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[Understanding Innovation Decline: A Moderated Mediation Model of Perceived Organizational Support and Internal Locus of Control]

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ABSTRACT

The present study examines the impact of workplace bullying on employees' innovative work behavior (IWB), highlighting the mediating role of perceived organizational support (POS) and the moderating role of internal locus of control (ILC). Drawing on the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, data were gathered using a structured questionnaire from 336 employees in public sector banks of Pakistan. Structural equation modeling was used for analysis. Results show that workplace bullying significantly reduces both innovative work behavior and perceived organizational support. Employees who experience bullying feel unsupported and demoralized, which limits their creativity and willingness to propose new ideas. Conversely, higher levels of perceived support from the organization are positively associated with increased innovative behavior. POS partially mediates the relationship between bullying and IWB, indicating that support acts as a buffer. However, the moderating effect of ILC was found to be statistically insignificant, suggesting that personal resilience alone does not reduce the negative impact of bullying on perceived support. The findings highlight the importance of fostering a supportive work environment to mitigate the damaging effects of bullying and promote innovation. Organizations should implement strong anti-bullying policies, encourage open communication, and provide psychological support systems. While individual traits like ILC are valuable, systemic organizational efforts play a more critical role in protecting employee creativity and well-being. This study contributes to workplace psychology literature by clarifying how bullying affects innovation and the mechanisms that mediate or fail to moderate this relationship in the Pakistani context.
Keywords: Workplace Bullying, Internal Locus of Control, Perceived Organizational Support, Innovative Work Behavior, Conservation of Resource Theory.

Introduction
Workplace bullying constitutes a profound and endemic challenge that permeates the organizational environment worldwide. Workplace bullying is characterized as a sustained and deliberate pattern of hostile behavior whereby one employee systematically inflicts emotional and psychological harm upon a colleague (Arynne, 2009). Many studies have distinguished between different forms of bullying, such as person-related bullying versus work-related bullying. Work-related attitudes include factors such as excessive workload and unrealistic deadlines. Son-related ed bullying includes behaviors such as making insolent comments, teasing, spreading rumors, and playing impractical jokes (Einarsen & Hoel, 2001). This type of conduct detrimentally affects workforce efficiency, leadership, job excellence, and innovative work practices (Carbo, 2008). Workplace bullying is not confined to individuals in positions of authority; it can be carried out by anyone within the organization, including peers, subordinates, and supervisors. Organizations are now addressing bullying at multiple levels to create a healthier work environment. The influence of bullying within the workplace extends beyond personal experiences, disrupting team functionality and hindering organizational effectiveness as a whole (Singh & Samnani, 2012).
In this dynamic environment, innovation is considered a vital factor that would help

institutions accomplish developmental goals, thus achieving higher performance and productivity (Islam et al., 2024). Indeed, innovative employees get engaged in the process of generating, screening, selecting, and applying new ideas (Abdul Fattah et al., 2022). Innovative work behavior is crucial for corporate sustainability, economic development, especially in developing countries like Pakistan, where businesses are under pressure to modernize, adapt to technological change, and compete globally. Therefore, it becomes crucial to understand the social and psychological factors that hinder or promote innovative work behavior at the employee level.

One such factor is workplace bullying, which can damage morale, reduce motivation, and create a toxic work climate, ultimately stifling innovation. While extensive research findings highlight the deleterious effects of workplace stressors on critical outcomes such as organizational performance, employee turnover, leadership effectiveness, and productivity, despite its importance, the link between bullying and innovative behavior has received limited attention. This is an important area to explore, especially in Pakistan, where many organizations face challenges related to rigid hierarchies, power imbalances, and lack of employee voice—all of which can contribute to workplace bullying that may hinder employee innovative work behavior. Another gap in the literature is the mediating role of perceived organizational support between bullying at work and creative behavior. As highlighted by Zhou, X., Rasool, S.F., and Ma (2020), future research is needed to investigate how perceived organizational support mediates the association between workplace bullying and innovative work behavior.

Apart from addressing empirical gaps, the current study offers a meaningful theoretical contribution by drawing on the Conservation of Resources Theory. Guided by (COR) Theory, this study considers perceived organizational support as a key psychological resource that may be compromised in environments where workplace bullying is present.

The decline in POS is theorized to mediate this relationship and reduce innovative work behavior, highlighting how the loss of supportive organizational perceptions can intensify the counterproductive effects of bullying on employee creativity and idea generation.

