



Bullying to Citizenship Loss and Withdrawal: The Roles of Politics and Resilience in Pakistan's HEI Sector

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ABSTRACT

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Grounded in Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, this study examines the direct effects of workplace bullying (WPB) on organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) and work withdrawal behavior (WDB), as well as the indirect role of perceived organizational politics (POP) and the moderating role of employee resilience (EPR) within Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Pakistan. Data were collected from 235 employees working in the HEI sector, and Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was applied using SmartPLS and SPSS to analyze the proposed relationships. The results reveal that WPB is negatively associated with OCB and positively associated with WDB. Furthermore, POP partially mediates the relationships between WPB, OCB, and WDB. In addition, EPR was found to buffer the effect of WPB on POP, thereby reducing its intensity. This study provides valuable insights for executives and policymakers in Pakistani HEIs by highlighting the detrimental impact of WPB on employees' attitudes and behaviors. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first study to explore the effects of WPB on OCB and WDB through POP, with EPR as a moderating factor. Moreover, the results underscore the need for HEIs in Pakistan to develop effective policies and resilience-building interventions to curb workplace bullying and foster a supportive organizational environment.

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1. Introduction

The discretionary work behavior of employees at higher education institutions (HEIs) contributes to keeping complex, interdependent work moving, coordinating teaching, research, student services, and academic administration. However, interpersonal mistreatment can also be enabled by embedded structural features. Sekgobela and Matjie (2025) explored the detrimental effects of workplace bullying on the mental health and performance of employees in HEIs. These psychological and emotional health challenges directly lead to serious physiological issues, resulting in poor performance in the form of absenteeism, work avoidance, turnover intention, and reduced prosocial behavior (Srivastava et al., 2022). The two most important discretionary work behaviors carry enormous consequences: Organizational Citizenship Behavior toward Individuals (OCB) involves employees' voluntary loyalty, devotion, and reciprocation towards their subordinates/coworkers (Podsakoff et al., 2009), whereas work withdrawal behavior (WDB) includes lateness, absenteeism, reduced effort, and turnover intentions that destroy continuity (Berry, Lelchook, & Clark, 2012). OCB is a distinct interpersonal dimension of citizenship that links it to desirable individual- and unit-level outcomes, underlining the value of Citizenship behavior in knowledge-intensive workplaces like HEIs (Williams & Anderson, 1991). In contrast, classic and contemporary evidence shows WWB

as a family of disengagement responses, such as voluntary lateness, absenteeism, and employee turnover, that threaten service quality and collaborative research in HEIs (Berry, Lelchook, & Clark, 2012; Hammer, Bauer, & Grandey, 2003; Harrison, Newman, & Roth, 2006). Taken together, protecting OCB and minimizing WWB are central to maintaining the flow of complex academic work in HEIs.

Bullying has become a major workplace issue (Einarsen, 2000). In Europe, Australia, the US, and other nations, workplace bullying research and conversations have grown dramatically in recent decades (Power et al., 2013). Many organizations report regular bullying at all levels, with coworkers, subordinates, and customers also being accused of such behaviors (Hoel, Cooper, & Faragher, 2001). Supervisors are the most common violators. Workplace bullying has been proven to harm both individuals and organizations. More specifically, victims report increased anxiety (Zheng, Nauman, & Jahangir, 2024), emotional exhaustion (Naseer, Raja, & Donia, 2016), and politicized organizational climates (De Clercq, Fatima, & Jahanzeb, 2021). However, organizations with prevalent bullying experience a decrease in OCB (Nielsen & Einarsen, 2012), higher voluntary turnover by targets, and lower employee commitment and loyalty. Workplace bullying may reduce an employee's likelihood of engaging in OCB because they perceive the costs as outweighing the advantages, and increase the physical removal from the workplace. Recent evidence covering two decades of research in higher education institutions (HEIs) concludes that workplace bullying is prevalent across HEIs and is often embedded within the sector's aggressive interpersonal behaviors, such as politics, diffuse authority, and unfair management practices (Hodgins et al., 2024), and broadly affects the overall well-being of the organizational culture (Reeves et al., 2025).

