

## **The Moderating Role of Workplace Social Support in the Relationship between Workplace Bullying and Job Performance**

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**Abstract.** This study aimed to investigate the effect of workplace bullying (work-related bullying - interpersonal bullying - physical intimidation) on job performance, as well as to examine the mediating role of workplace social support in this relationship. A questionnaire was distributed to a sample of nurses in Egyptian hospitals. Correlations and hierarchical correlation analysis were applied to the test hypotheses. The results indicated that bullying related to work has a negative but not significant relationship with job performance, while bullying related to people and physical intimidation has a significant negative relationship with job performance. The results also confirmed the moderate effect of social support in the workplace on the relationship between dimensions of bullying and job performance. Except for the physical intimidation dimension. Many suggestions and recommendations have been presented to reduce bullying in the workplace and mitigate its negative consequences on bullying victims.

**Keywords:** workplace bullying, workplace social support, job performance

## **1. Introduction**

Job performance is one of the most important variables that attracts the attention of Scholars in the field of organizational behavior, as employees' job performance is mostly reflected in organizational performance, and it is also necessary to achieve organizational efficiency and effectiveness (Elazzazy, 2020). Therefore, Scholars and practitioners in the field of organizational behavior have been interested in studying the impact of informal behaviors in workplaces on employees' job performance (Devonish, 2013). Workplace bullying is a form of informal behavior that prevails at high rates in all types of organizations (Nielsen and Einarsen, 2012) and especially in medical organizations (Nielsen et al, 2010).

Nurses specifically are exposed to bullying, which has escalated dramatically during the time of Corona pandemic since they were on the frontline fighting this pandemic. According to (Trépanier et al., 2016) up to 40% of nurses have experienced bullying behaviors, while Hook and Colbert (2017) found that the prevalence rates of bullying behaviors among nurses have varied from 26% to 77%. These figures indicate that the medical sector appears to be severely affected by this phenomenon. In contrast, workplace bullying studies in non-medical organizations indicate a global prevalence of these behaviors of only 15%, which implies that workplace bullying in different workplaces may be less prevalent in them than in the context of the medical sector (Nielsen et al, 2010).

Bullying refers to the repeated exposure of a specific person over a long time to intentional negative behaviors by co-workers, superiors, or subordinates (Nielsen et al., 2017), so workplace bullying can not be seen as a simple conflict between two people, but rather as a toxic workplace behavior that has negative consequences on both organizations and their employees (Glambek et al., 2014; Nielsen and Einarsen, 2012; Olsen et al., 2017), so such behaviors should be taken seriously.

The seriousness of workplace bullying can be explained by social learning theory, according to this theory, learning often occurs through modeling or imitating the behavior of others within the organization (Elazzazy, 2020), and this explains why some subordinates, peers, and superiors are encouraged to practice these behaviors against a specific person if they see others do the same, especially their superiors (Freire and Pinto, 2021), So Nwobia and Al Johani (2017) emphasized that tolerance with bullies leads to widespread of bullying behaviors and therefore creates a stressful work environment that can negatively affect employee performance.

Despite the intensity of studies on workplace bullying, no study- to the best of our knowledge- attempts to measure the effect of bullying dimensions (work-related bullying, person-related bullying, and physical intimidation) in Egyptian hospitals and its effect on job performance, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic where the effectiveness of performance in hospitals has been more critical. In addition, there is inconsistency in the literature findings about the relationship between bullying and job performance. Also, no previous study examines the moderating role of workplace social support in the relationship between workplace bullying and job performance. Accordingly, this research will fill this research gap by answering the following questions:

1-To what extent can workplace bullying with its various dimensions (work-related bullying – person- related bullying – physical intimidation) affect job performance?

2- Does workplace social support act as a moderator in the relationship between workplace bullying and job performance?

To the best of our knowledge, this research examines relationships that have never been tested before, either in general or in the hospital's context. This implies that our research will make a unique contribution to the organizational behavior literature and most particularly in the medical sector context.