Existing studies characterize bullying as a chronic stressor that undermines the core functioning of most organizations (Sheehan, McCabe, & Garavan, 2018). This research also explores the role of internal locus of control as a moderating variable. Understanding the role of personality traits in workplace bullying requires examining them as potential moderators that influence how bullying leads to various outcomes, as proposed by Nielsen and Knardahl (2015). Previous research has indicated that an individual's locus of control and its associated outcomes serve as a critical determinant in shaping employee performance level and their commitment to the organization (Martin et al., 2005). A significant relationship exists between individuals with higher internality and organizational outcomes. An individual's locus of control could influence adverse reactions such as stress, dissatisfaction, and diminished performance. Employees with a high internal locus of control tend to perceive their work environment as supportive and collaborative (Owolabi, 2013). Overall, a stronger internality is often linked to higher levels of happiness and better psychological well-being (Ng et al., 2006). Consequently, it

is anticipated that individuals with higher ILC will be less affected by bullying. Thus, by examining the moderating influence of internal locus of control, mediating role of perceived support, this study offers a insightful understanding of how workplace bullying impacts innovative work behavior and also seeks to inform organizational practices—particularly in the context of Pakistan by promoting environment that is psychologically secure, supportive, and conducive to employee innovation and well-being.

Literature Review

Workplace Bullying and Innovative Work Behavior

Workplace bullying is defined as the persistent mistreatment of one employee by another, leading to both physical and psychological health issues. Victimization arises when individuals experience hostile or aggressive behaviors, such as bullying, in the workplace (Tag-Eldeen et al., 2017). Negative feelings, diminished morale, and legitimate concerns point to workplace bullying as a phenomenon rooted in conflict (Chia & Kee, 2018). WB can manifest as disparaging criticism, blaming without logic, being treated differently from others, being humiliated, being the target of jokes, or being overly monitored (Rai & Agarwal, 2018).

Workplace bullying involves several forms of repeated negative behaviors, such as excessive observation of work, suppression of information that can influence how well a job is done, and verbal and physical abuse and threats. Many of these bullying tactics include derogatory speech, such as spreading rumors and gossip, and overt humiliation (Martin et al., 2020).

IWB is a dynamic process where employees harness their creativity to elevate work performance, refine organizational procedures, and optimize routine tasks (Bin Saeed et al., 2019). These behavioral manifestations often encompass identification of work-related challenges, the generation of innovative ideas, and implementation of these ideas to deliver tangible benefits for individuals, teams, or organizations (Janssen et al., 2015; Afsar & Badir, 2017; Lee et al., 2019). Hence, it is characterized as multifaceted behavior that involves the generation, introduction, and implementation of ideas, alongside the processes and discovery of innovative solutions (Budiyono et al., 2019). The theory of innovative work behavior is intended to purposefully create and apply novel ideas that are critical for an organization, particularly to improve customer experience, product design development, and procedural optimization (Samma et al., 2020).

Moreover, workplace bullying fosters a climate of fear, discouraging employee participation in meetings and discussions, thereby stifling the flow of novel and creative ideas in the organization (Suggala et al., 2020). (Suggala et al., 2020).Workplace bullying decreases employee commitment and leads to the unlikely sharing of new ideas (Rai & Agarwal, 2018; Tabassum et al., 2021).

Bullying undermines an individual's intrinsic motivation, significantly hindering creative output. This detrimental behavior diminishes both the creativity and competence of the workforce, ultimately affecting organizational performance (Liao, Lui & Lio, 2010). Drawing on (COR) theory, we contend that workplace bullying triggers a resource loss process. To safeguard their resources, individuals may refrain from engaging in creative activities. Additionally, a hostile work environment depletes employees' focus and time, erodes their resources, and restricts their capacity to exhibit

innovative practices (Agarwal et al., 2016).

Hence, it is proposed that:

H1: Workplace bullying has a significant and negative influence on innovative work behavior.

Workplace Bullying and Perceived Organizational Support

Bullying remains a pervasive issue in modern workplaces, with harmful consequences for both the workforce and organizational functioning (Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, & Cooper, 2003). Supportive leader behaviors and a generally facilitative organizational climate may be subsumed under a variable entitled "Perceived Organizational Support." Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, and Sowa (1986) demonstrated that individuals tend to "form global beliefs concerning the extent to which the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being". Specifically, individuals assess how their bosses treat them and infer the broader intentions underlying such treatment, while recognizing that what is considered significant varies extensively among organizations and individuals.

For a few employees, perceived organizational support may stem from receiving additional assistance or resources to complete tasks. In contrast, others may view training opportunities in areas of personal interest as evidence of organizational support. Regardless of the form it takes, the perception that the organization is invested in an employee's success plays a crucial role in shaping their overall job satisfaction and engagement.

However, when employees are exposed to bullying—particularly by supervisors—they tend to attribute such negative treatment to the organization as a whole, perceiving it as neglect or even intentional harm. This leads to a diminished sense of POS (Shoss, Eisenberger, Restubog, & Zagenczyk, 2013). Employees who endure harassment and hostile treatment come to view the organization as apathetic toward their well-being. These adverse experiences are perceived as intentional efforts to harm them, ultimately eroding their sense of perceived organizational support (Naseer, Saima, & Usman Raja, 2019).

