Jahangirnagar University Journal of Management Research

Journal Homepage: https://journals.juniv.edu/index.php/jujmr

Workplace Bullying and Organizational Performance in Bangladesh's RMG Industry: Exploring the Mediating Role of Organizational Stress

Md. Mahfuzur Rahman[1]

Article Info:

Received: November 14, 2025
Revised: May 04, 2026
Accepted: June 21, 2026
Published: June 30, 2026

Keywords:

workplace bullying, organizational stress, effectiveness, performance, RMG industry

JEL Codes: J28, M54

DOI:
http://doi.org/10.59185/jujmr.v8i1.412

Abstract: Workplace bullying has become a vital concern that endangers employee well-being and undermines overall organizational health. It manifests in many forms, including verbal abuse, hostile conduct, and social exclusion. This study explores the detrimental impact of workplace bullying on overall organizational effectiveness in the Ready-Made Garments (RMG) sector in Bangladesh. The study also examines whether organizational stress mediates the relationship between workplace bullying and organizational performance. Ultimately, the research aims to shed light on how a culture of bullying shapes organizational climate and erodes performance, guiding the creation of healthier work environments in the RMG sector. The methodology employs non-probability convenience sampling with a cross-sectional design, collecting data at a single time point. A total of 304 respondents' data has been considered. Data analysis conducted using SPSS 25.0. The results show a strong relationship between workplace bullying and organizational stress, as well as a moderate negative association between organizational stress and the performance of the organization. Conclusions and discussions are based on findings from primary research and relevant literature, both practical and academic.

1.0 Introduction

Workplace bullying has long been recognized as a significant organizational challenge, defined by persistent patterns of negative behaviour directed at employees across all levels of an organization. Its effects are far-reaching — stretching well beyond the individual to touch teams, departments, and entire institutions. Workplace harassment carries a tremendous negative impact on employee productivity and efficiency (Saha & Mazumder, 2015), and as scholarly interest in this phenomenon has grown, researchers

[1] Assistant Professor, Department of Management Studies, Jahangirnagar University, Savar, Dhaka-1342 Email: riyadmahfuz@juniv.edu

and policymakers worldwide have paid increasing attention to understanding how such antagonistic tendencies shape job performance. There is mounting evidence to suggest that toxic working environments represent a deeply systemic issue, one that produces consequences not only for individual workers and their employers, but for society at large (Saleem et al., 2022).

In high-pressure industries, these dynamics tend to be particularly acute. Bangladesh's Ready-Made Garments (RMG) sector offers a striking case in point. As one of the country's most vital economic engines, the RMG industry operates under intense demands — tight production targets, compressed timelines, and a competitive global market that places relentless pressure on both management and workers. These conditions create fertile ground for bullying behaviours to take root and, when left unchecked, to cause lasting damage not only to workers' well-being but to overall organizational performance (Hasan et al., 2023). Understanding how bullying operates within this specific context is therefore not merely an academic exercise — it carries real implications for the industry's long-term sustainability and the welfare of its workforce.

Workplace harassment, broadly defined, refers to situations in which employees at any organizational level endure persistent and systematic mistreatment from colleagues, managers, or subordinates. This destructive dynamic gives rise to a wide range of adverse organizational outcomes: higher rates of employee turnover, diminished self-assurance among victims, more frequent absenteeism, reduced workplace efficiency, and chronically suboptimal work performance. Research has consistently demonstrated strong associations between workplace harassment and compromised psychological health — including reduced self-worth, difficulties with concentration, persistent exhaustion, irritability, heightened tension, and various physical manifestations of psychological distress (Ngale, 2018). Building on this, Haq et al. (2018) further identified that victims commonly experience anxiety, depressive symptoms, and sleep disruptions — all of which contribute to declining workplace satisfaction and, ultimately, lower job performance.

Despite the volume of research addressing workplace harassment at the international level (Einarsen et al., 2011; Nielsen & Einarsen, 2012; Lutgen-Sandvik & Tracy, 2012), investigations within the Bangladeshi context remain notably scarce. This gap is particularly glaring given the scale and significance of Bangladesh's garment sector, which employs millions of workers — many of them women — in conditions that are frequently demanding and, at times, overtly hostile. The limited scholarly attention directed at this context prompted the present inquiry into how workplace harassment shapes job performance and occupational stress among workers in the RMG sector, where the stakes are especially high and the voices of workers are too often left out of academic and policy conversations.

Notwithstanding the well-documented prevalence of workplace stressors and harassment behaviours within Bangladesh's labour market, few studies have rigorously examined their cumulative impact on institutional effectiveness (Islam et al., 2021; Hasan et al., 2023). This study addresses that gap directly by exploring the complex, layered relationship between workplace bullying, organizational stress, and performance

outcomes in the RMG industry. It investigates how bullying behaviours contribute to elevated stress levels among garment workers, tracing both the psychological and physiological toll of hostile work environments. It further examines how harassment affects individual productivity and broader factory-level effectiveness — asking whether these negative behaviours produce measurable, operationally significant declines in output and performance. Crucially, the study tests whether organizational-level stress functions as a mediating mechanism in the relationship between bullying incidents and performance outcomes, thereby clarifying the pathways through which workplace misconduct translates into organizational consequences.