## **2. Literature Review and Hypotheses Development**

The concept of workplace bullying attracts the attention of Scholars and practitioners in the last decade since Leyamann 1996 published his research on workplace bullying. Then, the research on this concept has grown significantly (Samnani and Singh,2012). The concept of workplace bullying has been studied

under several terms, such as mobbing (Matthiesen and Einarsen, 2010), workplace harassment (Herscovis and Barling, 2010; Nielsen et al., 2017), aggression in the workplace (Schat and Frone, 2011), as well as emotional abuse (Tepper, 2007), social undermining (Duffy et al., 2002), interpersonal deviance (Berry et al., 2007). The central core of all these terminologies is hostility, bullying is a repetitive, intentional attack by one or a group of employees on another employee that occurs Regularly over a specific period, aiming at inflicting psychological or professional harm on the victim.

Accordingly, the neglect of such behavior may result in a lot of negative consequences both on the organizational level and on the individual level (Nielsen and Einarsen, 2012). Firstly, the consequences of bullying on an organizational level can be represented in; increasing employees turnovers (Glambek et al., 2014), low organizational commitment (Humair and Ejaz, 2019), low work motivation (Einarsen et al., 2009; Rodriguez-Muñoz et al., 2009), low job engagement and job satisfaction (Rodríguez-Muñoz et al., 2009), low organizational trust (Elewa, 2019), high levels of job stress and psychological strain (Jenkins et. al, 2011), high burnout (Rossiter and Sochos, 2018), decreasing organizational citizenship and increased organizational retaliation (Naseer et al., 2018), and workplace deviant behaviors (Litzky et al., 2006). Secondly, negative consequences of bullying on the individual level can be represented in; increasing turnover intention, which is the main outcome of workplace bullying (Nielsen and Einarsen, 2012; Spence Laschinger and Fida, 2014), increasing job insecurity feeling (Glambek, 2014), decreasing sense of personal achievement and lower employees' satisfaction (Israa and Suneel, 2018), also it may cause the victim to feel lonely, reduce self-confidence (Herscovis and Barling, 2010), increase anxiety, depression, and mental disorder (Briones Vozmediano, 2015).

Workplace bullying is affected by many organizational factors (Olsen et al., 2017). In most cases, bullying in the workplace occurs due to a power imbalance between the bullies and the victims (Samnani, 2013). Bullies may have more information than victims and may have more job experience., or have support from influencers in the organization (Matthiesen and Einarsen, 2010). Generally, victims of bullying often experience low self-esteem and lower social skills (Nel, 2019). Bullying behavior is directed toward individuals who are unable to defend themselves in a real situation (Revi, 2021). So, some Scholars found an association between bullying behavior and the victims' tendency to follow organizational silence behaviors to protect their organizational resources (Liu et al., 2020; Rai and Agrawal, 2018).

There are different categorizations of bullying behaviors each has its' own characteristics and consequences, i.e., bullying can be covert or overt behaviors, also it can be direct or indirect behaviors, in this context Scholars claim that most workplace bullying is perceived as indirect behavior by nature (Glambek et al., 2014).

Most Scholars embraced the classification of (Einarsen, 2009) for workplace bullying behavior, where he divided those behaviors into work-related behavior, person-related behavior, and physical intimidation behavior. Person-related bullying refers to the behaviors practiced by the boss or colleagues towards the victim, which includes; social isolation, ignoring the victim in social situations, spreading rumors about him, taunting and insulting him, repeating the use of inappropriate signs in front of others, name-calling, and continues criticism (Einarsen et al. 2009; Huchinson et al. 2010). While work-related bullying reflects all the negative behaviors which the bullied utilizes to affect the performance of the victim, including; ignoring the victim's opinions in work-related decisions, assigning excessive workloads, or assigning worthless tasks to undermine the victim, continuous blaming, hiding work-related information, negatively evaluating the victim's performance, or assigning tasks beyond formal roles, as well as the unfair treatment to bullying employee (Giorgi, 2010; Einarsen et al. 2009).

Lastly, physical intimidation, which refers to all negative behaviors that cause physical harm to the victim, and is directed toward the victim's body, which includes objecting to the victim while working,

talking to him loudly, and intentionally hitting him (Pompii et al.2015 Einersen et al.2009).

