# Bullying at Workplace and Innovative Work Behavior: Empirical Testing of an Integrative Model

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – Using the theory of conservation of resource (COR), current research investigates direct and indirect effects of bullying at workplace on innovative work behavior (IWB) in higher educational sector of Pakistan. In specific, current study examines the influence of workplace bullying on IWB through the mediation of knowledge hiding and psychological safety as a boundary condition.

**Methodology** – A self-administered survey design was used to have data from 306 faculty members of the HEIs. Further, SPSS 29.0 and SmartPLS 4.1.0.8 software were used to analyze the data.

**Findings** – Empirical findings highlighted a negative association between workplace bullying and IWB. Further, resulted revealed a positive relationship between workplace bullying and knowledge hiding. Furthermore, the mediation effect of knowledge hiding was also empirically supported.

**Implications** – Current study adds to the extant literature around workplace bullying and IWB. It also offers invaluable insights for HEIs on fostering an environment that promotes innovation through reducing workplace bullying and knowledge hiding.

**Originality/value** – Several factors make this study distinct. First, this study investigated the influence of workplace bullying on the IWB. Second, this research work delved into the mediating role of knowledge hiding between workplace bullying and IWB, as well it also studied the moderating role of psychological safety in this relationship. Third, this is the first study of its kind to be conducted in the HEIs in the twin cities of Pakistan.

**Keywords** Workplace Bullying, Knowledge Hiding, Psychological Safety, Innovative Work Behavior, Conservation of Resource Theory

## Introduction

Innovation is one of the most sought-after phenomenon in the 21st century workplace, driving the rise and fall of business empires. In this era of fierce competition, creative and innovative minds have become the backbone of successful organizations (Fadli Muhamad et al., 2023). Innovation, other than being included in the 9th sustainable development goal (SDG), is deemed critical by the United Nations for finding better solutions to contemporary issues that industries such as education are facing (Hales & Birdthistle, 2022). Developing and nurturing innovativeness is essential for the survival of organizations. However, innovative behaviors often become the target of malicious forces at workplace, whereas they must be nurtured with care (Breidenthal et al., 2020). Understanding negative forces at the workplace will assist organizations pinpoint the warning signs and take effective measures to safeguard organizational innovativeness and make informed decisions (Breidenthal et al., 2020). When the workplace environment is not comforting, new thoughts and

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ideas do not emerge, innovation does not occur, and companies do not survive and prosper (Breidenthal et al., 2020).

Here, it becomes prudent to understand innovative work behavior (IWB) which is defined by Bos-Nehles et al. (2017) as "the intentional behaviors of individuals to produce and implement new and useful ideas explicitly intended to benefit the individual, group or organization". Scholars have highlighted that innovative people think "outside the box" and surpass conventional perspectives (Binsaeed et al., 2023). A typical example of innovation is Netflix which gives its employees autonomy to experiment and take calculated risks. Due to its innovative culture, Netflix evolved to a worldwide leader in video streaming from a CD and DVD rental service and breakthrough content creation such as Stranger Things and Squid Game (Dimitrakaki, 2025). IWB is one of the essential qualities that employees must possess, as individual ideas have been found to significantly influence an organization's ability to continuously innovate its business model and remain competitive (Hock-Doepgen et al., 2024). Cultivating innovation also requires the development of a psychologically safe environment in which employees feel safe to display innovative work behavior (Wechtler & Suseno, 2025). A toxic work environment poses grave threats to innovative work behavior (Bou Reslan et al., 2025).

While comparing various negative behaviors in an organization, workplace bullying (WB) emerges as one of the most distinguished among others because of its recurring nature, a lasting timespan, and involvement of power imbalances (Sun et al., 2025). Einarsen (2018) defined workplace bullying as "situations where an employee repeatedly and over a prolonged time period is exposed to harassing behavior from one or more colleagues (including subordinates and leaders) and where the targeted person is unable to defend him-/herself against this systematic mistreatment" (p. 73). Workplace bullying constructs an environment in which stress and fear prevail which hampers employees' ability to engage in innovative behaviors (F. Bou Reslan et al., 2025). It is a form of violence in which the employee faces continuous mistreatment, where the employee is criticized consistently, and has to endure psychological, verbal, or even physical violence (Galanis et al., 2024). The employee is systematically targeted and can neither easily escape it nor is able to stop it. These detrimental acts of bullying not only reduce an employee's drive, morale and happiness but also reduces employees' efficiency and performance at work and leads to increased turnover intentions, sickness leaves, actual dropout, depression, physical and mental health issues, and suicidal ideations among others (e.g. Sun et al., 2025; Ma and Song et al., 2023; V. Boudrias et al., 2021).

