Workplace Bullying, Engagement and Employability: Moderating Role of Organization-Based Self-Esteem

Nimmi P. M.¹ · Geetha Jose² · Maria Tresita Paul Vincent³ · Anjali John⁴

Accepted: 12 July 2022 / Published online: 20 July 2022
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Abstract
The present research paper aims to examine the influence of workplace bullying on employee work outcomes in terms of employee engagement and perceived internal employability. The paper also analyses the moderating role of organization-based self-esteem (OBSE) in the relationship between workplace bullying and employee work outcomes. The authors relied on cross-sectional data from teaching faculty across universities and colleges in South India to validate hypotheses empirically. The proposed model was tested using Warp-PLS and PROCESS macro in SPSS. The study reported a significant negative influence of workplace bullying on perceived internal employability and employee engagement. The study also found that OBSE positively moderated the negative relationship between workplace bullying and employee work outcomes in terms of engaging employees and perceived employability. The unique aspect of this research is that it is the first time the moderating role of OBSE is discussed in bullying literature. The study puts across OBSE as a positive organization related construct that can nullify the negative impacts of workplace bullying. OBSE is a crucial resource in annualizing the negative effect of bullying in the workplace. Policymakers should imbibe OBSE as a crucial factor in the policies and ethics of their organization for enhancing employee engagement and employability.

Keywords Workplace bullying · Perceived internal employability · Employee engagement · Organization-based self-esteem · Indian faculty

Nimmi P. M.
nimmimohanadas1985@gmail.com
Geetha Jose
josegeetha@gmail.com
Maria Tresita Paul Vincent
maria.tresi@gmail.com
Anjali John
anjalijohn1990@gmail.com

¹ SCMS Cochin School of Business, Kochi, Kerala, India
² Bharata Mata Institute of Management, Kochi, India
³ Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel International School of Textiles & Management, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, India
⁴ Marthoma College of Management, Perumbavoor, India
Introduction

Daily interactions in the workplace establish critical grounds based on which organizational members are respected or not as respected. These interactions are also vital aspects that transfer the sense of belongingness and worth to the members (Nguyen et al., 2019). This unique sense of significance derived from interactions is at the heart of the human experience and psychological needs (Rogers & Ashforth, 2017). During such social exchanges, negative interactions may occur like workplace bullying, incivility, abusive supervision, deviance, harassment, emotional abuse, and social undermining (Mao et al., 2019; Jacobsen et al., 2018). Amongst these, even after 30 years of research, bullying remains a prominent issue that workplaces must solve (Agarwala, 2018; Krishna & Soumyaja, 2020). Workplace bullying is established as a serious work demand and has received much attention in the organizational psychology and behaviour literature in the last decade (Agarwala, 2018; Arshad & Ismail, 2018; Bartlett & Bartlett, 2011; Conway et al., 2021; Gardner et al., 2016; Glambek et al., 2018; Gupta, 2013; Hogh et al., 2021; Nielsen & Einarsen, 2012; Rai & Agarwal, 2017; Tuckey et al., 2017; Verkuil et al., 2015).

In India, teaching as a profession is considered noble; despite this, ‘Indian academia’ reports a high rate of workplace bullying (Agarwala, 2018; Gupta, 2013; Krishna & Soumyaja, 2020). Workplace bullying is described as a category of harassing behaviour that employees may be subjected to at any stage of their career, regardless of their membership in a protected class based on gender, ethnicity, age, etc. (Leymann, 1990). The repercussion of workplace bullying in academia is often reflected in the behaviour towards other stakeholders in an immediate environment like students. This vicious spillover effect may also be reflected in other work outcomes (Krishna & Soumyaja, 2020). However, research examining outcomes of workplace bullying literature in Indian academia is comparatively less (Agarwala, 2018; Gupta, 2013; Krishna & Soumyaja, 2020). Recent research identified that the literature on workplace bullying in India lacks studies on the antecedents and consequences of workplace bullying at the national, societal, and cultural levels, emphasizing future research in this direction (Gupta et al., 2020). Given these gaps in bullying literature in Indian academia, the present study is a modest attempt to address how workplace bullying influences work outcomes among Indian academics.