According to the social learning theory, human behaviors are learned through modeling and imitating the behaviors of others, which gives the chance for these behaviors to be carried on a large scale in organizations. So, it is important to find mechanisms to reduce workplace bullying and mitigate its negative consequences on victims. According to (Elewa, 2019) organizational culture matters a lot as it can promote or prohibit workplace bullying which in turn creates a stressful work environment, which negatively affects employees' performance and productivity.

## **2.1 Workplace Bullying and Job Performance**

Workplace bullying is a type of social stressor that has an impact on the psychological work environment (Hauge et al., 2010), and thereby can affect employee performance and productivity directly or indirectly (Nguyen et al.2021).

The most cited definition of job performance was introduced by Campbell (1990). He defines performance as activities or behaviors under the individual's control that contribute to the organization's goals and may be quantified based on the individual's level of proficiency. Some Scholars dealt with job performance as a one-dimensional concept, where job performance is evaluated in terms of the employees' proficiency in carrying out the formal tasks assigned to them and identified in the job description (Kappagoda et al., 2014). In real fact, employees do not devote all their time to performing formal work behavior specified in the job description. So, employees' performance is said to be a multidimensional construct (Ramawickrama & Opatha, 2017). In 1993, Borman and Motowidlo also considered performance as a multi-dimensional concept consisting of two basic dimensions; task performance, and contextual performance (Hong, 2022).

Rotundo and Sackett (2002) added a third dimension under the general performance dimensions which is counterproductive performance. However, in 2011, Koopmans et al. proposed four theoretical dimensions; Task performance, Contextual performance, Adaptive performance, and Counterproductive work behaviors. In his model of job performance Hunt's (1996) included adaptive performance as a part of the contextual performance (Elazzazy, 2020).

There is a variation in the research results about the nature of the relationship between workplace bullying and job performance. Some Scholars confirmed the negative relationship between bullying and work performance (Ashraf and Khan, 2014; Robert, 2018), while other Scholars didn't find a significant relationship between workplace bullying and performance (Nielsen and Einarsen, 2012; Tag-Eldeen et al., 2017) Another study conducted by (Devonish, 2013) he found a significant relationship between contextual performance, counterproductive behavior, and bullying; on the other hand, he found no effect of bullying on in-role job performance, also (Mourssi-Alfash, 2014) through his research, he concluded that there is a negative relationship between workplace bullying and citizenship behavior.

Based on the results of previous literature, we can conclude that there is no agreement on the direction of the relationship between job performance and workplace bullying. Also, all previous studies are concerned with studying the effect of bullying on different dimensions of job performance while no previous study has examined which type or dimension of bullying has more effect on job performance. Therefore, this study attempts to fill this gap by examining the following hypothesis:

H<sub>1</sub>: there is a significant negative relationship between workplace bullying and job performance.

This main hypothesis will be divided into three sub-hypotheses.

H<sub>11</sub>: There is a significant negative relationship between work-related bullying and job performance.

H<sub>12</sub>: There is a significant negative relationship between person-related bullying and job performance.

H<sub>13</sub>: There is a significant negative relationship between physical intimidation and job performance.

## **2.2 Workplace Bullying and Social Support**

As we discussed previously, there is a variation in results Regarding the relationship between bullying and performance, which means that there is a moderator that affects this relationship. The study of (Ashraf and Khan, 2014; Meriläinen et al., 2019) suggested job engagement as a mediator in this relationship, while (Devonish, 2013) examined the effect of psychological well-being and emotional intelligence as a moderator, but (Arifin et al., 2019) examined the effect of teamwork as a mechanism to absorb the negative impact of bullying on performance. On the other hand, (Olsen et al., 2017) investigated the interactive effect of bullying and job satisfaction on job performance. He recommended that employees who experience bullying should be given adequate support to reduce the negative consequences of workplace bullying on their performance.

Bullying in the workplace can be a source of job stress since it indicates a constant loss of intrinsic resources like status, dignity, safety, and motivation to work (Neill and Tuckey, 2014). In this context, many studies have emphasized the importance of social support in the workplace as an essential resource that protects employees from the negative effects of job stress caused by bullying. (Bakar and Syahrudin M., 2017; Konishi and Hymel, 2009; Rosander and Blomberg, 2019). This viewpoint is supported by the conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989), as this theory is considered one of the most significant theories for explaining the origins and effects of stress by emphasizing the role of resources (Samnani, 2013). According to this theory, in difficult working situations, employees with elevated levels of resources perform better and have more ability to deal with stress. Therefore, workplace social support is an important individual resource that leads to perceiving potentially threatening situations as less stressful (Rai and Agarwal, 2018).