Moreover, the organization is both morally and structurally accountable for the actions of its managers and coworkers, particularly in their roles as evaluators and leaders. Alarmingly, research indicates that superiors often protect perpetrators rather than support victims, and may manipulate situations to excuse or defend bullying behaviors (Longo & Sherman, 2007). As a result, reporting such incidents can be a frustrating and ineffective process, especially when the perpetrators are seen as closely aligned with the organization or perceived as beneficiaries of organizational support. Therefore, it is stated that

H2: Workplace bullying has a significant and negative influence on perceived organizational support.

Perceived Organizational Support and Innovative Work Behavior

POS is a critical indicator of how well employees are treated by their employer (Zagenczyk et al., 2010). Wiesenfeld et al. (2001) argue that supportive organizations augment the workers' feelings of being esteemed and acknowledged. Undoubtedly, organizational support is a key driver of motivating employees to perform at their best. The role of organizations is crucial in fostering innovative work behaviors (Chughtai &

Khalid, 2022), which in turn stimulate employees' curiosity and drive for continuous development, while also boosting their enthusiasm and vitality at work. When employees are valued, they tend to feel more resolute and obligated to the organization as a whole (Pundt et al., 2010). To exhibit innovative work behaviors, employees require robust interpretations of support from management and supervisors, which can be manifested through granting autonomy at work and ensuring resource availability (Sulaiman et al., 2019). Employees derive greater meaning, independence, and self-determination from generating fresh ideas compared to merely persuading and executing existing ones (Afsar et al., 2014).

Pundt et al. (2010) suggest that when organizations support their employees, it encourages innovative behavior. This reciprocal relationship benefits both employees and the organization by unlocking their creative potential. Similarly, Khalili(2016) argues that managers must offer sufficient support for innovation to influence employees' creativity and innovative abilities positively. Hence, supportive leadership and a resource-rich environment enable employees to explore their creative potential, increasing both competence and engagement in innovative work practices.

Furthermore, Ekmekcioglu and Öner (2023) demonstrate that supportive leadership, which is recognized for fostering an environment where employees can enhance their skills and achieve their creative aspirations, enables employees to boost their creative output by gaining a deeper understanding of their skills, competencies, and abilities. This leads to strong insights into organizational support among employees, which in turn can encourage them to exhibit an increased level of innovative work behavior. This set of studies implies that when employees perceive high levels of organizational support, they are more inclined to reciprocate with innovative behaviors. Therefore, we propose the hypothesis:

H3: Perceived organizational support has a significant and positive impact on innovative work behavior

Mediating Role of Perceived Organizational Support

Perceived organizational support can be defined as "the motivation of organizational managers to value their employees' contributions and to care about their well-being" (Zhang et al., 2017). Substantial research has found a positive association between fair treatment and perceived organizational support however, few studies have explored impact of unfair treatment on POS, and little is known about how significant other's experiences of adverse treatment affect the individual associated with them and their perception regarding the support of their organization (Shoss, Restubog, Eisenberger, et al., 2013).

Giorgi and Majer (2009) identified bullying as a pervasive, task-driven global issue that can engender a markedly negative interpretation of support from employers. Additionally, the evidence provided substantiates the assertion that such hostile practices are not intended to enrich an organizational climate that restricts bullying, but rather to foster a toxic and burdensome environment for employees.

Elevated levels of perceived (POS) strengthen employees' sense of obligation to support organizational objectives, particularly when individuals rely on the organization for guidance and support amidst evolving roles and responsibilities (Shore & Wayne, 1993)

consequently, these negative perceptions and sentiments will compel employees to perform inconsistently or with diminished efficacy when POS is inadequate or adverse.

The Conservation of Resource theory offers a valuable lens for understanding these dynamics. Resource loss is inherently stressful for individuals; therefore, the threat or experience of such loss compels employees to protect their existing resources and limit further investment in order to avoid additional risk (De Clercq et al., 2004). For acquiring resources, restoration is the most observable approach. When employees are exposed to detrimental conditions, such as workplace bullying, they may experience a significant loss of essential resources, which in turn weakens their perception of organizational support. Continuous exposure to stressors, such as bullying, gradually strips employees of their resources, fostering deeply ingrained negative perceptions of the organization. Individuals with a weakened POS may struggle to navigate further risks of resource loss, triggering intensified stress and a noticeable deterioration in their ability to engage in IWB.

Cycles of resource loss are more essential and arise at a quicker speed than resource gains Hobfoll, 2010). When being bullied in the workplace, people feel less able to create anything valuable or new, as well as having no energy left for their work (Agarwal et al).

Previous research has shown that if employees perceive that their supervisor does not give them enough help or treat them equitably, then their inclination to put effort towards doing something innovative will fall away (Bosnehles et al. 2017). Those who work in an unsupportive environment become less productive, demotivated, and less dedicated to their jobs. Additionally, they have a negative attitude about going to work, which persists throughout the day (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Consequently, when workers experience bullying, they develop poor perceptions; these unfavorable assessments of the organization's support may reduce worker creativity and productivity. Hence, it is stated that

H4: Perceived organizational support mediates the relationship between workplace bullying and Innovative work behavior.