Adverse effects of bullying affect the organizational sustainability of higher educational institutions (Muazzam et al., 2020). Organizational sustainability is associated with how engaged/associated employees are with their work and organization (Glavas, 2012; Zayed et al., 2020). Activities that demoralize employees’ enthusiasm for the organization can negatively impact organizational sustainability and growth. Moreover, workplace victimization can lead to absence of employees, reduced morale and motivation, and reduced productivity (Law et al., 2011). Although studies on workplace bullying and adverse work outcomes, like turnover intention (Coetzee & van Dyk, 2018), workplace incivility (Meiers, 2018), and deviant behaviours (Sarwar et al., 2020), have yielded an understanding of the negative impact of bullying. The impact of workplace bullying and its relationship with positive work outcomes remain underexplored (Rai & Agarwal, 2017). While workplace bullying can have profound consequences in the work purview, it is vital to comprehend further workplace bullying and its interactions with positive outcomes in the work domain, like employee engagement and internal employability.

Sustainable growth of organizations is achieved by developing human resources and having a positive mindset at work. A highly engaged workforce is quintessential for the success of an organization. Commitment and belongingness towards the organization are evident while
assessing employees’ perceived internal employability as it indicates whether employees plan to continue with the organization (Nimmi et al., 2020). From an employee perspective, an optimum balance between resources and demands is essential for a sustainable career.

Perceived internal employability is an indicator of increased productivity and higher retention of employees (Sánchez-Manjavacas et al., 2014). A greater sense of employability is associated with career satisfaction and wellbeing (Gowan, 2012). Employees with higher internal employability perceptions are confident that they are competent and competitive. Referred to as employees’ alignment of current and future career prospects within the company, perceived employability is affected by individual differences. External realities relating to work and work environment help to nurture or hinder perceived internal employability (Cerdin et al., 2020). Uncertainties and contingencies at work results in less cognitive resources for employees which can negatively impact their internal employability perceptions (Cerdin et al., 2020).

Employee engagement can be defined as a “positive, active, work-related psychological state operationalized by the maintenance, intensity, and direction of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral energy” (Shuck et al., 2017, p. 269). Kahn conceptualizes engagement as harnessing selves in one’s work roles cognitively, physically, and emotionally, driving in-role behaviours (May et al., 2004). The psychological conditions of meaningfulness, safety and availability has to be met for engaging the employees (Kahn, 1990). Research revealed that psychological conditions influence the overall employee engagements. (Allen & Rogelberg, 2013). Engagement creates a psychological connectedness with employees’ work, and engaged employees encompass high levels of energy and are enthusiastic about their work. They also often get fully engrossed in their work and execute their role and responsibilities at a higher quality level. In organisations harmful social stressors like workplace bullying causes disengagement and disrupts the organisational productivity, increased intent to quit and decreased employee performance (Trépanier et al., 2013; Serban et al., 2022). Thus, when the psychological conditions are not met in the organizations, it can affect the employee’s psychological health. Employee disengagement is a prominent indicator of such poor psychological health in employees.

Resource theory literature (Hobfoll, 2012) highlights the importance of resource caravans and resource passageways for a sustainable career. Bullying is characterized as a job demand that drains out the positive resources in an employee. More and more resources are needed to buffer the drain of resources. Theoretically, the study draws from the conservation of resources theory to decipher how workplace bullying negatively influences employee engagement and internal employability and how an organizational resource could mitigate this negative effect. The study proposes that developing organization-based self-esteem can potentially protect employees from the detrimental effects of bullying. Practically, this study provides insights into mitigating the adverse effects of bullying in the workplace and how organizations can play a role. The purpose of our paper is thus two-fold. First, to see if bullying negatively predicts employee engagement and perceived internal employability among academics in India as a case. Second, to look into whether OBSE moderates the negative relationships between the above said variables.

