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Effect of Toxic Leadership on Workplace Bullying: A Mediation and Moderation Analysis

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Abstract

This study investigates the impact of toxic leadership on workplace bullying across multiple sectors in Gujranwala, Pakistan, emphasizing the mediating effects of employee silence and psychological well-being, as well as the moderating effect of employee voice. A systematic survey was conducted with 384 employees from various industries and the data was analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). Statistical results were drawn through SPSS and AMOS. The findings show that toxic leadership has a significant impact on workplace bullying, with employee silence and psychological well-being acting as essential mediators. Contrary to predictions, employee voice did not moderate the association between toxic leadership and bullying, implying that the impact of toxic leadership is widespread, regardless of employees' willingness to speak up. The results demonstrate how organizations can reduce workplace bullying and enhance employee well-being by addressing toxic leadership and fostering a positive work environment.

Keywords: employee silence, employee voice, psychological well-being, toxic leadership, workplace bullying

Introduction

Constructive leadership is mandatory to create and sustain a positive work atmosphere. (Labrague, [2024](#)). The term "interpersonal mistreatment," which is now commonly used to refer to workplace bullying, describes a scenario in which a worker is frequently subjected to unfavorable acts from coworkers, particularly from superiors (D'Cruz & Rayner, [2013](#)). Bullying at workplace is a problem, according to the majority members of Society for Human Resource Management. Based on the studies and attitudes towards the issue, Nielsen et al. ([2012](#)) found that over the past 25 years,

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there has been a positive correlation between workplace bullying and unfavorable organizational perceptions and climate.

The existing research on interpersonal mistreatment traditionally centers on three ways employees respond to workplace mistreatment. These include displaying inappropriate work-related behaviors and attitudes, such as job dissatisfaction and a higher likelihood of quitting (Giorgi et al., [2015](#)). Employees may also react by behaving resentfully or engaging in retaliatory actions, such as workplace deviance and neglect.

Although it has been anticipated that ‘employee voice’ affects the probability of bullying at the workplace, the goal of employees sharing their ideas is to assist their respective organization to converting these ideas into efficacy and efficiency, as well as improving individual job satisfaction. Different workplace-level measures, such as creating an organizational culture that opposes bullying, have been recommended by several researchers in view of the impact of workplace bullying (Duffy, [2009](#)).

Since leaders are believed to be essential for promoting organizational effectiveness, leadership style has been recognized as an essential element of social science research. Previous studies also noted that it adversely affects job outcomes, such as motivation, performance, and work engagement and increases organizational costs, turnover intentions, absenteeism, and deviant behaviors (Morris, [2019](#)).

In the extant literature, only a small number of studies are available that deal with unconstructive and negative management approaches (Cakiroglu & Unver, [2024](#)). Without eliminating the toxic management style, it isn’t possible to maintain an optimistic work atmosphere. It is crucial to understand the toxic management style, given that it affects the organizational culture adversely and deteriorates workforce productivity, morale, health, and well-being, and consequently undermines the effectiveness of the organization (Gupta & Chawla, [2024](#)). Pakistan, being an emerging economy, possesses great potential and space for infrastructural and behavioral improvements in corporate and all other sectors (Mughal, [2024](#)).

Problem Statement

Although it has been identified previously that toxic leadership has negative consequences for organizational culture and employee motivation, little is known about the effects of the so-called toxic leadership on the

oppression of employees at workplaces in Pakistan (Ahmed, Atta, et al., [2024](#)). Emotional health implications of employees' tootle at toxic leadership and the resulting effects on organizational production and turnover remain unexplored in the Pakistani context (Qureshi et al., [2022](#)).

Some works have focused on 'employee voice.' However, little is known about 'employee silence' in response to toxic leadership and its impact on emotional experience or overall organizational functioning (Ahmed, Zang, et al., [2024](#); Manaa, [2022](#); Wolor et al., [2022](#)).

Research Gaps

Theoretical Gap

Despite the increasing interest in toxic leadership, extant research is mainly concerned with the general effects of this phenomenon and less so with the variety of cultural manifestations of employee voice and emotional outcomes in, for example, Pakistani organizations (Cakiroglu & Unver, [2024](#)).