Numerous research work exist on the positive antecedents and outcomes of innovative work behavior, but less examined are the factors which become a hindrance in the path in achieving IWB (Bou Reslan et al., 2025; Breidenthal et al., 2020). Workplace bullying is one of the most common and dire phenomenon impacting IWB (Bou Reslan et al., 2025). Despite a plethora of research on workplace bullying, organizations still have to spend an incomprehensible amount of $64 billion annually to cope with bullying (Liang, 2021). Research exploring the impact of workplace bullying on IWB remains scarce, especially in developing countries, depicting a significant gap in the knowledge area that needs more empirical research. Bou Reslan et al., (2025) studied a negative relationship between workplace bullying and IWB. Although contrary findings between the two variables have been revealed by Majeed and Naseer (2021). Creasy and Carnes (2017) examined the relationship between WB and IWB. Other than these three studies, no other research studies the workplace bullying and IWB relationship, and even among these three, a contradiction exists among the findings. Therefore, there is an evident need for a targeted empirical study to delve into and examine how workplace bullying impacts IWB of employees, especially in HEIs context of developing countries like Pakistan. Therefore, this research study is examining the effect of workplace bullying on IWB with the original mediation of knowledge hiding and moderation of psychological safety in the higher education institutes of Pakistan.

Current research on the effect of WB on IWB with the original mediation and moderation of knowledge hiding and psychological safety respectively resulted few important contributions to the literature. Firstly, it was

observed that studies examining the linkage between WB and IWB are extremely few in number (Bou Reslan et al., 2025; Majeed and Naseer 2021; Creasy and A. Carnes, 2017). There also exists a contradiction among the results in the few studies which have already been conducted. This requires further empirical research study examining the relationship between WB and IWB to better understand their relationship. Additionally, only a scarce number of mediators and moderators have been studied in the relationship between WB and IWB. Bou Reslan et al., (2025) studied the direct impact of workplace bullying on employees' IWB, although through a different mechanism than ours. Majeed and Naseer (2021) found that workplace bullying enhances employees' creativity, possibly due to employees perceiving WB as a challenge to overcome. In their research, they studied the mediating mechanism of Eustress and moderation of psychological capital (Majeed and Naseer, 2021). Furthermore, Creasy and A. Carnes, (2017) studied association of workplace bullying with team innovation with the mediation of virtual and traditional team dynamics. In the light of these studies, we aim to contribute to the literature by studying an original mediation and moderation impacting the scarcely studied association of WB with IWB.

Secondly, it contributes to the literature concerning WB and IWB by utilizing the theory of conservation of resources (COR) which helps us to understand the linkages toward IWB. This will also lend support to the theory and contribute to its literature. Thirdly, it has been observed that the linkage between WB and IWB has rarely been studied in the developing nations. Only two such studies have been conducted in Pakistan which explore the relationship between WB and IWB which were by F. Bou Reslan et al., (2025) and Majeed and Naseer (2018). The higher educational institutes (HEIs) have rarely been exclusively studied in this context. Additionally, studies in the past have also found that over 70% of the employees were a victim to the uncivil acts at work, such as getting disparaged, criticized, not being appreciated for their efforts and continuously being disturbed (Agarwal, 2023; Touni and Hussein, 2023). This highlights a prevalent issue in organizational environments where disrespectful behaviors towards employees diminish their sense of worth and hinder their ability to perform innovatively, requiring in-depth research. Hence, this study contributes towards the depth of literature regarding WB and IWB in the HEIs of a developing economy like Pakistan.

**Hypotheses Development**
*Workplace Bullying and Innovative Work Behavior*
Workplace bullying is defined by Einarsen (2018) as "situations where an employee repeatedly and over a prolonged time period is exposed to harassing behavior from one or more colleagues (including subordinates and leaders) and where the targeted person is unable to defend him-/herself against this systematic mistreatment" (p. 73). Three types of workplace bullying have been generally identified by Yu-Chia Chang et al., (2025): work-related bullying, physical bullying and personal bullying. Work-related bullying includes getting unreasonably burdened with workload and intentionally being withheld the employee from necessary information; physical bullying includes threatening actions and gestures and physical contact; and personal bullying includes verbal abuse, rumors, and gossip (Yu-Chia Chang et al., 2025). More practically, it includes excessive or destructive criticism, attacks on reputation, bodily harm, interference, and coercion (Yu-Chia Chang et al., 2025). It is an unethical practice that becomes the cause of major stress in organizations (De Clercq, 2025). Meta-analysis suggests that 15% of the employees all over the globe experience different types of workplace bullying (Sun et al., 2025).

With regards to educational institutes, Beckmann et al. in 2013 studied bullying in the faculty of nursing schools, found that junior faculty members who reported bullying comprised 65% of the respondents, associate professors made up another 21% who reported experiencing bullying, and 60% of the reported occurrences had senior faculty members and management acting as the bullies (Beckmann et al., 2013). It has also been found that in 80% of reported bullying cases, someone from the higher managerial position was the perpetrator (Simson and Cohen, 2004). Bullying is still occurring in contemporary times and causing huge losses annually to organizations (Liang, 2021) requiring scholars' attention.

Scholars have found workplace bullying to be negatively impacting employees' physical and mental health, mutual relationships, their faith in the organization, productivity, and organizational innovation, also leading to increased organizational turnover intentions and actual turnover (e.g. Sun et al., 2025; Faeq D., 2025; Ma Z et al., 2024). Studies have also linked workplace bullying to reduced innovative work behavior such as creative thinking, problem-solving and suggesting of solutions (Bou Reslan, 2025). WB is also negatively linked to job performance (Chang Y, 2025), creative performance (Faeq D., 2025), emotional exhaustion and knowledge hiding (Islam and Chaudhary, 2024), and quiet quitting among nurses (Gelanis P. et al., 2024). Scholars have also established that workplace bullying leads to fear-based silence and workplace withdrawal (Srivastava et al., 2023). Interestingly, Paul Vincent M. et al., (2023) identified that family incivility caused workplace bullying. Similarly, Stapinski et al., (2023) highlighted that role stress led to bullying at workplace. Touni and Hussein (2023) found that toxic workplace climate negatively impacts employee engagement and IWB.

