

# HOW DOES WORKPLACE BULLYING TRIGGER VICTIM'S COUNTERPRODUCTIVE BEHAVIORS? THE MEDIATING ROLE OF PERCEIVED CO-WORKER SUPPORT

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## ABSTRACT

**Purpose/Objectives:** This study disentangles an important knot in the bullying literature by examining how and through what psychological processes workplace bullying triggers counterproductive work behaviors (CWBs) in its victims. Using the theory of triggered displaced aggression and stressor-emotion model of CWB we hypothesize that workplace bullying as a stressor leads to the development of negative perceptions of coworker support which prompt its targets to strike back by displaying CWBs both towards the source of abuse and redirect it towards others such as co-workers as well as organization.

**Methodology:** By collecting two source field data (N= 334; Self-peer dyads) from employees working in the Education, Banking and Telecom sector of Pakistan, we tested our direct as well as mediation hypothesis using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) technique.

**Findings:** The results of SEM analysis support all the direct as well as indirect paths clearly suggesting that victims of bullying develop lower perceptions of coworker support which causes them to vent out their frustration creating higher levels of individually as well as organizationally directed CWBs.

**Practical Implications:** Our study extends the mistreatment literature and is beneficial for managers as it examines and tests a unique mechanism of perceived coworker support in the through which a stressful condition of bullying ignites CWBs in its targets towards others and organization.

**Keywords:** *Workplace Bullying, Perceived Co-worker Support, Counterproductive work Behaviors.*

**Jel Classification:** M51, M14

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## INTRODUCTION

In recent years, Workplace bullying has surfaced as one of the pertinent concerns which has generated controversy not only in organizations but has sparked huge debate in management and organizational behavior research as well (Samnani & Singh, 2012). Research on bullying has focused on investigating the pervasiveness, causes and consequences of bullying behaviors on individuals, groups and organizations. For instance, the research examining the antecedents of bullying clearly highlight a number of factors such as target's and perpetrators personality (Coyne, Seigne & Randall, 2000), demographic factors such as victim's age and gender (Fox & Stallworth, 2005), ethical climate (Bulutlar & Unler Oz, 2009), perceived political and supportive environments (Naseer, Raja & Donia, 2016) and leadership styles (Hoel, Glaso, Hetland, Cooper & Einarsen, 2010) etc as important determinants of bullying within organizations.

Although less prevalent than workplace bullying's antecedents, recent reviews of the literature also reveal that bullying at work has been related to a number of different deleterious consequences for its victims (Hoel et. al., 2011; Hogh et. al., 2011). In a recent meta-analysis on outcomes of workplace bullying, Nielsen & Einarsen (2012) established that research on workplace bullying consists of a huge number of studies concentrating on its deleterious effects such as physiological, psychological and other well-being outcomes. Nonetheless, there is an apparent dearth of studies on work related behavioral variables such as counterproductive work behaviors, job performance, OCB etc. Hershcovis (2011) in his comparative meta-analysis of workplace bullying with other related forms of interpersonal aggression investigated a small number of studies on workplace bullying and analyzed its effects on four major types of outcomes i.e. on turnover intentions, job satisfaction, physical and mental well-being and psychological well-being.

Samnani & Singh (2012) in their qualitative review on workplace bullying also suggested that future researchers need to examine those infrequently studied behavioral outcomes of bullying rather relying exclusively on health related outcomes. We take up the recent calls by researchers and investigate one of the most relevant yet under-examined variable of counterproductive work behaviors (CWBs) both directed towards other individuals and organizations as a probable outcome of workplace bullying.

According to the stressor-strain model (Jex & Beehr, 1991), workplace bullying is recognized as a severe social stressor which has detrimental effects on employee's outcomes (Finne et al., 2011). Although this model acknowledges that bullying as a workplace stressor translates into strain for its victims, this model is overly simple and there might be some intervening mechanism through which bullying shows its deleterious effects on its targets (Devonish, 2013).

Recent reviews and meta-analysis clearly found that workplace bullying was though strongly related to mental and physical health and well-being outcomes, it was weakly related to work related behaviors such as absenteeism, job performance or CWBs (Devonish, 2013; Nielsen & Einarsen, 2012; Samnani & Singh, 2012) suggesting the possibility of mediators. The authors recommended that workplace bullying might have indirect and secondary effects on these work related behaviors and the insignificant or weak relationships in the bullying-behaviors relationship can be explained by the existence of mediators in this link.

In this regard, a limited number of studies have examined the causal mechanisms through which workplace bullying shows its indirect effects on outcomes. For example, a few

potential mechanisms such as work engagement (Rodriguez-Munoz, et.al., 2009), emotional exhaustion (Hansen, Hogh, Persson, et. al., 2006; Tuckey & Neall, 2014), perceptions of organizational climate (Giorgi, 2012), psychological capital and social support (Cassidy, McLaughlin & McDowell, 2014) have been studied in the bullying-outcomes relationship. We attempt to expand the bullying literature by examining a unique and a highly relevant mechanism of perceived coworker support through which a stressor such as bullying sparks off CWB (I & O) in its victims.