**Theoretical Framework**

Our study is positioned on the conservation of resource theory (COR theory). According to COR theory, “people strive to retain, protect, and build resources and that what is threatening to them is the potential or actual loss of these valued resources, Hobfoll (1989,
p.513). COR theory introduces resource passageways, representing how the external environment, including work and non-work environment, can promote or hinder one’s resource gain. In this study, we place bullying as a job demand. The job demand ought to have a depleting role on job resources. At a work setting, employee engagement and perceived internal employability are considered an outcome of resource perceptions. The study proposes that bullying as a job demand depletes the job resources and negatively impacts engagement and internal employability. The study then places OBSE as a resource passageway instigated within an employee by the organization. Thus, developed self-esteem in employees protects and safeguard them against incivility experienced by them at the workplace.

**Literature Review and Hypothesis Development**

**Workplace Bullying and Employee Engagement**

Personnel engagement is conceptualized as “the harnessing of organization members’ to their work roles; i.e., in engagement, people express and employ physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances (Kahn, 1990, 694)”. Engagement is about the willingness to invest oneself and expend an open effort to help the employer succeed. Employee engagement consists of three facets: trait engagement, behaviour engagement, and psychological state engagement (Macey & Schneider, 2008). Employee engagement is a crucial competitive advantage factor in human resource management practices (Albrecht et al., 2015). Saks (2019), in his study on the antecedents and consequences of employee engagement, stated a positive and significant relationship of employee engagement with job performance, organization commitment, and organizational citizenship behaviour. Employee engagement can be better understood by understanding the sources creating employee engagement.

The COR theory gets aligned with this perspective. The demands and resources employees collect in the organization play a vital role in engaging them. This is because employees’ intrinsic and extrinsic motivation gets strongly influenced by these demands and resources, which results in their engagement level (Nazir & Islam, 2017; Tesi, 2021). Workplace bullying covers a set of negative behaviours aimed toward an individual at the workplace (Einarsen et al., 2009). Bullying acts as a job demand that drains out the resources of an employee and negatively impacts the positive job outcomes of employees. Workplace bullying is primarily defined as “repetitive acts of harassment, such as social isolation and verbal abuse, which one or more perpetrators commit over an extended period (six months or more)” (Einarsen et al., 2020, p.22). There are a series of negative consequences of workplace bullying (Coetzee & van Dyk, 2018; Meires, 2018; Sarwar et al., 2020). Engagement with work or organization is the result of actual or anticipated resource gain enhancing energetic resources. The washout of resources due to bullying can reduce engagement with the organization. Based on previous empirical findings (e.g., Einarsen et al., 2018; Meriläinen et al., 2019; Park & Ono, 2017), based on the above discussions, we hypothesize that workplace bullying is negatively related to engagement, especially employee engagement.

*H1: Workplace bullying negatively predicts employee engagement*
Workplace Bullying and Perceived Internal Employability

Employability perception is defined as an individual’s perception of his or her chances of attaining and maintaining employment (Vanhercke et al., 2014). Assessing employability perceptions is essential as employees’ perceptions rather than reality activate their cognitions and behaviours (Vanhercke et al., 2014; Nimmi et al., 2020). There are two dimensions of perceived employability, namely, perceived internal employability and perceived external employability. According to Rothwell and Arnold (2007), internal employability is the perceived value of the occupation with the current employer or within the labour market. In contrast, external employability reflects the perceived value of employment in the external labour market.