Additionally, examining workplace bullying from a sectoral perspective (Hodgins et al., 2024) highlights workplace bullying as a process that challenges a person's sense of identity, voice, and belonging, which are especially crucial in an academic environment characterized by limited oversight and high interdependence. Therefore, HEIs are both theoretically significant and practically urgent contexts in which to examine how workplace bullying influences employee behavior and organizational culture. These HEIs include universities, colleges, educational training institutions, faculty/schools, graduate research institutions, and other relevant entities. Therefore, this research presents three interrelated goals. First, we examined the direct association between WPB and two theoretically important outcomes, OCB and WDB, in Pakistan's HEI sector. Establishing these links in HEIs clarifies the contextual scope and boundary conditions for general findings commonly drawn from universities, colleges, educational training institutions, faculty/schools, and graduate research institutions (Alm, Melén, & Aggestam-Pontoppidan, 2021; Erdemli, 2015). We introduce POP as a mediating mechanism between stated relationships, providing a parsimonious account of how a single interpretive shift channels behavior away from discretionary contributions and toward withdrawal. Third, we examined employee resilience (EPR) as a first-stage moderator, specifying when bullying experiences are less likely to crystallize into politicized appraisals. Together, these aims integrate mistreatment, politics, and personal resources into a unified COR-consistent process model tailored to HEIs.

2. Review of Literature

2.1. Relationship of WPB and OCB

The phenomenon of WPB was introduced during the late 1980s when Leymann (1990) defined their synonymous term workplace mobbing, which means "hostile action." Hostile actions do not appear offensive; however, when they are repeatedly held for a longer period, they reflect hurtful results. However, WPB refers to a situation characterized by present negative actions over a prolonged period, directed by one individual toward another, in which the targeted person finds it difficult to defend themselves (Mendiratta & Srivastava, 2021). In addition, Bateman and Organ (1983) define the organizational citizenship behavior phenomenon (OCB). OCB is extra work that employees do, which plays a significant role in organizational performance. (Mendiratta & Srivastava, 2021). Moreover, research has explained OCB in terms of the extra-role behavior of employees (Van Dyne, Graham, & Dienesch, 1994). It can further be described as any behavior of employees that is carried out to support or contribute positively to the organization. Bullying is the intentional harassment, belittling, or social rejection of someone that hinders their work (Einarsen et al., 2003). When one or more people fully and persistently perceive themselves as the object of negative behavior and are targeted by multiple people, they are vulnerable to workplace bullying and

must take proactive measures to protect themselves (Glambek, Skogstad, & Einarsen, 2018). Bullying can cause job or social stress (Lutgen-Sandvik, Hood, & Jacobson, 2016; Mendiratta & Srivastava, 2021). Bullying victims experience emotional exhaustion, absenteeism, and higher intent to leave. Bullying at work has many harmful consequences for employees, but performance habits have worried business and HR managers. Workplace bullying is a danger or stressor for management and employees, since employee performance determines organizational competency and efficiency (Sekgobela & Matjie, 2025). Organizational circumstances, such as interpersonal conflict and social stressors, can affect individual performance and OCBs through their emotional impact (Spector & Fox, 2002). Therefore, WPB is a potential stressor that results in increased stress at the workplace, decreases organizational citizenship, and increases organizational retaliation (Jenkins et al., 2011).

Our study presented the WPB and OCB relationship based on the foundation of Hobfoll's (1989) conservation of resources theory (COR). According to this theory, individuals strive to obtain, retain, and protect valued resources such as self-esteem, social support, and emotional energy (Mendiratta & Srivastava, 2021). The consequences of WPB resulted in intentions to leave, turnover, absenteeism, and also not showing "cooperation" among team members. Workplace bullying threatens and depletes these resources by creating stress, emotional exhaustion, and feelings of helplessness. As employees invest considerable effort to cope with such hostile treatment, they have fewer resources available to engage in extra-role behaviors like OCB, which require discretionary effort and psychological energy (Davies, Stoermer, & Froese, 2019). Documenting more negative results of WPB as it widely negatively correlates with employee job performance and satisfaction. It is also negatively related to the intrinsic motivation of employees, which results in their empowerment being minimized to take self-initiative (Trépanier, Fernet, & Austin, 2013). Consequently, the resource-draining nature of bullying undermines employees' willingness and capacity to demonstrate altruism, conscientiousness, and other forms of OCB, highlighting how resource loss processes explain the inverse association between WPB and OCB. Workplace deviance is related to and in conflict with OCB. Previous literature supported the factors that WPB increases employee disengagement, absenteeism, and employee deviance behavior, henceforth not favorable to OCB. Therefore, we propose a hypothesis:

H1: Workplace bullying has an inverse relationship with organizational citizenship behavior