By utilizing theories of triggered displaced aggression (Dollard et. al., 1939) and the stressor-emotion model of counterproductive work behaviors (Spector, 1998; Spector & Fox, 2005) we examine how and why a stressor such as workplace bullying creates negative feelings in employees through the development of lower perceptions of co-worker support which in turn produces CWBs as an outcome to counter aggression.

## **THEORY AND HYPOTHESIS**

### **2.1 The Direct effects of Workplace Bullying on Counterproductive work behaviors**

Workplace bullying refers to a process in which a single or a number of individuals consistently and during a period of time are frequently exposed to a range of negative acts from supervisors, colleagues or customers/outside, where there is a power gap between the bully and bullied and where the target of such negative acts is unable to protect himself/herself against such abuse (Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996; Einarsen et. al., 2003). Bullying behaviors can be work related such as providing limited/false/incomplete information, constantly reminding of errors in work, impossible workloads, criticizing one's views and opinions etc. Whereas personal bullying intends to be more focused on the individual e.g. name calling, ridiculing behaviors, offensive remarks, persistent abuse, made the laughing stock of the department or social exclusion acts (Einarsen et.al., 2003). Counterproductive work behaviors also labeled deviance/retaliatory or anti-social work behaviors are defined as voluntary actions on the part of individuals that go against organizational standards and are done to damage other individuals, organization or both (Bennett & Robinson, 2002). Robinson and Bennett (1995) came up with a commonly recognized typology of counterproductive work behaviors which classifies CWBs into two dimensions i.e. organization and individuals.

CWB directed towards organization is specifically targeted towards damaging organization as a whole which includes such actions as engaging in free-riding, intentionally prolonging overtime, sabotaging organizational property, using office equipment for personal use etc. CWB focused towards other individuals inculcates deviance intended to harm other workplace members such as harassment, ignoring supervisor's instructions, teasing a co-worker, making obscene comments, gossiping about colleagues etc. Previous research clearly indicates that it is beneficial to differentiate between the two types of counterproductive work behaviors (Herscovits et. al., 2007). Therefore in line with this research, for the present study we also use a two-dimensional classification of counterproductive work behaviors e.g. CWBs directed towards supervisors and co-workers and CWBs targeted towards the organization. We use the foundations of stressor-emotion model of CWB and theories of triggered aggression to explain how workplace bullying leads to CWBs in its targets. Despite previous research has conceptualized that maltreated individuals go on to victimize others (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Folger & Skarlicki, 1998; Ireland & Archer, 2002) this relationship has not been expansively studied.

Based on the assumptions of stressor-emotion model of CWB (Fox & Spector, 1999) at work, we believe that when victims are exposed to stressful situation such as bullying they may indulge in deviance behaviors at work to vent out their frustration. This theory assumes that CWB is one of the most possible outcomes of stressors at work and comprise a reaction to frustrating work conditions (Spector & Fox, 2005).

On the basis of triggered aggression, we believe that when employees feel mistreated in the form of bullying, they view that set patterns of acceptable behaviors have been infringed and thus hostile treatment may further cause abusive behaviors (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). This theory contends that since victims of bullying ignite negative feeling in them this in turn stimulates a need to maltreat others. Indeed, studies on workplace deviance have reported that victims of abuse try to get even in some way as a reaction to the negative treatment that they receive from the perpetrator (Bies & Tripp, 1996; Miller, 2001). Hence, we assert that when employees experience humiliating treatment from their superiors or colleagues in the form of bullying, these victims respond to maltreatment by devising strategies to lessen such emotionally unfavorable situation thereby creating higher levels of CWBs towards organization and individuals. Thus we hypothesize:

*Hypothesis No.1: Workplace Bullying is positively related to Counterproductive Work Behaviors directed towards the organization (CWB-O)*

*Hypothesis No.2: Workplace Bullying is positively related to Counterproductive Work Behaviors directed towards other individuals (CWB-I)*

## **2.2 Perceived Co-worker Support as a mediator between Workplace Bullying and Counterproductive work behaviors**

Perceived co-worker support is defined as the degree to which a person interprets their colleagues would be useful in offering assistance and show care in case of any need with work related matters and play an active role in providing emotional support to them as well (Thoits, 1985).

The stress and coping literature identify social support as one of the central variable in both mediating and moderating the detrimental effects of stressors (Cassidy, 2011). For example, past research identifies that victims of bullying perceive less support from co-worker (Hansen et al., 2006; Cassidy, McLaughlin & McDowell, 2014).

