

Consequences of Workplace Bullying: Findings from Public Sector via PLS-SEM¹

(Research Article)

İş Yeri Zorbalığının Sonuçları: KEKK-YEM ile Kamu Sektöründen Bulgular
Doi: 10.29023/alanyaakademik.1302573

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Bu makaleye atıfta bulunmak için: Develi, A., & Turak, T.T. (2023). Consequences of Workplace Bullying: Findings from Public Sector via PLS-SEM. Alanya Akademik Bakış, 7(3), Sayfa No.1387-1400.

ABSTRACT

Keywords:

Bullying, Stress,
Turnover Intention,
Job Satisfaction,
Work Engagement

Received:

25.05.2023

Accepted:

22.08.2023

This study aims to determine the predictive power of workplace bullying on work engagement, perceived stress, job satisfaction, and turnover intention in the public sector. The study was patterned with a quantitative research method. Data were collected through survey techniques in March and April 2023. The sample consisted of 218 individuals working in a Special Provincial Administration in Türkiye. Partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) was used to test research hypotheses. According to findings, in descending order, workplace bullying positively contributes to explaining perceived stress first and turnover intention second. Workplace bullying negatively contributes to explaining, thirdly job satisfaction, and, finally, work engagement. The theoretical and practical contributions of the study were discussed, and suggestions were made for further research.

ÖZET

Anahtar Kelimeler:

Zorbalık, Stres,
İşten Ayrılma
Niyeti, İş Tatmini,
Çalışmaya
Tutkunluk

Bu çalışma, kamu sektöründe iş yeri zorbalığının çalışmaya tutkunluk, algılanan stres, iş tatmini ve işten ayrılma niyeti üzerindeki açıklayıcılık gücünü tespit etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Çalışma, nicel araştırma yöntemi ile tasarlanmıştır. 2023 yılı Mart ve Nisan ayında anket tekniği aracılığıyla veri toplanmıştır. Örneklem, Türkiye'deki bir İl Özel İdaresi'nde çalışan 218 kişiden oluşmaktadır. Araştırma hipotezlerinin testi için kısmi en küçük kareler yapısal eşitlik modellemesi (KEKK-YEM) kullanılmıştır. Bulgulara göre, azalan sırayla, iş yeri zorbalığı ilk olarak algılanan stresi ve ikinci olarak işten ayrılma niyetini açıklamada olumlu yönde katkı yapmaktadır. İş yeri zorbalığı üçüncü olarak iş tatminini ve son olarak işe adanmışlığı

¹ Bu çalışma için Tokat Gaziosmanpaşa Üniversitesi Sosyal ve Beşeri Bilimler Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu'nun 16.11.2022 tarihli ve 14 nolu kararınca etik kurul onayı alınmıştır.

açıklamada olumsuz yönde katkı yapmaktadır. Çalışmanın kuramsal ve uygulamaya yönelik katkıları tartışılarak gelecekteki araştırmalara önerilerde bulunulmuştur.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Literature Overview

Workplace bullying is defined as a persistent and repetitive situation that encompasses various negative behaviors, including knowledge hiding, excessive criticism, practical jokes, gossip, anger, hostile actions, and physical assault, among others (Einarsen & Raknes, 1997; Einarsen & Hoel, 2001; Salin, 2003). It involves the dimensions of victim-perpetrator dynamics and is characterized by a continuous occurrence. Bullying behaviors, whether conscious or unconscious, intentionally or unintentionally executed, targeted at one or more employees, create an unpleasant work atmosphere that leads to humiliation, distress, and discomfort (Einarsen, 1999).

It is well known that bullying behaviors occur regularly in many workplaces (Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996; Hoel et al., 2001; Lee et al., 2013; Oflaz & Polat, 2023; Tortumlu & Uzun, 2022). A systematic review conducted by Boudrias (2021) on longitudinal studies regarding the consequences of bullying has observed that it leads to outcomes such as anxiety, depression, burnout, emotional exhaustion, psychosomatic complaints, role conflicts, and work-family conflicts. Additionally, it has been found that not only the victims of bullying but also bystanders are affected by these types of negative consequences (Cooper et al., 2004; Rayner et al., 2001).