Bos-Nehles et al. (2017) defined IWB as "the intentional behaviors of individuals to produce and implement new and useful ideas explicitly intended to benefit the individual, group or organization". IWB is characterized by actively creating, introducing, and applying new ideas that enhance the functioning of an individual's work or that of a group, as described by researchers (Orfila-Sintes & Mattsson, 2009). IWB is also described as the act of employees investing extra time and effort beyond their usual responsibilities in order to create novel ideas and methods. Liao (2010) observed that workplace stresses, such as bullying, have a significant negative effect on the intrinsic drive of employee, consequently impeding their ability to be creatively productive. Workplace bullying is known to not only hinder innovation but also diminish the general ability of the organizational personnel, thereby diminishing the organization's ability for development and adaptation.

The conservation of resources (COR) theory by Hobfoll (2018) suggests that employees' outcomes are set to protect their existing resources as well as prevent potential future losses. Based on the COR theory, it can be theorized that bullying may trigger resource depletion, consequently compelling employees to engage in fewer IWBs in order to conserve their resources. According to De Clercq et al., (2025), in line with COR theory, when employees experience workplace bullying, it notably depletes a significant amount of their self-esteem resources, and two of the relevant personal resources, namely, innovative tendencies and resilience. Additionally, Babar (2022) and Podsakoff (2007) suggested that a stressful work environment demands significant amounts of an employee's time and mental focus, thereby draining their available resources. This depletion makes it difficult for the employees to involve in innovative work behaviors, as their capacity to generate new ideas and solutions is diminished. Therefore, the following relationship is hypothesized:

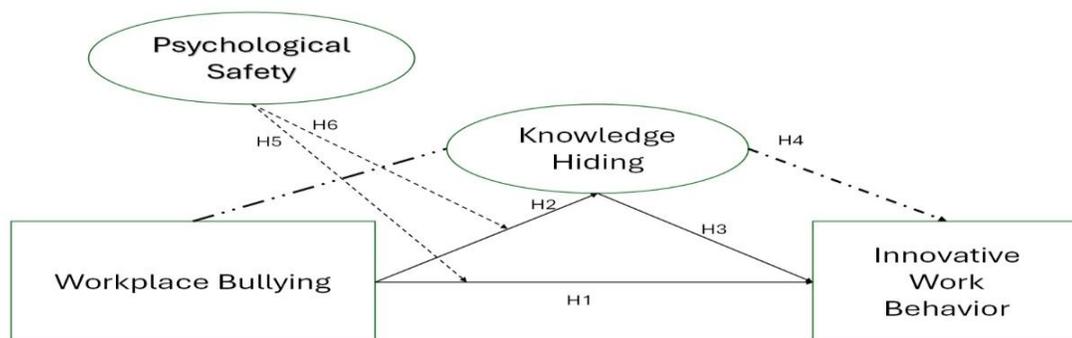**H1:** *Workplace bullying has a significant negative relationship with innovative work behavior (IWB).*



**Figure 1:** The Research Model

### Workplace Bullying and Knowledge Hiding

Connelly et al., (2012) defined knowledge hiding as "an intentional attempt by an individual to withhold or conceal knowledge that has been requested by another person" (p. 65). It consists of three factors, namely, playing dumb, evasive hiding, and intentional and rationalized hiding (Connelly et al., 2012). It has been found by Ali and Mehreen (2026) that negative career shocks lead to employees not seeking quality relationships which in turn promotes knowledge hiding behaviors among employees. Tariq et al., (2025) found that when employees learn that their leaders hide knowledge from customers, they will begin to devalue the customers and also start the practice of knowledge hiding from their customers. In a meta-analysis of Xiao M (2024), investigating the predictors and outcomes of knowledge hiding, one relevant antecedent found was workplace mistreatment among others, which lead to knowledge hiding. In this line, Fatima et al. (2021) explored the impact of workplace bullying on small, offensive and illegal conduct, namely knowledge hiding and employee time stealing. This research also looked into how unpleasant emotions could be a mediator between WB and its consequences. The results showed that bullying at work increased nurses' knowledge hiding and time stealing.

The link of workplace bullying to negative consequences has made it a major workplace problem worldwide. In response to this challenge, Islam & Chaudhary (2024) carried out a study to assess how, via the process of emotional exhaustion, workplace bullying affects hiding information behaviors. Furthermore, research explored the possible moderating role of friendships at work in reducing the unfavorable influence of bullying at work on knowledge hiding. According to the study, bullying at work greatly raises psychological exhaustion and encourages nurses to suppress information. The purpose of this study is to improve awareness of how employee behaviors related to information withholding interact with workplace dynamics.