Research reveal that, employability is a key job resource, impacting the subjective career success and job performance within organizations. (Bozionelos et al., 2016). The COR theory places perceived employability as a vital resource (Kirves, 2014) to enable an individual to adapt to the changing work environment (Baruch, 2014; Baruch & Rousseau, 2019) and as an individual coping mechanism for job security and a sustainable career (Donald et al., 2020). Perceived employability is considered an outcome of interactions between structural factors (Job market and Organisational) and internal factors (Berntson, 2008). Several factors like training, work experience, interpersonal relationships, and constructs like, protean career attitude, and spirituality affect the employability perceptions of a person (Cortellazzo et al., 2020; Groot & Van Den Brink, 2000; Nimmi et al., 2020; Nimmi et al., 2021). Organizational factors like HRM practices are associated with perceived internal employability (Akkermans et al., 2020). Perceived internal employability explains organizational outcomes like desired commitment, loyalty, adaptability, and productivity (Sánchez-Manjavacas et al., 2014). It is an indicator of enhanced commitment towards the organization and output of developmental activities provided by the organization. However, work demands like workplace bullying, which deplete resources, have a detrimental effect on internal employability as different bullying activities manifest into different adverse outcomes. Bullying depletes the resources like self-esteem, self-confidence, physical and mental health, trust in the organization and colleagues (Krishna & Soumyaja, 2020). As these resources see a downfall, workplace bullying can be detrimental to the internal employability perceptions of individuals and job insecurity (Krishna & Soumyaja, 2020). Thus, we hypothesize that,

\[ H2: \text{Workplace bullying negatively predicts perceived internal employability.} \]

The Moderating Role of OBSE

Pierce et al. (1989) introduced the concept of organization-based self-esteem as a multifaceted phenomenon. Organization-based self-esteem (OBSE) is defined as “the degree to which an individual believes him/herself to be capable, significant, and worthy as an organizational member.” The concept elaborates self-esteem, which has been studied in the individual context, to an organizational context where one’s self-evaluation of his/her worthiness as an organizational member is assessed. High OBSE indicates individuals consider themselves as essential and competent enough to be employable in that particular organization (Pierce & Gardner, 2004) and are highly satisfied with the treatment in the particular organization. OBSE is a self-concept (personal resource)
developed at the individual level, based on social exchange within the organization. According to Xanthopoulou et al. (2007), personal resources moderate the link between job demands and work outcomes. In this context, employees who enjoy a stronger sense of self-esteem can be expected to exhibit a stronger sense of performance than their low self-esteem counterparts (Paul V & Devi, 2018, 2020).

Recent research has revealed that psychological empowerment substantially affects employee engagement (Joo et al., 2019). OBSE is an essential psychological empowerment resource for employees. In the organizational context, people with high self-esteem or high levels of OBSE may be less responsive to adverse effects than employees with low levels of OBSE (Hui & Lee, 2000). When threatened by a hostile work atmosphere, employees with high OBSE may cope more than employees having low OBSE (Arshadi & Damiri, 2013). The theoretical explanation for the moderating role of OBSE comes from its role as a resource passageway. First is that OBSE acts as a resource caravan passageway helps to maintain resource caravan by compensating for resources lost at the job (Hobfoll, 2012). OBSE moderates the relationship as ‘resource passageway function’ as it can diminish the side effects of adverse workplace habits. So OBSE helps an individual to cope up with the negative impacts of workplace bullying. Based on the assumptions we propose,

H3: OBSE positively moderates the negative relationship between Workplace bullying and employee engagement; such that the negative relationship between workplace bullying and employee engagement is weaker for those who are high in OBSE.

H4: OBSE positively moderates the negative relationship between Workplace bullying and perceived internal employability; such that the negative relationship between workplace bullying and internal employability is weaker for those who are high in OBSE.

So based on the propositions a theoretical model was framed, depicted in Fig. 1 which was theoretically tested,

Methodology

Methods and Participants

The core aim of this study was to investigate the linkage between workplace bullying with employee engagement and employability. It also examined how OBSE moderates the relationship mentioned above among university teachers.

