



Job demands and exposure to workplace bullying: a study of state universities in Sri Lanka

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ABSTRACT

Workplace bullying is one of main mistreatments at work that has many negative impacts over individuals, groups, organizations and the larger society. The present study investigates the impact of job demands (i.e., cognitive and emotional demands) on exposure to workplace bullying based on the work environment hypothesis in higher education sector in Sri Lanka and the mediating effect of emotional exhaustion over the relationship between job demands and exposure to workplace bullying using the three way model. Survey data were collected from 203 academics attached to management faculties in state universities in Sri Lanka using a self-administered questionnaire. Hypothesized model was tested through simple linear regression analysis and mediator analysis. Based on the results, the study provides evidence for the existence of workplace bullying in state university sector in Sri Lanka. Further, it reveals that cognitive, emotional and aggregate job demands have significant impact on exposure to workplace bullying. Further, it found that relationship between these job demands and exposure to workplace bullying are partially mediated by emotional exhaustion. The study provides numerous theoretical and practical implications.

Keywords:

Workplace bullying,
Job demands,
Cognitive demands,
Emotional demands,
Emotional exhaustion,
Academia

Contribution/ Originality

This study examines the impact of job demands on exposure to workplace bullying in state universities in Sri Lanka. To the best of researchers' knowledge, there is no even single article written on workplace bullying in Sri Lankan academia. Hence, the current study provides good evidence for the existence of workplace bullying in academia while contributing to bridge the existing gap in the knowledge base.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Workplace bullying has evolved as a significant area in management studies (Samnani and Singh, 2012) while becoming a serious problem in the contemporary business world (Pate and Beaumont, 2009) with the new challenges (e.g., time pressures, information overload, and higher interpersonal interactions, violence) that employees are facing today at their workplaces (Salin, 2003). Further, researchers (e.g., Harvey *et al.*, 2009; Raineri *et al.*, 2011) have shown that the complex environment around the business world has caused to increase mistreatments at work such as bullying not only in the business environment but also in other contexts (e.g., healthcare and education) and many negative consequences on individuals, groups, organizations, and the larger society.

There are evidence (e.g., Fadda *et al.*, 2015; Kinman and Wray, 2013; Giorgi, 2012; Keashly and Neuman, 2010; Einarsen *et al.*, 2011; McKay *et al.*, 2008) that confirm the prevalence of workplace bullying in academia. However, there can be seen a limited scholarly attention (e.g., McCormack *et al.*, 2006) on workplace bullying in education sector in Asia. Especially, researchers could not find even single article on bullying in Sri Lankan academia. Hence, a pilot survey was conducted using Negative Acts Questionnaire – Revised (NAQ-R) (Mikkelsen and Einarsen, 2001) to verify whether the problem of workplace bullying exists or not. Findings of the pilot survey verified that Sri Lankan academics are exposed to workplace bullying. It indicated that majority (57.66%) of respondents have exposed to workplace bullying. Accordingly, 16.67% reported that they are exposed to workplace bullying daily. 13.33% and 26.67% of respondents have reported that they are experiencing workplace bullying weekly and monthly respectively. Thus, to the researchers' knowledge, existing literary evidence and empirical studies have identified the existence of the issue, still exist the gap as 'why' remains unanswered. Accordingly, this study expects to look at 'why academics are exposed to workplace bullying?' and thereby bridge the existing gap in the knowledge base. Hence, the present study examines the impact of job demands on exposure to workplace bullying and the mediation effect of emotional exhaustion over the relationship between job demands and exposure to workplace bullying.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

As used in literature, there are different terminologies such as "mobbing" (Leymann, 1996), "emotional abuse" (Keashly, 1998), "victimization" (Mathisen *et al.*, 2012) referred to bullying at work. However, workplace bullying is the term used consistently and frequently in the literature (Branch *et al.*, 2013). As it is identified in different terms, there is no universal definition (Rayner *et al.*, 1999; Saunders *et al.*, 2007) due to the complexity of the construct of workplace bullying (Saunders *et al.*, 2007). One of comprehensive definitions (Einarsen *et al.*, 2011) widely used in literature is, harassing, offending, socially excluding someone or negatively affecting someone's work tasks. In order for the label bullying (or mobbing) to be applied to a particular activity, interaction or process it has to occur repeatedly and regularly (i.e., weekly) and over a period of time (i.e., about six months) (p. 15).