In pursuing these questions, the research aims to evaluate how workplace bullying and professional harassment impact employee job performance, while also assessing their influence on the mental and emotional health of daily workers in the RMG sector. Importantly, this study addresses a meaningful theoretical gap in existing knowledge by positioning organizational stress as a mediating variable between workplace bullying and performance — an approach that aligns with the research directions recommended by Wahba et al. (2023), whose work substantiates the gaps this investigation seeks to fill. Taken together, these objectives reflect a commitment to producing findings that are not only academically rigorous, but practically relevant to those working to improve conditions within one of Bangladesh's most important industries.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Workplace Bullying: Definition and Prevalence

The issue of occupational bullying and pressure has been growing in prominence and is widely acknowledged to have serious detrimental consequences for both individuals and organizations. Stress, broadly defined as a physical and psychological reaction to a perceived threat or demand, can stem from numerous workplace factors including workload intensity, limited autonomy, and interpersonal conflicts (Kawai, 2013). Workplace intimidation, on the other hand, refers to repeated and deliberate behaviours intended to hurt, frighten, or humiliate an individual or group, and may manifest as verbal abuse, social ostracism, or physical violence (Pheko, 2018).

Two theoretical frameworks are particularly useful for understanding the combined impact of workplace bullying and stress on employee well-being: the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model and Social Exchange Theory. Lesener et al. (2019) argue that the JD-R model holds that employees experience heightened stress and diminished performance when job demands consistently outpace the resources available to manage them. Conversely, when organizations invest in adequate support structures, they create a buffer against the adverse effects of demanding work environments (Shevchuk et al., 2018). Social Exchange Theory, meanwhile, foregrounds the relational dimension of work life: as Chernyak-Hai & Rabenu (2018) contend, employees who feel unsupported by their environment or colleagues become significantly more vulnerable to stress and its downstream consequences (Nazir et al., 2018).

A consistent body of research demonstrates that both workplace stress and bullying carry severe consequences for employees, including diminished job satisfaction, higher rates of turnover, and increased absenteeism (Steele et al., 2020). Chronic workplace stress, in particular, can produce health consequences that extend well beyond the workplace, including clinical-level depression and anxiety disorders (Xiao et al., 2020). Bullying behaviours inflict comparable harm — eroding employees' confidence, causing emotional injury, and weakening their commitment to their roles (Anasori et al., 2021). Together, these findings underscore the gravity of workplace stress and bullying as threats to employee well-being and, by extension, organizational performance. Tackling these issues demands sustained research attention and proactive organizational responses.

Within the Bangladeshi context specifically, local evidence reinforces these international findings. Akhter et al. (2019) conducted an in-depth qualitative exploration of violence experienced by female garment workers across four RMG factories in Bangladesh. Their findings reveal that workplace violence is commonplace, taking the form of physical abuse, persistent verbal aggression, the withholding of wages, and constant threats of dismissal. Critically, the female workers in this study felt powerless to raise complaints, fearing retaliation from supervisors and the loss of their livelihoods — a dynamic that perpetuates cycles of abuse and erodes workers' psychological well-being over time.

2.2 Workplace Bullying and Organizational Stress

Occupational stress arises when employees struggle to reconcile the competing demands of their professional and personal lives, often resulting in physical injuries, workplace accidents, and elevated rates of absenteeism (Farley et al., 2023). Even beyond the RMG sector, in industries such as tourism and hospitality, workers experiencing high levels of workplace pressure commonly report a range of physiological symptoms — including migraines, chronic fatigue, nausea, skin conditions, elevated blood pressure, and cardiovascular complaints — all of which can reduce employee productivity while simultaneously inflating employers' healthcare costs (Oludeyi et al., 2019).

Workplace intimidation also leaves a visible imprint on organizational stress through its damage to institutional reputation, both internally and externally, contributing in turn to rising levels of consumer dissatisfaction. Hazardous working environments and frequent workplace accidents impose direct financial costs on organizations, including insurance claims and legal proceedings (Farley et al., 2023). Research has consistently shown that exposure to workplace bullying tends to be perceived as more incapacitating and destructive than virtually all other forms of occupational pressure combined (Bentley et al., 2012).

Lending direct empirical grounding to these patterns within the Bangladesh context, Yuan et al. (2022) conducted a large-scale study among 350 employees across 25 RMG factories in the Dhaka, Narayanganj, and Gazipur industrial zones. Their findings establish a significant positive association between occupational stress and health risk among garment workers, with stress rooted in long working hours, poor environmental conditions, low wages, and supervisor misconduct. Importantly, the study demonstrates that work-related stress measurably reduces productivity and increases absenteeism —

particularly among female workers, who reported perceiving their roles as more stressful and health-endangering than their male counterparts. These findings highlight the specific structural vulnerabilities that intensify the stress-performance relationship in the Bangladeshi manufacturing context.

As a conclusive statement from the existing research, this investigation proposes the following research hypothesis:

H1. Workplace bullying exerts a clearly notable influence on organizational stress.