Internal Locus of Control as a Moderator

LOC is strongly associated with well-being, emotional responses at work, behavioral tendencies, and levels of ambition (Park et al., 2020). ILC is a personality trait that reflects the extent to which an individual feels they have mastery over the outcomes in their life (Levenson, 1981). Individuals with higher expectations, believing they can shape outcomes, are classified as internals, while those with lower expectations, perceiving external forces as determining rewards or consequences, are labeled externals (Rotter, 1966). People who have a strong internality believe that they have control over their surroundings, which gives them the strength and bravery to avoid the adverse effects of negative experiences like bullying (Nielsen et al., 2020) As a result, individuals with a strong internal locus of control tend to interpret and address challenges constructively, leading to their higher job satisfaction. This may lead to improvements in both performance and creativity.

According to Shah et al. (2020), the impact of bullying at work is influenced by whether people perceive negative actions as personal failings or as the result of external

conditions. The consequences of stressful experiences are closely tied to an individual's coping capacity, their ability to handle adverse events. As a result, personal differences in how targets assess bullying behaviors may help explain why people react to such situations in varied ways (Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2002).

The impact of workplace bullying varies across individuals. It is posited that personality traits and individual differences are pivotal in shaping how such experiences influence psychological and organizational outcomes (Moreno-Jiménez et al., 2009). Individuals targeted by workplace bullying frequently demonstrate diminished self-worth and impaired social functioning (Matthiesen & Einarsen, 2007).

Individuals with a strong internal locus of control are more inclined to attribute failures to their actions, which enhances their psychological resilience. This sense of agency enables them to navigate adverse environments more effectively by maintaining rational thought and adaptive behavior (Connolly, 1980). Thus, individuals who demonstrate positive behavior can lessen the negative consequences of workplace bullying and continue to act constructively within the organization, even in difficult situations. A strong sense of internal control helps individuals maintain a positive mindset and emotional stability. This is consistent with findings that link self-confidence to favorable psychological and behavioral outcomes (Ng, Sorensen, & Eby, 2006). Employees with a strong internal locus of control believe that their abilities and skills are key to managing and overcoming stressors, such as workplace bullying. They perceive coping as primarily dependent on their efforts and internal resources (Björkqvist, Österman, & Hjelt-Bäck, 1994).

Moreover, individuals who perceive themselves as having control over stressful situations exhibit greater self-esteem and a more favorable perception of their work environment. They are more likely to develop positive insights of organizational support that can enhance their ability to think creatively and pursue innovative solutions (Grob, 2000). Basm and Esen (2008) identified ILC as a constructive disposition that nurtures the entrepreneurial spirit and promotes engagement in creative endeavors.It has been revealed in prior research that an internal locus of control positively shapes employees' cognitive abilities, foresight, and innovative behavior (Perry, 1990; Kaufmann & Walsh, 1995). Moreover, individuals with a strong internal orientation firmly believe that their actions, competencies, and knowledge are the primary drivers of performance outcomes (Babalola, 2019).Thus, it is proposed that ILC moderates the link between workplace bullying and perceived organizational support. High internality, characterized by the tendency to attribute outcomes to personal factors such as effort or ability, is associated with more positive cognition, emotion, and behavior, thereby reducing the adverse effects of mobbing. This positive psychological orientation leads to more favorable interpretations of organizational support, ultimately fostering greater willingness to engage in IWB.

In light of the reviewed literature, the following hypothesis is formulated.
H5: Internal locus of control moderates the relationship between workplace bullying and perceived organizational support, such that it weakens the relationship when it is high and strengthens the relationship when it is low.