On the basis of stressor-emotion model of CWB (Fox & Spector, 1999), we believe that targets of bullying in a stressful and derogatory environment create negative perceptions of co-worker support (Semmer et. al., 2008). This perception emerges as victims of bullying feel that their colleagues are not preventing the harm or providing any support to them. These battered individuals also feel that the co-workers are not playing their due part in diffusing their negative emotions (Tuckey & Neal, 2006) and instead are ganging up with the perpetrator to insult them. Such stressful conditions takes a toll on bullied individuals who do not respond positively towards their co-workers by giving their fair share into their relationship with peers. Hence the continuous cycle of abusive behaviors may communicate the violation of socially acceptable norms, whereby individuals feel betrayed on the part of their peers generating lower perceptions of coworker support. Thus, we hypothesize:

*Hypothesis No.3: Workplace Bullying is negatively related to Perceived Co-worker support*

Although past research on perceived support have demonstrated strong relationships of perceptions of co-worker support with a range of attitudes and well-being outcomes (Chiaburu & Harrison, 2008; Karatepe et al., 2010; Ng & Sorensen, 2008); no study till date

has explicitly examined the direct influence of perceived co-worker support in influencing CWBs.

Using the foundations of theory of triggered displaced aggression (Dollard et.al., 1939), we assert that when employees perceive that their peers are not emotionally available to them and are not considerate to them, these employees develop feelings of injustice which might cause them to retaliate or indulge in deviance towards their co-workers or towards the organization. Past research clearly depicts that employees who interpret support from their colleagues are less likely to feel stress and have fewer intentions to quit the organization (Cho & Johanson, 2008; Tsai et al., 2007). According to the stressor-emotion model of CWB (Fox & Spector, 1999), we contend that when individuals view that their coworkers are not willing to provide assistance to them or stand by them in times of crisis, such individual might feel demoralized which would cause them to engage in higher levels of CWBs towards these co-workers as well as towards the organization as a whole. Thus, we hypothesize:

*Hypothesis No.4: Perceived Co-worker Support is negatively related to Counterproductive Work Behaviors directed towards the organization (CWB-O)*

*Hypothesis No.5: Perceived Co-worker Support is negatively related to Counterproductive Work Behaviors directed towards other individuals (CWB-I)*

The theory of triggered displaced aggression (Dollard et. al., 1939) sheds light on how perceived coworker support plays an intervening role in workplace bullying and CWBs relationship. The theory assumes that victims of abuse who become disturbed by a perpetrator may transfer their CWBs/deviance on other targets who are not the cause of the harm (Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mowrer & Sears, 1939).

In line with the contentions of this theory, we believe that when individuals are exposed to a threatening environment of bullying where they are mocked at and ridiculed, victims develop negative perceptions of coworker support as they feel that they are not stopping the bully or helping them to counter the aggressor which eventually leads to redirect their CWBs from the actual perpetrator towards their peers.

Moreover, when the bully is a powerful superior and is not available directly, targets of such abusive treatment might not engage in CWBs towards the aggressor (Baron, 1971) and CWBs might be redirected towards available and less powerful others. Also, when individuals are constantly criticized and degraded professionally, such victims develop feelings of hatred and revenge not only towards the aggressor but also towards their co-workers whom they feel are silent observers which triggers CWBs towards these peers or the organization. We also believe that when individuals are subjected to offensive treatment like bullying, these bullied individuals perceive that their co-workers are not offering their emotional support and are adding fuel to fire which paves the way for displacing their aggression on to the organization producing higher levels of CWBs towards the organization as well. Thus we hypothesize:

*Hypothesis No.6: Perceived Co-worker Support mediates the relationship between Workplace Bullying and (a) Counterproductive Work Behaviors directed towards the organization (CWB-O) (b) Counterproductive Work Behaviors directed towards other individuals (CWB-I)*

**FIGURE 1**  
**Research Model**

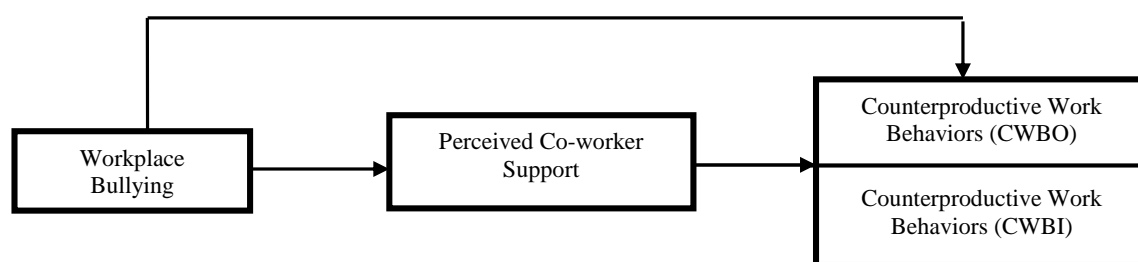


Figure 1 shows a mediation model whereby Workplace Bullying influences victims Counterproductive work behaviors (CWB-O & I) through the mechanism of Perceived Co-worker Support.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Participants and Procedures

We collected data on our proposed model variables through field survey and utilizing cross-sectional research design from full time employees working in the service sector e.g. Banking, Telecom and Education Sector of Pakistan. The procedure followed for data collection was that the Human Resource Departments of targeted organizations were contacted through personal and professional references to sought permission and official approval for collecting data. After formal authorization was granted, a cover letter was sent to employees in these organizations which explained them the purpose, nature and design of the study. The respondents were guaranteed of confidentiality and anonymity of results and indicated that participation in the study was voluntary.