2.3 Organizational Stress and Job Performance

Employee performance is a paramount concern for organizations of all sizes and structures — and for good reason, given that employees are widely recognized as among an organization's most strategically valuable assets (Bashir & Ramay, 2010). Yet stress is an inescapable feature of working life, and its effects on performance are well-documented. Rose (2003) identifies long working hours and relentless deadlines as among the most potent sources of workplace stress, with direct consequences for employee motivation and output.

Bangladesh's RMG sector provides a particularly stark illustration of these dynamics. Employing millions of workers and making a significant contribution to national GDP, the sector is nonetheless characterized by demanding conditions — extended shifts, low wages, and intense production pressure — that create fertile ground for bullying to take hold (Kona et al., 2023). Its entrenched hierarchical structure often leaves workers with little capacity to challenge or report abusive behaviours. Weak regulatory frameworks and inconsistent enforcement further compound the problem, ultimately harming both staff well-being and organizational performance (Hossain et al., 2021).

Demands on modern workers continue to intensify. Hallowell (2005) notes that heavy workloads impair employees' ability to meet expectations and deplete their creative resources. Ongoing pressure, time constraints, and constant interruptions erode workers' capacity for both creative and effective performance (Elmadağ & Ellinger, 2018; Kalyar, Nawaz et al., 2019). A broader body of research confirms that job stress negatively impacts performance outcomes across a wide range of industries (Sari et al., 2021).

Reinforcing these patterns at the local level, Akter et al. (2024) examined gender-based violence and harassment in Bangladesh's RMG factories through qualitative methods, including document analysis and semi-structured interviews. Their findings reveal a striking policy implementation gap: while Bangladesh's High Court directives mandate the establishment of anti-harassment committees in workplaces, these provisions remain largely unenforced. The study finds that large factories are more likely to identify — though not necessarily prevent — violent behaviours by supervisors, while smaller and medium-sized factories often fail to restrain such conduct at all. The resulting environment of normalized harassment and impunity suppresses worker well-being, dampens motivation, and translates into measurable declines in organizational

performance — highlighting that the bullying-to-performance pathway operates through regulatory as well as psychological mechanisms in the Bangladeshi context.

Based on the literature, the following hypothesis has been developed:

H2. Organizational stress has a clearly notable effect on organizational performance.

2.4 Impact of Workplace Bullying on Organizational Performance

Paais (2018) examined employee harassment at Bank Maluku and its effect on performance, concluding that such behaviours inflict both economic and productive harm on organizations (Weber et al., 2018). This finding resonates strongly with conditions in Bangladesh's RMG sector, where harassment disproportionately affects female workers — many of whom come from underprivileged backgrounds with limited prior exposure to formal workplace environments and, consequently, limited awareness of their rights when confronted with bullying. Studies demonstrate that workplace harassment is closely associated with poor mental health outcomes among employees, which in turn leads to suboptimal performance (Hasan et al., 2023). Further, harassment stifles the organizational creativity and innovation that are essential to competitive performance (Schneider et al., 2010). Prior research has also shown that bullying by supervisors or co-workers alike can produce withdrawal behaviours, erode motivation, and drive up sickness-related absences (Apaydin et al., 2022; Malik et al., 2019). Laschinger & Fida (2014) add another dimension, finding that workplace harassment intensifies manager-employee conflict — compounding the organizational costs of an already destructive dynamic.

For all these reasons, harassment causes individual-level harm and simultaneously functions as a driver of widespread organizational damage, manifested through declining productivity, deteriorating job performance, and heightened intentions to leave.

H3: Workplace bullying shows a clearly notable inverse relationship with organizational performance.

3.0 Research Methodology

3.1 Research Method

This research is descriptive and analytical and has followed cross-sectional method (data has been collected in a single point of time).

3.2 Research Framework

The model that was followed to conduct this research is given below, which basically presents the proposed linkages between workplace bullying and organizational performance through job stress.

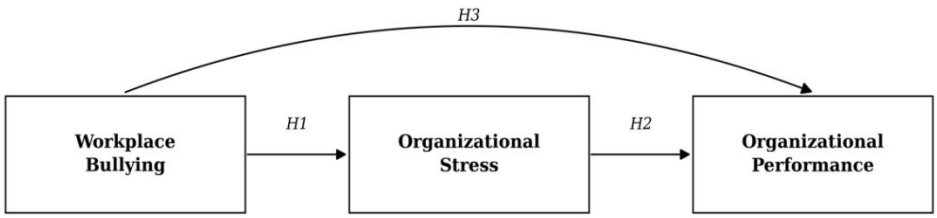


Figure 1. Research Model

3.3 Population

This research focuses on garment factories in and around Dhaka City, with the aim to connect with a substantial number of workers who work in these factories, hearing their perspectives and experiences first-hand. This study centres on organizational bullying and the mediating effect of organizational stress on the performance of workers who make up the backbone of Dhaka's thriving textile industry.

