

EXAMINING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CYBERBULLYING AND
EMPLOYEE'S JOB PERFORMANCE WITH MEDIATING ROLE OF STRESS IN
PUBLIC COMMERCIAL BANKS OF PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

Banking sector is the backbone of Pakistan's financial system which subsequently important to the country's economic development such as human capital development, technology and innovation, high trade and investment opportunities, infrastructure development, and others. Meanwhile, technology is now being used widely as a medium of communication in all sectors, especially the banking sector. This emerging sector demands a high level of employee job performance to compete with the competitors and ensure continuous growth. Unfortunately, in this age of digital communication, cyberbullying is observed as a new form of workplace harassment and could be the potential reason for a decrease in employee job performance. Therefore, the present research aims to investigate the relationship between cyberbullying and employee job performance with the mediating role of stress in public, commercial banks of Pakistan. In achieving the research objectives, the study utilized Affective Event Theory and Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping. Data was collected from 358 respondents through an online questionnaire from five public, commercial banks in Pakistan, and SPSS was used to analyze the data. This study found that cyberbullying, stress, and employee job performance level is high, whereas cyberbullying has a low positive direct association with employee job performance. Furthermore, the results found that cyberbullying is positively associated with stress, and stress has a positive relationship with job performance. Lastly, the results revealed that stress fully mediates the relationship between cyberbullying and employee job performance (indirect path). This study has contributed theoretically, practically, and empirically to the current body of knowledge on the banking sector of Pakistan. Therefore, researchers, professionals, and management can able to reduce cyberbullying behaviors, improve employee job performance and overcome stress by implementing relevant policies and procedures.

ABSTRAK

Sektor perbankan adalah tulang belakang sistem kewangan Pakistan yang kemudiannya penting bagi pembangunan ekonomi negara seperti pembangunan modal insan, teknologi & inovasi, peluang perdagangan dan pelaburan yang tinggi, pembangunan infrastruktur dan lain-lain. Kini, teknologi digunakan secara meluas sebagai medium komunikasi dalam pelbagai sektor, terutamanya sektor perbankan. Sektor yang sedang pesat membangun ini memerlukan pekerja yang mempunyai tahap prestasi kerja yang tinggi untuk bersaing dengan pesaing dan demi memastikan kemajuan berterusan. Malangnya, dalam era komunikasi digital kini, buli siber dilihat sebagai bentuk baharu gangguan di tempat kerja dan ia berpotensi menjadi penyebab penurunan prestasi kerja. Oleh itu, kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji hubungan antara buli siber dan prestasi kerja pekerja serta faktor stres sebagai pengantara dalam sektor perbankan Pakistan. Dalam mencapai objektif kajian, kajian ini mengaplikasikan Teori Peristiwa Afektif serta Teori Transaksi Stres dan Daya Tindak. Data dikumpul daripada 358 responden melalui soal selidik dalam talian daripada enam bank komersial awam di Pakistan, dan SPSS digunakan untuk menganalisis data. Kajian ini mendapati bahawa buli siber, stres dan prestasi kerja berada pada tahap tinggi manakala buli siber mempunyai kaitan langsung positif yang rendah dengan prestasi kerja pekerja. Tambahan pula, keputusan menunjukkan buli siber mempunyai hubungan positif dengan stres, dan stres mempunyai hubungan positif dengan prestasi kerja. Terakhir, keputusan mendapati bahawa stres mengantara sepernhnge dengan hubungan antara buli siber dan prestasi kerja pekerja (hubungan tidak langsung). Kajian ini telah menyumbang secara teoretikal, praktikal dan empirikal kepada bahan pengetahuan dalam sektor perbankan di Pakistan. Oleh itu, penyelidik, profesional dan pengurusan dapat mengurangkan tingkah laku buli siber, meningkatkan prestasi kerja dan mengatasi stress dengan melaksanakan polisi dan prosedur yang berkaitan.

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PTTA UTHM
PERPUSTAKAAN TUNKU TUN AMINAH

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

SBP	–	State Bank of Pakistan
PBS	–	Pakistan Bureau of Statistics
ICT	–	Information Communication Technology
AET	–	Affective Event Theory
SPSS	–	Statistical Package for Social Sciences



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PTTA UTHM
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Digital technology has made the world an increasingly interconnected place. The use of technology and the internet in the workplace has dramatically increased since 2010. Rapid technological advancements, intense competition, and increasing globalization have forced policymakers to change the working environment completely. The efficiency of a country's economy is determined by the frequency of investments here made, which eventually leads a nation to the status of being a developed nation. The volatility of the economic system has increased as the entire world's financial system has become global. Banks are unquestionably crucial to a country's economic success because they serve as financial institutions and intermediaries. A well-functioning financial system is critical for the economy because it provides investors with appealing and safe investment options. Furthermore, they believe the banking industry is at the center of the whole investment phenomenon.