A total of 500 questionnaires were distributed among employees working in 11 different organizations; out of which 6 were banks, 3 were telecommunication organizations and 2 were educational institutes in the capital city of Islamabad, Pakistan. Out of the disseminated 500 survey we received 350 questionnaires, however 16 out of those were discarded due to missing data resulting in a final sample size of 334 and generating a response rate of 68%.

Majority of the respondent were males (61%), were single (60.5%), mostly belonged to private sector organizations (68.6%), belonged to the Management/Administrative departments (37%), had Accounts and finance as their area of specialization (37.4%) and were on the junior management levels (53%). Majority of the respondents were Masters degree holders (79%), had spend approximately 2 years in the present company (12%), with 3 years of total working experience (9.3%). Respondents had an average age of 30 (SD=8.58) years.

### 3.2 Measures

English is the formal mode of communication at work and is also the medium of instruction used for teaching in all universities in Pakistan. Considering the fact that majority of respondents were Masters degree holders and worked at the junior management levels, utilizing questionnaires in English was not a serious concern. Past studies published in mainstream journals (Abbas, Raja, Darr & Bouckennooghe, 2014; Naseer, Raja & Donia, 2016; Naseer, Raja, Syed, Donia & Darr, 2016) clearly show that using questionnaires in English in Pakistan was not problematic. Moreover, we measured our study variables by employing well-established, globally valid and well-tested scales whose psychometric

properties have been already substantiated in a number of countries and in a number of languages across the globe. Hence, due to the above reasoning we did not translate our questionnaires in Urdu.

### 3.2.1 Workplace Bullying.

Workplace Bullying was tapped by the shortened version of the Negative Acts Questionnaire (NAQ) adopted from Einarsen and his colleagues (Einarsen, et. al., 2003). The Negative Acts Questionnaire is an 8 item scale which asks respondents on how repeatedly and continuously they have been exposed to negative behaviors at the workplace for the past six months. Sample item for this scale are "I have been controlled so much that I feel extremely insecure; ". The scale anchors ranged from 1= Never to 7= Always. The Cronbach alpha reliability for this scale in our study was alpha, = 0.90.

### 3.2.2 Perceived Co-worker Support.

Perceived Co-worker scale was measured by a 3 item scale developed by Staw, Sutton & Pelled (1994). A sample item for this scale is "My coworkers give me the help I need to do my job". Responses to the scale were tapped through a seven point scale ranging from 1= strongly disagree to 7= strongly agree. In the current study, the alpha reliability for this scale is = 0.85.

### 3.2.3 Counterproductive Work Behaviors (CWBs).

Counterproductive work behaviors were measured through peer reports by a 14-item dimensional scale consisting of CWBO and CWBI developed and adopted from Aquino, Lewis & Bradfield (1999). Responses to items on the scale was measured through a seven point likert scale with anchors ranging from 1= Never to 7= Always.

A Sample item of CWBO is " Left work early without permission". We hypothesized and measured CWB (O & I) as a two dimensional measure. The results of CFA also demonstrated that the two factor model showed better fit to the data indices ( $\chi^2 = 165.64$ ,  $df = 66$ ,  $p < .001$ ; CFI = 0.98, NFI = 0.96, GFI = 0.94, RMSEA = 0.07) as in comparison to the one factor model ( $\chi^2 = 287.49$ ,  $df = 73$ ,  $p < .001$ , CFI = 0.95, NFI = 0.94, GFI = 0.88, RMSEA = 0.09). The cronbach alpha reliability for this measure in our sample was = 0.93. A sample item of CWBI is "Refused to talk to a co-worker". The cronbach alpha reliability for the CWBI in our sample was = 0.95.

## 3.3 Confirmatory Factor Analysis

The present study employed two source data to tap the independent, mediating and outcome variables i.e. Workplace Bullying and Perceived Co-worker support was self reported whereas the dependent variable of Counterproductive work behaviors (CWB-O & I) was tapped at time-2 from peers. Nonetheless, in order to ensure that each of these variables possessed adequate discriminant validity, we ran a number of confirmatory factor analysis utilizing AMOS 18 software. According to the recommendations given by Anderson & Gerbing (1988), we performed CFAs for each possible pairing of a 2 factor model with a single factor model (see Table 1). As depicted in Table 1, the model fit statistics reflected through the values of  $\chi^2$ , DF, CFI, GFI, NFI and RMSEA for each of the two factor unconstrained models exhibited higher model fit as in comparison to the one factor constrained model. The results of each probable set of alternate pairs of variables with the model fit values are presented in Table 1.