Bari et al. (2023) discovered the clear connection between many aspects of knowledge hiding inside people and personal experiences of workplace bullying. Furthermore, the research looked at the role that relational psychological contract breach (RPCB) as an intervening mechanism for the association of bullying with the desire to conceal information. This study showed that workplace bullying connected to a person has a big impact on the attitudes to act stupid and evasively hide knowledge, acting both directly and indirectly. Particularly, though, this kind of bullying does not change the actions linked to reasoned knowledge hiding. This emphasizes the complex influence on knowledge management inside organizations of interpersonal disputes and alleged contractual violations. Hence, it is hypothesized that:

**H2:** *Workplace bullying has a significant positive relationship with knowledge hiding.*

### Knowledge Hiding and Innovative Work Behavior

Studies have found association of knowledge hiding and IWB. For instance, M Xiao (2024) studied the knowledge hiding and innovative performance of the employees relationship. Similarly, Arain et al. (2020) examined the acts of supervisors hiding knowledge from their subordinates affected their IWB. The study shows that supervisor knowledge hiding influence IWB of the employees. Through a mediation effect with self-efficacy serving as the mediator, the indirect effect takes place. The nationalities of the supervisor and supervisee—local or foreign—were also shown to decrease this mediation effect.

In contrast, destructive leadership practices, such as harsh monitoring as described by Liu et al. (2012) and Rousseau & Aubé (2018), have been shown to lower inventive work behavior and employee creativity. The lack of required resources is blamed for the drop in performance when inspiration is lost. A study conducted by Khalid et al., (2018) demonstrated that harsh supervision can cause supervisees to hide information, which is bad for their creativity and IWB. This creates a loop of distrust, as shown in studies conducted by researchers (Černe et al., 2013, 2017). Hence, it is hypothesized that:

**H3:** *Knowledge Hiding has a significant negative relationship with innovative work behavior (IWB).*

### Mediating Role of Knowledge Hiding

Previously no studies have studied the mediating role of knowledge hiding between WB and IWB. Knowledge hiding is conceptualized as a set of negative tactics used to deliberately withhold information from others. While having no intention of keeping their word, an evasive hider usually makes oblique promises about giving thorough answers in the future. By withholding information, workers separate themselves and get excluded from the group that shares vital information. (Perry-Smith, 2006). They may feel cut off from other decision-makers and planners by being left out of the information-sharing group (Connelly & Zweig, 2015).

The conservation of resources (COR) theory holds that workers want to save their most valuable assets, including knowledge. These resources are threatened when bullying happens at work, which makes staff members hide their expertise as a kind of defense. An intervention between WB and IWB might be the act of knowledge hiding. In particular, when bullying undermines a person's psychological safety and resource base, knowledge hiding that follows restricts the exchange of ideas and information that is essential to creativity. Therefore, it is evident how resource conservation, interpersonal behaviors, and organizational results are closely linked when bullying, which is mediated by knowledge hiding, depletes resources directly affecting the capacity of employees to participate in and contribute to creative activities. Hence, it is hypothesized that:

**H4:** *Knowledge hiding mediates the relationship between workplace bullying and IWB.*

### Moderating Role of Psychological Safety

The idea of psychological safety has been looked into in great detail as a crucial factor affecting mental health. (Wang et al., 2019). In his early work on team learning models, Edmondson first characterized psychological safety as a certain kind of team member confidence, belief, and shared feeling. It shows how well someone knows the potential social risks in their immediate surroundings (Edmondson, 1999). This idea emphasizes the requirement of building a safe and trustworthy atmosphere inside a team, where people feel at ease enough to take chances with one another, express themselves honestly, and collaborate without fear of negative consequences. Accordingly, psychological safety is the perception of a person about the reliability and management of their environment. Their individual characteristics determine this mental state. In other words, psychological safety is a mental condition that enables people to feel comfortable, secure, and at ease.

Most of the research on psychological safety studied how it impacts employees at the workplace (Carmeli et al., 2009; Hu et al., 2018). For instance, a psychologically secure workplace reduces employee anxiety, which can result into more positive attitudes and behavior of the employees that are conducive to knowledge acquisition and sharing (Gong et al., 2010; Frazier et al., 2017).

Based in the COR theory, psychological safety could be a key moderating factor for workplace bullying, knowledge hiding and IWB relationship. According to this theory, people work hard to safeguard and develop their most valuable resources. In this respect, psychological safety is one such resource that might lessen the harmful consequences of workplace bullying. Employees that feel protected are less inclined to hide information in defense of bullying, which preserves the information resource and their ability to act creatively at work. Psychological safety can also lessen the knowledge-hiding indirect consequences of bullying on creativity. Employees in psychosocially safe environments are more likely to share and integrate diverse knowledge even in the face of bullying -thus fostering an atmosphere conducive to innovation. This demonstrates how psychological safety not only protects but potentially enhances resource pools critical for innovation under stressful conditions. Hence, it is hypothesized that:

**H5:** *Psychological Safety moderates the relationship between workplace bullying and innovative work*

*behavior (IWB).*

**H6:** *Psychological Safety moderates the indirect relationship between workplace bullying and innovative work behavior through knowledge hiding.*

## Research Methodology
### *Sample and Procedures*
For the purpose of this study, data were collected from the faculty members working in the higher education institutions of the twin cities, Islamabad and Rawalpindi, of Pakistan through the distribution of online questionnaires. We focused on people from the education field in this study, especially those who work at higher education institutions (HEIs) in Pakistan. Pakistan's education system is a great place to do this study because it is always changing and plays an important role in both personal and work life. Data were gathered from 24th August, 2024 to 5th November, 2024. Convenience sampling was used for the purpose of current study due to the practicality of accessing every organization in Pakistan's higher education sector and the undefined population of interest. Convenience sampling was chosen because of its ease to select participants who are readily available and willing to take part from the higher educational institutions. This approach helps gather data efficiently, given the time and resource limitations.