Initially, victims of workplace bullying often try not to be labeled as oversensitive or fragile. They attempt to appear stronger, minimize the potential harm from external sources, and protect themselves by downplaying and ignoring verbal attacks. However, over time, these verbal assaults intensify, and the victim is pushed into even worse situations, trapped in a cycle of humiliating and hostile words and actions (Hirigoyen, 2016). It is evident that bullies intentionally harm others and compel them to act in predetermined ways (Boddy, 2011). Therefore, workplace bullying can take on aggressive, malicious, intimidating, or unjust forms of harassment. Additionally, it may involve demeaning, threatening, violent behaviors and physical aggression (Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996; Einarsen, 1999).

Workplace bullying, which appears to hinder various aspects of work life, continues to be a subject of increasing interest for research. However, there are still gaps in understanding the consequences of bullying behavior in the workplace. Notably, it is observed that research in this field has predominantly focused on the private sector. This study examines the perception of workplace bullying in the public sector, specifically focusing on its individual-level outcomes. Accordingly, the research question of the study is whether the concept of workplace bullying in the public sector is associated with work engagement, perceived stress, job satisfaction, and turnover intention.

1.2. Theoretical Background

The anticipated relationships between the variables of the study can be found within the frameworks of Social Exchange Theory and Affective Events Theory. According to Social Exchange Theory, workplaces can be seen as an exchange zone between employees and the organization. The presence of social exchange in terms of reciprocity between the employee and the organization leads to positive or negative effects on the employee (Blau, 1964).

Besides, according to Affective Events Theory, positive events in workplace generate positive affect, while adverse events generate negative affect (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Based on these, it is anticipated perceived workplace bullying would result in a decrease in positive-themed concepts, such as work engagement and job satisfaction, while an increase would be observed in negative-themed concepts, such as perceived stress and turnover intention.

1.3. Hypothesis and Model Development

Clues regarding the anticipated relationships between the variables of the study can also be found in previous research in the literature. This approach makes it possible to anticipate a negative conceptual relationship between workplace bullying and work engagement. This is because the perception of workplace bullying would interrupt the positive process in which employees become absorbed in their work, known as work engagement. Indeed, a study conducted by Einarsen et al. (2018) on employees of a private transportation company found a negative relationship between exposure to bullying and work engagement. Therefore, the first research hypothesis of the study is formulated as follows:

H₁: Workplace bullying negatively contributes to explaining work engagement.

It is possible to anticipate a positive relationship between workplace bullying and perceived stress. Considering that stress emerges particularly in situations involving pressure and perceived threat, it can be predicted that bullying would increase the level of stress. Indeed, a study conducted by Mathisen et al. (2011) on restaurant employees found a positive relationship between witnessing bullying and stress. As a result, the second research hypothesis of the study is formulated as follows:

H₂: Workplace bullying positively contributes to explaining perceived stress.

The relationship between workplace bullying and job satisfaction can be expected to have a negative interaction. In this regard, job satisfaction, a fundamental indicator of employees' pleasure with their work, is likely to be adversely affected by the perception of bullying. In a study conducted by Arenas et al. (2015) on individuals working in different private industry sectors, a negative relationship between bullying and job satisfaction was identified. Therefore, the third research hypothesis of the study is formulated as follows:

H₃: Workplace bullying negatively contributes to explaining job satisfaction.

It is thought that there is a positive relationship between workplace bullying and turnover intention. Considering that negative experiences can be a factor in employees' decision to leave their jobs, it can be anticipated that perceived bullying would play a role in this regard. In a study conducted by Öcel and Aydın (2012) on individuals working in the private sector as blue-collar and white-collar workers, a positive relationship between bullying and turnover intention was found. Therefore, the fourth research hypothesis of the study is formulated as follows:

H₄: Workplace bullying positively contributes to explaining turnover intention.