**TABLE 1**  
**Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results**

Sr No	Measurement Models	<sup>2</sup>	DF	CFI	GFI	NFI	RMSEA
1.	WB- PCS (2 Factor Model)						
	WB- PCS (1 Factor Model)	<b>90.58</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>.97</b>	<b>.95</b>	<b>.96</b>	<b>.07</b>
		215.75	39	.91	.90	.89	.12
2.	WB- CWBI (2 Factor Model)						
	WB- CWBI (1 Factor Model)	<b>183.37</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>.97</b>	<b>.93</b>	<b>.95</b>	<b>.06</b>
		438.72	75	.90	.87	.88	.12
3.	WB- CWBO (2 Factor Model)						
	WB- CWBO (1 Factor Model)	<b>163.53</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>.98</b>	<b>.94</b>	<b>.95</b>	<b>.05</b>
		462.28	71	.88	.86	.87	.13
4.	PCS- CWBI (2 Factor Model)						
	PCS- CWBI (1 Factor Model)	<b>68.15</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>.98</b>	<b>.96</b>	<b>.97</b>	<b>.07</b>
		118.60	31	.97	.93	.96	.09
5.	PCS- CWBO (2 Factor Model)						
	PCS- CWBO (1 Factor Model)	<b>67.12</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>.98</b>	<b>.96</b>	<b>.97</b>	<b>.06</b>
		77.13	31	.98	.96	.97	.07
6.	CWBI-CWBO (2 Factor Model)						
	CWBI- CWBO (1 Factor Model)	<b>165.64</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>.98</b>	<b>.94</b>	<b>.96</b>	<b>.07</b>
		287.49	73	.95	.88	.94	.09
7.	WB-PCS-CWBI-CWBO (4 Factor Model)						
	WB-PCS-CWBI-CWBO (1 Factor Model)	<b>482.58</b>	<b>253</b>	<b>.97</b>	<b>.90</b>	<b>.93</b>	<b>.05</b>
		1459.41	265	.82	.74	.79	.12

WB= Workplace Bullying

PCS= Perceived Coworker Support

CWBO= Counterproductive Work Behaviors directed towards organization

CWBI= Counterproductive Work Behaviors directed towards Individuals

## RESULTS

### 4.1 Descriptive Statistics and Pearson Bivariate Correlation Analysis

Table 2 display the descriptive statistics i.e. Mean, Standard Deviation, Bivariate Correlations and reliabilities of the current study's variables. Workplace Bullying was significant and positively related to CWB-O ( $r = .33$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), CWB-I ( $r = .32$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and negatively associated with perceived co-worker support ( $r = -.29$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Perceived co-worker support was also significantly negatively related with both CWB-O ( $r = -.28$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and CWB-I ( $r = -.28$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Both the dimensions of counterproductive work behaviors were also significantly positively related to each other ( $r = .88$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). However, as verified above the validity results of the two factor model fit statistics showed superiority over a single factor CWB aggregate variable proving the distinctiveness of the CWB-O & I dimensions.

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Insert Table 2 about here  
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### 4.2 Structural Equation Modeling Analysis

We utilized Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) technique employing AMOS 18 software to test each of our direct as well as indirect/mediation hypothesis. SEM is a statistical approach which facilitates the researcher to pictorially draw, test and verify a sequence of structural paths i.e. regression equations both independently and simultaneously using the AMOS diagram builder (Bryne, 2013). On the basis of the suggestions offered by Anderson &

Gerbing (1988), the SEM model was run by following a two step approach in which firstly a full measurement model (Full CFA) of all the present study's variables were run.

After substantiation of the full measurement model, we moved forward to the second step for testing hypothesis through running of structural or path models so as to accept or reject both the direct as well as indirect paths of the current research model. Bootstrapping technique was also employed to specifically affirm the indirect effects or mediation hypothesis. The model fit statistics consisting of ( $\chi^2$ , DF, CFI, GFI, NFI and RMSEA) signifies the fit of the entire model to the data. The parameter estimates provides the individual path coefficients or standardized regression weights (Beta values), significance (p values) and the squared multiple correlation (R square change) of each path which further highlights the statistical evidence for confirmation or rejection of hypothesis. For verifying the mediation hypothesis, the estimates section in the AMOS output provides the results of standardized indirect effects (beta/estimate values), bootstrap 95% lower level (LL) and upper level (UL) confidence interval (CI) and also bootstrapped two tailed significance of the indirect path. Thus, the mediation hypothesis or indirect effects are verified through the bootstrapping technique in AMOS.

#### 4.3 Full Measurement Model (Full CFA Model)

The Full measurement model (Full CFA) model was run to test and verify the measurement model comprising of the 4 variables in the present study i.e. Workplace Bullying, Perceived Co-worker support, Counterproductive Work Behaviors, CWB-O and CWB-I. Figure 2 shows the full CFA model of all the study's constructs thus indicating discriminant as well as convergent validity of the variables. The results of the full measurement model highlighted that the full CFA model adequately fits the data well i.e. Chi-square,  $\chi^2=482.58$ , df= 253,  $p<.001$ , Chi-square/df,  $\chi^2/df= 1.91$ , CFI= .97, GFI=.90, NFI= .93, RMSEA= 0.05 (See Figure 2). These statistical values highlighted superior model fit and offered confirmation of the full measurement model (Full CFA) proving the first step of SEM.