3.4 Sampling Method

Data collection for this study relied solely on non-probability convenience sampling, a widely used approach in organizational research where access to participants is constrained by practical and logistical realities. Given the nature of the RMG sector, where workers operate under tight production schedules, factory access is often restricted, and management gatekeeping is common, this method allowed the research team to collect data in a feasible and efficient manner.

While this approach offered a clear practical advantages, it is important to acknowledge its inherent limitations with respect to representativeness. Convenience sampling, by definition, selects participants based on their availability and accessibility rather than through a randomized or systematic process. As a result, the sample may disproportionately reflect the experiences of workers who are more reachable or more willing to participate, potentially excluding more marginalized voices, such as those of workers who are more fearful of retaliation or who lack social connections within the factory.

That said, the use of the method is not uncommon in studies conducted within the RMG sector and comparable high-pressure industrial contexts, where probability sampling is rarely achievable without institutional cooperation that is frequently unavailable to independent researchers (Etikan et al., 2016).

3.5 Sample Size

To conduct the research, data from a total of 337 workers of different garment companies were collected, out of which 304 questionnaires were accurate to be considered.

3.6 Data Collection Technique and Measurement Scale & Tool

Data were mostly obtained by using day long, face-to-face interviews for couple of days, some of the data were collected using telephone from different garment factories. An ordinal 5-point Likert scale has been used for measuring each item of the constructs. Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 25 has been used for analysing the data and testing hypotheses.

4.0 Analysis and Findings

Respondents were asked a series of questions using 5-point Likert scale. Various measurement scales were used to assess the study variables. For the demographics section, a nominal scale was applied. The independent variable, workplace bullying, was measured using a 22-item scale adapted from the Negative Acts Questionnaire-Revised (NAQ-R), originally developed by Einarsen et al. (2009). Dependent variable, Job performance was measured by using 7 items developed by Williams & Anderson (1991). The mediating factor, Job stress was measured using 5 items from the scale developed by (Crank et al., n.d.). Findings and Analysis are presented below based on the questions of the questionnaire used in this study:

4.1 The demographic profile of the respondents

The five demographic items of the questionnaire were gender, age, marital status, level of education, and years of working experience in their current job in the organization, as shown in Table 2. To measure the variables, a validated five-point Likert scale has been used, where the two extremes are strongly agree (5) and strongly disagree (1).

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	106	34.9
	Female	198	65.1
Age	Below 20	73	24.0
	20 - 30	179	58.9
	31 - 40	44	14.5
	41- 50	6	1.9
	51 or Above	2	0.7
Marital status	Unmarried	103	33.9
	Married	144	47.3
	Divorced	57	18.8
Level of education	No Formal Education	76	25.0
	School Level	157	51.6
	Diploma or Equivalent	68	22.4
	Graduation	3	0.99

	Post-Graduation	0	0
Year of experience	Less than a years	23	7.6
	01-03 years	141	46.4
	03-05 years	87	28.6
	05-07 years	39	12.8
	More than 7 years	14	4.6

Table 1: Demographic Profile of the Respondents

In our survey, a total 65.1% female workers took part, and the rest of the workers were male, which apparently reflects the common scenario in the employment of workers in RMG sector of Bangladesh. The largest category of age was 20–30, which reflects 58.9% of the whole sample. Total, 47.3% of workers were married. The majority of the workers just have completed their schooling in terms of academic qualification, representing 51.6% of the whole sample size. In terms of work experience, respondents with 01–03 years of experience constitute most of the sample at 46.4%, which is much higher than those with more than seven years of work experience.

4.2 Test of reliability and validity

To assess how consistently the measurement tools performed, the researcher used the Cronbach's Alpha test. Since this method can't evaluate single questions in isolation, the reliability score for each component of this study has been calculated. This helped to understand how trustworthy the findings were across the different aspects the research tried to examine—whether employees experienced workplace bullying, how the organization performed overall, and the levels of stress people felt in their work environment, which can act as a mediator.

	No of Items	**Cronbach's Alpha**
Workplace Bullying (WB)	22	0.882
Organizational Performance (OP)	7	0.921
Organizational Stress (OT)	5	0.852

Table 2: Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Test for individual dimension

The above table shows the reliability of the components of workplace bullying, organizational performance, and organizational stress against the responses from a pilot survey. All the variables were tested for Cronbach's Alpha and the values for all components range from 0.852 to 0.921. For this reason, it can be said that, the Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient was accepted, which is important.

4.3 The intensity of workplace bullying

The respondents were asked about the degree of bullying they faced in the workplace on a regular basis. As per the literature, the author has selectively taken some variables into account to determine the level of workplace bullying. To do so, a descriptive analysis has been conducted. All the WB variables were put into the questionnaire with a five-level Likert scale, where a score of 1.0 denoted the weak existence of a characteristic and a score of 5.0 represented quite the opposite, the very high existence of workplace bullying.