2.2. Workplace Bullying and Work Withdrawal Behavior

Work withdrawal behavior refers to behaviors aimed at avoiding or reducing engagement in one's tasks, such as skipping meetings, arriving late, or taking excessive breaks (Hammer, Bauer, & Grandey, 2003; Hanisch & Hulin, 1990). In contrast, job withdrawal reflects employees' intentions to exit the organization altogether, manifested through actions such as planning to resign, considering early retirement, or accepting downsizing and buyout offers (Srivastava et al., 2022). According to Hobfoll (2011), individuals struggled to obtain, retain, protect, and updated what the value defined as "resources." These resources included, for instance, self-esteem, financial stability, career opportunities, social support and relationships, job autonomy, energies like time, personal characteristics, sense of safety and security, organizational position, etc. Based on the COR principles, individuals perceived a stressful situation when they perceived a threat to their resources (Hobfoll, 1989, 2011). Most threatening situations and organizational hazards are increasingly being recognized as "WPB" (Mendiratta & Srivastava, 2021; Srivastava et al., 2022). However, WPB studies have vastly investigated the penalties of WPB concerning individuals who work in HEI, such as absenteeism, laziness, intention to quit, and burnout. WPB is an undesirable behavior that increases organizational costs and decreases employee productivity (Walker, 2017). Bullying episodes, characterized by persistent hostility and power imbalances, gradually deplete individuals' energy, self-esteem, and sense of security (Srivastava & Agarwal, 2020). When employees perceive that their resources are continually drained and recovery is limited, they may engage in work withdrawal behaviors, such as absenteeism, reduced effort, or psychological disengagement, as a defensive mechanism to conserve their remaining resources (Srivastava et al., 2022; Walker, 2017). Thus, consistent with COR theory, workplace bullying not only undermines employees' resource reservoirs but also fosters withdrawal behaviors aimed at self-preservation, such as absenteeism. Therefore, we documented a hypothesis as:

H2: Workplace bullying has a positive and significant impact on work withdrawal behavior.

2.3. Mediating Role of Perceived Organizational Politics

Demanding and strenuous work circumstances have long been thought to increase WPB (Akella, Soumyaja, & Krishna, 2025). Organizational politics is informally discretionary behavior used to obtain benefits, resources, and influence from other individuals for self-interest (Ferris, Russ, & Fandt, 2013). Intentional exploitation, revenge, and power abuse to benefit oneself at the expense of others and against organizational aims and norms are common (De Clercq, Fatima, & Jahanzeb, 2021). Manipulation is believed to be rewarded in highly political workplaces. Previous research shows that when employees perceive the organizational climate as political and self-serving, they tend to worry or complain rather than focus on how they can contribute to their employer's success (Kacmar & Ferris, 1991). Task performance refers to in-role work practices directly related to employment tasks, whereas OCB describes discretionary behaviors intended to benefit individual workers. OCB is consistent acts that go beyond one's formal employment, are not explicitly rewarded by the organization, and improve hierarchy (Organ, 1988). WPB undermines employees' trust in fairness and equity within the organization, often heightening their perceptions of organizational politics (POP). When employees face persistent mistreatment, exclusion, or humiliation, they may interpret such experiences as a reflection of a politically charged environment in which favoritism, hidden agendas, and self-interest outweigh merit-based practices. Thus, POP becomes a critical cognitive lens through which employees evaluate their workplaces. Elevated perceptions of politics, in turn, discourage employees from voluntarily engaging in extra-role contributions, as they feel that their efforts will go unrecognized or unfairly exploited. Thus, POP mediates the relationship between WPB and OCB, explaining why bullied employees become less inclined to support their colleagues or contribute to the broader organizational community. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: POP mediates the association between WPB and OCB

Furthermore, DuBrin (2010) documented that POP is an informal way of gaining power, rather than through merit or luck. Ferris and Kacmar (1992) define this phenomenon as "it is a subjective perception of individuals instead of objective reality". Therefore, POP is negatively related to individual resources and attitudinal outcomes such as WDB. Therefore, we argue that POP mediates the effects of WPB and WDB. Employees who feel threatened by WPB are more likely to leave by creating views about dysfunctional organizational dynamics, thereby externalizing their WDB. Similarly, employees who experience bullying may perceive organizational structures that not only tolerate such mistreatment but are also dominated by political maneuvering, favoritism, and a lack of transparency (Naseer, Raja, & Donia, 2016). These perceptions drain psychological resources, foster feelings of helplessness, and diminish employees' motivation to engage in their work (Hobfoll, 1989, 2011). Consequently, employees confronted with bullying are more likely to disengage by arriving late, avoiding meetings, or taking unnecessary breaks, reflecting WDB. Therefore, POP serves as the explanatory link that translates bullying into withdrawal, highlighting that it is not only the act of mistreatment itself but also the political climate it signals that pushes employees toward disengagement. Hence, we documented a hypothesis:

H4: POP mediates the relationship between WPB and WDB.