Practical Gap

Existing research does not offer any evident and functional models to manage toxic leaders in the organizations of Pakistan, which impedes practical steps taken in response to toxic leadership by HR.

Empirical Gap

There is little research available that uses an empirical approach to examine the correlation between toxic leadership, employee voice, emotional wellbeing, and organizational outcomes in the Pakistani context, thus leaving significant room in terms of both quantity and quality.

Objectives

- To understand the particular behaviors that relate the toxic workplace model and its effects with the morale and emotional health of employees.
- To examine the purpose of such silence and emotional outcomes that it brings to a working context.
- To evaluate how toxic leadership affects workers' emotional well-being and general productivity at work, both directly and indirectly.

Research Questions

- How does toxic leadership contribute to employee oppression across various industries in Gujranwala, Pakistan?
- How exactly does employee silence act as a form of resistance to toxic leadership?
- How do emotional well-being, organizational productivity, and toxic leadership relate to one another?

By integrating *Leader Member Exchange (LMX)* theory and *Social Exchange Theory (SET)*, this study offers a robust framework for the contextualization of the findings. These two theories elaborate how toxic leadership disturbs organizational harmony, thus nurturing psychological distress, bullying, and silence. Hence, this study examines toxic leadership's impact on workplace bullying, simultaneously keeping intact mediated-moderated roles of employee voice, psychological well-being, and employee silence. The ongoing research contributes to the existing archive of literature by exploring the above-mentioned dynamics within various industrial sectors of Gujranwala, Pakistan. The outcomes are likely to improve the implementation of toxic management and its implications for workplace dynamics.

Literature Review

Toxic Leadership and Workplace Bullying

Toxic Leadership or TL has multiple facets, including brusque administration, self-preoccupation, authoritarianism, self-aggrandizement, and impulsivity (Dobbs, [2014](#)). Toxic leadership is detrimental to the workplace, as well as the organization's ideals and standards, since it fosters the development of inappropriate behaviors (Aubrey, [2012](#)). When a leader begins to act adversely and exhibits unethical attitude, this is regarded as toxic leadership. Ashfaq et al. ([2024](#)) discovered that toxic leadership is less prevalent and is distinguished by the targeted subjects' demographics. The study showed that workplace bullying reduces employees' potential and negatively affects the work environment.

In a study organized by Huang et al. ([2016](#)), 182 workers were selected randomly from both public and private institutions to determine the correlation between toxic leadership and workplace bullying or WPB. A

total of 185 emailed questionnaires were used to gather the data. According to the findings, both of these variables were found to be strongly but negatively linked with various leadership approaches, including authoritarian, narcissistic, and abusive approaches. Subsequently, Maxwell (2015) confirmed the abusive and dominant aspects of toxic leadership and offered empirical support for two-way differentiation.

Earlier researchers validated and synchronized the detrimental and biased correlation between toxic leadership behaviors and workers' stress levels and job performance (Hadadian & Zarei, 2016). According to the literature, managers must be aware of workplace harassment and seek its solutions, as it is a persistent problem in organizations (Brown et al., 2017).

Van (2019) stated that toxic leadership is manifested when leaders perform adverse acts or express hatred towards specific employees; these acts may harm individuals and organizations as psychological well-being correlates with the leadership style. Also, the study concluded that the egocentric personality characteristic of such a leader translates into the fact that the concerned leader is more interested in personal achievement than the success of the team.

H1: Toxic leadership has a significant impact on workplace bullying.

Relationship between Toxic Leadership, Employee Silence, and Workplace Bullying

The study of 'employee silence' is relatively new and hardly any literature is available on it; hence, the issues of dimensionality and empirical operationalization remain undisputed (Boadi et al., 2020). 'Employee voice' is another prevalent issue in organizations (Harlos & Knoll, 2021). Toxic leadership reduces employee voice in the workplace (Coakley, 2021). This is because employees choose to remain quiet, especially when confronted with self-centered and self-serving toxic leaders (Chou & Chang, 2020; Wang et al., 2020). Other studies have established that older employees exhibit a higher degree of quietness (Atalla et al., 2022). This is significant in view of the fact that the co-worker plays a very important role, along with the leadership, in a workplace (Syed-Yahya et al., 2022).