Social support in the workplace has been defined as behaviors that are beneficial or intended to be beneficial to someone, those behaviors include a variety of interpersonal behaviors among workers that enhance each other's psychological and behavioral performance (Harris et al., 2007).

House's (1981) identified four main categories of social support they are; (a) emotional support or psychosocial support such as empathy and caring, acceptance, encouragement, and trust, this type of support makes an employee feel that he is valued and gives him a sense of social belonging, (b) instrumental support refers to things that others physically do or provides to assist someone in his assigned tasks, (c) informational support refers to providing someone with general information that may help him address job demand, the provision of information that helps an individual to evaluate themselves, provision of advice, guidance, or information about social power structures, (e) appraisal support which refers to providing useful information for self-evaluation (Jolly et al.2020).

While (Suanet et al., 2020) suggested that workplace social support can be divided into two main types; the first is instrumental support, which refers to providing tangible and practical assistance, and the second is emotional support, which denotes the acknowledgment of another person's feelings and attempts to boost the other's morale. Another classification is supervisor support and co-worker support (Yang et al.,2015).

Few studies have demonstrated the significance of social support in reducing psychological stress among bullied employees (de Beer, 2014; Gardner et al., 2013). In his study, Gardner and his colleagues (2013) concluded that both supervisor support and colleague support can reduce the psychological strain among bullied workers in various sectors. War-szewska-makuch and his colleagues (2015) found that co-workers' support can mitigate the negative impact of workplace bullying on mental health. Also, in the study of Rai and Agarwal (2018), they considered that Employees' networks of friends give emotional and practical assistance needed to deal with difficult employment conditions. On the other hand, previous research has consistently confirmed that supervisor support has a direct positive impact on job performance (Zeb et al., 2022). This means that supervisor support can be a protective resource against bullying (Desrumaux and Gillet, 2018). Thus, to examine social support as a moderator in the relationship between workplace bullying and work performance, we suppose the following hypothesis:

H<sub>2</sub>: Workplace social support moderates the relationship between workplace bullying and job performance. This main hypothesis will be divided into two sub-hypotheses.

H<sub>21</sub>: Social support moderates the relationship between work-related bullying and job performance.

H<sub>22</sub>: Social support moderates the relationship between person-related bullying and job performance.

H<sub>23</sub>: Social support moderates the relationship between physical intimidation and job performance.

Based on the previous discussion it's expected that social support will moderate the relationship between workplace bullying and job performance, therefore it will mitigate the negative effect of workplace bullying on employees' performance.

### **3. Research Methodology**

The quantitative approach was employed in this study to collect the necessary primary data, by utilizing a 5-point Likert scale. ranging from 1=strongly disagree, to 5= Strongly agree. workplace bullying was measured depending on the Negative Acts Questionnaire -revised (Einarsen et al., 2009), as this scale is the most widely used instrument to measure workplace bullying in previous studies, this scale divided workplace bullying into three dimensions (work-related bullying, person-related bullying, and physical intimidating), concerning employees job performance Griffin and his colleagues (2007) suggested job performance scale. And lastly, social support was measured using Heaney's (1991) scale.

#### **3.1 Population and sample**

According to the results of a national study that was conducted in Egypt by Al-Shiyab and Ababneh (2018), They revealed that 17,1 % of medical personnel experienced Workplace bullying, particularly nurses. According to (Ariza-Montes et al., 2015) bullying is greater in the public sector than in the private sector. Therefore, this research will be applied to nurses in five public hospitals in one Egyptian city. The research population is (N=1387). the primary data collection took place between August and October 2022. Data were collected through self-administered hard copy, out of the 300 respondents targeted (according to the sample size table of Sekaran & Bougie (2016), 288 responses were received. After excluding invalid responses, 272 were valid for further analysis (90% response rate).