Conceptual Framework
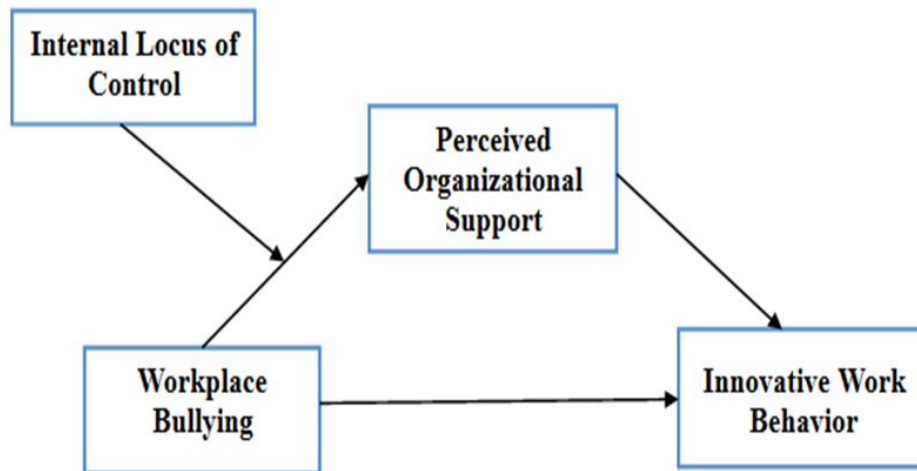
Methods

This study employed a **cross-sectional research design**, collecting data at a single point in time. Data were gathered using a structured survey administered through email, online platforms, and printed questionnaires. A convenience sampling technique was used to target employees of public sector banks in Pakistan, primarily in Rawalpindi and Islamabad. Participants were thoroughly informed of the study's aims and guaranteed that all responses would be handled with the utmost confidentiality and anonymity. After removing duplicate entries, outliers, and incomplete responses, a total of 336 valid questionnaires were retained for analysis.

Measures

Workplace Bullying

(WB) was the independent variable. A seven-item questionnaire, adapted from Einarsen et al. (2009), was used to assess bullying. The instrument employed a five-point Likert scale to measure participants' responses. The items include: 'I am ignored or excluded from work-related social gatherings,' 'I am exposed to an unmanageable workload,' and 'I am insulted or subjected to offensive remarks about my habits, attitudes, or private life.'

Perceived Organizational Support

(POS) was examined as a mediating variable in this study. POS was measured using the 8-item scale developed by Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002). Sample items include: 'My organization values my contribution to its well-being,' 'My organization cares about my well-being,' and 'My organization cares about my general satisfaction at work.'

Innovative Work Behavior

Innovative work behavior was the dependent variable. To assess IWB, a 10-item scale developed by De Jong and Den Hartog (2010) was employed. The items for innovative work behavior include ' I always pay attention to the issues that are not part of my daily work, ' 'I wonder how things can improve. '

Internal Locus of Control

ILC was used as a moderating variable in this study. It was measured using the internality subscale developed by Levenson (1981), which includes eight items. These items assess

individuals' belief in personal control, such as: ' My life is determined by my actions,' 'When I make plans, I am almost certain to make them work, ' 'Whether or not I get to be a leader depends mostly on my ability. '

Data Analysis

Construct Reliability and Validity

Several indicators were measured to determine the reliability and validity of the constructs that have been used in the study, which include Internal Locus of Control (ILC), Innovative Work Behavior (IWB), Perceived Organizational Support (POS), and Workplace Bullying (WB). The findings indicated that all constructs exhibited a significant degree of internal consistency with Cronbach's Alpha rating between 0.813 and 0.948, which surpassed the preferred level of 0.70. Moreover, all constructs exhibited high composite reliability (rho_c) values, exceeding the acceptable threshold of 0.70, indicating significant internal consistency. Notably, IWB and WB displayed particularly high values of 0.955 and 0.940, respectively. Convergent validity-wise, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) levels of each of the constructs were also greater than the minimum standard of 0.50 requirements, with a range of 0.575 (POS) to 0.690 (WB). All these findings collaboratively confirm the reliability of the instrument and the validity of the measurement model; therefore, it is undoubtedly the case that the constructs used in the study reflect sound theoretical abstractions.

Table No. 1: Construct Reliability and Validity

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
ILC	0.813	0.844	0.822	0.657
IWB	0.948	0.956	0.955	0.681
POS	0.892	0.903	0.914	0.575
WB	0.925	0.926	0.940	0.690

Indicator Reliability (Outer Loadings)

In order to analyze the measurement model further, the outer loading of each of the individual indicators to its construct was considered. Most of the items exhibited high loadings that are better than the recommended cutoff of loadings, 0.70, bearing the idea that observed variables are good predictors of the latent variables. In case of construct Internal Locus of Control (ILC), the loadings of items ILC3 (0.727), ILC6 (0.746), and ILC7 (0.727) were satisfactory, but loadings of items such as ILC1 (0.470), ILC2 (0.546), and ILC4 (0.402), which do not match the acceptable limit. These low-loading items may need to be discarded or reconsidered in further research to achieve construct purity. Almost all loadings were exemplary in the case of Innovative Work Behavior (IWB), except for the indicator IWB3, which had a loading of 0.697, marginally below the threshold of 0.70. However, it was passable in some circumstances when the overall construct reliability was also very high. All the items on Perceived Organizational Support (POS) had acceptable to strong loadings that ranged between POS7 (0.552) and POS2 (0.814). Although the loading of POS7 is relatively low (0.552), it can be retained if it is theoretically supported and does not negatively impact AVE and composite reliability.

Lastly, all the items used to indicate Workplace Bullying (WB) had high loadings exceeding 0.80, demonstrating a high reliability of the indicator items, with WB7 loading up to 0.855. On the whole, the results of the outer loading support the idea that the indicators of most of the constructs could be deemed reliable and add some value to the latent variables. Nevertheless, certain weak items (see ILC1, ILC2, ILC4, and POS7) can be taken into account in order to refine the scale in the future.