The Covid-19 epidemic has recently drastically altered how every organization works. Widespread lockdowns caused by the ongoing COVID-19 crisis have had a negative effect on global economic activity in a number of different countries. The COVID-19 issue, according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), is "a crisis unlike any other" (IMF, 2020). After a shaky recovery in 2021, things worsened in 2022 as threats materialized (IMF, 2022). The IMF and the Economist Intelligence Unit-UK both predicted that by 2020, global economic growth would have shrunk by roughly 4.2%, which would be

the worst decrease since 1946 and significantly worse than the 2008 global financial crisis.

In Pakistan, a central bank oversees the operations of every bank. The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) implemented several strategies to lessen the effects of COVID-19, including a significant cut in the policy rate. Before COVID-19, the policy rate was more than 13% and is currently between 7% and 8%. The capital conservation buffer was lowered from 2.50% to 1.50%, according to the SBP, which also allowed the banking industry to offer more loans. The SBP offered low-cost loans for hospitals and medical facilities at 3% for five years under the Refinance Facility for Combating COVID-19 and a refinancing program for the payment of wages and salaries to all types of workers and employees. The state bank of Pakistan advised banks to adhere to the necessary procedures to stop the spread of COVID-19 and guarantee the availability of ongoing financial service facilities. The state bank of Pakistan also gave banks the go-ahead to maintain a bare minimum of staff to ensure the continuity of vital banking services. In addition, the SPB has asked banks to forgo all expenses for funds transfers using internet banking platforms such as interbank fund transfers to prevent the development of COVID-19 by outlawing citizens' physical contact in bank offices (Xu & Haris, 2022).

One of the nations where the COVID-19 epidemic had the harshest effects was Pakistan. On February 26, 2020, the first COVID-19 case was detected in Karachi. More than 1.2 million cases have been documented, with 28,000 fatalities. However, the recovery rate is far better than wealthy nations like the USA, France, and Italy. To stop the spread of COVID-19, the Pakistani government began enforcing lockdowns on March 24, 2020, allowing only essential enterprises and industries to operate (Xu & Haris, 2022). Due to the rapid adoption of pandemic containment measures and targeted policy actions to assist the country's economic activity, Pakistan's economy has exhibited visible indications of recovery, with 3.94 percent growth for FY21. In H1CY21, the banking industry experienced robust growth of 12.2 percent, primarily supported by an increase in deposits of 10.4 percent (State Bank of Pakistan, 2021). The banks are under extreme pressure to succeed due to the highly competitive industry, which calls for more staff effort and a quick transition to and adoption of new technology according to COVID-19.

Management in the banking industry must recognize that crucial to success are the people that work there. Therefore, businesses must entirely please their workforce.

A delighted workforce is critical for organizations, mainly service sector firms such as banks, who rely totally on their staff to offer their services. Employees are internal customers of an organization, and a delighted and motivated employee can deliver services more efficiently than unsatisfied or demotivated employees, which may negatively impact the organization and employees' job performance. Furthermore, employees' job performance and their good or bad behavior with the customers can build up or destroy a bank's goodwill. The emergence of new and enhanced communication platforms makes it easier than ever for people all over the world to keep in touch. However, like other technical developments, this high interconnectedness has undesirable repercussions. As seen in cyberbullying, humans have consistently sought novel methods to abuse them. Because of more accessible access to technology and social media, cyberbullying has become a global concern as more and more people use the internet and social media to communicate with each other. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok have become more popular in recent years and with increased use of these platforms, cyberbullying has become more prevalent (Akrim, 2022).

According to a survey by Pew Research Center, (2021) 59% of United States's teens have experienced cyberbullying on social media platforms. Cyberbullying has also become a growing problem globally. This can take many forms, including online hate speech, and revenge. A report by Amnesty International, (2021) found that women are disproportionately targeted by online abuse and harassment. Cyberbullying can have severe impacts on mental health, including depression, anxiety, and even suicidal thoughts. A study published found that cyberbullying victims were more likely to experience depression and anxiety than those who had not experienced cyberbullying (Giumett & Kowalski, 2022). Laws around cyberbullying are still evolving, and there is a lack of consistency across countries. In some countries, cyberbullying is a criminal offense, while in others, it may only be a civil offense. A report by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2020) found that many countries do not have adequate legal frameworks to deal with cyberbullying. Despite the challenges, there has been an increase in awareness of cyberbullying and efforts to prevent it. Many schools and organizations have implemented anti-bullying programs, and social

media platforms have introduced tools to help users report and block cyberbullies. However, much more needs to be done to address the problem effectively.