The population of the study constitutes permanent teachers employed with recognised Indian universities and their affiliated colleges spread across Kerala and Tamil Nadu, in South India. Convenience sampling was chosen for the study considering the special interventions of Covid 19 pandemic. The methodological rigour followed in this study can subdue the apprehensions of choosing convenience sampling method in this cross-sectional study. Limiting respondents to the above criteria made OBSE, employee engagement, and employability relevant issues for the individual. An online survey was floated through the mail. Participants were assured strict academic usage of collected data and anonymity of their responses. Screening 269 reverted responses, nine were cast off due to incompletion, resulting in a sample size of 260.
**Measures**

*Perceived Internal Employability* was assessed via 4-items based on the scale developed by Rothwell and Arnold (2007). The perceived value of occupation in the current organization (internal employability) with four items. A sample item was “*Even if there was downsizing in this organization, I am confident that I would be retained.*”

*Organisation Based Self-Esteem* was assessed with a ten-item scale developed by Pierce et al. (1989). A sample item was “*I am taken seriously around here*”.

*Employee engagement* was assessed using a UWES -9 developed by Schaufeli et al. (2006) containing 9 items. A sample item is “*I feel happy when I am working intensely*”.

*Workplace bullying* was assessed using a Short Negative Acts Questionnaire containing 9 items developed by Notelaers, Hoel, van der Heijden and Einarsen et al. (2018). A sample item is “*in the past six months I experienced persistent criticism about my work and effort*”.

**Control Variables**

Gender, total experience, years of experience in the current organization were controlled in the study as previous studies have denoted the impact of these variables on outcome variables (Pierce et al., 1989; Donald et al., 2019).

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**Fig. 1** Proposed theoretical model
Data Analysis Strategy

The Warp PLS was used to conduct confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), examining adopted study measures’ measurement model and validity. Thus, confirming the discriminant and convergent validity of the instrument items. Subsequently, using the PROCESS macro in SPSS 23.0 (Hayes, 2013) with 5000 bootstrapped samples following Preacher and Hayes (2008), the structural equation model (SEM) was performed to test the hypothesized moderation model. Out of 260 respondents, 161 were female, and 99 were male. Also, 35% of teachers were below 25 years, 26% were between 26 and 35 years, 21% were between 36 and 45 years, 7% were between 46 and 55 years, and the remaining 11% were above the age of 55 years.

Further analysis was done in two stages. In the first stage, Harmon’s single factor test was applied to check for common method bias. Initial descriptive tests were conducted using SPSS software. Then the reliability and validity of the scales were assured. The reliability of the scales was assessed using Cron-Bach alpha values. In the second stage of the study, the hypotheses were tested using structural equation modelling using Warp-PLS. The moderation effects were assessed using SPSS Macro- Hayes Model Template 1.

Results and Analysis

Descriptive Statistics

The fit of the proposed model depicted in Fig. 1 was tested with Warp-PLS v.6.0 statistical software (Kock, 2015). Each of the constructs like Bullying, OBSE are represented by latent factors. And each latent factors were assessed using specific scale items. Fit Indices are provided in Table. 1, which permits an acceptable fit for the model.

The mean, standard deviation, and correlations (Table 2) indicated a reliable correlation for the variables under study.

The convergent and discriminant validity was assessed using average extracted variance (AVE) and maximum shared variance (MSV); which found to be above threshold levels and approves validity and reliability tests for the measures (Table. 3). The

| Fit Index                              | Value | Threshold limit       |
|----------------------------------------|-------|-----------------------|
| Average path coefficient (APC)         | 0.350 | \( P < 0.001 \)       |
| Average R-squared (ARS)                | 0.276 | \( P < 0.001 \)       |
| Average adjusted R-squared (AARS)      | 0.261 | \( P < 0.001 \)       |
| Average block VIF (AVIF)               | 3.34  | acceptable if \( \leq 5 \), ideally \( \leq 3.3 \) |
| Average full collinearity VIF (AFVIF)  | 2.00  | acceptable if \( \leq 5 \), ideally \( \leq 3.3 \) |
| Tenenhaus GoF (GoF)                    | 0.443 | small \( > = 0.1 \), medium \( > = 0.25 \), large \( > = 0.36 \) |
| Sympon’s paradox ratio (SPR)           | 0.750 | acceptable if \( \geq 0.7 \), ideally \( = 1 \) |
| R-squared contribution ratio (RSCR)    | 0.950 | acceptable if \( \geq 0.9 \), ideally \( = 1 \) |
| Nonlinear bivariate causality direction ratio (NLBCDR) | 0.750 | acceptable if \( \geq 0.7 \) |
| Statistical suppression ratio (SSR)    | 0.720 | acceptable if \( \geq 0.7 \) |
The reliability of the constructs (Cron-Bach values) was above the accepted threshold (Workplace Bullying - 0.87, OBSE - 0.89, Perceived Internal Employability - 0.87, Employee Engagement - 0.86).