According to Sahabuddin et al. (2021), workplace bullying can also affect people and cause them to keep silent. Abdillah et al. (2021) emphasized the mysterious nature of silence. It is even more demanding of attention in as much as the realization that beneficial attitudes and behaviors

that embrace the welfare of the individual and the organization are affected by silence (Zhang & Cao, [2021](#)). Companies need help in realizing mistakes. The study claimed that passive compliance consumes the energy required to deliver work that meets the expectations set by the employers (Knoll et al., [2019](#)).

As noted by Xu et al. ([2015](#)), limited theoretical research examines why employees do not react to workplace abuse. On the other hand, when employees' resources are negatively affected by dysfunctional leadership, they are likely to avoid voicing out to protect their resources (Park et al., [2018](#)). In order to reverse the situation and escape from abusive leaders, employees remain passive and need to put in more working hours to earn barely enough to make a living (Park et al., [2018](#)). On the basis of the above discourse, it is hypothesized that

H2: Toxic leadership has a significant impact on employee silence.

H4: Employee silence has a significant impact on workplace bullying.

H6: Employee silence has a mediating role among toxic leadership and workplace bullying.

Relationship among Toxic Leadership, Psychological Well-Being, and Workplace Bullying

Psychological well-being is initiated by an individual learning to adapt to a situation or environment (Foster et al., [2020](#)). Subjective well-being is the overall evaluation of one's mental health which is involved in an individual's perceived efficacy to become more productive in any endeavor (Huang et al., [2016](#)). Subjective well-being is a self-report of people's happiness, gratification of desires, satisfaction, abilities, and accomplishments in their tasks. Employee well-being can be categorized as hedonic and eudaimonic, as described by (Ballesteros-leiva et al., [2017](#)).

According to Pelletier ([2010](#)), a leader becomes toxic when a subordinate feels that the leader has caused them psychological harm, which exacerbates long-term emotional impairment. Van Katwyk et al. ([2000](#)) indicated that employees' perceptions of both positive and negative job changes influence their level of well-being. Hence, by providing social support and attachment to the subordinates, the leaders improve their psychological state to create sound well-being. On the other hand, leaders who fail effectively to give the best environment to their employees have a

dim effect on their well-being because they enhance the creation of psychological ill health among them (Bhandarker & Rai, [2019](#)). Moreover, there is some optimism that psychological well-being is directly linked to one or another dimension of the job content. When employees gain less psychological benefits from their respective organization, their commitment weakens, and ultimately, they look for other jobs (Langove et al., [2016](#)).

Chirilă and Constantin ([2013](#)) examined the link between workplace bullying and psychological well-being. A company must attend to the behaviors that are noticeably unkind and associated with bullying. In addition, according to this report and case, *workplace bullying* is a process of persistently and systematically trying to undermine the powerless individual in their working, social, or personal life for at least six calendar months. Victims struggle to stand up for themselves to prevent them from being bullied (Chirila & Constantin, [2013](#)).

Targeted employees at the workplace are likely to experience negative feelings. This negatively affects their psychological health (Einarsen & Nielsen, [2015](#)) and they have less of it, which results in lower well-being. The above emotions and the sub-par physical and psychological health status of targets, as pointed out by Ariza-Montes et al. ([2017](#)), affect job satisfaction. The results of this study provide a solid academic basis to examine and demonstrate the ability of the indicators of psychological well-being to lessen the impact of workplace bullying on employee performance.

H3: Toxic leadership has a significant impact on psychological well-being.

H5: Psychological well-being has a significant impact on workplace bullying.

H7: Psychological well-being has a mediating role among toxic leadership and workplace bullying.