**TABLE 2**  
**Means, Standard Deviations, Correlations and Reliabilities of main variables of the Study**

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Age	30.13	8.58						
2. Gender	.40	.49	-.29**					
3. WB	2.56	1.26	.10	.01	(.90)			
4. PCS	5.05	1.44	-.02	-.01	-.29**	(.85)		
5. CWB-I	1.86	1.23	-.16**	-.00	.32**	-.28**	(.95)	
6. CWB-O	1.86	1.16	-.17**	.01	.33**	-.28**	.88**	(.93)

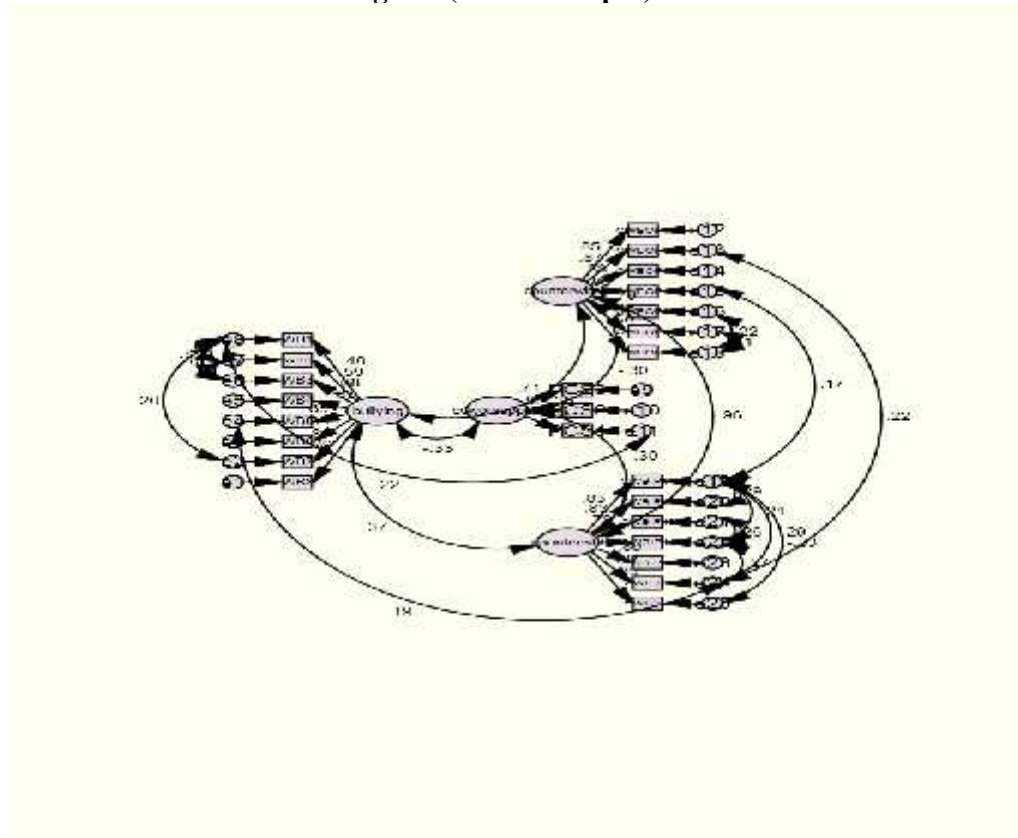
Note.  $N=334$ ; Control variables are Age and Gender; for Gender 0= 'Male' and 1= 'Female'; WB=Workplace Bullying; PCS= Perceived Co-worker Support; CWB-I= Counterproductive work behaviors individually directed; CWB-O= Counterproductive work behaviors towards organization. Alpha reliabilities presented in parenthesis.

\* $p<.05$ ,

\*\* $p<.01$ ,

\*\*\* $p<.001$

**FIGURE 2**  
**Full Measurement Model Diagram (AMOS Output)**



#### 4.4 Structural Model (Hypothesis Testing)

The structural models also called as the path models determines the association between the latent variables (Byrne, 2013). The confirmation of the Full measurement model assured us of fulfillment of SEM's first step, therefore we moved forward to the next step e.g. our hypothesized structural model was run to test and verify our direct as well as mediation hypothesis. The results of the model fit statistics of our hypothesized structural model showed adequate fit to the data ( $\chi^2 = 478.78$ ,  $DF = 253$ ,  $\chi^2/DF$  ratio = 1.89, CFI = .97, GFI = .90, NFI = .93, RMSEA = 0.05).