Table No. 2 Outer Loadings

	ILC	IWB	POS	WB
ILC1	0.470			
ILC2	0.546			
ILC3	0.727			
ILC4	0.402			
ILC5	0.585			
ILC6	0.746			
ILC7	0.727			
ILC8	0.607			
IWB1		0.703		
IWB10		0.851		
IWB2		0.896		
IWB3		0.697		
IWB4		0.835		
IWB5		0.825		
IWB6		0.837		
IWB7		0.838		
IWB8		0.881		
IWB9		0.865		
POS1			0.772	
POS2			0.814	
POS3			0.784	
POS4			0.743	
POS5			0.774	
POS6			0.788	
POS7			0.552	
POS8			0.806	
WB1				0.815
WB2				0.827
WB3				0.842
WB4				0.844
WB5				0.813
WB6				0.817
WB7				0.855
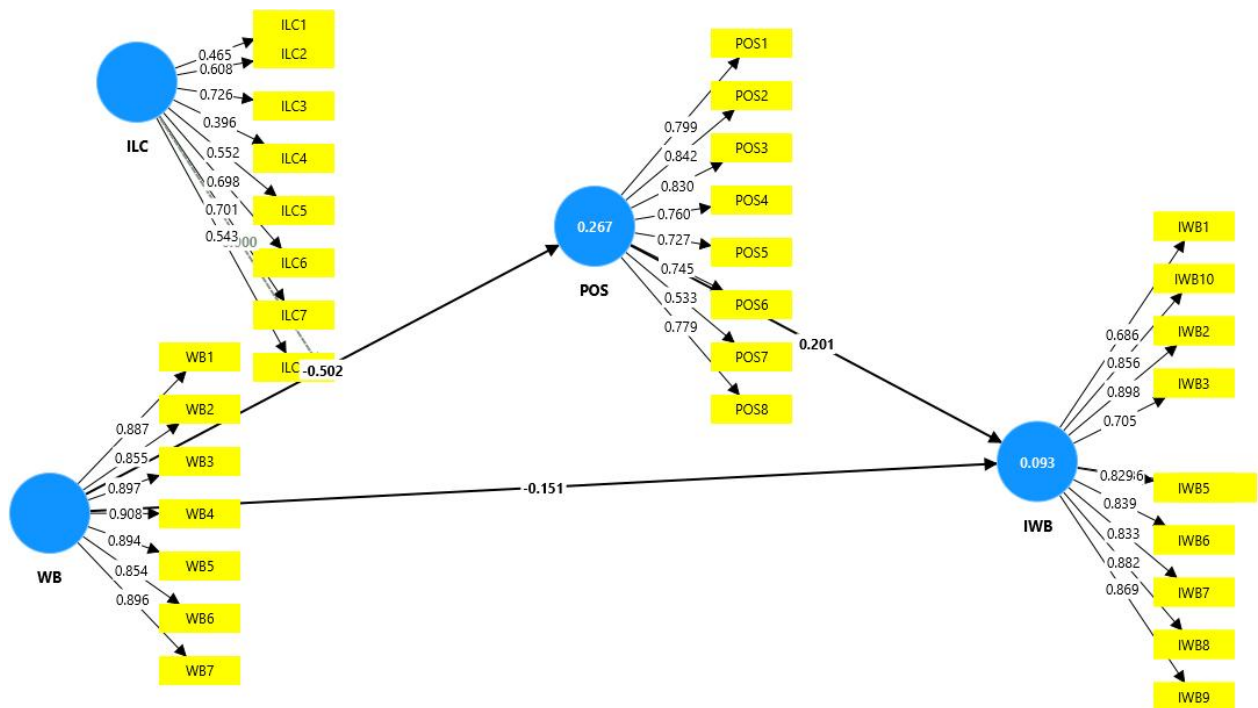
Figure No. 1: Measurement Model

Table No: 3 HMTM

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	2.5%	97.5%
IWB <-> ILC	0.207	0.226	0.129	0.349
POS <-> ILC	0.105	0.150	0.105	0.217
POS <-> IWB	0.296	0.297	0.184	0.418
WB <-> ILC	0.080	0.121	0.078	0.185
WB <-> IWB	0.256	0.256	0.146	0.364
WB <-> POS	0.518	0.520	0.422	0.617

Heterotrait-monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

The HTMT findings show reasonable discriminant validity across all the study constructs. HTMT values are all below the conservative cutoff of 0.85, indicating that every construct is empirically different. The greatest HTMT was between workplace bullying and the perceived organizational support (HTMT = 0.520), which indicated a moderate but appropriate relationship that even lent credence to the distinctiveness of the two constructs. In the same breath, the value of HTMT between perceived organizational support and innovative work behavior was the highest at 0.297, which also supported their uniqueness. The connections of both innovative work behavior (HTMT =0.226) and perceived organizational support (HTMT = 0.150) and internal locus of control were not high, which suggests that there is little conceptual overlap. The internal locus of control and workplace bullying association had the lowest HTMT value (HTMT = 0.121) in confirmation of the idea that these constructs examine different latent notions. Altogether, the HTMT outcomes prove that the discriminant validity is indeed established as a part of the suggested model.