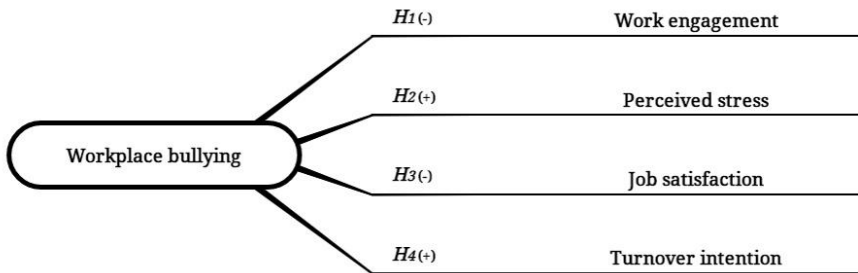


Figure 1. Research Model

2. METHOD

2.1. Sample

The general population for the study consists of employees of Special Provincial Administrations, which are units affiliated with the Governor's offices in Turkey. It is known that within the Special Provincial Administration units, there are employees with different statuses, such as civil servants, contracted workers, subcontracted workers, and temporary workers. Considering the measurement of phenomena that are relatively low in the public sector, such as turnover intention and work engagement, it is more reasonable to have a diverse population in terms of employment status. Therefore, Special Provincial Administration units were deemed appropriate for the general population of the study.

For the research population, a unit of Special Provincial Administration affiliated with a Governor's office in the Middle Black Sea Region of Turkey was selected. To reach the necessary sample size, the criterion suggested by Hair et al. (2014) was considered, which states that the number of observed variables should be at least five times the number of participants ($43 \times 5 = 215$ employees). On the other hand, since there are a total of 278 employees in the selected Special Provincial Administration unit, the convenience sampling method was used to attempt to reach the entire target population. As a result, the study sample consists of 218 employees ($n = 218$).

Considering the demographic characteristics of the participants, 114 (52.3%) were male, and 104 (47.7%) were female. In terms of age groups, 18 participants are 30 years old or younger (8.3%), 105 are in the 31-45 age range (48.2%), and 95 are 46 years old or older (43.6%). Regarding educational levels, 32 employees have completed primary education (14.7%), 65 have completed high school (29.8%), 32 have completed associate degrees (14.7%), 76 have completed undergraduate degrees (34.9%), and 13 have completed graduate degrees (6.0%). In terms of employment status, 100 employees are civil servants (45.9%), 51 are contract workers (23.4%), 34 are subcontracted workers (15.6%), and 33 are temporary workers (15.1%). As for employment duration, the majority of participants have more than 21 years of experience (70 employees, 32.1%), followed by 2-8 years of experience (54 employees, 24.8%).

2.2. Measures

To measure workplace bullying, the scale developed by Einarsen and Raknes (1997) and later revised by Einarsen and Hoel (2001) was used. The scale consists of 22 items. Although the scale has different dimensional types, the single-dimensional version recommended by Aydın and Öcel (2009), who adapted the scale to Turkish, was used. In this study, the items were

designed to measure perceived bullying. The scale scored with a 6-point ranging from 1 (never) to 6 (always).

The scale developed by Schaufeli et al. (2006) to measure work engagement was used, which was translated into Turkish by Eryılmaz and Doğan (2012) and adapted with a 3-item short version by Güler et al. (2019). The scale scored with a 6-point ranging from 1 (never) to 6 (always).

For the measurement of perceived stress, the scale developed by Cohen et al. (1983) and adapted into Turkish by Bilge et al. (2009) was used. The scale consists of 5 items precisely measuring perceived stress within the measurement tool. The scale scored with a 6-point ranging from 1 (never) to 6 (always).