Descriptive Statistics			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Work-related bullying	4.0306	.68930	304
Person-related bullying	4.3061	.994666	304
Physically intimidating bullying	3.4490	.83315	304

Table 3: Frequency of Workplace Bullying

The mean score of all the factors shows the intensity of each factor's presence in th workplace. The mean score of all the variables is more than 3.0, which indicates that majority of the workers who responded are a victim of workplace bully. The mean score for work-related bullying is 4.3061 with a relatively small level of deviation (.68930), indicates that workers are kind of frequently facing work-related bully in the workstation. They are mostly ignored in case of taking any opinion, even they have to face micro level control in every aspect. In the case of the person-related bullying, the mean score (4.3061) reflects a high level of existence of the characteristics, which indicates the notable level of humiliation caused by other individual, and notable number of gossips and rumours. The mean score for Physically intimidating bullying is 3.4490. That means, threats of violence are also very frequent, though comparatively minimal. All of the variables of workplace bullying are strongly taking place in the RMG sector of Bangladesh.

4.4 Correlation analysis

Pearson correlation analysis is a statistical tool that help to measure the strength and direction of relationships between different variables of any study. The results give a clear picture on a scale ranging from completely negative (-1.00) to perfectly positive (+1.00), showing whether changes in one factor tend to coincide with changes in another, and how strongly they're connected. This study shows that workplace bullying is

notablely correlated with Job Stress with the r=0.864, which means that it is strongly notable at 1 percent. On another test, it shows that workplace bullying has moderately strong negative relationship with organizational performance, the score is r=-628. In practical terms, as workplace bullying increases, organizational performance tends to decrease. The more bullying there is at work, the worse the organization tends to perform. Conversely, minimizing bullying may lead to better outcomes for the organization.

4.5 Test of Hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: "Workplace bullying exerts a clearly notable influence on organizational stress."

The first hypothesis was tested using the linear regression analysis. Results are presented on the given table.

Table 4: Linear Regression Analysis Showing the effect between Workplace bullying and Organizational Stress (n= 304):

Table 4 Coefficients Table & Model Summary

	B	T	P. value	R	R^2	F	P. value
(Constant)	12.827	20.772**	0.001	0.339	0.115	74.579**	0.001
Workplace bullying	0.395	8.636**	0.001				

a. Dependent Variable: Organizational stress

The results indicate a meaningful and statistically significant relationship between workplace bullying and organizational stress ($R^2 = 0.115$, $F = 74.579$, $p < 0.01$). Workplace bullying accounts for approximately 11.5% of the variance in job-related stress among workers — a finding that, while modest in statistical terms, carries real weight when considered against the scale of Bangladesh's RMG sector and the millions of workers it employs. The significant coefficient for workplace bullying ($B = 0.395$, $p < 0.01$) confirms that bullying is a measurable driver of organizational stress, not merely a peripheral interpersonal issue, and one that managers have both the responsibility and the capacity to address.

For managers, these findings point toward proactive rather than reactive intervention. Practical steps might include implementing structured anti-bullying policies with clear reporting pathways, conducting regular workplace climate surveys to detect early warning signs, and providing supervisory training that builds awareness of coercive behaviors and their organizational consequences. In the RMG context specifically, where hierarchical power imbalances are entrenched and workers often fear retaliation, creating

psychologically safe reporting channels is particularly critical. While other factors also contribute to organizational stress — and merit investigation in future research — bullying remains a meaningful intervention target whose reduction is likely to yield compounding benefits for morale, performance, and long-term organizational sustainability.

This research aligns with what Luthans (2011) and Leka and colleagues (2004) discovered earlier—workplace harassment does more than just increase employee stress. When bullying occurs, it tarnishes both how employees see the company and its public reputation, often leading to customers voicing more dissatisfaction. These toxic work environments typically see more accidents and safety issues, which ultimately hit the company's bottom line through increased insurance premiums and potential lawsuits.

Hypothesis 2: "Organizational stress has a clearly notable effect on organizational performance."

The second hypothesis was tested using the linear regression analysis. Results are presented on the given table.

Table 5: Linear Regression Analysis Showing the effect between Organizational Stress and Organizational Performance (n= 304):

Table 5 Coefficients Table & Model Summary

	B	T	P. value	R	R^2	F	P. value
(Constant)	7.610	9.843**	0.001	0.706	0.449	382.495**	0.001
Organizational Stress	-0.816	19.557**	0.001				

b. Dependent Variable: Organizational performance

Our analysis uncovered a strong relationship between workplace stress and how well employees perform their jobs ($R^2 = 0.449$, $F = 382.495$, $p < 0.01$). The data shows that stress levels explain nearly half—about 45%—of the variation in job performance among workers.

These findings echo those of earlier researchers like (Ahmed & Ramzan, 2013) and (Bashir & Ramay, 2010) who recognized that employees represent one of an organization's most valuable resources. This research found that workplace stress is unavoidable in virtually every company and notable impacts how well people perform. Rose (2003) noted that when workers face tight deadlines and extended hours, their stress levels typically raise, which then erodes their drive to excel in their roles.

Hypothesis 3: "Workplace bullying shows a clearly notable inverse relationship with organizational performance."

The third hypothesis was tested using the linear regression analysis. Results are presented on the given table.