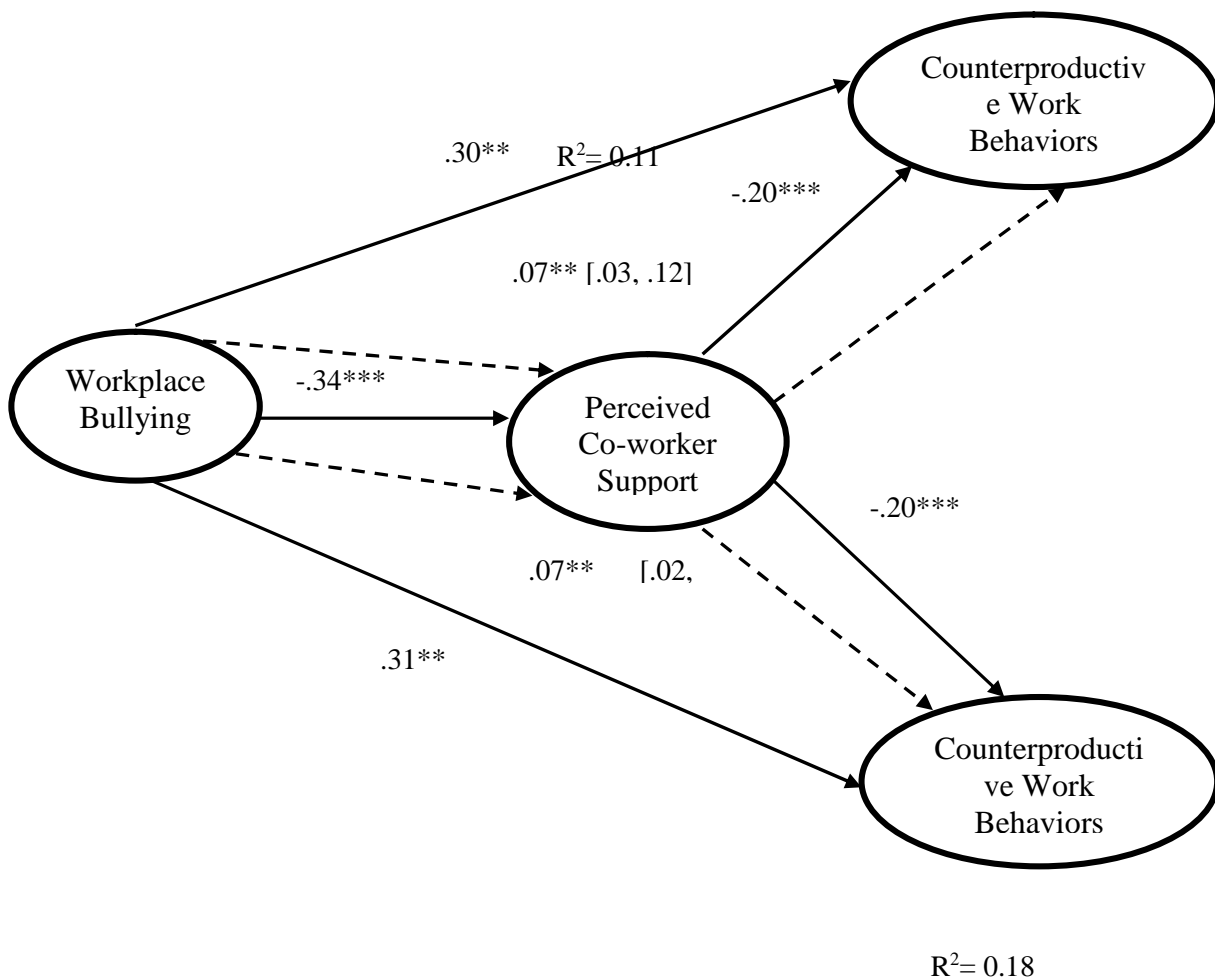
H1 and H2 hypothesized that Workplace bullying is positively and significantly related to CWB-O and CWB-I respectively. The parameter estimates indicated that the direct structural paths from workplace bullying was significant and positive for both CWB-O ( $\beta = 0.31$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and CWB-I ( $\beta = 0.30$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Workplace explained 18% and 17% in CWB-O and CWB-I respectively. Thus, Hypothesis No. 1 and Hypothesis No. 2 was supported.

H3 postulated the direct negative effects of workplace bullying on perceived co-worker support. The individual standardized path coefficients revealed that the direct path running from Workplace bullying to Perceived co-worker support was negative and significant ( $\beta = -0.34$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Workplace bullying explained 11% variation in perceived co-worker support, thus lending support for Hypothesis No. 3. H4 and H5 hypothesized the direct negative effects of Perceived co-worker support on CWB-O and CWB-I. The standardized regression path coefficients (as depicted in Figure 4) clearly highlight that perceived co-worker support was significantly and negatively related to both CWB-O ( $\beta = -0.20$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and CWB-I ( $\beta = -0.20$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Thus, Hypothesis No. 4 and Hypothesis No. 5 were accepted.