To measure job satisfaction, the scale developed by Diener et al. (1985) and adapted into Turkish by Çavuş and Develi (2022) was used. The scale consists of 6 items and is unidimensional. The scale scored with a 6-point ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree).

The scale developed by Rosin and Korabik (1995) to measure turnover intention was used, which was adapted into Turkish by Tanrıöver (2005). The scale consists of 4 items and is unidimensional. The scale scored with a 6-point ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree).

In addition to the reflective measurement tools, nominal and ordinal-minded questions were created to measure participants' gender, age, education level, employment status, and employment duration.

2.3. Procedure

The study was patterned with a quantitative research method and correlational research design. A survey technique was used to collect data from the participants. First, ethics committee approval was obtained from the Social and Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee of a state university in Türkiye (decision date: 16.11.2022, session no: 14, decision number: 01-41). Afterward, permission to apply the questionnaire was obtained from the institution where the research will be conducted (date and number: 08.03.2023-273463).

The survey was conducted both face-to-face and online in March and April of 2023. It was a cross-sectional study, and data were collected using convenience sampling. For the online survey, the Google Forms platform was utilized (Google Forms, n.d.). During the research process, participants were approached based on voluntary participation, and both verbal consent and an informed consent question on the survey form were obtained to ensure compliance with ethical principles.

During the data analysis, IBM SPSS software was used for preliminary and descriptive analyses. For testing the measurement model and structural model, SmartPLS software was used. SmartPLS is a variance-based partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) software that does not require the assumption of normal distribution (Hair et al., 2013). In other words, it can make predictions regardless of whether the data has a normal distribution or not (Develi & Çavuş, 2019; Develi, 2020). Besides, it has capable of effectively testing complex models (Sarstedt et al., 2016). This software was chosen for the analysis of this research due to its mentioned features.

To assess the statistical significance of SmartPLS analyses, the bias-corrected and accelerated confidence interval (*BCa CI*) method was used at a 95% confidence level. Moreover, the bootstrapping number of 5000, as suggested by Hair et al. (2017) and Henseler et al. (2016) was preferred.

3. FINDINGS

3.1. Preliminary Analysis

To ensure data integrity and test the assumptions, some preliminary analyses were conducted. Firstly, the presence of missing values was examined. 7 of the 236 face-to-face and online surveys were excluded from the observation as they contained significant incomplete answers. As a result of the missing value analysis applied afterward, it was observed that there was no missing value in the data ($MVA = 0\%$).

Afterward, as a result of the outlier analysis performed with the Mahalanobis Distance method (Mahalanobis, 1936), 20 outliers were determined ($p < .01$). Among these outliers, 10 surveys that negatively affected the skewness-kurtosis and reliability coefficients were excluded, while the others were preserved. Additionally, one participant who completed all the questions in the face-to-face survey but answered 'no' to the informed consent question regarding voluntary participation was excluded from the analysis. Thus, the number of participants, which was 236, was finalized as 218 in the last case ($n = 218$).

Lastly, Harman's single-factor test was conducted to control for common method bias (Harman, 1979; Podsakoff & Organ, 1986). A principal component analysis without rotation was performed, and the results indicated that all items did not load on a single dimension but revealed a multidimensional structure consisting of 8 factors. However, the single-factor structure representing all items explained only a low portion of the total variance, accounting for 33.45% ($s^2 < .50$). These findings suggest that the potential issue of common method bias does not pose a significant problem in the data (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

3.2. Measurement Model Analysis

Measurement model analysis was conducted to determine the validity and reliability of the measurement tools used within the study. In terms of the validity of factor (indicator) loadings, the criteria suggested by Hair et al. (2017) were followed, which consider coefficients of 0.70 or higher as acceptable and recommend removing indicators within the range of 0.40-0.70 if their exclusion leads to an improvement in composite reliability (*CR*) and average variance extracted (*AVE*) coefficients. Therefore, the indicator loadings within the 0.40-0.70 range were examined for all measurement tools, but since there was no significant improvement in *CR* and *AVE* coefficients, those indicators were retained.