### **4. Results and Discussion**

To examine the moderating effect of workplace social support on the relationship between workplace bullying and job performance the hierarchical Regression analysis was applied using the Eviews program. Also, descriptive statistics, reliability, and correlation analysis using SPSS 20. Also, we checked for Regression assumptions of multicollinearity and homogeneity of variances of data before running the Regression analysis.

#### **4.1 Reliability**

Cronbach's (a) was used to assess the reliability of study variables. As Table (1) reveals, reliabilities for work-related bullying ( $\alpha = 0.804$ ) and for person-related bullying ( $\alpha = 0.726$ ) and physical intimidation ( $\alpha = 0.706$ ), social support ( $\alpha = 0.811$ ), and job performance ( $\alpha = 0.854$ ), all of them are within the acceptable range, with total reliability of ( $\alpha = 0.851$ ). which indicates good internal consistency of the scale.

**Table 1:** Reliability for study variables (Alpha Cronbach)

<i>Variables</i>	<i>No of items</i>	<i>Cronbach's alpha</i>
<b>(1) Independent Variable:</b>		
Work-related bullying	11	0.804
Person-related bullying	7	0.726
Physical Intimidating	3	0.706
<b>(2) Moderator Variables:</b>		
Social support	15	0.811
<b>(4) Dependent Variable:</b>		
Job performance	14	0.854
<b>The Questionnaire Overall</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>0.851</b>

## 4.2 validity

The questionnaire was originally written in English before being translated into Arabic. The Arabic version was improved based on experts' feedback. The questionnaire was sent via email to A questionnaire was reviewed by four researchers in the field of organizational behavior and three head nurses from Egyptian hospitals. They were also asked for their thoughts on how explicit the questionnaire items were and how appropriate they were for determining the aspects for which they were intended. They were also asked if they could provide more feedback to the researcher on making changes to the phrases on the questionnaire items to make them clearer and more informative. There was helpful feedback on language usage, phrasing, and item wording. Based on experts' responses and based on their opinions, the survey was prepared in its final copy.

## 4.3 Testing Hypotheses

**Table 2:** Descriptive analysis for study variables

	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Dev.</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>RII</i>	<i>Importance level</i>
<b>Independent Variable:</b>						
Work-related bullying	3.00915	0.5503	1.9091	4.9091	0.602	Medium-High
Person-related bullying	3.03164	0.4941	2.2857	4.5714	0.606	Medium-High
Physical Intimidating	2.81208	0.7884	1.6667	5	0.562	Medium
<b>Moderator Variables:</b>						
Social support	2.45101	0.3088	1.8214	3.0804	0.490	Medium
<b>Dependent Variable:</b>						
Job performance	2.44732	0.3501	1.4333	3.0167	0.489	Medium

Table (2) indicates the descriptive analysis of research variables, concerning the dimensions of workplace bullying, work-related bullying, and person-related bullying were perceived to be practiced more than physical intimidation bullying among nurses. Nurses are exposed to moderating levels of workplace bullying whether work-related bullying or person-related bullying.

**Table 3:** Spearman's correlation coefficient between study variables:

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Work-related bullying (1)	1				
Person-related bullying (2)	0.315**	1			
Physical Intimidating (3)	0.797**	0.340**	1		
Social support (4)	-0.006	-0.357**	-0.338**	1	
Job performance (5)	-0.421**	-0.893**	-0.488**	0.214**	1

*Note:* - \*\*, \* indicate significance at 1%, and 5% respectively.

Spearman correlations were also examined between research variables; Workplace bullying and its dimensions positively correlated, as It was expected, Job performance correlates negatively with workplace bullying dimensions of work-related bullying ( $r = -0.421$ ), person-related bullying ( $r = -0.893$ ) and physical intimidation ( $r = -0.488$ ). while social support correlates negatively with workplace bullying and its three dimensions of work-related bullying ( $r = -0.006$ ), person-related bullying ( $r = -0.357$ ), and physical intimidation ( $r = -0.338$ ). On the other hand, social support correlates positively with job performance ( $r = 0.214$ ).