When looking at the contributing factors of workplace bullying, there are counter arguments over individual and work environment related factors. Some researchers have emphasized that individual factors cause to workplace bullying while some others highlighted work environment related factors. As elaborated by Leymann (1996), workplace bullying is a result of poor work environment but not due to personal factors. He strictly ignored individual factors as predictors of workplace bullying. However, some researchers argued that individual factors (e.g., age, gender, personality) are also important predictors for being bullied at work (Coynne *et al.*, 2000; Persson *et al.*, 2009). There are many researchers (e.g., Reknes *et al.*, 2014) who have studied the impact of work related factors (e.g., role stressors, job demands, social support) over workplace bullying. Based on the work environment hypothesis (Leymann, 1996) which indicates that work environment factors contribute to expose people for workplace bullying, this study investigates the impact of job demands on exposure to workplace bullying.

Many occupations have shifted from physical demands to psychological demands such as cognitive and emotional demands (Le Blanc *et al.*, 2001). People in human services where they should deal with clients directly are experiencing more emotional demands (Vegchel *et al.*, 2004) and psychological demands (Le Blanc *et al.*, 2001) with the changing nature of the work environment. Accordingly, many empirical studies (e.g., Aedo *et al.*, 2013; Feuerhahn *et al.*, 2013; Keller *et al.*, 2014; Moos and Pitton, 2014; Then *et al.*, 2014; Tuxford and Bradley, 2014) have shown cognitive demands and emotional demands as the most important demands for academics. Therefore, cognitive and emotional demands were selected as job demands of academics. These two demands have been recognized as qualitative job demands. Furthermore, the study looks towards the mediation effect of emotional exhaustion on the relationship between job demands and exposure to workplace bullying with the theoretical support of the three way model (Baillien *et al.*, 2009) which describes that stressors could lead to intrapersonal frustration and strain leading to become a target of bullying through a process of 'annoying target'. Accordingly, following hypotheses are proposed.

- H1: There is a positive impact of cognitive demands on exposure to workplace bullying.
- H2: There is a positive impact of emotional demands on exposure to workplace bullying.
- H3: There is a positive impact of aggregate job demands on exposure to workplace bullying.
- H4: Emotional exhaustion mediates the relationship between cognitive demands and exposure to workplace bullying.
- H5: Emotional exhaustion mediates the relationship between emotional demands and exposure to workplace bullying.
- H6: Emotional exhaustion mediates the relationship between aggregate job demands and exposure to workplace bullying.

Figure 1 Shows the conceptual model of the study.

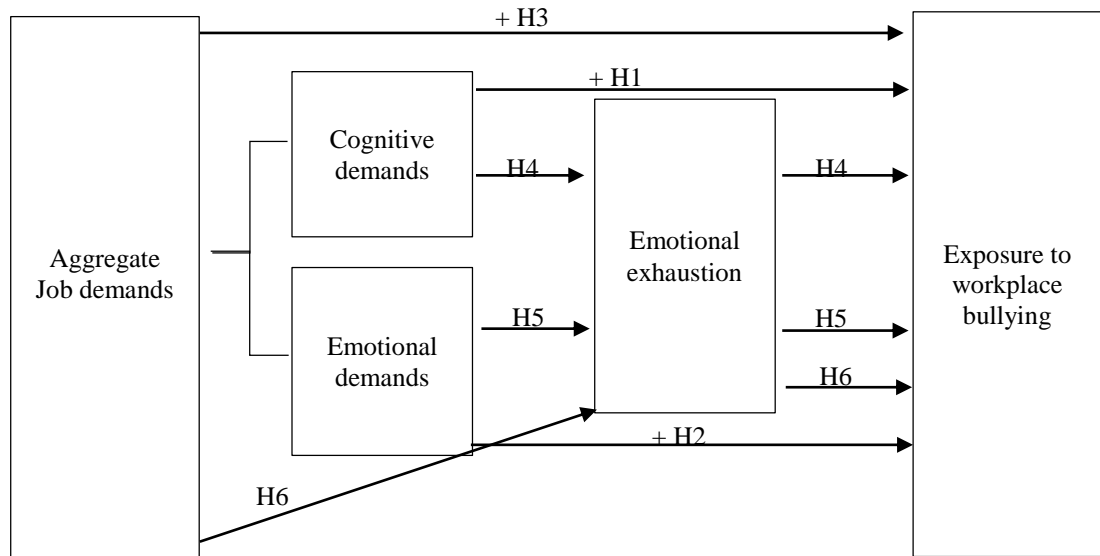


Figure 1: Conceptual model of the study

3. METHODOLOGY

The study adopts the objectivism which denotes that the reality exists externally to social actors and positivistic epistemological stance. It is driven with the deduction research approach. This explanatory study was conducted using survey strategy and followed mono method. All constructs were measured using standard measures. Present study is a cross sectional and uses academics attached to management faculties in state universities in Sri Lanka.