The results pertaining to the convergent validity and reliability of the constructs in the measurement model are presented in Table 1.

According to the results obtained from the measurement model analysis, all indicator loadings are statistically significant ($t > 2.57, p < .001$). Furthermore, coefficients for Cronbach's alpha (α), ρ_{ho_A} , and composite reliability (*CR*) criteria being above .70 indicate the reliability of the constructs (Cronbach, 1951; Nunnally, 1978; Hair et al., 2017; Henseler et al., 2016). Therefore, it can be said that the constructs related to the measurement tools are sufficiently reliable in providing consistent measurements (Develi & Yıldız, 2021).

Furthermore, having average variance extracted (AVE) coefficients of .50 or higher indicates the achievement of convergent validity (Latan & Ghazali, 2015; Hair et al., 2017). Meeting this criterion signifies that the indicators belonging to the structures of the measurement tools have a high level of shared variance (Develi & Yıldız, 2021).

In the measurement model analysis scope, discriminant validity was examined through cross-loading analysis, the Fornell-Larcker criterion, and the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (*HTMT*). Cross-loading, a traditional approach to assessing discriminant validity, suggests that the indicator loadings of a construct should be higher than the indicator loadings of other constructs (Hair et al., 2017). In other words, indicator loadings should take the highest coefficient in their own construct without any cross-loading problem (Develi, 2020). When evaluated according to this criterion, it was concluded that discriminant validity was provided because the indicator loadings of perceived stress, workplace bullying, job satisfaction, work engagement, and turnover intention constructs received the highest coefficients within their constructs without any cross-loading problem.

Table 1. Results of Reliability and Convergent Validity

Constructs	Indicators	IL	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>rho_A</i>	<i>CR</i>	<i>AVE</i>
Perceived stress	PS1	.855	49.667	.000	.773	.840	.841	.518
	PS2	.710	10.424	.000				
	PS3	.732	19.781	.000				
	PS4	.572	7.221	.000				
	PS5	.702	12.588	.000				
Work engagement	WE1	.876	21.477	.000	.924	.966	.951	.866
	WE2	.957	86.239	.000				
	WE3	.956	67.254	.000				
Turnover intention	TI1	.660	10.034	.000	.878	.931	.918	.739
	TI2	.931	68.423	.000				
	TI3	.886	26.301	.000				
	TI4	.933	42.438	.000				
Job satisfaction	JS1	.840	20.145	.000	.925	.950	.941	.726
	JS2	.817	24.413	.000				
	JS3	.910	51.189	.000				
	JS4	.844	24.714	.000				
	JS5	.808	20.704	.000				
	JS6	.888	42.142	.000				
Workplace bullying	WB1	.713	14.565	.000	.961	.962	.964	.550
	WB10	.755	14.429	.000				
	WB11	.744	15.897	.000				
	WB12	.742	14.595	.000				
	WB13	.754	17.928	.000				
	WB14	.842	30.837	.000				
	WB15	.794	22.521	.000				
	WB16	.759	21.464	.000				
	WB17	.743	19.269	.000				
	WB18	.805	20.997	.000				
	WB19	.766	19.534	.000				
	WB2	.702	18.364	.000				
	WB20	.816	26.677	.000				
	WB21	.776	17.852	.000				
WB22	.735	12.421	.000					
WB3	.600	9.108	.000					

WB4	.726	17.717	.000
WB5	.609	11.426	.000
WB6	.699	14.632	.000
WB7	.733	17.354	.000
WB8	.787	18.623	.000
WB9	.670	13.191	.000

Note: *n* = 218, *PS*: Perceived stress, *WE*: Work engagement, *TI*: Turnover intention, *JS*: Job satisfaction, *WB*: Workplace bullying, *IL*: Indicator loadings, *t*: The *t*-test statistic, *p*: Statistical significance level, *α*: Cronbach's alpha, *CR*: Composite reliability, *AVE*: Average variance extracted.