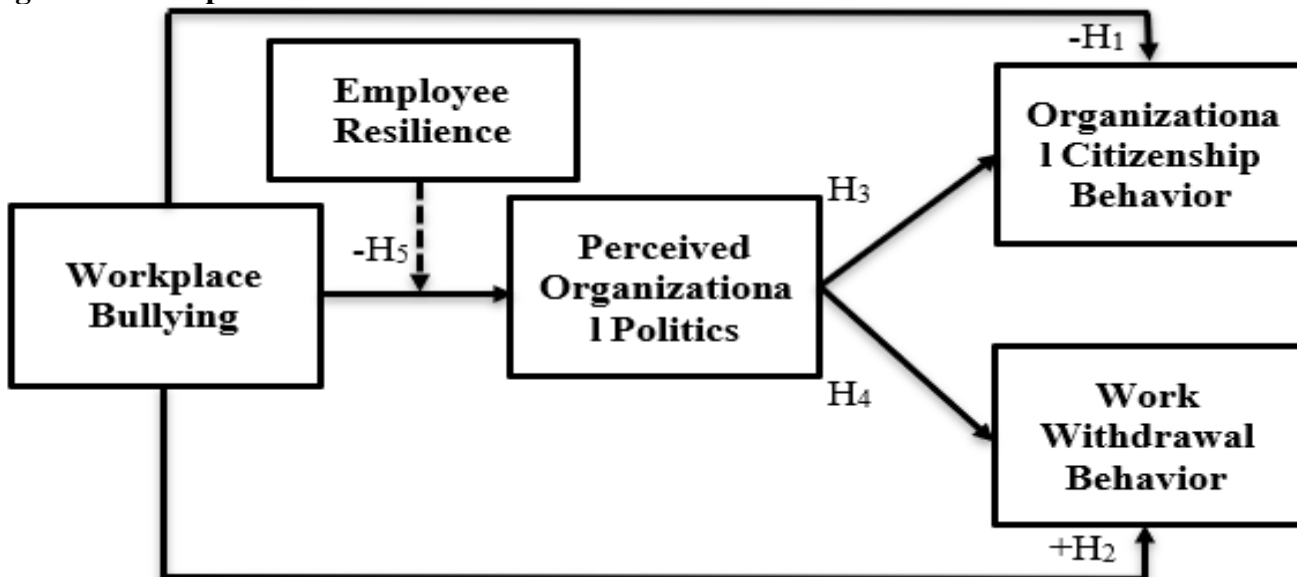
2.4. Employee Resilience as Moderator

This research documented that employee resilience (EPR) is a result of actions that underlie effective human responses. This phenomenon has received attention from potential researchers and organizations, responding to the uncertainties of individuals' discretionary behaviors. According to Bonanno (2004), it is the ability of an individual that cannot deviate from their functioning during stressful and traumatic situations. Organizations changing their workplace have become the norm and face various cultures and individual behavior, and studies have shown that employees play an essential role in understanding and addressing their changes (Shin, Taylor, & Seo, 2012). Therefore, more resilient employees are better equipped and well-skilled to cope with these challenging situations. We claim that EPR plays a moderating role in influencing the relationship between WPB and POP. While bullying experiences often increase employees' perception that the workplace is unfair and driven by politics, resilient employees are better at coping with adversity, managing negative emotions,

and reinterpreting stressors in less damaging ways (Davies, Stoermer, & Froese, 2019; Mendiratta & Srivastava, 2021). By utilizing adaptive coping strategies, resilient employees are less likely to see bullying incidents as part of systemic organizational politics, instead viewing them as isolated interpersonal conflicts (Shin, Taylor, & Seo, 2012). As a result, resilience weakens the positive link between WPB and POP, indicating that employees with higher resilience are less likely to perceive their organizational environment as politically charged, even when faced with bullying. Therefore, we suggested a hypothesis:

H5: Employee resilience negatively moderates the relationship between WPB and POP.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