H6a and H6b are related to the mediation hypotheses. H6a and H6b hypothesize that Perceived co-worker support mediates the workplace bullying and counterproductive work behaviors, CWB-O and CWB-I relationship respectively. The results of our bootstrapping technique depict that the indirect effects of workplace bullying on organizationally directed counterproductive work behaviors, CWB-O through the mechanism of perceived co-worker support (Indirect Effect= 0.07,  $p < 0.001$ ) was significant (two tailed significance with normal distribution). The findings of the bootstrap 95% bias corrected interval with Lower bounds (LLCI) and Upper bounds (ULCI) contained non-zero (0.02, 0.11) confirming the indirect effects.

Similarly the indirect effects of workplace bullying on individually directed counterproductive work behaviors, CWB-I through the mechanism of perceived co-worker support (Indirect Effect= 0.07,  $p < 0.001$ ) was significant (two tailed significance with normal distribution). The results of the bootstrap 95% bias corrected interval contained non-zero (0.03, 0.12) thus proving the indirect effects. Hence, Hypothesis No. 6a and 6b were fully accepted. Figure 3 depicts the full hypothesized structural model (manually drawn).

**FIGURE 3**  
**Full Structural Model Diagram**  
 $R^2 = 0.17$



—→ Standardized Direct Path Coefficients with asterisks indicating significance values

-----► Standardized Indirect Path Coefficients with asterisks indicating significance values  
 N=334; Full structural model showing direct and mediating effects. Mediation paths running from Workplace Bullying to Perceived Co-worker Support to Counterproductive Work Behaviors (CWBO and CWBI). For indirect path values the square brackets represent significant indirect effects with bootstrapped 95% Confidence interval (CI) lower limit (LL) and upper limit (UL) values i.e. (LLCI and ULCI). R<sup>2</sup> values show the percentage variance for each path.  
 \*\*\* p< 0.001; \*\* p< 0.01; \* p<0.05

## DISCUSSION

### 5.1 Study Strengths

Our study offers a number of theoretical and empirical strengths. We investigate one of the most novel, hot and relevant topics of workplace bullying which has gained increasing researcher and practitioner attention for the past few decades (Nielsen & Einarsen, 2012; Samnani & Singh, 2012; Tuckey & Neal, 2014).

Our study is also distinctive in the sense that it examines how and why workplace bullying triggers CWBs in its victims through the underlying mechanism of perceived coworker support. Evidently, the literature examining the harmful consequences of workplace bullying on job behaviors is still very limited. Yet a smaller number of studies prevail that have investigated whether workplace bullying directly or indirectly trigger CWBs through a number of psychological or attitudinal mechanisms (Devonish, 2013; Nielsen & Einarsen, 2012; Samnani & Singh, 2012; Tuckey & Neal 2014).

The current study is also unique as it utilized the theoretical dynamics of theory of triggered displaced aggression (Dollard et.al., 1939) and stressor-emotion model of CWB (Fox & Spector, 1999) as overarching theories to explain our suggested model relationships. The present study used data collection obtained from independent measures i.e. workplace bullying and PCS were self-reported whereas the outcome variable of CWBs were peer reported which lessens the chances of common method bias associated with reporting behavioral variables. Our study also employed one the most latest and vigorous approach of Structural Equation Modeling technique (SEM) for testing our main effects as well as mediation links.

### 5.2 Study Limitations and Future Research Directions

Despite the strengths of the study, there are certain limitations as well. The present study used a cross-sectional research design to test the hypothesized research model. However, the results of CFA's signify that respondents viewed each of these variables as distinct. The results of the Full measurement model and Structural model both for the direct as well as indirect paths also depict that these relations might not have been inflated. Moreover, collecting data from two different sources also increased the legitimacy and acceptability of the study's research design. Future researchers should utilize a time-lagged research model or a pure longitudinal research design with data collected at different measurement points so as to address the concerns for reverse causality.

The current study examined one of the behavioral outcome of CWB, however the intent of the study was to identify how and through what process bullying generates deviance in its victims. Future studies should examine other behavioral and attitudinal variables such as job performance, OCB, turnover intentions etc as a direct as well as indirect consequence of bullying. Another limitation pertains to the use of only one of the support types i.e. perceived

co-worker support in explaining how bullying at work can activate CWBs in targets. Future researchers can examine other support types such as perceived organization support, perceived supervisor support and perceived social support (support from family and friends) as possible mediators in the bullying-CWB link.

### 5.3 Practical Implications for Managers and Organizations

Our study is beneficial for managers and organizations as well. Our results confirmed that employees at all levels within the organization when subjected to workplace bullying are more likely to get even by displaying CWBs. Managers at all levels must make efforts to stop instances of bullying as it has been found to invite retaliation on the part of its victims. Our findings also support the direct as well as mediating effects of perceived coworker support in the bullying and CWB relationship.

Coworkers should refrain from being either the silent observer or in worst cases supporting the perpetrator as the current study lends credence that victims of bullying hold the co-workers accountable for such aggressive acts by developing lower perceptions of coworker support towards them. Therefore our study adds important insights in the dark side of employee behaviors by answering how and why victims of abusive behaviors might strike back in the form of CWBs in a developing country like Pakistan.

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