The results of the Fornell-Larcker and Heterotrait-Monotrait (*HTMT*) ratio and the correlation coefficients between the constructs are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Results of Discriminant Validity (Fornell-Larcker and *HTMT*)

Constructs	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Fornell-Larcker criterion</i>					
1 Perceived stress	(.720)				
2 Workplace bullying	.612	(.742)			
3 Job satisfaction	-.076	-.281	(.852)		
4 Work engagement	-.132	-.260	.436	(.930)	
5 Turnover intention	.266	.337	-.264	-.191	(.860)
<i>Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)</i>					
1 Perceived stress	-				
2 Workplace bullying	.650	-			
3 Job satisfaction	.112	.282	-		
4 Work engagement	.153	.270	.461	-	
5 Turnover intention	.322	.352	.313	.217	-

Note: The coefficients in parentheses on the diagonals of the Fornell-Larcker criterion represent the square roots of the average variance extracted (\sqrt{AVE}). Other values in the same part show the correlation coefficients between constructs.

According to the results of the Fornell-Larcker criterion, it can be observed that the square root of the average variance extracted (*AVE*) for perceived stress, workplace bullying, job satisfaction, work engagement, and turnover intention constructs is greater than the inter-construct correlation coefficient ($\sqrt{AVE} > r$), indicating the achievement of discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Furthermore, considering the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio, all research constructs meet both the general discriminant validity criterion (*HTMT* < .90) and the criterion for distinguishing dissimilar constructs (*HTMT* < .85), indicating the achievement of discriminant validity in terms of both overall differentiation and differentiation among dissimilar constructs (Henseler et al., 2015). As a result, both the *HTMT* ratio criterion and the Fornell-Larcker criterion have demonstrated that the research constructs are distinct from each other.

3.3. Structural Model Analysis

In order to test the research hypotheses, the structural model analysis was carried out. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Results of Predictive Power and Path Coefficients

Exogenous (independent) constructs	Endogenous (dependent) constructs	<i>R</i> ²	<i>f</i> ²	<i>Q</i> ²	<i>β</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	Bias	<i>BCa CI (2.5, 97.5)</i>
WB →	PS	.374	.598	.169	.612	11.855	.000	.007	.492, .698
WB →	JS	.079	.086	.053	-.281	4.139	.000	-.009	-.412, -.151
WB →	WE	.068	.073	.053	-.260	4.271	.000	-.006	-.373, -.136
WB →	TI	.114	.128	.076	.337	3.991	.000	.006	.167, .496

Note: $n = 218$, *WB*: Workplace bullying, *PS*: Perceived stress, *JS*: Job satisfaction, *WE*: Work engagement, *TI*: Turnover intention, R^2 : Coefficient of determinant, f^2 : f-square effect size, Q^2 : Predictive relevance, β : Path coefficients, t : The *t*-test statistic, p : Statistical significance level, *BCa CI*: Bias-corrected and accelerated bootstrap confidence intervals. All paths' variance inflation factor (*VIF*) coefficients were obtained as 1.000.

According to the results of the structural model analysis, the strongest predictive power for the consequences of workplace bullying is observed in the following order: perceived stress ($R^2 = .374$), turnover intention ($R^2 = .114$), job satisfaction ($R^2 = .079$), and work engagement ($R^2 = .068$). Besides, in terms of the magnitude of contribution to the R^2 by the exogenous (independent) construct, it is found that perceived stress has a large level ($f^2 > .35$) of contribution, while job satisfaction, work engagement, and turnover intention have a small level ($f^2 < .15$) of contribution (Cohen, 1988; Hair et al., 2019). Moreover, the coefficient of predictive relevance ($Q^2 > 0$) for all constructs indicates that the research model has predictive power and is effective in explaining the endogenous construct (Geisser, 1974; Stone, 1974). Additionally, since the research model has only one exogenous construct, all the variance inflation factor (*VIF*) coefficients are obtained as 1. A *VIF* coefficient below 5 indicates the absence of multicollinearity issues (Hair et al., 2017). Finally, it can be observed that all path coefficients (β) are statistically significant ($t > 2.57$, $p < .001$). The summarized results of the research hypotheses tested based on all the findings are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Results of Hypotheses