3. Research Methods

This study employed a positivist approach to target the HEI sector in Pakistan. Based on the positivist approach, deductive reasoning with quantitative methodology was selected, and a closed-ended questionnaire instead of an open-ended one was designed. Simple random sampling (SRS), a probability sampling, was employed to draw a total of 235 participants who provided services in HEI. We adopted SRS because it provides unbiased data collection from the targeted population and ensures that each individual has an equal chance of being selected. In addition, SRS increases data reliability and the generalizability of study outcomes. However, incomplete and missing values were deleted from the entire sample. To ensure questionnaire validity and a high response rate, we have provided the complete details of the study. This initiative also decreases social desirability and common method biases for the data. They were also repeatedly assured that there were no right or wrong answers (Spector & Fox, 2002). Our samples are based on higher education institutions (HEIs) from five major cities in the Punjab region of Pakistan: Lahore, Multan, Sahiwal, and Gujranwala. This research setting was chosen because Punjab hosts a large concentration of HEIs, and many of the country's leading institutions are located in these cities. Additionally, the region plays a central role in shaping educational development, research capacity, and academic innovation, making it a valuable context for quantitative empirical research. The self-report form, which asked about perceived organizational politics, bullying at work, organizational citizen behavior, work withdrawal behavior, and employee resilience, was completed by the respondents. Similarly, the respondents completed the demographics section, providing information on their names, age, gender, education, title, organization, and qualifications. A cross-sectional design was used in this study. Respondents either handed over the completed questionnaires to the concerned researcher or sent their responses through Google Forms. After eliminating any missing values and deemed responses, a total of 235 valid respondents shared their responses. The data consisted of a major part of male 56.84% participants. The data showed that 45% of the participants surveyed were under the age of 35, which means that most of the employees were younger. Most employees holding a bachelor's degree have achieved an education level of 68% or higher education qualification. Moreover, 55% of the individuals had been employed in the HEI sector over the past five years.

3.1. Measures

All questionnaires were evaluated by Likert scale in which strongly agree represented by 5 and strongly disagree denoted by 1. All variables were measured using well-established and verified scales from prior studies. We measured workplace bullying to which workers were subjected to bullying at work using a condensed version. We assessed employees' exposure to workplace bullying using an eight-item short version of the Negative Acts Questionnaire (Einarsen, Hoel, & Notelaers, 2009), which was later verified by De Clercq, Fatima and Jahanzeb (2021). A sample item is "I have been ridiculed in relation to my work." Perceptions of organizational politics (POP) as employees perceive dysfunctional politics in the workplace, which measures general political behavior and the degree to which self-serving tendencies are evident in organizational decision-making. Kacmar and Ferris (1991) developed a 6-item scale that we used to assess POP, which was also employed in past studies (Ferris et al., 2002). An example item is "People build themselves up by tearing or lagging others down." Organizational citizenship behavior was assessed through an 8-item scale introduced by Lee and Allen (2002) and used by previous studies (Luthans & Youssef, 2007). The example item is "I always help others who have been absent." Work withdrawal behavior (WDB), assessed using a modified scale developed by Lehman and Simpson (1992), has been introduced and utilized in previous studies (He, Guan, & Xing, 2025; Nauman et al., 2022). An example item is "I let others do my work in the last completed task." Lastly, Employee resilience (EPR) was assessed through a 6-item scale developed by Smith et al. (2008) and employed in past studies (Labrague & De los Santos, 2020). A simple item is "I tend to bounce back quickly after hard times." The complete list of items for all variables is provided in Appendix A.

3.2. Data Analysis Techniques

The current approach involves several analytical steps to ensure its reliability and validity in terms of the measurement and explanation of the relationship between the variables. To determine the sample size that was sufficient to conduct the study and to test the hypothesis, we employed PLS-SEM using SmartPLS and the SPSS statistical package. It is a powerful multivariate technique that allows researchers to simultaneously examine both the measurement (outer) and structural (inner) models (Hair, Howard, & Nitzl, 2020; Khan & Ullah, 2025). Moreover, this technique provides valuable insights by assessing the relationships among latent variables while ensuring the reliability and validity of the measurement models (Hair et al., 2019). We followed the past studies and examined both the outer and inner models simultaneously (Hair et al., 2010; Khan et al., 2025). The outer model demonstrates how the items of each variable represent and measure the latent variable. The reliability and validity of all measures were also evaluated using PLS-SEM. The inner model evaluates the path analysis to test the hypothesis. Meanwhile, it shows the beta values of the latent variable that represents the strength of the estimation of the study variables. In this study, we also evaluated the model goodness-of-fit indices using different measures.

4. Results

4.1. Descriptive, Correlation, and Multicollinearity Test

Table 1 reports a summary of the descriptive statistics, showing that the mean value ranges from 2.34 to 3.74 for each study variable. Additionally, the standard deviation provides moderate variability for each construct.