Employee Voice, Toxic Leadership, and Workplace Bullying

Bullying comprises planned and repeated acts of aggression or the use of violence on targets by an individual or a group of people (Galanaki & Papalexandris, [2013](#)). Employee voice may account for why some employees may be vulnerable to workplace bullying. Also, *workplace bullying* is an ongoing process; usually, it has one or multiple perpetrators and they use verbal or non-verbal forms of aggression against the target (Samnani & Singh, [2012](#)). Since the victim is always in a lower power

position than the perpetrator, they cannot control aggression or use counterforce to avoid odds (Ma et al., [2011](#)). Previous studies looked at the connection between bullying at work and employees' poor physical and mental health, increased organizational costs, and lower profits (Nielsen & Einarsen, [2012](#)).

According to Barry and Wilkinson ([2022](#)), employee voice captures how people inquire, propound ideas, solve problems, practice fundamental management, and participate in organizational work settings (Wilkinson et al., [2020](#)). Studying it negatively correlates to predicting employee silence. However, it is also critical to note that such control (moderation) may lead to reverse causation in the target variables, whereby leaders may benefit from the followers' voice to continue improving their leadership behaviors as a result of their followers' expectation of ethical leadership (Li, [2018](#)).

As stated by Kim and Leach ([2020](#)), there are numerous ways through which one can investigate employee voice in an organization, including the presence of policy or frameworks that support it, the culture that allows and embraces the staff's opinions and stance on some issues, and to what extent employees' conceptions influence the decisions made (Purwaningrum et al., [2020](#)).

Employees openly discuss with their peers or supervisor organization-related issues and provide suggestions or make complaints, even if others do not have a similar opinion (Tangirala & Ramanujam, [2008](#)). This would not occur in isolation and core facilitating elements involve the nature and character of the motives, the individual, and the situation (Morrison, [2011](#)). To capture the different forms of the voice that exist in practice, this study aligns with Liang et al. ([2012](#)) to differentiate employee voice between promotive and prohibitive voice. The former includes innovative ideas or proposals pertaining to the improvement of work unit or organization, while the latter pertains to the negative aspects of work-related practices, occurrences, or behaviors (Liang et al., [2012](#)).

Workplace bullying may arise from social exclusion, the stigmatization of the speaking employee as a "mischief-maker," and the depreciation of social capital when the concerned employee's voice conveys costs and risks, leading to sanctions and dismissal by the respective organization's power-holders. Bullying at work has been linked in the past to poor employee psychological and physical health, increased organizational costs, and lower

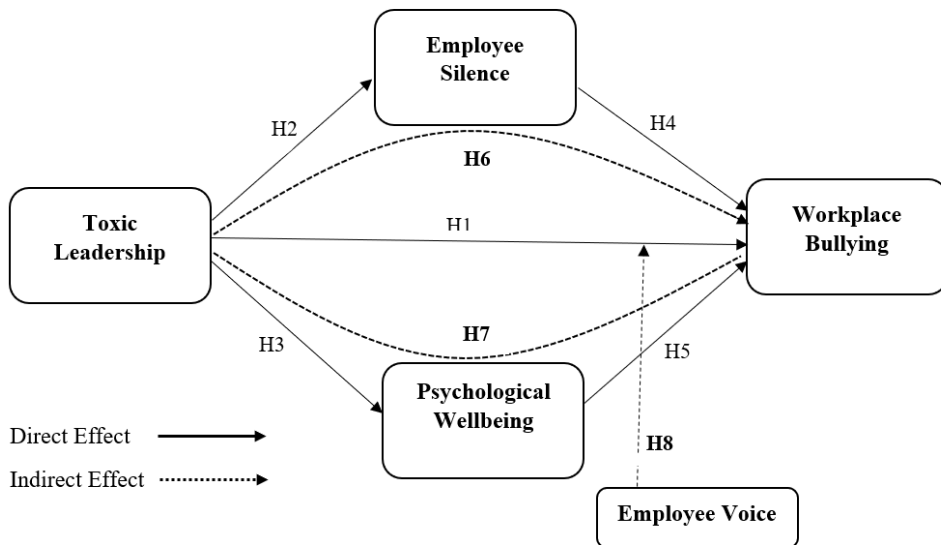
profits (Nielsen & Einarsen, [2012](#)). Social alienation, labeling the outspoken employee as a "mischief-maker," and the devaluation of social capital when the concerned employee's voice carries costs and risks—which results in punishment and termination by the organization's powerholders—can all contribute to workplace bullying.