**Hypothesis Testing**

In order to assess the direct effects, path analysis was conducted with workplace bullying as the predictor and employee engagement and perceived internal employability as outcomes in Warp-PLS. The direct effects were assessed from the structural model. The study found a significant negative effect of workplace bullying on employee engagement ($-0.269^{**}$) and employability ($-0.312^{**}$). So, hypothesis 1 and 2 are accepted.

To test the moderating hypotheses, PROCESS method (Preacher and Hayes (2004, 2008)) was used as indirect effect can be deducted from it. Bootstrapping procedure was followed with around 5000 samples to give 95% confidence interval (CI) with indirect effect estimates. The codes for moderation analysis were captured from SPSS - Hayes Macro output and graphical representation were created with MS-Excel. Lastly, regarding the moderating hypotheses, H3 and H4, the indirect outcome of workplace bullying on perceived internal employability was significant for OBSE (beta $=0.318^{**}$) and on employee engagement was significant for OBSE (beta $=0.468^{**}$). The positive moderating role of OBSE is represented in the Figs. 2 and 3. Further Tables 4 and 5 depicts the interaction effect of Workplace Bullying on Internal employability and Employee engagement. The direct effect of Bullying on Engagement and Internal Employability in the presence of OBSE as well interaction (moderation effect) effect is evident from the tables.
Discussion

The purpose of this paper was two-fold. First, to see whether workplace bullying has a detrimental effect on internal employability perceptions and employee engagement. Second, to see whether OBSE has a positive effect on the above-mentioned relationships. We found support for H1 (workplace bullying negatively predicts employee engagement) and H2
The moderating hypothesis put forward was also accepted. That means OBSE moderated the relationship of workplace bullying with employee engagement as well as perceived internal employability. Our study was in response to a call by Park and Ono (2017) on more representation of reports from the impact of bullying on employees belonging to different cultures and occupations. The support to H1 addresses calls by Park and Ono, 2017 and Rai and Agarwal, 2017 on the under-representation of the effects of workplace bullying in different cultural contexts and also the organization-level outcomes of workplace bullying.

Our findings of the detrimental effect of workplace bullying on engagement and employability are in line with the JD-R theory claiming the negative impact of workplace bullying on work outcomes. The potential explanation of the negative impact of workplace bullying is that bullying could act as a workplace demand that can mitigate the energy and resources of the individual. This drain of resources may lead to a decreased level of engagement within the organization activities as well as perceiving low internal employability. The moderating role of OBSE is very much evident from the regression coefficient and Figs. 2 and 3. For those employees who have high OBSE, even when facing bullying experiences their engagement at work and internal employability seems to be high. This means the adverse effects of bullying are buffered by the high OBSE levels.