Table 1: Descriptive, Correlation, and Multicollinearity Test

Variables	WPB	POP	OCB	WDB	EPR	Mean	SD	VIF
WPB	1					2.34	0.86	1.24
POP	0.416	1				3.27	0.89	2.17
OCB	-0.351	0.362	1			3.74	0.96	2.74
WDB	0.284	0.347	-0.284	1		2.86	0.95	2.35
EPR	-0.324	0.174	0.214	-0.274	1	2.84	0.93	2.84

The correlation values of WPB, negatively and significantly related to OCB and EPR, which shows the inverse relationship with these variables. In addition, OCB and EPR were negatively related to WDB, whereas the other variables were positively associated with each other. Importantly, none of the correlations exceed 0.80, which reduces concerns of multicollinearity. The VIF values are all below the threshold of 5, confirming the absence of multicollinearity issues in the model.

4.2. Reliability and Validity

Table 2 demonstrates the findings of various measures of reliability and convergent validity. For instance, outer loading of all latent variables is higher than the recommended threshold of 0.7. This means that each observed variable strongly represents its underlying construct, showing good indicator reliability (Hair et al., 2010). The Cronbach's alpha (α), Rho-A, and Rho-C was employed to investigate internal consistency (Barak, Watted, & Haick, 2020). All measures provide excellent reliability, which is above the 0.8 threshold value, demonstrating high internal consistency (Barak, Watted, & Haick, 2020). The convergent validity was investigated by employing average variance extracted (AVE). The AVE values were higher than 0.5 and met the criteria and threshold value according to previous studies (Dos Santos & Cirillo, 2023), which shows sufficient convergent validity.

Table 2: Outer Loading, Reliability, and Convergent Validity

Construct	Items	Loading	α	Rho-A	Rho-C	AVE
Workplace Bullying	WPB-1	0.718	0.826	0.844	0.867	0.621
	WPB-2	0.729				
	WPB-3	0.824				
	WPB-4	0.729				
	WPB-5	0.861				
	WPB-6	0.79				
	WPB-7	0.768				
	WPB-8	0.722				
Perceived Organizational Politics	POP-1	0.769	0.861	0.865	0.904	0.598
	POP-2	0.865				
	POP-3	0.729				
	POP-4	0.893				
	POP-5	0.755				
	POP-6	0.865				
Organizational Citizenship Behavior	OCB-1	0.768	0.821	0.854	0.869	0.588
	OCB-2	0.861				
	OCB-3	0.769				
	OCB-4	0.732				
	OCB-5	0.864				
	OCB-6	0.718				
	OCB-7	0.726				
	OCB-8	0.786				
Work Withdrawal Behavior	WDB-1	0.845	0.815	0.839	0.843	0.621
	WDB-2	0.795				
	WDB-3	0.803				
	WDB-4	0.764				
	WDB-5	0.795				
	WDB-6	0.768				
Employee Resilience	EPR-1	0.781	0.826	0.841	0.857	0.624
	EPR-2	0.796				
	EPR-3	0.792				
	EPR-4	0.864				
	EPR-5	0.795				
	EPR-6	0.781				

Table 3 provides the details of discriminant validity by two measures and model goodness-of-fit indices. The Fornell-Larcker criterion shows sufficient discriminant validity. As the diagonal values of AVE square root for each variable were higher than their correlations with other variables. This suggested that all observed variables of each latent construct were strongly related to their own indicators rather than to other latent variables (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) was analyzed to identify the robustness of discriminant validity. Table 3 shows the italicized HTMT values of each construct. The HTMT ratio verified if their values show less than 0.8 or 0.9 (Ab Hamid, Sami, & Mohamad Sidek, 2017; Fornell & Larcker, 1981). According to the results in Table 3, all italicized HTMT values were less than 0.8, supporting the absence of multicollinearity and discriminant validity concerns (Yusoff et al., 2020). Furthermore, these results confirm that the constructs are empirically distinct and valid for hypothesis testing. In addition, the model goodness-of-fit indexes (TLI, NNFI, RNI > 0.90, and RMSEA < 0.07) demonstrate an overall strong model fit. All indices of model goodness fit are represented in Table 3.