H8: Employee voice has a moderating role among toxic leadership and workplace bullying.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 presents the current study's conceptual framework, derived from the literature review. It illustrates the connections among critical constructs, namely toxic leadership, workplace bullying, employee silence, psychological well-being, and employee voice.

Figure 1
Conceptual Model



Sample and Study Procedure

This research followed the quantitative paradigm. The data was gathered from full-time managerial and non-managerial employees of various organizations in Gujranwala, Pakistan. The participants were drawn from manufacturing, retail, traders, information technology, and the

telecommunication sector, among others. The above-mentioned sectors were selected based on their predominance in the economy of Gujranwala, as well as the diversity in their workforce dynamics and organizational structure. This assortment was meant to offer an inclusive perspective of the trends across different organizations. Stratified sampling technique was adopted in this study to get better responses from the respondents working in different departments and job levels in their respective organizations. Workers were chosen at random within all strata to ensure variability and to avoid selection bias. Strata were additionally refined within each sector, keeping in view organizational size (large, medium, and small enterprises), to reflect variations in workplace dynamics and leadership styles. For example, from the manufacturing sector, 25% of participants were chosen from small organizations, 35% from medium size organizations, and 40% from large enterprises. Likewise, from the IT industry, participants were chosen proportionally from call centers, freelance agencies, and software houses.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Demographic	Demographic Features	Frequency	Percentage
Age	20-35	146	38.0
	36-45	141	36.7
	Above 45	97	25.3
	Total	384	100.0
Gender	Male	297	77.3
	Female	87	22.7
	Total	384	100.0
Sector	Retail and trade	50	13.0
	Manufacturing	201	52.3
	IT	72	18.8
	Telecommunication	61	15.9
	Total	384	100.0

Demographic's data was collected in the first stage of the questionnaire. In the second stage, data was collected from employees while they were at work. A valid response rate of 85.3% was obtained from the 450 self-

administered structured questionnaires, of which 384 were completed and returned. As for the distribution of the respondents who completed and returned the questionnaires, 297 were male and 87 were female. Most respondents (146, 38.0%) were between the ages of 20 and 35; however, 97 (25.3%) respondents were above 45 years of age and 141 (36.7%) were between the ages of 36 and 45. The retail and trade sectors employed 50 respondents or 13.0% of the workforce, manufacturing sector employed 201 respondents or 52.3% of the workforce, information technology sector employed 72 respondents or 18.8% of the workforce, and the telecommunication sector employed the remaining 61 respondents or 15.9% of the workforce (see Table 1).

Rationale of Target Population

This study provides a rich understanding of the experiences and perspectives of the employees working both at managerial and non-managerial positions. By incorporating subjects from both the manufacturing and service departments, this research aims to investigate the similar and dissimilar characteristics and trends in the workplace and covers various dynamics. The findings have the potential to be more diverse and universally acknowledged as they present a cross-sector analysis, which otherwise would have been neglected if only a single industry was taken under consideration. Both professionals and researchers may utilize this study to become aware of certain trends and patterns with room for improvement, ultimately leading them towards a possible corrective course of action. This research tends to be significantly meaningful and applicable by means of applying the methodological procedures of stratified sampling and other similar strategies.

Measures

This study collected data using a self-administered, 36-item questionnaire. The first three items of this questionnaire are designed to collect demographic information and the next 33 are about the main construct. The responses were assessed using a 5-point Likert scale. All the questionnaire items employed in this survey were translated from the existing English written scales. Schmidt's (2014) Toxic Leadership scale containing 8 items was used to assess toxic leadership. On the other hand, 7 items were used to measure workplace bullying, while psychological well-being was measured by using another 7 items (Hsu et al., 2019).