Researchers emphasize the importance of selecting an optimal sample size in studies to best represent the overall population, given the difficulty in finding a perfect sample (Sekaran, 2016). A minimum of 200 participants is generally recommended for such type of relational study (Cooley, 1971). The formula to determine the minimum number of participants is $N > 50 + m$, where "N" is the total number of participants and "m" is the number of variables (Harris, 1975). The Raosoft online tool was used to calculate the exact sample size needed, with settings of 50% response distribution, 95% confidence interval and 5% margin of error. The calculated minimum sample size for this study is 377. Online questionnaires of 377 was distributed out of which 306 total responses were complete and came back, indicating a response rate of 81.17%. After screening and cleaning of data, a total of 306 responses were finalized for analysis, which were according to the calculated sample size.

### *Demographic Analysis*
Data gathered through questionnaires were assessed via the IBM SPSS Statistics software (version 29.0) for demographic and descriptive analysis. After this, the Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was used to assess both the models (measurement and structural) through the SmartPLS software. The valid responses were N=306, out of which more than half i.e., 174 were men (56.95%) and the remaining 132 were women (43.10%). The largest age group of the faculty in HEIs was between 31-35 years (N=87; 28.50%), and the smallest age groups were 20-25 years (N=12; 3.94%) and 36-40 years (N=76; 24.80%). Although a fairly equal distribution of various age groups was found across the sample. Master's degree as the highest education was the major group (N=162; 52.95%) and PHD's consisting of (N=144; 47.10%) contributing to the depth and reliability of the data collected. The frequency distribution of demographics is mentioned in Table 1.

### *Measures*
Response against each item was recorded on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), as done in previous studies from where the measurement scale were adopted.

***Innovative Work Behavior:*** A 9-item scale, first created by Janssen, (2000) and since used by researchers such as Agarwal et al., (2012) was used to rate innovative work behavior. "I am able to come up with new ideas for complicated problems" is an example of an item on this list.

***Knowledge Hiding:*** Knowledge hiding was measured using a 3-item scale from the study of Peng, (2012).

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Fatima et al. (2021) validates this scale in the Asian context. Among the example items is "I do not share helpful information with others."

**Table 1.** Frequency Distribution of Demographic Data

| Variables | Frequency (f) | Percentage (%) |
|-----------|---------------|----------------|
| **Gender** | | |
| Male | 174 | 56.95% |
| Female | 132 | 43.10% |
| **Age** | | |
| 20-25 years | 12 | 3.94% |
| 26-30 years | 61 | 19.90% |
| 31-35 years | 87 | 28.50% |
| 36-40 years | 76 | 24.80% |
| 41+ years | 70 | 22.90% |
| **Education** | | |
| Masters | 162 | 52.95% |
| PHD | 144 | 47.10% |

***Psychological Safety:*** A 03-item scale taken from the study of Kahn, (1990) was used to evaluate psychological safety. These items gauge how comfortable people are in expressing themselves and their ideas honestly at work; one example is "I'm not afraid to be myself at work."

***Workplace Bullying:*** Workplace bullying was gauged using a 7-item scale developed by Einarsen et al., (2009). This scale has been previously validated in an Asian context by Ahmad et al., (2021). An example of an item from this scale is, "I face persistent criticism of your work and effort.".

**Data Analysis**
*Measurement Model*
*Reliability and Convergent Validity*
The reliability and validity results in Table 2 show that each construct exhibits strong reliability and validity. Cronbach's alpha values, ranging from 0.85 to 0.92, are all well above the commonly accepted threshold of 0.70, suggesting internal consistency for each construct. The rho_c scores for composite reliability are also highly reliable and all are greater than 0.90. Likewise, the values of composite reliability (rho_a) for all constructs are well above the expectation supporting the reliability of the measures used for each construct of the study. Based on these results, it appears that each of the constructs has a reliable measure.

Concerning the convergent validity, the average variance extracted (AVE) for all the constructs are satisfactory and are above the universally accepted threshold of 0.50, as shown in Table 2. Notably, highest AVE values are recorded for KH and PS constructs, being 0.77 for both, it confirms that KH and PS can explain more than 70% variance from their respective indicators. IWB and WB complied with this criterion with observed AVE of 0.63 and 0.65 respectively. In fact, these results of this study provide evidence for the convergent validity of the constructs, which suggests that the instrument provides an adequate measure of each construct as represented by the selected items.

The reliability of all the constructs namely KH, IWB, PS and WB are high with the the composite reliability of greater than 0.92 and Cronbach's alpha values of greater than 0.90. All the AVE values are above 0.50, which proves the convergent validity of the constructs. These findings also mean that the constructs employed in the proposed model are both reliable and valid, which will enable the analysis of the PLS-SEM for meaningful and reasonable results.