Table No. 4 Statistical Path Analysis

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P values
POS -> IWB	0.180	0.178	0.122	1.473	.000
WB -> IWB	-0.251	-0.253	0.054	4.698	0.000
WB -> POS	-0.502	-0.499	0.041	12.111	0.000
WB -> POS-> IWB	-0.101	-0.103	0.039	2.606	0.009
ILC x WB -> POS	-0.058	-0.031	0.058	1.010	0.312

Statistical Path Analysis

Findings of the structural model will strongly confirm the hypothesized links between the sets of variables (WB), (POS), (IWB), and (ILC). To begin with, the direction of the path running from workplace bullying to innovative work behavior was negative and highly significant (β= 0.251, t = 4.698, p < 0.001), thereby showing that as the levels of bullying increase, the likelihood of employees engaging in innovative behavior becomes weaker.
 This lends credence to the theoretical claim that bullying drains the psychological reserves and also results in a hostile climate that inhibits creativity and proactivity.

Workplace bullying has a highly negative and significant impact (β = -0.502, t = 12.111, p < 0.001), indicating that workplace bullying compromises employees' sense of being supported and valued by the organization. This is in line with existing bodies of work that show that, given that bullying is so common and unchecked, employees might see the organization as either indifferent or as one that tolerates bullying. Notably, the direction of linkage between perceived organizational support and innovative behavior in work (path c) was positive and significant (β = 0.180, t = 1.473, p = 0.000), which means that when authorities of the organization are perceived to be supportive; there is an increase in the propensity of employees to participate in work related to innovation.

This accentuates the importance of a favorable climate in the development of creativity, a zone of accepting risks, and an active approach to work. Also, it can be assessed that there was a significant indirect effect of Bullying on IWB through POS (β = -0.101, t = 2.606, p = 0.009), which contributes to supporting the assumptions of partial mediation. This implies that some adverse influence of bullying on innovation takes place by decreasing perceptions of support. Finally, the internal locus of control had the moderating role of internality (β = -0.058, p = 0.312), which means that internal locus of control did not significantly moderate the relationship between bullying and perceived organizational support in this scenario.

Discussion

Based on a sample of 336 employees working in public banks in Rawalpindi and Islamabad, this study aims to develop and integrate a framework that explores the decline of innovation and the impact of organizational support in toxic work environments, with ILC as the moderator. According to the results, the path from workplace bullying to innovative work behavior was negative and highly significant (β = 0.251, t = 4.698, p < 0.001), indicating that as bullying levels increase, the likelihood of

employees engaging in innovative behavior decreases. These findings align with previous research that has shown a negative association between WB and IWB (Zhou, X., Rasool, et al., 2020; Smith, D., Bruyns, et al., 2011). Harmful workplace conduct, such as bullying, increases somatic and emotional disorders and adversely affects employee innovative practices (Sheehan et al., 2018)

The data analysis and findings of the study confirmed the second hypothesis, offering a clear understanding that workplace bullying hurts perceived organizational support. Workplace bullying had a highly negative and significant result as well (β = -0.502, t = 12.111, p < 0.001), indicating that workplace bullying compromises the sense of employees that they are supported and valued by their employer organization.

Past studies have concluded that there is a significant and negative link between exposure to bullying and perceived organizational support (Shoss et al., 2013; Hauge et al., 2011). In a related study, 301 employees working in small and medium-sized firms in Guangdong Province, China, reported that toxic workplace conditions like bullying are strongly linked with lower levels of perceived organizational support (Samma Faiz Rasool et al., 2021).

The third hypothesis was also confirmed the direction of linkage among perceived organizational support and innovative behavior in work (path c) was positive and significant (β = 0.180, t = 1.473, p = 0.000), which means that when authorities of the organization are perceived to be supportive; there is an increase in the propensity of employees to participate in work related to innovation. Similarly, earlier research has identified a positive correlation between POS and IWB. The findings of this study further reveal that perceived organizational support has the strongest positive association with employee innovativeness. These findings indicate that employees are more inclined to exhibit creative behavior when they notice support for their innovation-related efforts; they consider their organization as the leading provider of the critical resources they need to perform effectively (Caglar & Dogru, 2018).

Findings from the analysis supported the fourth hypothesis of the study; there was a significant indirect effect of bullying on innovative work behavior through POS (β = -0.101, t = 2.606, p = 0.009), which contributes to supporting the assumptions of partial mediation. Specifically, it highlights how exposure to bullying in the workplace undermines employees' perceptions of organizational support, which subsequently hampers their capacity and willingness to engage in innovative work behavior. These results not only reinforce the theoretical assumptions but are also consistent with (COR) theory, emphasizing that the depletion of perceived support as a critical resource negatively hinders employees' willingness and energy to engage in innovation-driven tasks. In line with this, Naseer, Saima, and Usmn Raja (2019) found that perceived organizational support plays a mediating role in the link between workplace bullying and job-related strain.