**Table 4:** Workplace bullying, social support, and Job performance; Econometric results

**Dependent variable:** *Job Performance*

<i>Independent variables</i>	<i>Reg (1)</i>	<i>Reg (2)</i>	<i>Reg (3)</i>	<i>Reg (4)</i>	<i>Reg (5)</i>
<b>Direct effects:</b>					
<i>Work-related bullying (WB)</i>	<b>-0.2441</b> [-0.663]	<b>-0.1042</b> [-3.721]***	<b>-1.3650</b> [-1.867]*	<b>0.0079</b> [0.276]	<b>0.1279</b> [4.428]***
<i>Person-related bullying (PB)</i>	<b>-0.3872</b> [-9.256]***	<b>-0.4004</b> [-9.089]***	<b>-0.4161</b> [-8.004]***	<b>-5.0969</b> [-5.630]***	<b>-0.3847</b> [-9.368]***
<i>Physical Intimidating (PI)</i>	<b>-0.0944</b> [-5.667]***	<b>-0.1106</b> [-7.741]***	<b>-0.0691</b> [-2.168]**	<b>-0.1747</b> [-6.130]***	<b>0.1179</b> [1.092]
<i>Social support (SS)</i>		<b>0.1785</b> [5.719]***	<b>7.3239</b> [2.339]**	<b>19.378</b> [5.362]***	<b>0.4453</b> [3.283]***
<b>Moderating effects:</b>					
<i>WB × SS</i>			<b>0.6607</b> [2.099]**		
<i>PB × SS</i>				<b>1.9874</b> [5.125]***	



<b>Independent variables</b>	<b>Reg (1)</b>	<b>Reg (2)</b>	<b>Reg (3)</b>	<b>Reg (4)</b>	<b>Reg (5)</b>
<i>PI × SS</i>					<b>0.2644</b>
					[ 0.663]
<i>Constant</i>	<b>-2.0539</b>	<b>-3.0048</b>	<b>-19.109</b>	<b>-48.592</b>	<b>-3.3704</b>
	[-4.418]***	[-4.986]***	[-2.589]**	[-5.725]***	[-5.499]***
<b>▪ Model fit statistics:</b>					
<i>R<sup>2</sup></i>	90.7%	91.2%	92.3%	93.7%	92%
<i>Adjusted R<sup>2</sup></i>	90.4%	91.6%	91.9%	93.4%	91.7%
<i>DW - stat.</i>	2.148	1.801	1.899	1.702	1.799
<i>Fisher test (F-stat.)</i>	(337.7)***	(347.5)***	(298.6)***	(368.3)***	(314.8)***

**Note:** - \*\*\*, \*\*, \* indicate significance at 1%, 5%, 10% respectively.

Table 4 shows the results of the Hierarchical Regression analysis employed to test the research hypotheses. Hypothesis 1 anticipated a negative relationship between workplace bullying and job Performance, we tested this hypothesis using hierarchal Regression, through Reg1 analyzed the effect of each dimension of bullying on job performance, as indicated in table (4), person-related bullying has a significant negative impact on job performance ( $\beta = -0.3872$ ) and also physical intimidation has a significant negative impact on job performance ( $\beta = -0.0944$ ), while work-related bullying has a negative but insignificant relationship with job performance ( $-0.2441$ ), but in Reg 2 when the direct effect of social support on performance was positive ( $\beta = 0.1785$ ) the impact of work-related bullying and job performance becomes significantly negative ( $\beta_3 = -0.1042$ ).

So we can conclude that the first main hypothesis with its related sub-hypothesis is statistically supported. Except for the first sub-hypothesis that related to the relationship between work-related bullying and job performance, contrary to what was hypothesized there was no relation between them except in the existence of social support this relation becomes negative which can be interpreted by the absence of perception of work-related bullying or that nurses are familiar with such type of bullying and in their workplace.

In Reg 3 the interactive effect of social support and work-related bullying on performance is positive ( $\beta = 0.6607$ ), which means that social support can mitigate the negative effect of work-related bullying on performance. The same result is repeated in Reg 4, where the interactive effect of social support with personal-related bullying on job performance is positive ( $\beta = 1.987$ ) which means that social support can mitigate the negative effect of personal-related bullying on job performance. Also, there was an increase in the value of  $R^2$  accompanied by calculating the interaction between different dimensions of bullying with social support, where  $R^2 = 91\%$  it increased in Reg 4 to become  $R^2 = 93\%$ .