**Table 2.** Convergent Validity and Reliability

| Constructs | Items | Loadings | AVE | Alpha | CR |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| IWB | IWB1 | 0.86 | 0.63 | 0.92 | 0.93 |
| | IWB2 | 0.78 | | | |
| | IWB3 | 0.77 | | | |
| | IWB4 | 0.75 | | | |
| | IWB5 | 0.74 | | | |
| | IWB6 | 0.81 | | | |
| | IWB7 | 0.79 | | | |
| | IWB8 | 0.80 | | | |
| | IWB9 | 0.83 | | | |
| KH | KH1 | 0.88 | 0.77 | 0.85 | 0.91 |
| | KH2 | 0.85 | | | |
| | KH3 | 0.90 | | | |
| PS | PS1 | 0.90 | 0.77 | 0.85 | 0.91 |
| | PS2 | 0.86 | | | |
| | PS3 | 0.86 | | | |
| WB | | | 0.65 | 0.91 | 0.93 |
| | WB1 | 0.83 | | | |
| | WB2 | 0.79 | | | |
| | WB3 | 0.85 | | | |
| | WB4 | 0.78 | | | |
| | WB5 | 0.78 | | | |
| | WB6 | 0.80 | | | |
| | WB7 | 0.81 | | | |

**Notes.** IWB = Innovative work behavior; KH = Knowledge hiding; PS = Psychological safety; WB = Workplace bullying; CR = composite reliability; AVE = Average variance extracted.

### *Discriminant Validity*

Table 3 assesses the discriminant validity through the Fornell-Larcker Criterion. The discriminant validity assessment, in particular the Fornell-Larcker Criterion. Examining this in the relation to the dependent variable; innovative work behavior (IWB), mediator; knowledge hiding (KH), independent variable; workplace bullying (WB), and the moderator; psychological safety (PS) substantiates the validity of each construct, and ability to distinguish between them.

**Table 3.** Discriminant Validity (Fornell-Larcker Criterion)

| | IWB | KH | PS | WB |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **IWB** | 0.79 | | | |
| **KH** | -0.62 | 0.88 | | |
| **PS** | 0.72 | -0.61 | 0.87 | |
| **WB** | -0.56 | 0.75 | -0.62 | 0.81 |

**Notes.** IWB = Innovative work behavior; KH = Knowledge hiding; PS = Psychological safety; WB = Workplace bullying.

Fornell-Larcker requires the value on the diagonal of a construct's square root of AVE to be higher than the correlation between the constructs, the off-diagonal values. As shown in the table above, all the AVE values are higher than individual construct´s correlations; indicating that each of the construct IWB, KH, PS and WB have more variance in its construct than in any other construct. Therefore, the Discriminant validity of the constructs IWB, KH, PS, and WB proved valid since all the constructs are well defined and each of them measures just one construct in their respect area.

### Common Method Variance

As all of our constructs were self-reported, it was possible that common method variance was present and therefore might have inflated the hypothesized relationships. Harman's single-factor test was conducted as recommended by P. M. Podsakoff et al. (2003), to assess any potential issue of common method variance. The single-factor test was employed using principal factor analysis via varimax rotation. If greater than 50% of variance is explained by the common latent factor, then common method bias may be present. Our results showed that the largest factor accounted for variance, which was under the recommended 50% threshold, indicating no existence of the common method bias.

**Table 4.** Mean, Standard Deviation and Correlation Scores

| Variables | Mean | S.D | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1. Workplace Bullying** | 3.08 | 1.02 | | | | |
| **2. Innovative Work Behavior** | 3.78 | 0.79 | -.56** | | | |
| **3. Knowledge Hiding** | 2.65 | 1.08 | .75** | .62** | | |
| **4. Psychological Safety** | 3.64 | 0.98 | -.62** | .72** | -.61** | |

Notes. S.D = Standard Deviation

### Hypotheses Testing (Structural Model Results)

Table 04 shows the mean, standard deviation and correlation scores between the key variables of the study. These results show that the correlation between all key variables are statistically significant which provided the initial support to the hypothesized relationships of the study. Further, Table 5 presents the path coefficients from the PLS-SEM analysis. The path coefficients table shows the relationships between various factors influencing IWB and knowledge hiding (KH) in the workplace, with specific focus on the mediating role of KH, the moderating role of psychological safety (PS), and the influence of workplace bullying (WB). Significant results are indicated by p-values less than 0.05, suggesting that several paths are statistically significant, while others show weaker relationships.

Firstly, knowledge hiding has a negative impact on IWB (B = -0.27, p < 0.001), indicating that increased knowledge hiding reduces IWB. Further, psychological safety also shows a positive association with IWB (B = 0.53, p < 0.001), indicating that a safer psychological environment fosters IWB. Similarly, the negative path from PS to KH (B = -0.22, p < 0.001) suggests that psychologically safe climate reduces knowledge hiding, which may indirectly enhance IWB.

Moreover, workplace bullying has mixed effects. The direct path from WB to IWB is not significant (p = 0.65), indicating that bullying may not directly affect IWB. However, WB positively influences KH (B = 0.61, p < 0.001), suggesting that workplace bullying increases knowledge hiding, which could then indirectly reduce IWB. Lastly, the mediation effect of knowledge hiding for the relationship between WB and IWB relationship is also significant (B = 0.30, p < 0.001).