Since the population frame is well defined, it was decided to use the probability sampling technique to select the sample required. Accordingly, the researcher decided to select the sample using the simple random sampling technique. The population frame was prepared using information in university websites. Before selecting the representative sample, a proportion from each university was determined depending on the required sample size in order to avoid sample biases. Then the representative sample was selected using simple random sampling. Accordingly, questionnaires were distributed. Even though reminders were sent responses were not in satisfactory level. Bjorkqvist *et al.* (1994, as cited in Moreno-Jimenez *et al.*, 2008) has shown that possibility of low responses for sensitive topics like bullying. Therefore, the researcher decided to use the convenience sampling technique in order to rectify the less response rate. Accordingly, the present study distributed 300 questionnaires based on the willingness to respond of academics in state universities.

3.1. Data collection

A self-administered questionnaire included 5 parts for demographic information (i.e., age, gender, marital status, whether the respondent was graduated from the same university, designation, tenure, and highest level of education), cognitive demands, emotional demands, exposure to workplace bullying, and emotional exhaustion were used for data collection. 212 were returned out of 300 questionnaires distributed. Only 203 questionnaires were eligible for the final analysis. Therefore, the final sample size was 203.

3.2. Measures

Job demands; cognitive and emotional demands were measured using VBBA measure, a 5 point Likert scale ranging from 1 (“Never”) to 5 (“Very Often”). Sample items are “Does your work demand a lot of concentration?”, “Does your work demand a lot from you emotionally?” Exposure to workplace bullying was measured using NAQ-R (Mikkelsen and Einarsen, 2001) which measures the exposure to workplace bullying during the past 6 months period. It is a 5-point Likert scale measure with the responses of Never (1) to Daily (5) and includes 22 items under three dimensions as person-related bullying (12 items) (e.g., Spreading of gossip and rumors about you), work-related bullying (7 items) (e.g., Having key areas of responsibility removed or replaced with more trivial or unpleasant tasks), and physically intimidating (3 items) (e.g., Being shouted at or being the target of spontaneous anger). Emotional Exhaustion was measured using the sub scale of Maslach Burnout Inventory developed by Maslach and Jackson (1981). Sample items are “Working with people all day is really a strain for me”, “I feel fatigue when I get up in the morning and have to face another day on the job”.

3.3. Data Analysis

3.3.1. Sample composition

Most (39.90%) of the academics belonged to the age category of 25-34 and a very few respondents (11.33%) were over 55 years. Majority (58.62%) of respondents were female academics and 52.22% were married. Out of the total sample, majority (67%) have graduated from the same university where they were working for while the remainder (33%) graduated from another university. A larger percentage (37.44%) of them were senior lecturers. There was 36.45% of probationary lecturers. Most (51.23 %) of the academics were working for the university for 2-5 years. 3 respondents were excluded from the sample since they had a service period of less than 6 months. 47.78% had a master degree as the highest qualification while 15.76% of academics had a doctoral degree.

4. RESULTS

Assumptions of multivariate analysis were tested through the preliminary analyses before testing hypotheses. Accordingly, normality, linearity, homoscedasticity, multicollinearity and common method variance were tested. Table 1 shows descriptive statistics (i.e., mean, standard deviation (SD), skewness, kurtosis, correlation, and reliability statistics). Accordingly, mean values reflect that academics have higher cognitive and emotional demands. All variables have a cronbach’s alpha

greater than 0.7. High construct reliability indicates that internal consistency exists. It denotes a high construct reliability.