An online study of 4,000 employees from ten countries namely Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, New Zealand, Spain, the Czech Republic, the USA, and the UK indicated that 90% of respondents had received abusive online digital remarks. Nearly 53% of survey participants felt that social media had harmed workplace privacy as coworker's intimidating online behaviour had been experienced by 9% of respondents, 11% of participants had embarrassing work-related images and videos shared online, and almost 10% of participants had witnessed a superior utilizing social media to harm a colleague (Loh & Snyman, 2020). Consequently, this malicious behavior at the workplace is a potential cause of stress. The World Health Organization has already proposed that by 2020 five of the top ten medical problems worldwide will be stress-related. Lim & Teo (2009) investigated the negative impacts of cyberbullying in the workplace, finding that victims of abusive emails suffer from stress-related disorders, incurring significant health expense. Individuals do not have the opportunity to seek instant clarity regarding the recipients, who may be physically, geographically, and possibly temporally separate from the senders due to unpleasant online encounters, primarily in electronic communications. Furthermore, stress extends the time available for technological connectivity, resulting in extended work hours and the inability to disconnect from work (Andre et al., 2022).

One real case related to cyberbullying in the workplace that highlights the impact of IR 4.0 and technology in the banking sector of Pakistan is the incident that occurred at the Bank of Punjab in 2020. In this case, a female employee reported that she had been subjected to online harassment and bullying by her male colleagues. The woman alleged that her male colleagues had created fake social media accounts in her name, and used them to post inappropriate content and make false accusations against her. They also shared her personal information online and made derogatory comments about her appearance and character. The incident highlights the negative impact that the use of technology in the workplace can have on employees, particularly in the context of IR 4.0. With the increasing use of social media and other digital platforms, it has become easier for cyberbullies to target their victims anonymously and from a distance.

To address this issue, companies in the banking sector and other industries in Pakistan need to develop clear policies and procedures for dealing with cyberbullying and harassment in the workplace. They should also provide training and support to employees on how to recognize and report incidents of cyberbullying and create a culture of respect and inclusion that promotes positive behavior and discourages negative behavior like cyberbullying.

1.2 Research Background

The banking industry plays a massive role in global economic growth. A country's economic growth is not possible without a robust financial sector. A strong banking industry can withstand major financial shocks and serve as a foundation for the nation's economic system to be strengthened (Marcu, 2021). When the financial sector is healthy and well-developed, there are greater chances to utilize the economic resources to generate physical capital resulting in positive economic growth (Fahim, Wajidi, Abid, & Rehan, 2017; Lee & Hidayat, 2018).

In Pakistan, banking industry is the backbone of the financial sector and plays an essential role in economic development in the developing and competitive world. The banking sector of Pakistan has emerged as a critical player and contributing its best to create employment and improve the country's financial sector (Khan & Ali, 2016). Since Pakistan's independence, the banking sector has witnessed significant changes. Initially, Pakistan's banking sector experienced numerous challenges, including less resources political uncertainty, a shortage of trained human resources, and a socioeconomic disaster that hampered the banking sector's efficiency. Due to this, the State Bank of Pakistan took the initiative by introducing the SBP Act of 1956 to promote the banking sector.

The industry was regulated by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), which governs local banks under its prudential regulations. The State Bank is a central bank established on 1 July 1948 and the banking system's regulatory body that compiles and circulates statistics on the scheduled banks operating in Pakistan (State Bank of Pakistan, 2020). The financial sector contributed 5.1% to the total Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2019, which relatively decreased compared to the previous year was 7.0% in 2018 (State Bank of Pakistan, 2019). According to the state bank Act 1956, scheduled banks refer to any bank carrying out banking business in Pakistan.

All banking institutions in Pakistan were divided into three categories: public sector banks, domestic private banks, and foreign banks.

1.2.1 Public Sector Banks

Public sector banks are managed by government unites incorporated in Pakistan. The government or state bank holds the majority stake of shares and capital. Public sector banks are further classified into two groups which are known as public sector commercial banks and specialized banks (State Bank of Pakistan, 2021)

Public commercial banks are the scheduled banks primarily engage in deposit mobilization operations and credit extending through a branch network. In addition, these banks provide their customers with various financial services, including short-term collateralized loans such as trade finance and an overdraft (State Bank of Pakistan, 2021).