Finally, the moderating role of internal locus of control (β = -0.058, p = 0.312), which means that the internal locus of control did not significantly moderate between WB and POS in this scenario. Contrary to this, several previous studies have emphasized the significant role of individual differences in understanding and predicting workplace bullying, suggesting that personal dispositional traits can strongly influence one's

experience and response to such behavior and act as moderators within the workplace bullying-outcomes relationship (Moreno Jimenez et al., 2009). Furthermore, the absence of a significant moderating effect may reflect a generally low level of internal locus of control among participants, suggesting that when employees feel less in control over workplace outcomes, their disposition has limited power to alter the impact of bullying on their perceptions of support. In such environments, external factors or organizational policies might be more critical in mitigating bullying's adverse effects.

Practical Implications

This study's outcomes present key practical insights for organizations, providing management with effective approaches to proactively address and reduce mobbing practices while simultaneously fostering a culture that encourages and sustains innovative practices at work. Results underscore a significant negative relationship between workplace bullying and employee innovativeness, highlighting the urgent need for organizations to create psychologically safe environments where creativity can thrive and employees feel empowered to contribute novel ideas.

This research also emphasizes the need for organizations to actively recognize and address bullying behaviors while also empowering employees to respond appropriately when such incidents occur. To effectively combat workplace bullying, managers need to engage with staff across all levels of the organization. Practitioners and policymakers can implement a range of proactive measures to curb victimization. For example, employees should be encouraged to disclose any occurrence of mobbing or hostile practice through appropriate channels, with assurance that their concerns will be treated confidentially and that their rights will be protected. Organizations should promote open communication and encourage employees to report such incidents to designated departments, such as Human Resources or direct supervisors. Furthermore, organizations should allocate resources toward developing mechanisms that enable employees to report bullying anonymously and seek support without fear of retaliation. Maintaining proper documentation of reported incidents is also crucial, ensuring a formal record of grievances.

Top leadership must take responsibility for establishing impartial and trustworthy committees or teams tasked with investigating and resolving bullying-related complaints. Additionally, managers should implement consistent follow-up procedures to ensure that both the perpetrator and the victim receive fair, timely, and appropriate outcomes. These practices not only support victims but also help in cultivating a safe, respectful, and innovation-friendly workplace culture. During the hiring process, organizations should align candidate evaluation with the demands of the job, incorporating psychological assessments to identify key personal traits that contribute to a healthier and more adaptive workforce. Additionally, organizations should offer training and counseling programs to help employees cope with negative behaviors and foster positive perceptions of support, which can boost innovation. Providing restorative time off is also important to help employees recover and maintain well-being.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

There are certain limitations associated with this research; nevertheless, every possible effort was made to uphold rigorous research standards given the available resources.

Because of time constraints, a cross-sectional design was adopted for the study. However, since workplace bullying is characterized by repeated negative behaviors, a longitudinal approach with multiple observations over time—ideally with intervals of six months or more—would provide a more accurate assessment of its prevalence. This study focused solely on employees in the public banking sector, which limits the generalizability of findings across other key employment sectors, including private organizations. Future research could enhance the robustness and applicability of the results. This study offers multiple opportunities for further research. It explored how perceived organizational support and internal locus of control impact workplace dynamics. Although internal locus of control did not significantly moderate the association, future research should explore other personality traits, such as conscientiousness, agreeableness, openness to experience, and neuroticism, which could provide deeper insights into the dynamics of bullying. Future research could investigate additional mechanisms linking bullying to innovative work behavior. For instance, exploring the mediating effects of organizational climate, employee voice, emotional exhaustion, and similar factors may shed light on how bullying influences employee creativity and innovation. Moreover, future studies could examine gender differences in the prevalence of workplace bullying, as well as the dynamics of cross-gender versus same-gender bullying, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of interpersonal dynamics within organizational settings.

Conclusion

This study offers meaningful insights into the intricate dynamics between workplace bullying (POS), (IWB), and (ILC). The results confirmed that workplace bullying has a significant negative impact on IWB, revealing its destructive role in organizational settings. Furthermore, POS positively influences IWB and partially mediates the relationship between work bullying and innovative work behavior, emphasizing the importance of supportive environments in fostering employee innovative work practices. Although internal locus of control was found to be a reliable construct, its moderating role between workplace bullying and perceived organizational support was not statistically significant, suggesting that when employees feel less in control over workplace outcomes, their disposition has limited power to alter the impact of bullying on their perceptions of support. Overall, the study highlights that organizations must minimize bullying and maximize perceived support to encourage innovative behaviors among employees. The findings contribute to both theory and practice by underlining the psychological and structural mechanisms that affect workplace innovation.

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