Confirmatory factor analysis was done in order to test the construct validity. All the standard regression weights of the all variables were above 0.5. Most of the loadings were above 0.7 (Hair *et al.*, 2010). Therefore, the indicators are strongly related to their associated constructs while confirming acceptable validity.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics related to key constructs

Construct	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	Correlation					
					CD	ED	AJD	WPB	EE	
CD	3.74	0.86	-0.98	-0.02	0.92					
ED	3.65	0.84	0.51	-0.71	0.37**	0.88				
AJD	3.69	0.71	-0.26	-0.58	0.83**	0.83**	0.89			
WPB	2.93	0.85	1.04	-0.07	0.20**	0.55**	45**	0.98		
EE	3.09	1.19	0.27	-1.06	0.21**	0.49**	0.42**	0.35**	0.93	

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)
Cronbach’s alpha values appear on the diagonal

CD – Cognitive Demands, ED - Emotional Demands, AJD – Aggregate Job Demands, WPB – Workplace Bullying, EE – Emotional Exhaustion

4.1. Hypotheses testing

Simple linear regressions and mediator analysis were performed in the present study for testing hypotheses.

4.2. Direct effects

Simple linear regression was used to test the impact of cognitive demands, emotional demands, and aggregate job demands on exposure to workplace bullying. Table 2 shows statistics for direct effects of cognitive, emotional demands and aggregate job demands on exposure to workplace bullying.

Table 2: Model parameters and summary - Direct effects

Model parameters	H1	H2	H3
Regression	WPB <- CD	WPB <- ED	WPB <- AJD
Independent Variable	CD	ED	AJD
Beta	0.18	0.53	0.50
t-value	2.60	8.87	6.65
p-value	0.01	0.00	0.00
Model Summary Statistics			
R	0.18	0.53	0.43
R ²	0.03	0.28	0.18
Adjusted R ²	0.03	0.28	0.18
Δ R ²	0.33	0.28	0.18
Δ F	6.77	78.68	44.20
Δ F sig	0.01	0.00	0.00

Note: WPB – Workplace Bullying, CD – Cognitive Demands, ED – Emotional Demands, AJD –Aggregate Job Demands

As shown in Table 2- H1, R² which denotes the explained variance is .03 that means 3% of variability of exposure to workplace bullying is explained by cognitive demands. F statistic specifies the significance of R² and as the F change (6.77) for is significant at 0.05 level. P value is 0.01 and it is less than 0.05. Further, results show that cognitive job demands are positively related to exposure to workplace bullying (Beta = 0.18). Hence, H1 is accepted.

Emotional demands also positively affect exposure to workplace bullying (See Table 2 – H2). Beta value is 0.53 and p value is .00 which is less than 0.05. Further, emotional demands explain 2.8 % of variance in exposure to workplace bullying ($R^2 = 0.28$). Therefore, H2 can be accepted.

Model statistics (See Table 2 – H3) suggest a positive impact of aggregate job demands on exposure to workplace bullying. R^2 denotes the explained variance by aggregate job demands in exposure to workplace bullying as 18 %. Further, the beta value is positive (0.50.) and p value is 0.00 and it is less than .05. Hence, H3 is supported.

4.3. Mediating effects

In a mediating model, there are two causal paths feeding into the dependent variable as; the direct impact of the independent variable and the impact of the mediator (Baron and Kenny, 1986). They further highlighted the path of independent variable to the mediating variable. Following steps were followed for testing mediation effect (Judd and Kenny, 1982 as cited in Baron and Kenny, 1986).

- 1) The dependent variable predicted by the independent variable (testing for the direct effect)
- 2) The mediator predicted by the independent variable (testing for direct effect)
- 3) The dependent variable predicted by the mediator controlling for the independent

Table 3: Mediating effect of emotional exhaustion on the relationship between cognitive demands and exposure to workplace bullying

Effect Regression Independent Variable	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	Model parameters		Model parameters		Mediating effect	
	Direct effect WPB <- CD	Direct effect EE <- CD	Direct effect WPB <- CD,EE	Direct effect WPB <- CD,EE	Direct effect WPB <- CD,EE	Direct effect WPB <- CD,EE
B	0.18	0.30	0.11	0.23		
t-value	2.60	3	1.68	4.84		
p-value	0.01	0.04	0.01	0.00		
Model summary statistics						
R	0.18	0.20	0.39			
R^2	0.03	0.04	0.15			
Adjusted R^2	0.03	0.04	0.12			
ΔR^2	0.33	0.04	0.15			
ΔF	6.77	8.38	17.98			
ΔF sig	0.01	0.00	0.00			

Note: CD – Cognitive Demands, WPB – Workplace Bullying, EE – Emotional Exhaustion