Specialized banks are founded to provide credit facilities, help, and advice to clients in a particular sector or lines of credit, such as agriculture, industry, housing, or small businesses. These institutions provide loan services but do not carry out typical commercial banking operations (State Bank of Pakistan, 2021).

1.2.2 Domestic Private Banks

Domestic private banks are run by private individuals in Pakistan, and most of the bank's share capital is owned by private individuals (State Bank of Pakistan, 2021). These banks are registered as limited liability companies, such as silk bank limited, Muslim commercial bank limited, Habib bank limited, and others.

1.2.3 Foreign Banks

Foreign banks are those that are operated by a foreign entity from outside of the country. These banks are registered in another country and have their headquarters, yet they have branches in Pakistan (State Bank of Pakistan, 2021). Examples are the bank of China, Citi banks Pakistan, and other banks. Table 1.1 shows the list of all banks operating in Pakistan.

Table 1.1: Number of Banks in Pakistan
(State Bank of Pakistan Report, 2020)

Type of Banks	Banks	Branches
Public Commercial Banks	5	2651
Specialized Banks	4	665
Domestic Private Banks	20	11376
Foreign Banks	4	9
Total	33	14701

Over the last two decades, Pakistan's banking sector has evolved from a primarily government-owned and closely regulated sector to a progressive, innovative, and viable one. The gradual privatization of government banks in the early 1990s, the entry of foreign banks, local private sector commercial banks, and Islamic banks into the banking sector, the stepwise implementation of practical regulations and capital adequacy requirements, as well as increased supervision by The State Bank of Pakistan following international standards, have all contributed to this progress and strengthened competitiveness in Pakistan's banking industry.

Information Communication Technology (ICT) is now being used widely as the medium of communication in the banking sector. The internet, mobile phones, and other electronic devices are considered quick communication sources in organizations. Banks have demanded workers with more significant competencies and skills, as well as new contractual appointments and hiring a more professional and intelligent human resource. As a result, workplace flexibility is gaining traction (Short-term contracts, improved competences, contract base work, adjustable remuneration, and part-time employment). Temporary workers are said to be more vulnerable to cyberbullying and sexual harassment (Iftikhar & See Beh, 2018).

The current study aims to understand better how the banking industry's technical communication platforms, such as email, social media, and online communications, spread cyberbullying and alter employee behavior. For better or worse, cyberbullying is likely a global problem (Hershcovis, Cameron, Gervais, & Bozeman, 2018). Therefore, managers and human resource specialists might use the study's findings to develop more effective workplace management procedures and carry out successful campaigns to lessen or completely eradicate cyberbullying in the workplace.

1.3 Problem Statement

Employees are a valuable asset that contributes significantly to the organization's ability to maintain and develop its business and earnings. The State Bank of Pakistan's annual performance assessment report (2020-2021) indicated that the banking sector's performance was 12.2% in 2021, which is a decrease from 12.3% in 2019 and 15.9% in 2018. This decline of 3.7% suggested a poor performance by the banking sector, which is similar to how an employee's job performance reflects their effectiveness in achieving organizational goals through specific actions (Khan, 2015).

However, some reasons for lower job performance include health issues, poorer well-being, lack of motivation, and negative attitudes (Muhonen, Jönsson, & Bäckström, 2017a; Johnson et al., 2018). In line with parallel results, Baloch (2020), found that cyberbullying has negatively, directly and significantly associate with employee job performance whereas the psychological distress has a significant mediation between the relationship of cyberbullying and employee job performance. Similarly, a previous study found 49% workplace cyberbullying in banking sector of Pakistan, depicted negative consequences on employee's health in the form of psychological, physiological and emotional health leading to ill health, burnout and consequently low job performance (Mehwish, 2019). On the other hand, this findings is in support to that made by Aisha, Farheen, & Shaikh (2019) found a 35% turnover rate in the sector for decreased job performance. Furthermore, now in the age of digital communication and advanced technologies, it was observed that new ways of harassing behavior in workplaces have emerged, referred to as cyberbullying could be the potential reason for a decrease in job performance (Muhonen et al., 2017a). Previously research by Iftikhar & See Beh (2018), found that banking sector in various countries showing the prevalence of bullying percentage given in Table 1.2 shows the existence of bullying acts in banking.

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