Table 6: Linear Regression Analysis Showing the effect between Workplace Bullying and Organizational Performance (n= 304):

Table 6 Coefficients Table & Model Summary

	B	T	P. value	R	R^2	F	P. value
(Constant)	7.882	11.565**	0.001	0.741	0.549	454.392**	0.001
Workplace bullying	-1.047	21.316**	0.001				

c. Dependent Variable: Organizational performance

This analysis revealed a substantial link between workplace bullying and employee effectiveness ($R^2 = 0.349$, $F = 454.392$, $p < 0.01$). The data shows that bullying behaviours in the workplace account for more than half—approximately 55%—of the differences we see in how well employees perform their duties.

Meanwhile, these results align with (Bowling & Beehr, 2006) research, which identified a negative—though modest—connection between increased workplace harassment and job performance. The harmful effects of workplace bullying on both companies and their staff have been thoroughly documented in research literature. Similarly, Teo et al., (2020) found that when bullying occurs, employees feel less loyal and committed to their organizations. This type of harassment creates ripple effects throughout the workplace, causing financial damage to the company and changing how employees behave, ultimately leading to diminished work quality.

5.0 Recommendations & Future research

To effectively combat workplace harassment, the garment companies should strengthen internal policies and legal safeguards to address bullying, ensuring that those who exhibit harmful behaviours face appropriate consequences for their actions. This creates accountability and shows the organization takes these issues seriously, which is important.

Organizations should actively promote a culture where respect and dignity are core principles, not just aspirational goals. When workers feel valued and respected, they're more likely to contribute positively to the organization's success.

Encouraging teamwork and shared goals can reduce isolation and minimize bullying opportunities. Team-based approaches often minimize the isolation that can make bullying possible and encourage supportive relationships among colleagues.

Training sessions and awareness programs can help employees understand and address bullying that illuminate the destructive nature of workplace bullying. These educational initiatives should highlight how harassment damages not just individual well-being but ripples outward to affect families, communities, and the broader social fabric.

Organizations can run awareness initiatives to build a respectful and inclusive workplace and help workers recognize problematic behaviours before they escalate. Creating a shared understanding of what constitutes bullying can empower bystanders to speak up.

Strengthening employee empowerment and recognition can help shape a more positive organizational culture. This means recognizing their contributions, valuing their unique perspectives, and avoiding tactics that undermine their confidence or sense of worth.

Setting realistic performance expectations can reduce stress and prevent conflict, avoiding excessive pressure that can lead to stress and conflict. When deadlines and targets are realistic, employees can perform effectively without resorting to negative behaviours.

Giving employees meaningful roles can foster a sense of ownership and reduce negative workplace dynamics. This sense of ownership often leads to greater job satisfaction and reduces the likelihood of destructive workplace dynamics developing.

These research findings have illuminated several critical areas that merit deeper investigation by both practitioners and scholars in the field. While this study focused on job stress as a mediating factor, the complex dynamics of workplace bullying would benefit from examining additional psychological and organizational variables. Future research might explore how job frustration functions as an intermediary mechanism between bullying and performance outcomes, potentially capturing emotional responses that stress measures might miss. Employee engagement reflects another promising avenue for investigation, as bullying likely undermines the connection workers feel to their organizations and colleagues. Understanding how harassment affects different dimensions of engagement could provide valuable insights for intervention design. Job satisfaction, with its well-established links to productivity and organizational commitment, should be examined as both a potential moderator and outcome variable in the bullying-performance relationship. Research might investigate whether higher baseline job satisfaction provides any protective effect against the negative impacts of bullying.

References

Ahmed, A., & Ramzan, M. (2013). Effects of Job Stress on Employees Job Performance A Study on Banking Sector of Pakistan. Journal of Business and Management, 11(6), 61–68.

Akhter, S., Rutherford, S., & Chu, C. (2019). Sufferings in silence: Violence against female workers in the ready-made garment industry in Bangladesh: A qualitative exploration. Women's Health, 15. https://doi.org/10.1177/1745506519891302

Akter, R., Teicher, J., & Alam, Q. (2024). Gender-Based Violence and Harassment in Bangladesh's Ready-Made Garments (RMG) Industry: Exploring Workplace Well-Being Issues in Policy and Practice. Sustainability (Switzerland), 16(5). https://doi.org/10.3390/su16052132

Anasori, E., Bayighomog, S. W., De Vita, G., & Altinay, L. (2021). The mediating role of psychological distress between ostracism, work engagement, and turnover intentions: An analysis in the Cypriot hospitality context. International Journal of Hospitality Management, 94, 1–50. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2020.102829

Apaydin, E. A., Rose, D. E., Yano, E. M., Shekelle, P. G., Stockdale, S. E., & Mohr, D. C. (2022). Gender Differences in the Relationship Between Workplace Civility and Burnout Among VA Primary Care Providers. Journal of General Internal Medicine, 37(3), 632–636. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11606-021-06818-1

Bashir, U., & Ramay, M. I. (2010). Impact Of Stress On Employees Job Performance A Study On Banking Sector Of Pakistan. International Journal of Marketing Studies, 2(1), 122–126. https://doi.org/10.5539/ijms.v2n1p122