Employee silence, used as a mediating variable in this study, was cross-checked by using 6 items (Arpana et al., 2018). Employee voice was captured using the 5-item scale by (Van Dyne & Ang, [1998](#)). The software used for statistical analysis were SPSS and AMOS.

Table 2

Definitions of Variables

Variable	Definition	Author
Toxic leadership	“A kind of leadership characterized by cruel behavior used to oppress or manipulate people”	(Wolor et al., 2022)
Psychological wellbeing	“Helps to find out the pleasantness dimension of an individual’s feelings (i.e. depression vs happiness) which, in turn, helps in determining various actions of an individual, such as a person feeling depressed will tend to have low self-esteem”	(Diener et al., 2010)
Workplace bullying	“Situations where a person repeatedly, and over a period of time, is exposed to negative acts on the part of coworkers, supervisors, or subordinates”	(Hsu et al., 2019)
Employee silence	“Withholding of any form of genuine expression about the individual’s behavioral, cognitive and/or affective evaluations of his or her organizational circumstance to persons who are perceived to be capable of effecting change or redress.”	(Rai & Agarwal, 2018)
Employee voice	“An unsolicited behavior that emphasizes constructive challenges and the expression of suggestions.”	(Van Dyne & Ang, 1998)

Results and Discussion

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Matrix

	Mean	Std.	PW	TL	ES	WB	EV
PW	4.040	0.608	0.613				
TL	3.771	0.660	0.182	0.639			
ES	3.720	0.725	0.084	0.359	0.632		
WB	2.161	0.539	-0.077	0.127	-0.098	0.517	
EV	3.764	0.748	0.029	-0.019	-0.028	-0.001	0.722

The correlation matrix in Table 3 reveals important relationships among the key variables. Psychological well-being (PW) has a mean score of 4.04, indicating that, on average, employees experience moderate well-being. However, the negative correlation between toxic leadership (TL) and psychological well-being (PW) suggests that as TL increases, employees' PWB tends to decrease. The mean score of 3.77 for TL reflects a significant presence of toxic leadership behaviors in the surveyed organizations. On the other hand, the results show that TL is positively correlated with both employee silence (ES) and workplace bullying (WB), indicating that higher levels of TL are associated with increased ES and WB. ES, with a mean score of 3.72, shows that employees often choose to remain silent, which is likely a response to the toxic environment created by the leaders. WB has a lower mean score of 2.16, suggesting that while bullying is less prevalent than other issues, it is still significantly linked to TL. Finally, employee voice (EV), with a mean score of 3.76, indicates that employees do express their opinions, occasionally. However, the weak correlation between EV and WB suggests that speaking up does not necessarily reduce bullying in a toxic leadership environment.

Table 4

Convergent Validity

Construct Scale	Item	Factor loading	CR	AVE	α
Toxic leadership	TL1	.64	.0777	0.5597	.80
	TL2	.66			
	TL3	.86			
	TL4	.71			
	TL5	.63			

Construct Scale	Item	Factor loading	CR	AVE	α
Employee silence	TL6	.67	0.824	0.6670	.76
	TL7	.85			
	TL8	.14			
	ES1	.83			
	ES2	.70			
	ES3	.32			
	ES4	.61			
	ES5	.80			
Psychological wellbeing	ES6	.33	0.782	0.6208	.77
	PS1	.30			
	PS2	.92			
	PS3	.60			
	PS4	.31			
	PS5	.50			
	PS6	.92			
Employee voice	PS7	.31	0.655	0.5375	.80
	EV1	.99			
	EV2	.56			
	EV3	.21			
	EV4	.50			
Workplace bullying	EV5	.98	0.818	0.6557	.69
	WB1	.87			
	WB2	.55			
	WB3	.75			
	WB4	.18			
	WB5	.32			
	WB6	.49			
	WB7	.32			

The convergent validity assessment depicted in Table 4 confirms the reliability of the constructs used in the current study. Most items related to toxic leadership loaded well, particularly the items TL3 and TL7, indicating that these aspects of toxic leadership are strongly manifested in the workplace. The slightly lower loading of TL8 may indicate that this particular behavior is less frequent or less intense, as compared to others. Similar to the reliability findings, each item's loading value range from 0.32 to 0.99. Cronbach's alpha was calculated for each variable and the composite reliability value is more than 0.7. In the same interval, all

considered variables have average variances greater than 0.5. Thus, each variable emerges as higher than the threshold value suggested by Hair et al. (2016).