Regression statistics (See Table 3 – Model 1) show R^2 as 0.03 and p value of 0.01. Beta is 0.18. Hence, direct effect of cognitive demands on exposure to workplace bullying is significant. Under the second step, the mediator is predicted by the independent variable (testing for direct effect). Accordingly, emotional exhaustion was regressed by cognitive demands. Emotional exhaustion was significantly predicted by cognitive demands ($p = 0.04 < 0.05$, $t = 3$). Third step which tests the indirect effect states the mediation. As Table 3 - Model 3 shows, the direct impact remains insignificant ($p = 0.01 > 0.05$) with the t statistic of 1.68, when exposure to workplace bullying is regressed by both cognitive demands and emotional exhaustion. Moreover, the impact of emotional exhaustion on exposure to workplace bullying becomes significant ($p = 0.00 < 0.05$). Baron and Kenney (1986) stated that having both the direct effect and indirect effect at once when dependent variable is regressed by both independent and mediating variables is a partial mediation. Before adding emotional exhaustion to the regression, the unstandardized beta between emotional demands and exposure to workplace bullying is .18 ($p = 0.00 < 0.05$) and as it is reduced to 0.11 ($p = 0.01$) and remains significant after adding emotional exhaustion, then, there is a partial mediation (Hair et al., 2010). Accordingly, emotional

exhaustion partially mediates the relationship between cognitive demands and exposure to workplace bullying. Hence, H4 is supported.

Table 4: Mediating effect of emotional exhaustion on the relationship between emotional demands and exposure to workplace bullying

Effect Regression Independent Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	
	Model parameters		Mediating effect	
	Direct effect WPB <- ED	Direct effect EE<- ED	WPB <- ED,EE	
	ED	ED	ED	EE
B	0.53	0.75	0.45	0.1
t-value	8.87	7.97	6.71	2.24
p-value	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.03
Model Summary Statistics				
R	0.53	0.49	0.55	
R ²	0.28	0.24	0.3	
Adjusted R ²	0.28	0.24	0.29	
Δ R ²	0.28	0.24	0.3	
Δ F	78.68	63.51	42.62	
Δ F sig	0.00	0.00	0.00	

Note: ED – Emotional Demands, WPB – Workplace Bullying, EE – Emotional Exhaustion

Regression statistics (see Table 4 - Model 1) of direct effect show a statistically significant ($p = 0.00$), positive ($Beta = 0.53$) impact between emotional demands and exposure to workplace bullying. Table 4 – Model 2 statistics confirmed that emotional demand is a significant predictor of emotional exhaustion with the t statistic of 7.97 and p value of .00. Beta is 0.75. As shown results of the third step (see Table 4 – Model 3), effect of emotional demands on exposure to workplace bullying remains significant ($p = 0.00 < 0.05$, $t = 6.71$) while the impact of emotional exhaustion on exposure to workplace bullying becomes significant ($p = 0.03 > 0.05$, $t = 2.24$). At the first step, the unstandardized beta between emotional demands and exposure to workplace bullying is 0.53 ($p = 0.00 < 0.05$) and as it is reduced to 0.45 ($p = 0.00$) and remains significant after adding emotional exhaustion. Accordingly, emotional exhaustion partially mediates the relationship between emotional demands and workplace bullying. Hence, H5 is supported.

Table 5: Mediating effect of emotional exhaustion on the relationship between aggregate job demands and exposure to workplace bullying

Effect Regression Independent Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	
	Model parameters		Mediating effect	
	Direct effect WPB <-AJD	Direct effect EE<- AJD	WPB <- AJD, EE	
	AJD	AJD	AJD	EE
Beta	0.50	0.75	0.39	0.15
t-value	6.65	6.41	4.77	3.54
p-value	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Model Summary Statistics				
R	0.43	0.41	0.49	
R ²	0.18	0.17	0.23	
Adjusted R ²	0.18	0.17	0.22	
Δ R ²	0.18	0.17	0.23	
Δ F	44.20	41.13	29.63	
Δ F sig	0.00	0.00	0.00	

Note: AJD – Aggregate Job Demands, WPB – Workplace Bullying, EE – Emotional Exhaustion