Bentley, T. A., Catley, B., Cooper-Thomas, H., Gardner, D., O'Driscoll, M. P., Dale, A., & Trenberth, L. (2012). Perceptions of workplace bullying in the New Zealand travel industry: Prevalence and management strategies. Tourism Management, 33(2), 351–360. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2011.04.004

Bowling, N. A., & Beehr, T. A. (2006). Workplace harassment from the Victim's perspective: A theoretical model and meta-analysis. Journal of Applied Psychology, 91(5), 998–1012. https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.91.5.998

Chernyak-Hai, L., & Rabenu, E. (2018). The New Era Workplace Relationships: Is Social Exchange Theory Still Relevant? Industrial and Organizational Psychology, 11(3), 456–481. https://doi.org/10.1017/iop.2018.5

Crank et al. (n.d.). Instrumental and Organizational Antecedents of Role Stress, Work Alienation, and Anomie among Police Executives.

Einarsen, S., Hoel, H., & Notelaers, G. (2009). Measuring exposure to bullying and harassment at work: Validity, factor structure and psychometric properties of the negative acts questionnaire-revised. Work and Stress, 23(1), 24–44. https://doi.org/10.1080/02678370902815673

Einarsen, S., Hoel, H., Zapf, D., & Cooper, C. L. (2011). The concept of bullying and harassment at work: The European tradition. In S. Einarsen, H. Hoel, D. Zapf, & C. L. Cooper (Eds.), Bullying and harassment in the workplace: Developments in theory, research, and practice (2nd ed., pp. 3–39). CRC Press/Taylor & Francis Group.

Elmadağ, A. B., & Ellinger, A. E. (2018). Alleviating job stress to improve service employee work affect: the influence of rewarding. Service Business, 12(1), 121–141. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11628-017-0340-y

Etikan, I., Musa, S. A., & Alkassim, R. S. (2016). Comparison of convenience sampling and purposive sampling. American Journal of Theoretical and Applied Statistics, 5(1), 1–4. https://doi.org/10.11648/j.ajtas.20160501.11

Farley, S., Mokhtar, D., Ng, K., & Niven, K. (2023). What influences the relationship between workplace bullying and employee well-being? A systematic review of moderators. Work and Stress, 37(3), 345–372. https://doi.org/10.1080/02678373.2023.2169968

Hallowell, E. M. (2005). Overloaded circuits: Why smart people underperform. Harvard Business Review, 83(1), 54–62.

Haq, M. R., Zia-ud-Din, M., & Rajvi, S. (2018). The Impact of Workplace Bullying on Employee Cynicism with Mediating Role of Psychological Contract. International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences, 8(8), 127–137. https://doi.org/10.6007/ijarbss/v8-i8/4445

Hasan, M. M., Shafin, F., & Akter, N. (2023). the Role of Employee Stress in Workplace Bullying and Its Effect on Organizational Performance- a Study on Bangladeshi Workplace. Cultural Communication and Socialization Journal, 4(1), 18–22. https://doi.org/10.26480/ccsj.01.2023.18.22

Hossain, M. I., Islam, I., Aktar, M. A., & Islam, M. S. (2021). Human Rights Situation in Bangladesh 2019: An Overview. Journal of Asian and African Social Science and Humanities, 7(1), 54–70.

Islam, T., Ahmed, I., & Ali, G. (2021). Effects of ethical leadership on bullying and voice behavior among nursing staff: mediating role of organizational identification, moderating role of ideological perspective. Journal of Nursing Management, 29(5), 1184–1196. https://doi.org/10.1111/jonm.13267

Kalyar, Nawaz, M., Shafique, I., & Ahmad, B. (2019). Job stress and performance nexus in tourism industry: A moderation analysis. Tourism, 67(1), 6–21.

Kawai, K. (2013). Causes and prevention of occupational cancer. Journal of UOEH, 35(SPECIALISSUE), 107–111. https://doi.org/10.7888/juoeh.35.107

Kona, F. A., Tarafdar, P., & Zaman, Z. (2023). The Impact of Workplace Safety Practices on Employee Intention to Stay in the RMG Sector of Bangladesh: Moderating Role of Employee Safety Training. Canadian Journal of Business and Information Studies, January, 142–154. https://doi.org/10.34104/cjbis.023.01420154

Laschinger, H. K. S., & Fida, R. (2014). A time-lagged analysis of the effect of authentic leadership on workplace bullying, burnout, and occupational turnover intentions. European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology, 23(5), 739–753. https://doi.org/10.1080/1359432X.2013.804646

Lesener, T., Gusy, B., & Wolter, C. (2019). The job demands-resources model: A meta-analytic review of longitudinal studies. Work and Stress, 33(1), 76–103. https://doi.org/10.1080/02678373.2018.1529065

Lutgen-Sandvik, P., & Tracy, S. J. (2012). Answering five key questions about workplace bullying: How communication scholarship provides thought leadership for transforming abuse at work. Management Communication Quarterly, 26(1), 3–47. https://doi.org/10.1177/0893318911414400

Malik, M. S., Sattar, S., Younas, S., & Nawaz, M. K. (2019). The Workplace Deviance Perspective of Employee Responses to Workplace Bullying: The Moderating Effect of Toxic Leadership and Mediating Effect of Emotional Exhaustion. Review of Integrative Business and Economics Research, 8(1), 33–50.