Table 5

Model Fit

Model	χ^2	<i>df</i>	χ^2/df	RMSEA	TLI	CFI
Structural Model 1	.125	1	.125	0.000	1.00	1.00
Moderator Model 2	0.31	2.8	0.11	0.384	0.89	0.99

The model fit indices in Table 5 demonstrate that the structural model fits the data well, with strong indices such as $\chi^2/df = 0.11$, CFI = 0.99, and TLI = 0.89. These values indicate that the model adequately represents the underlying relationships among the variables, although the RMSEA value of 0.384 suggests some room for improvement in the model.

Table 6

Regression Weights (Group 1 - Default Model)

Path	Estimate	<i>S.E.</i>	<i>C.R.</i>	<i>p</i>	Decision
H1 WB <--- TL	.187	.044	4.244	***	Supported
H2 ES <--- TL	.423	.052	8.177	***	Supported
H3 PW <--- TL	.102	.047	2.183	.029	Supported
H4 WB <--- ES	-.103	.040	-2.581	.010	Supported
H5 WB <--- PW	-.114	.044	-2.572	.010	Supported

The results of regression analysis presented in Table 6 provide further insights. The first hypothesis (H1) is supported, showing a significant positive relationship between toxic leadership and workplace bullying ($\beta = 0.187$), confirming that toxic leadership directly increases the likelihood of bullying. The result is consistent with prior investigations by (Brown et al., 2017). The second hypothesis (H2) also receives substantial support, indicating that toxic leadership has a powerful positive impact on the extent of employee voice ($\beta = 0.423$; $p < 0.01$), as confirmed by Dedahanov et al. (2016) and Xu et al. (2015). It implies that those in toxic leadership situations likely stay quiet, which might lead to enhanced unpleasant organizational behaviors. The third hypothesis (H3) is also supported since the results reveal that toxic leadership exerts a negative and slightly smaller influence on psychological well-being ($\beta = 0.102$), which indicates that

toxic leadership may reduce employee well-being. H3 is consistent with the findings of Ariza-Montes et al. (2017). The fourth hypothesis (H4) unveils the impact of employee silence on workplace bullying, where employee silence has a negative correlation with workplace bullying ($\beta = -0.103$), indicating that if the employees remain silent then workplace bullying is likely to occur. Thus, H4 aligns with the findings of Tepper et al. (2007) and Xu et al. (2015). Likewise, concerning the fifth hypothesis (H5), it appears that when psychological well-being is low, workplace bullying remains high, similar to the previous studies conducted by (Bhandarker & Rai, 2019; Hudson, 2013).

Table 7
Mediation Analysis

Path	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	Total Effect	Decision
H6 TL>ES>WB	.176**	-0.44	132**	Supported
H7 TL>PW>WB	.144	-0.12*	132**	Supported

The mediation analysis in Table 7 provides additional insights into these relationships. The findings confirm the sixth hypothesis (H6) which establishes that employee silence mediates the relationship between toxic leadership and workplace bullying. It indicates that toxic leadership has a positive correlation with bullying and independently influences employee silence. The seventh hypothesis (H7) is also supported, presenting evidence that psychological well-being partially mediates the relationship between toxic leadership and workplace bullying. It also indicates that toxic leadership reduces the overall well-being and thereby enhances the risk of bullying.

Table 8
Regression Weights (Group 1 - Default Model)

Path	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	p	Label
ZWB <--- ZTL	.162	.051	3.187	.001	
H8 ZWB <--- ZEV	-.030	.051	-.600	.548	Not Supported
ZWB <--- INT	-.015	.056	-.260	.795	

Finally, Table 8 presents the moderation analysis for the eighth hypothesis (H8), which argues that employee voice likely moderates the negative relationship between toxic leadership and workplace bullying.