Hypotheses	Paths	Results
$H_1(+)$	Workplace bullying \rightarrow Perceived stress	Supported
$H_2(-)$	Workplace bullying \rightarrow Job satisfaction	Supported
$H_3(-)$	Workplace bullying \rightarrow Work engagement	Supported
$H_4(+)$	Workplace bullying \rightarrow Turnover intention	Supported

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The intended outcomes of this research, aimed at determining the explanatory power of workplace bullying in the public sector on work engagement, perceived stress, job satisfaction, and turnover intention, have been achieved. Accordingly, the main finding obtained from the study indicates that workplace bullying makes a negative contribution to explaining work engagement and job satisfaction, while positively contributing to turnover intention and perceived stress. Notably, the remarkable finding of the research lies in the fact that workplace bullying exerts the greatest influence, in descending order, on perceived stress, turnover intention, job satisfaction, and work engagement in terms of predictive power.

When the results are evaluated holistically, the emergence of individual-level antecedents as a result of the perception of workplace bullying by public sector employees shows that the research results overlap with the Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964). On the other hand, as a result of perceived workplace bullying, the decrease in positive concepts, such as work engagement and job satisfaction, and the increase in negative concepts, such as perceived stress and turnover intention, indicate that the findings are consistent with the Affective Events Theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996).

When the results are evaluated based on the research hypotheses, it is concluded that the first research hypothesis is supported, indicating that workplace bullying in the public sector negatively contributes to work engagement. This finding aligns with the study conducted by

Einarsen et al. (2018) in the private sector, which found a negative relationship between exposure to bullying and work engagement. On the other hand, the second research hypothesis is supported, indicating that workplace bullying in the public sector positively contributes to perceived stress. This finding is consistent with the study by Mathisen et al. (2011) in the private sector, which found a positive relationship between witnessing bullying and stress.

By supporting the third research hypothesis, it has been found that workplace bullying in the public sector negatively contributes to job satisfaction. This finding aligns with the study conducted by Arenas et al. (2015) in the private sector, which found a negative relationship between workplace bullying and job satisfaction. On the other hand, by supporting the fourth research hypothesis, it has been found that workplace bullying in the public sector positively contributes to turnover intention. This finding is consistent with the study by Öcel and Aydın (2012) in the private sector, which found a negative relationship between workplace bullying and turnover intention.

Based on the results obtained from the study, the most critical implication for practitioners is that workplace bullying occurs in the public sector to a similar extent as in the private sector, as perceived by employees. Moreover, like in the private sector, bullying behaviors also affect variables such as work engagement, perceived stress, job satisfaction, and turnover intention in the public sector. Therefore, it is crucial to consider various awareness-raising measures, preventive actions, and sanctions to address the negative consequences of bullying. In this regard, the first step that top management should take is to define what constitutes bullying behavior within the organization. Additionally, raising awareness about the rules in the constitution and labor law that protect employees in cases of bullying and mobbing is essential. Similarly, attention should be raised regarding the guidelines provided by the International Labour Organization (ILO) on violence and harassment in the workplace. Furthermore, supporting employees through contemporary management techniques such as psychological or structural empowerment is crucial.

The limitations of the study can be identified as focusing only on the unit of Special Provincial Administration within the public sector, using convenience sampling, and collecting cross-sectional data. Considering the aforementioned limitations may contribute to further research. Moreover, further studies can focus on new consequences of workplace bullying. Additionally, investigating the new antecedents of workplace bullying at the individual, group, or organizational levels could provide valuable insights and contribute to the existing literature.

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