Nazir, S., Qun, W., Hui, L., & Shafi, A. (2018). Influence of social exchange relationships on affective commitment and innovative behavior: Role of perceived organizational support. Sustainability (Switzerland), 10(12). https://doi.org/10.3390/su10124418

Ngale, I. F. (2018). Impacts of Workplace Bullying on Staff Psychological Wellness in Institutions of Higher Learning. Journal of Educational System, 2(2), 1–9. https://doi.org/10.22259/2637-5877.0202001

Nielsen, M. B., & Einarsen, S. (2012). Outcomes of exposure to workplace bullying: A meta-analytic review. Work and Stress, 26(4), 309–332. https://doi.org/10.1080/02678373.2012.734709

Oludeyi, O. S., Priyadharshini, S. A., Sudhahar, J. C., & Aubke, F. (2019). Occupational stress, job satisfaction, and employee loyalty in hospitality industry: a comparative case study of

two hotels in Russia. Master Thesis Submitted in Fulfillment of the Degree Master of Science in International Tourism Modul Vienna UNiversity, 18(2), 372–375. https://www.jhrm.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/JournalOfHumanResourceMng2015vol18issue2-pages-32-46.pdf

Paais, M. (2018). Effect of work stress, organization culture and job satisfaction toward employee performance in Bank Maluku. Academy of Strategic Management Journal, 17(5), 1–12.

Pheko, M. M. (2018). Autoethnography and cognitive adaptation: two powerful buffers against the negative consequences of workplace bullying and academic mobbing. International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-Being, 13(1). https://doi.org/10.1080/17482631.2018.1459134

Rose, M. (2003). Good deal, bad deal? Job satisfaction in occupations. Work, Employment and Society, 17(3), 503–530. https://doi.org/10.1177/09500170030173006

Saha, P., & Mazumder, S. (2015). Impact of Working Environment on Less Productivity in RMG Industries: a Study on Bangladesh RMG Sector. Type: Double Blind Peer Reviewed International Research Journal Publisher: Global Journals Inc, 15(2).

Saleem, F., Malik, M. I., Asif, I., & Qasim, A. (2022). Workplace Incivility and Employee Performance: Does Trust in Supervisors Matter? (A Dual Theory Perspective). Behavioral Sciences, 12(12). https://doi.org/10.3390/bs12120513

Sari, D. L., Storyna, H., Intan, R., Sinaga, P., Gunawan, F. E., Asrol, M., & Redi, A. A. N. P. (2021). The effect of job stress to employee performance: Case study of manufacturing industry in Indonesia. IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science, 794(1). https://doi.org/10.1088/1755-1315/794/1/012085

Schneider, K., Pryor, J., & Fitzgerald, L. (2010). Sexual Harassment Research in the United States. In Bullying and Harassment in the Workplace. https://doi.org/10.1201/ebk1439804896-14

Shevchuk, A., Strebkov, D., & Davis, S. N. (2018). Work value orientations and worker well-being in the new economy: Implications of the job demands-resources model among internet freelancers. International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy, 38(9–10), 736–753. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSSP-01-2018-0006

Steele, N. M., Rodgers, B., & Fogarty, G. J. (2020). The relationships of experiencing workplace bullying with mental health, affective commitment, and job satisfaction: Application of the job demands control model. International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 17(6). https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17062151

Teo, S. T. T., Bentley, T., & Nguyen, D. (2020). Psychosocial work environment, work engagement, and employee commitment: A moderated, mediation model. International Journal of Hospitality Management, 88(November). https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2019.102415

Wahba, Marwa, Khalaf, S., & Hanen, N. (2023). How does workplace bullying effect on organizational commitment &job performance? Mediating effect of job stress in the tourism and hospitality industry. Journal of Association of Arab Universities for Tourism and Hospitality, 25(1), 227–245. https://doi.org/10.21608/jaauth.2023.245271.1516

Weber, T. J., Sadri, G., & Gentry, W. A. (2018). Examining diversity beliefs and leader performance across cultures. Cross Cultural and Strategic Management, 25(3), 382–400. https://doi.org/10.1108/CCSM-11-2016-0200

Williams, L. J., & Anderson, S. E. (1991). Job Satisfaction and Organizational Commitment as Predictors of Organizational Citizenship and In-Role Behaviors. In Journal of Management (Vol. 17, Issue 3, pp. 601–617).

Xiao, X., Zhu, X., Fu, S., Hu, Y., Li, X., & Xiao, J. (2020). Psychological impact of healthcare workers in China during COVID-19 pneumonia epidemic: A multi-center cross-sectional survey investigation. Journal of Affective Disorders, 274(May), 405–410. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2020.05.081

Yuan, D., Gazi, M. A. I., Rahman, M. A., Dhar, B. K., & Rahaman, M. A. (2022). Occupational stress and health risk of employees working in the garments sector of Bangladesh: An empirical study. Frontiers in Public Health, 10(1). https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2022.938248