Furthermore, the moderating influence of PS for the association of WB with IWB (p = 0.053) was empirically significance, indicating that psychological safety might buffer the negative influence of bullying on IWB. In contrast, the interaction between PS and WB on KH was found to be insignificant statistically (p = 0.26), indicating that psychological safety does not significantly alter the impact of bullying on knowledge hiding. Overall, these findings highlight the moderating role of psychological safety for the association of WB and IWB to improve IWB in the workplace settings.

**Table 5.** Structural Model Results

| Paths | Beta (β) | SD | T statistics | P values | Status |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **WB -> IWB** | -0.02 | 0.06 | 0.44 | 0.65 | Rejected |
| **WB -> KH** | 0.61 | 0.05 | 12.29 | 0.00 | Accepted |
| **KH -> IWB** | -0.27 | 0.07 | 3.95 | 0.00 | Accepted |
| **WB -> KH -> IWB** | -0.30 | 0.04 | 3.71 | 0.00 | Accepted |
| **PS x WB -> IWB** | 0.07 | 0.04 | 1.93 | 0.05 | Accepted |
| **PS x WB -> KH -> IWB** | -0.03 | 0.01 | 1.06 | 0.28 | Rejected |

**Discussion of Results**

The findings of current study showed that the direct effect of WB on IWB is represented by the sample mean (M) of -0.03, indicating a slight negative relationship. These findings are aligned with the prior research where workplace bullying and creativity were not supported. In research (Rashid et al., 2020), it is found that fear, stress and anxiety can lead to even more creativity. This study took place in Pakistan within the twin cities. Further studies (Baas et al., 2011) found that workplace bullying can sometimes encourage innovation.
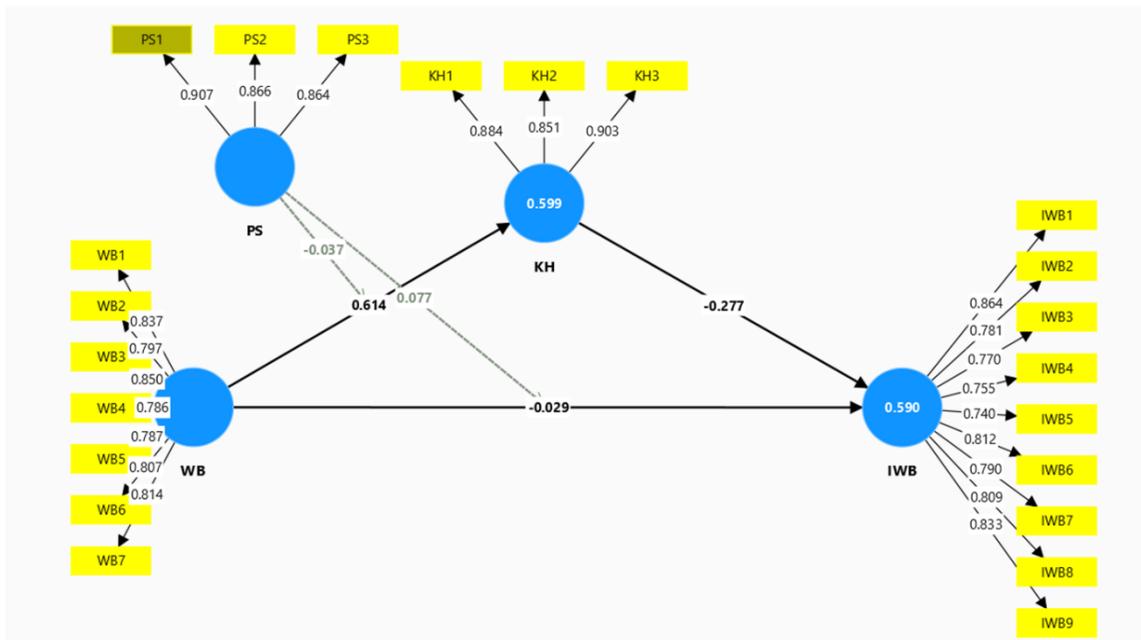


**Figure 2.** Structural Model

The influence of WB on knowledge hiding also indicated a strong, significant positive relationship. The conservation of resource (COR) theory, by (Hobfoll, 1989) and (Neveu, 2007), suggests that employees are motivated to protect existing resources and acquire additional ones. Resources include valuable items, traits, states, situations, or concepts. When an employee undergoes an event which might be stress, harassment or gets bullied, the employee tends to protect their resource which is knowledge in my case. These findings are

also similar to the previous literature. Javid et al. (2023) reported that bullying can cause knowledge hiding among the employees. Fatima et al. (2021) also found that negative behavior at the organization can promote the act of knowledge hiding. Irum et al. (2020) also found that incivility at institution can cause knowledge hiding in the organization.

The impact of knowledge hiding on innovative work behavior was also significantly negative. According to the COR theory, workplace bullying contributes to a fall in employee inventive work behavior due to the harsh and unfair impact of ongoing loss of resources through knowledge hiding. Therefore, the theory of conservation of resources offers a more effective understanding of the association of workplace bullying and IWB.