Results of the direct effect of aggregate job demands on exposure to workplace bullying is significant (p value = 0.00) and positive (Beta = 0.50). When mediator is predicted by the independent variable, it shows that aggregate job demands significantly predict ($p = 0.00$) emotional exhaustion. Since, first two steps of regression show significant predictor relationships, the possible mediating effect of emotional exhaustion can be examined. As Table 5 - Model 3 shows, the direct impact further remains significant ($p = 0.00 < 0.05$) with the t statistic of 4.77, when exposure to workplace bullying is regressed by both aggregate job demands and emotional exhaustion. Moreover, the impact of emotional exhaustion on exposure to workplace bullying becomes significant ($p = 0.00 < 0.05$, $t = 3.54$). If both direct effect and indirect effect are significant at once when dependent variable is regressed by both independent, there is a partial mediation. Accordingly, emotional exhaustion partially mediates the relationship between aggregate job demands and exposure to workplace bullying. Hence, H6 is supported. Before adding emotional exhaustion to the regression, the unstandardized beta between job demands and exposure to workplace bullying is 0.50 ($p = 0.00 < 0.05$) and as it is reduced to 0.39 ($p = 0.00$) and remains significant after adding emotional exhaustion, then, there is a partial mediation (Hair *et al.*, 2010).

Sobel's test was conducted in order to verify the statistical mediation of emotional exhaustion. The test supported the partial mediations between job demands and exposure to workplace bullying.

5. DISCUSSION

Results of the present study open up several remarkable findings to discuss. Findings of the study show that job demands of academics positively affect exposure to workplace bullying. Accordingly, cognitive demands positively impact on exposure to workplace bullying. As shown, the impact of cognitive demands on exposure to workplace bullying is significant, relatively there is a very lesser impact of cognitive demands ($R^2 = 0.03$, $p = 0.01$, Beta = 0.18) on being exposed to workplace bullying. Emotional demands also ($R^2 = 0.28$, $p = 0.00$, Beta = 0.53) have positive impact on exposure to workplace bullying and it is relatively higher than the impact of cognitive demands. The aggregate impact of these two demands remains over exposure to workplace bullying is only 18% ($R^2 = 0.18$, $p = 0.00$, Beta = 0.50). It implies that there may have other factors (e.g., role stressors, workload, and personal factors) that may cause to expose academics for workplace bullying. However, these findings are in line with the work environment hypothesis and empirical evidences (e.g., Baillien *et al.*, 2011; Notelaers *et al.*, 2013; Notelaers *et al.*, 2010; Tuckey *et al.*, 2009). Work environment hypothesis (Leymann, 1996) in bullying indicates that bullying behaviors are arising due to stressful and poorly organized work environment. Accordingly, negative psychosocial environment leads workplace bullying. In such environment, employees may get exposed bullying directly or indirectly (Neuman and Baron, 2003). As they explained, job stressors cause to expose a person to bullying due to their affective and behavioral reactions created through job stressors. Such affective and behavioral reactions encourage others/perpetrators to bully them. When it relates to the present study, high cognitive and emotional demands expose academics more to workplace bullying. As described through the work environment hypothesis, perpetrators may get encouraged to bully people who have higher job demands. Hence, higher the job demands higher the exposure to workplace bullying.

As shown, the mediating effect of emotional exhaustion over the relationship between job demands and exposure to workplace bullying proposed based on the three way model Baillien *et al.*, 2009) reveals that emotional exhaustion partially mediates the relationship between cognitive demands, emotional demands and aggregate job demands with exposure to workplace bullying. These findings reflect that job demands are not only contributing factors for being exposed to workplace bullying and it occurs through emotional exhaustion. If a person emotionally exhausted due to higher job demands then there is a tendency for being subjected to workplace bullying.

5.1. Implications

This study belongs to different domains such as human resource management, organizational behavior, and organizational psychology where the knowledge on workplace bullying is very useful.

Workplace bullying is still in an ambiguous, developmental state (Cowan, 2009) and still it has received limited research attention. This study contributes the available limited stock of knowledge in workplace bullying. The present study contributes to enhance the applicability of the work environment hypothesis and the three way model. Furthermore, Hauge (2010) stated that work environment hypothesis does not clearly verify work environment factors that affect workplace bullying. Hence, the present study further nurtures theory in workplace bullying by identifying job demands (i.e., cognitive and emotional demands) as important work environment factors in academia that affect exposure to exposure to workplace bullying.

Moreover, this study contributes to exhaustion literature, by examining emotional exhaustion as a mediating variable. It revealed that job demands can affect the exposure to workplace bullying not only through a direct impact but also through an indirect effect via emotional exhaustion. Further, majority of studies on workplace bullying have been conducted in hospitals and other private organizations while there are very limited number of studies related to workplace bullying in academia (especially in Sri Lanka and in other Asian countries). According to the author's knowledge, this is the first study on workplace bullying undertaken in the academia in Sri Lanka. Therefore, this study contribute to fill the knowledge gap on workplace bullying in academia.

