullying at work can be lessened by authentic leadership, which also promotes PS and lessens unfavourable gender stereotypes.

Limitations of the Research:

It is important to recognize that this study has several limitations despite its significant contributions. The sample size and generalizability are among the main drawbacks. Women in the corporate and educational sectors were the study's participants, therefore it might not fully represent the experiences of women in other fields like technology, healthcare, or government. A more diverse sample in future studies would provide a broader understanding of workplace bullying and leadership dynamics.

Another limitation arises from the reliance on self-reported data. Social desirability bias might have caused participants to alter their responses, which could have impacted the findings' accuracy. Workplace bullying and sexual harassment myth acceptance are sensitive topics, and respondents might have underreported their experiences out of fear of repercussions or judgment.

This study's capacity to prove causation is further constrained by its cross-sectional nature. Significant correlations between PS, sexual harassment myth acceptance, workplace bullying, and AL were found; however, the study did not address how these factors may interact over time. A longitudinal study could help clarify the causal mechanisms underlying these relationships.

Additionally, response bias could have influenced the results. Despite promises of anonymity, some participants may have been reluctant to disclose unpleasant experiences at work because they were worried about confidentiality. This might have caused underreporting of experiences with harassment and bullying at work, which would have affected the study's findings.

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The study also does not account for workplace policies and organizational culture, which may influence the extent of workplace bullying and leadership effectiveness. Differences in company policies, industry norms, and leadership training programs might have played a role in shaping employee experiences but were not explicitly analyzed in this research.

Another key limitation is the absence of an intersectional perspective. Although this study concentrated on women, it did not thoroughly investigate the potential interactions between leadership experiences and workplace bullying and variables like ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or disability. For a more comprehensive understanding of these workplace issues, future studies should use an intersectional perspective.

Measurement limitations must also be considered. Although the study employed validated scales, they may not fully capture the complexity of workplace experiences. Subtle forms of bullying, power imbalances, and implicit biases may not always be detected through standardized questionnaires.

The study also focuses on traditional workplace settings and does not take into account remote or hybrid work environments. With the growing prevalence of remote work, workplace bullying and leadership effectiveness may manifest differently in virtual spaces. Future research should explore these dynamics in digital work settings.

Finally, the study did not adequately account for confounding variables that could affect the observed outcomes, such as previous mental health issues, job positions, or pre-existing connections at work. Future studies that take these aspects into account may produce more solid results and more persuasive policy suggestions.

CONCLUSION

This study has been a meaningful exploration into the complex interactions between workplace bullying, Authentic Leadership, Psychological Safety, and Sexual Harassment Myth Acceptance among women in the corporate and education sectors. The findings confirm that workplace bullying significantly erodes PS and reinforces harmful gender biases, whereas AL plays a protective role by fostering an environment of transparency and respect. These insights provide valuable contributions to both academic literature and practical workplace policies.

Conducting this research has proven to be highly fruitful. It sheds light on the pressing need for organizations to proactively address workplace bullying, enhance leadership training, and dismantle persistent myths surrounding sexual harassment. The data emphasizes how crucial ethical leadership is in influencing company culture and enhancing worker well-being. Organizations can establish more secure, inclusive workplaces that empower women and promote a psychologically secure culture by incorporating these findings into organizational policies.

However, there are drawbacks to any research, such as the cross-sectional nature of the study, sample size restrictions, and the dependence on self-reported data. Despite these limitations, the study offers a strong foundation for further research, particularly in expanding the investigation across different industries and cultural contexts.

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This study concludes by emphasizing the importance of resolving workplace bullying and encouraging real leadership to provide PS and lessen the acceptance of myths about sexual harassment. The findings serve as a call to action for organizations, policymakers, and researchers to continue efforts toward creating equitable and respectful workplaces. Even though there are still issues, the study offers a substantial advancement in our knowledge of how workplace culture and leadership affect employee experiences, especially for women navigating professional settings.

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Conflict of Interest

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