Table 3: Model Goodness of Fit and Discriminant Validity

Variables	WPB	POP	OCB	WDB	EPR
WPB	0.788	0.784	0.714	0.694	0.684
POP	0.624	0.773	0.699	0.751	0.714
OCB	0.594	0.594	0.766	0.724	0.698
WDB	0.684	0.597	0.588	0.789	0.681
EPR	0.627	0.584	0.612	0.614	0.784
Indexes	TLI>0.9	NNFI>0.9	RNI>0.9	RMSEA<0.07	NFI
Matric	0.907	0.917	0.921	0.063	0.927
Scaled	0.911	0.951	0.917	0.041	0.917
Robust	0.917	0.927	0.931	0.027	0.933

4.3. Hypothesis Testing

All hypotheses were tested by employing PLS-SEM with the assistance of SmartPLSv4.1.1.2 statistical package (Hair, Howard, & Nitzl, 2020). Hypothesis 1 predicts a statistically significant and inverse relationship between WPB and OCB. As illustrated in Table 4, the stated relationship beta value is statistically significant with a negative beta value ($\beta = -0.315$, CI [-0.214, -0.428]). Therefore, H1 accepted. Hypothesis 2 proposes a positive association between WPD and WDB. The findings of the proposed hypothesis were significantly positive ($\beta = 0.243$, CI [0.124, 0.336]). Therefore, H2 was accepted. Furthermore, we found a positive and significant direct relationship between WPB and POP ($\beta = 0.267$, $P < 0.05$) and between POP and WDB ($\beta = 0.308$, $P < 0.05$). However, POP directly shows a negative and significant relationship with OCB ($\beta = -0.284$, $P < 0.05$). To analyze the mediation hypothesis, we employed PLS-SEM SmartPLSv4.1.1.2. Meanwhile, we employed the Monte Carlo statistical technique with 5000 bootstraps SPSS Macro (Hayes & Rockwood, 2020). Hypothesis 3, which proposes the mediating mechanism among WPB and OCB, with findings ($\beta = 0.184$, CI [0.134, 0.284]), and accepted Hypothesis 3. Hypothesis 4 proposes that WPB positively influences WDB through POP. The findings of the mediating hypothesis show a positive indirect effect ($\beta = 0.217$, CI [0.174, 0.321]) and support Hypothesis 4. Similarly, Hypothesis 5 suggests that EPR moderates the association among WPB and POP. The findings indicate a negative and significant moderating effect ($\beta = -0.217$, CI [-0.167, -0.378]), thus supporting Hypothesis 5. All findings of the path analysis are shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Hypothesis Testing

Paths	Hypothesis	Estimates	2.5%CI	97.5%CI	Results
WPB -> OCB	H ₁	-0.315	-0.132	-0.415	Supported
WPB -> WDB	H ₂	0.243	0.124	0.336	Supported
WPB -> POP -> OCB	H ₃	0.184	0.134	0.284	Supported
WPB -> POP -> WDB	H ₄	0.217	0.174	0.321	Supported
WPB*EPR -> POP	H ₅	-0.217	-0.167	-0.378	Supported

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, our study provides significant insights into the detrimental role of WPB and its consequences on critical employee outcomes in the form of OCB and WDB within Pakistan’s HEI sector. The underpinning of COR theory, the aim of this study was threefold: first, to investigate the association between WPB, OCB, and WDB. Second, this study introduced POP as a mediating variable that provides a mechanism for comprehensively defining these relationships. Third, this study examined the buffering role of EPR between WPB and POP. These results extend the application of COR theory by illustrating how WPB and EPR interact to shape the consequences of POP. Practically, the findings underscore the urgent need for HEIs in Pakistan to establish anti-bullying policies, create transparent governance structures to minimize politics, and invest in resilience-building interventions for the faculty and staff. Such measures can help safeguard employee well-being, improve job performance, and foster a more supportive academic environment that aligns with the developmental goals of Pakistan’s higher-education sector.

5.1. Implication of the Study

However, previous literature on WPB documented negative consequences of individuals' resources, which resulted in various outcomes. According to the COR principle, WPB is classified as a potential stressor. Our study takes insights from this underpinning and finds out WPB, POP, OCB, WDB, and EPR outcomes. Our study has several theoretical contributions to the HEI and organizational behavior literature. First, by investigating WPB in the HEI sector of

Pakistan, our study extends the scope of bullying research, which has predominantly been conducted in Western contexts. This research enriches the cross-cultural understanding of WPB and its behavioral outcomes. The results of this research contribute to the literature that employs COR theory to comprehend the outcomes of WPB, POP, OCB, WDB, and EPR, but in the HEI Pakistani context. In this study, WPB was preserved as a state of psychological resources, leading to heightened perceptions of POP, which reduced OCB and increased the level of WDB. However, resilience acts as a protective resource, mitigating the loss spiral and sustaining positive behavior. By combining organizational and personal resource perspectives, this study provides a more comprehensive framework for understanding how WPB translates into adverse outcomes in academic institutions.