### Theoretical Implications

The study looks into the impact of workplace bullying on important work outcomes from a multi-theoretic perspective. Major factors that reflect the sustainability of an organization are the internal employability and engagement of its employees. The study is the first among to look into the impact of bullying on employability. The study is significant from a socio-cultural perspective as India has a collectivist culture with high power distance (Hofstede, 1980). A negative association was found in lieu of the JD-R model and COR model. Prior research on workplace bullying has not checked the buffering role of OBSE. The most significant

### Table 4 Interaction effect of OBSE and bullying on employee engagement

| Predictor       | Beta  | SE  | t    | p      | LLCI  | ULCI  |
|-----------------|-------|-----|------|--------|-------|-------|
| Constant        | 1.32  | 1.01| 1.3  | 0.03   | 0.68  | 3.34  |
| Bullying        | −0.22 | 0.34| −0.65| 0.05   | −0.84 | −0.25 |
| OBSE            | 0.63  | 0.23| 2.62 | 0.0002 | 0.36  | 0.89  |
| Bullying*OBSE   | 0.46  | 0.08| 0.244| 0.04   | 0.27  | 0.85  |

Dependent Variable: Employee engagement

### Table 5 Interaction effect of OBSE and bullying on perceived internal employability

| Predictor       | Beta  | SE  | t    | p      | LLCI  | ULCI  |
|-----------------|-------|-----|------|--------|-------|-------|
| Constant        | 1.49  | 1.07| 1.38 | 0.17   | 1.18  | 2.23  |
| Bullying        | −0.21 | 0.36| −0.27| 0.05   | −0.78 | −0.31 |
| OBSE            | 0.61  | 0.32| 2.39 | 0.01   | 0.36  | 0.88  |
| Bullying*OBSE   | 0.32  | 0.08| 0.97 | 0.03   | 0.27  | 0.64  |

Dependent Variable: Perceived Internal Employability
theoretical implication of our study comes from the moderating role of OBSE. Organization based self-esteem acts as a source passage that alleviates the negative impacts of bullying in workplace domain. OBSE is an unswerving reflection of the self-perceived value that an individuals have in an organisational enviornment. Employees who perceive high OBSE, perceive themselves as important in the organisation and find meaning in the work they do. This is reflected in their future employment perceptions within the organisation. This will be directly reflected in their behaviours which is in lieu with the policies of the organisation and valued within organization. It is believed that these may result in employees’ deriving intrinsic satisfaction, coupled with reinforcing their self-esteem (Pierce et al., 1989).

**Practical Implications**

The deleterious effects of workplace bullying may reflect on the sustainable growth of organizations. The cues from the employees who perceive bullying shall be seriously taken up by HR managers and supervisors to support them and help them relieve the negative emotions. The study calls for interventions conducted at the organization level that can convey the value system within the organization and restrain individuals from bullying manifestations. It is pertinent to develop a work culture that nurtures creativity as well as employability rather than mitigating them. The study also voices the need to develop a harmonious relationship at work. Such an atmosphere is necessary to ensure employees that their jobs are not at stake. The importance of developing OBSE in an organization is conveyed through the article by looking into the buffering role of OBSE on the negative impacts of workplace bullying. The effects of employer brand image regarding their warmth and competence on employee engagement is influenced by their employee characteristics (e.g., experience and role) (Davies et al., 2018). Thus, organizations should provide the teachers with a supportive environment (Gallagher et al., 2021) through OBSE to enhance their positive affirmations with their role and experience accumulation, to enhance their brand image and employee engagement.

**Limitations and Future Research**

Future research could include observer ratings to examine how much they predict incremental variance over and above self-reports, which could be collected at multiple time points. Likewise, a longitudinal research design to attain more knowledge on causal relationships. Cultural differences may exist in academic settings in different countries, so the validation of models in different nations is a possibility. Also, another scope is to capture the difference in outcome on temporary and permanent employees who are subjected to bullying. Various personal and organization level moderators could be considered to buffer the negative impacts of bullying. Further studies also could come up with how bullying impacts external employability and turnover intentions.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, our study and model constitute an important step toward understanding the outcomes of workplace bullying. The study also investigated the moderating role of OBSE in the relationship of bullying at the workplace to that of employee engagement,
and employability. We found that OBSE positively moderates both the relationships. This research work adds to the research on workplace bullying and organizational outcomes in academia. We also provide implications of our findings for employees in academics.

**Declarations**

**Conflict of Interest** There is no conflict of Interest between the authors.

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