However, this hypothesis is not supported, as the results show that employee voice does not mitigate the effect of toxic leadership on bullying. The rejection of H8 may be due to sample characteristics (cultural differences or deviation in respondents' demographics, such as tenure), or the fact that contextual factors (workplace norms and leadership styles) within the selected location may not be in line with the assumptions of the moderating variable. This finding indicates that even when employees raise their voices, it does not reverse the effects of toxic leadership; rather, it stresses its prevalence in promoting a hazardous working environment.

Implications

Several studies and surveys reveal that, for instance, workplace bullying has risen recently by as much as 27% (Namie, [2014](#)). It would make sense for employees to complain or speak out against workplace bullying, as it is detrimental to workers and expensive for employers. However, the current study's findings contradict these theories and show that when faced with workplace harassment, employees choose to adopt a silent strategy. Therefore, according to Einarsen et al. ([2003](#)), companies should emphasize to stop workplace bullying and support employee voice. Earlier, employees voice was commonly used in organizations by supervisors to assess the performance and conduct of their reports. Moreover, anonymous feedback from employees regarding specific aspects of their current supervisor's behavior is necessary to identify toxic leaders, minimize their influence on the working staff and environment, and increase the establishment's productivity.

Furthermore, literature analysis also yielded some specific, managerially beneficial recommendations for more research on eliminating toxic leadership and workplace bullying. In terms of organizational culture, harassment in the workplace should never occur and each employee bears a personal responsibility to ensure this. The findings indicate that to stop the internal bullying behavior in the workplace, managers should create internal policies against bullying at work in advance, as seen from the standpoint of organizational policy. Such policies should include the definitions of aggressive acts, rules about punishment for the aggressors, reporting rights for the victims, as well as consultation provisions and protective measures. In addition, the formulated policies and procedures to control workplace bullying in an enterprise should be available in writing and publicly disseminated among its employees to enhance their understanding of the

respective enterprise's policies on workplace bullying. Lastly, to ensure that all the employees remain happy, safe, and comfortable at work, every organization must commit to creating a workplace culture that is free from bullying.

Recommendations

The study makes the following three recommendations. Firstly, if employee voice benefits the company, leaders should listen to what the staff says and support it appropriately. It is also important for leaders not to lose the opportunity of receiving good advice. Secondly, leaders should consider supporting the practice of employee voice if it facilitates organizational innovativeness. An appreciated employee voice increases organizational image, work satisfaction, perceived performance, pro-organizational behavior, dedication, and overall effectiveness. Thirdly, in order to cultivate an environment where employee voice is more likely to flourish, leaders should establish a culture that supports the diversity of viewpoints and promotes open communication. Leaders may also enhance decision-making procedures and promote organizational performance by actively listening to and acting upon employee feedback.

Limitations and Recommendations

The study has certain limitations. These are listed below and may be relevant for further research. Firstly, the study's population was restricted to a small area of Pakistan. This limits the generalizability of the results to the entire Pakistani financial sector and other industries. All financial institutions in Pakistan, including broking houses, insurance companies, mortgage companies, and investment companies, can be considered for future research. A comparative analysis between various financial institution types or between financial and non-financial sectors of the country's economy can also be conducted.

Secondly, this study employed a quantitative approach and the data was collected through a questionnaire. The researcher encountered considerable resistance from the respondents when gathering data regarding their readiness to answer the questionnaire items about their supervisors. Consequently, to have a deeper comprehension of the concepts, upcoming researchers may utilize one-on-one interviews with the participants. Moreover, the study design was cross-sectional. To get deeper insight,

future researchers may choose to implement a longitudinal study design that captures the impact toxic leaders have on their staff.

Conflict of Interest

The authors of the manuscript have no financial or non-financial conflict of interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

Data Availability Statement

The data associated with this study will be provided by the corresponding author upon request.

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