This study has vital implications for HEI managers, policymakers, academicians, and potential researchers. As documented, the prevalence of WPB in HEI can be very dangerous in different ways, as it leads to a decrease in OCB and an increase in WDB. As the HEI sector is highly competitive, delivering a high level of academic quality and student support is essential to maintain a sustainable competitive edge (Akella, Soumyaja, & Krishna, 2025; Hodgins et al., 2024). Managers and executives must consider these harmful incidents of WPB and take strict and well-equipped actions to curb them. Organizations have introduced "Zero-Tolerance Policies" regarding WPB and developed boards or committees to address unpleasant or unethical bullying incidents. Furthermore, the study shows that WPB increases POP, which negatively impacts organizational outcomes. Therefore, managers should focus on building transparent communication channels and fair decision-making processes to reduce such political climates in organizations. Executives can take responsibility for effective communication with employees, which enhances trust, minimizes POP, and decreases the chances of WPB occurrence. The study found that EPR mitigated the potentially harmful impact of WPB on POP when employees used it as a coping resource. Therefore, institutions should invest in resilience-building initiatives, such as mentoring programs, professional counseling, leadership support, and skills-training workshops. These initiatives can strengthen employees' ability to manage stress, maintain psychological well-being, and sustain constructive behaviors (such as OCB) even in challenging situations. Ultimately, such interventions protect employees and enhance institutional performance and reputation in the education sector.

5.2. Limitations and Future Directions

Although we have taken several initiatives to minimize these limitations, our research still faced limitations that may have impacted the findings' generalizability. First, this study focused on a limited number of individuals' outcomes regarding WPB. Future researchers can investigate the relationship between WPB and self-efficacy, psychological contract breach, and high-risk behavior, such as ignorance of safety standards. Second, our study focuses on a single sector; its findings might not be generalizable to other industries or countries. Therefore, potential researchers can study other sectors (FMCG, ICT, Service, Hotel) in various country contexts. Third, the study relied on a cross-sectional design at a single point in time, which restricts the ability to infer causality between WPB, psychological outcomes, and organizational performance. Longitudinal studies would provide a deeper understanding of the temporal effects of bullying and resilience. Finally, cultural dynamics unique to Pakistan may influence how bullying and resilience are perceived; comparative cross-cultural research would be valuable in identifying context-specific and universal patterns.

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Appendix A

Workplace Bullying

1. I have been ridiculed or humiliated in relation to my work.
2. I have been constantly reminded of any errors or failures I made.
3. My opinions and views have been ignored.
4. I have been exposed to an impossible workload to carry out.
5. I have experienced situations where important information was withheld from me, affecting my performance.
6. I have been ordered to carry out tasks below my level of competence.
7. I have had key areas of responsibility removed or replaced with trivial tasks.
8. I have been the subject of gossip or rumors at work.

Perceptions of organizational politics

1. People build themselves up by tearing others down.
2. There is a group of people who always get things their way because no one wants to challenge them.
3. There has always been an influential group that no one ever crosses.
4. I have seen changes made in policies here that only serve the purposes of a few individuals, not the work unit or the organization.
5. Favoritism rather than merit determines who gets ahead around here.
6. People here usually don't speak up for fear of retaliation by others.

Organizational Citizenship Behavior

1. I always help others who have been absent.
2. I willingly give my time to help others who have work-related problems.
3. I adjust my work schedule to accommodate other employees' requests for time off.
4. I go out of the way to make newer employees feel welcome in the work group.
5. I show genuine concern and courtesy toward coworkers, even under the most trying business or personal situations.
6. I give up time to help others who have work or nonwork problems.
7. I assist others with their duties.
8. I share personal property with others to help their work.

Work Withdrawal Behavior

1. I let others do my work in the last completed task.
2. I spent work time on personal matters in the last completed task.
3. I thought about being absent in the last completed task.
4. I put less effort into the job than I should have in the last completed task.
5. I thought about leaving my current job in the last completed task.
6. I daydreamed in the last completed task.

Employee Resilience

1. I tend to bounce back quickly after hard times
2. I have a hard time making it through stressful events (R)
3. It does not take me long to recover from a stressful event
4. It is hard for me to snap back when something bad happens (R)
5. I usually come through difficult times with little trouble
6. I tend to take a long time to get over set-backs in my life (R)