This study provides managerial implications for developing bullying free work environment in academia. As present study provides a good evidence for the existence of the problem of workplace bullying in Sri Lankan academia that affect the learning environment, students' education and the quality of academic life (Zabrodska and Kveton, 2012), it is better to create a bullying free work environment by relevant administrative parties in the higher education sector. There are anti-bullying policies in organizations and also in education institutions in other countries to reduce the occurrence of workplace bullying and its negative consequences. In this regard, the involvement of HR professionals has increased with the increase of the concerns towards employee dignity and implementation of such anti-bullying policies. Moreover, identifying risk factors of workplace bullying environment is necessary to eliminate such behaviors. It gives insights to administrative parties in academia on higher job demands as a risk factor of exposure to workplace bullying. Hence, effective management of these two demands will contribute to make a bullying less environment in academia and any other context where there can be seen high cognitive and emotional demands. Further, it is important to perceive optimal level of demands to avoid academics to get emotionally exhausted. Further, different programs such as positive emotions, inspirational, and self-management programs in assisting to manage emotional and cognitive demands can be implemented. In addition, counselling programs and other awareness programs can be implemented for assisting people who have become targets of bullying or any other mistreatments.

5.2. Limitations

The study used the questionnaire as the basic method of data collection. Data are self-reported. It may cause to occur self-bias that leads to common method variance, the risk of non-return questionnaires that directly affects the response rate. Further, workplace bullying is a sensitive topic and it asks some sort of negative behaviors for what a particular person could be exposed at their work. Therefore, some people might be reluctant to fill the questionnaire. Though survey strategy facilitates for other data collection methods such as structured interviews, time and other limitations did not allowed to use those methods. Further, this is cross-sectional study where all data were collected at one single time. This makes difficult to derive conclusions on causality. Another limitation is that the study only considered target's perspective on exposure to workplace since practically it is difficult to collect data from perpetrators.

However, despite these limitations, the study used different techniques in order to enhance the accuracy and quality of its findings. Among them, anonymous responses were collected, different procedural and statistical techniques were used to reduce the threats such as common method variance.

5.3. Directions for future research

The present study was directed to examine the impact of job demands on exposure to workplace bullying. Moreover, emotional exhaustion was used as the mediating effect on the relationship between job demands and workplace bullying. The study used only qualitative job demands; cognitive demands and emotional demands. Findings showed that cognitive demands explain only 0.03 of the dependent variable. Emotional demands explain 0.28 and aggregate job demands explain by 0.18 of the dependent variable. It denotes that there may have other causes that affect exposure to workplace bullying. Therefore, the study suggests to examine other job demands such as quantitative job demands of academics in future studies.

As described, this study used only target perspective only. There are very limited number of studies (e.g., De Cuyper *et al.*, 2009, Hauge *et al.*, 2009) on perpetrators perspective on reports workplace bullying. It is suggested for future studies to study perpetrators' perspective in workplace bullying.

Furthermore, there are several studies which have used dimension level analysis for workplace bullying (e.g., Tambur and Vadi, 2012). It is suggested for future researchers to do a dimensional analysis for workplace bullying, since present study identified that there are variations among these dimensions of workplace bullying. It will also be possible to have more comprehensive analysis in this regard. Further, it is suggested to replicate the study using longitudinal sample using different data collection methods.

6. CONCLUSION

The present study conducted to answer the research problem 'why academics are exposed to workplace bullying?' Based on the work environment hypothesis cognitive demands and emotional demands were used as job demands of academics in order to answer the research problem. The study found that cognitive demands and emotional demands have positive impact on exposure to workplace bullying. There was positive impact of aggregate job demands on exposure to workplace bullying. The relationship job demands and exposure to workplace bullying was partiality mediated by emotional exhaustion. In conclusion, exposure to workplace bullying makes academics vulnerable to different negative consequences. Further, it negatively affects the learning environment. Therefore, study shows the importance of addressing the workplace bullying in academia. In this regards, present study highlights the importance of well managed work environment in order to create a bullying free environment. Furthermore, the study contributes to the various knowledge domains of human resource management, organizational behavior, and organizational psychology.

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