In the last Reg 5, the interactive effect of social support and physically intimidating bullying on job performance is positive ( $\beta = 0.2644$ ) but insignificant value which means that social support can't eliminate the negative effect of physically intimidating bullying on job performance. All values of adjusted  $R^2$  are greater than 90% for all Regression equations, So we can conclude that the second main hypothesis is statistically supported and that workplace social support moderates the relationship between bullying and job performance, except for the third sub-hypothesis.

## 5. Conclusion and Implications

Healthier and happier employees working in a bullying-free environment are expected to be more productive and their contribution to enhanced organizational performance would be more valuable. Therefore, this study concentrated on investigating the effect of workplace bullying on job performance and identifying the moderating role of workplace social support in this relationship. To the best of our

knowledge, this study is the first to examine workplace social support as a moderator to cope with workplace bullying for those who experience it.

The results indicate that bullied employees are unable to do their jobs to the best of their abilities, which is consistent with the results of (Ashraf and Khan, 2014; Robert, 2018) who found that bullying adversely affects employee job performance. Also, results reveal that workplace social support both from supervisors and co-workers can mitigate the negative effect of workplace bullying on job performance. Therefore, it can be concluded that nurses who have a higher level of social support could be able to overcome the negative emotional consequences of bullying.

Also, the results of this study revealed the effect of each type of workplace bullying behavior on job performance, where work-related bullying behaviors have a negative but insignificant effect on job performance. Certain bullying can be inherent within the organizational culture of hospitals so that the victims may not perceive them. In addition, results indicated that bullied employees cannot overcome the psychological effects of personal-related bullying behaviors without workplace social support. Also, results indicated that the most dangerous type of bullying is physical intimidation where social support cannot mitigate its negative effect on job performance.

The outcomes of this study revealed several implications for theory and practice, particularly in an emerging market such as Egypt, as follows:

### **5.1 Theoretical Implications**

In sum, this study makes three key contributions. First, our study provides insight into the mechanisms through which workplace bullying as a workplace stressor leads to a decrease in job performance among Egyptian nurses. A second contribution of the study is that in a theory-driven examination, which integrates the literature on workplace social support in the hospital sector with literature on workplace bullying to find solutions to the problem of workplace bullying in the medical sector in Egypt. The third contribution is that this study increases our understanding of the social learning theory on the organizational level and how it can be considered the reason behind the prevalence of bullying behaviors in many organizations.

Decreasing toxic workplace behavior like bullying, especially in crucial service institutions like hospitals, will be reflected positively on the performance of its staff, which will result in providing better medical services to citizens and contributing to societal welfare.

### **5.2 Practical Implication**

As indicated in the research results, workplace bullying harms job performance which can be mitigated by giving the victim adequate workplace social support. Therefore, managers need to adopt anti-bullying policies and mechanisms. Managers and organizations can benefit from these findings and practical suggestions. Some of these suggested anti-bullying mechanisms are as follows:

First, we suggest that the human resource department should follow multiple sources of performance appraisal (360-degree evaluation), where an employee is evaluated by his superiors, peers, and subordinates to detect any deviant behavior toward others. Second, encouraging two-way communication between management and employees is important for building trust, which in turn enables employees to disclose the bullying behavior they are exposed to in their work environment. Third, top management must take any complaints about exposure to bullying seriously and establish deterrent organizational penalties for bullies. Fourth, top management in the hospital must rely on teamwork to perform various tasks, as cooperation between team members to achieve common goals helps in reducing bullying behaviors in the workplace. Fifth, trying to increase workgroup cohesion through staff participation in social activities, such as trips and informal parties outside working hours, holidays, and events, which in turn increases the convergence and cohesion among employees. This should be adopted by top management and can be carried out by the public relations department. Sixth, holding training programs for managers and employees to increase their awareness about ethical work

behavior to guide decision making and behavior in hospitals. Seventh, Nursing unions must hold workshops and seminars to educate nurses about workplace bullying behaviors and clarify the procedures taken by the union to protect and support them in case they are exposed to such behaviors. lastly, creating a work culture of mutual respect, and building an ethical work climate where there is no tolerance for violating ethical behavior. Such remedial actions would ensure the emotional and physical health of employees.

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