The findings demonstrate a significant association between WB and IWB through knowledge hiding (KH). Aliane et al. (2023) concluded that knowledge hiding negatively impacts the innovative work behavior in the tourism and hospitality sector. It also concluded that knowledge hiding behaviors and team anti citizen behavior hash major impact on innovative work behavior. Further studies also supported (Shailja et al., 2024) the knowledge hiding to examine how various facets of emotional intelligence affect teacher's tendencies to conceal knowledge. COR theory also supports these finding because due to uncertain event a person is bound to hold the resource and according to this study workplace bullying is leading a person to hold his knowledge and which is going to reduce the innovativeness.

The findings indicated a positive coefficient (0.07) for the interaction of psychological safety (PS) with workplace bullying (WB) on innovative work behavior (IWB), with a p-value nearing significance (0.05) and a t-statistic of 1.93. The findings are also supported by the previous literature such as Wan et al. (2024) explored the interaction between proactive personality traits, promotion focus, and psychological safety climate in relation to employees' likelihood of engaging in pro-social rule-breaking (PSRB) behaviors.

*Theoretical Implications*

Thereby, the research results of this study inform theoretical insights into workplace bullying, knowledge hiding, and innovative work behavior, enriching extant literature on workplace relations and innovation. This research adds to the understanding that while workplace bullying is not an isolated attitude but rather an integral component of the organizational environment and that contributes negatively to the IWB. It supports theories of negative organizational behavior by showing that a toxic climate at work as a result of WB raises knowledge hiding and decreases IWB, thereby reducing the levels of organizational innovation and creativity.

The study also adds to the literature around knowledge management by positioning knowledge hiding as a critical mediator in the relationship between workplace bullying and IWB. While previous research has focused on knowledge hiding primarily as a dependent variable getting influenced by some workplace related factors, this study highlights its mediating role, emphasizing that WB alone is insufficient to reduce IWB without the presence of knowledge hiding behavior of the employees. This insight contributes to a more nuanced theoretical model, highlighting that hiding knowledge acts as a bridge between WB and employees' IWB.

The findings of the study also supported existing body of knowledge on the moderating role of psychological safety for the relationship of WB with KH and IWB. Contrary to previous studies that psychological safety enhances employees' willingness to IWB because they feel protected, this study found moderating influence of PS for WB and IWB relationship.

Last but not the least, by focusing on a developing economies like Pakistan, this study contributes to expanding theoretical perspectives on workplace environment and innovation. It emphasizes the need to consider cultural and industry-specific factors when applying organizational behavior theories in diverse settings. The findings of the study call for further theoretical exploration on how workplace bullying and knowledge hiding interact in various cultural environments, offering a foundation for cross-cultural research in organizational psychology and innovation studies.

*Practical Implications*

Current study also has several practical implications that can benefit the higher educational institutions in Pakistan by fostering an environment that encourages IWB through reducing workplace bullying and knowledge hiding. HEIs should take immediate steps to identify which of the faculty members are being bullied which might lead to hide their knowledge that ultimately reducing their innovative work behavior. In other words, to control bullying, head of departments must encourage, appreciate and include the faculty members into the decision-making. When following such practices, the faculty members will feel psychologically safe at work environments which will ultimately lead to the positive work outcomes such as IWB.

Furthermore, the study suggests that knowledge hiding is the basic component that reduces innovative work behavior. Universities should invest in strategies that encourages faculty members to share their knowledge, such as providing meaningful work, offering feedback, and recognizing their contribution. Creating an environment where employees feel valued and connected to their tasks can result in higher IWB. Moreover, by keeping employees engaged, companies will not only benefit from improved performance but also cultivate a culture of innovation and continuous improvement.

The findings also suggest that psychological climate moderates the relationship of workplace bullying with knowledge hiding and IWB. Employees should be assured by their organization that they should not be scared off with the introduction of new ideas. However, the research reveals that this support influences IWB directly. Moreover, stable support in the form of psychological safety along with open lines of communication can help to shape a nurturing culture within which employees feel unfettered in their risk-taking.

**Limitations and Future Research**

Like all other scientific investigations, this study too has some limitations. One limitation is the use of convenience sampling, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. This sampling approach introduces the risk of selection bias, potentially skewing the results and limiting the applicability of the findings beyond the selected sample.

The use of self-reported questionnaires also presents a limitation. This method is prone to social desirability bias. Additionally, recall bias can potentially influence self-reported data, where participants' responses may not accurately reflect their experiences, leading to potential discrepancies in the measurement of key constructs such as knowledge hiding and psychological safety.

Workplace bullying is not restricted to one dimension of working life, but can be defined as workplace conflict, workplace stress and job insecurity. These research dimensions should be pursued separately to delineate individual effects of each on the identified phenomenon of interest – knowledge hiding and creative performance. Researchers can underride whether or not some of these components are more influential than the others if they are analyzed separately from each other and give organizations the necessary guidance on the changes that are necessary to be made in order to avoid such working environment.

Furthermore, the cross-sectional nature of this study limits establishes cause-effect among the variables. As the data were collected just once, the study cannot capture causal changes or developments in behavior, holding knowledge, or mental safety over time.

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