Psychological Fallout of Workplace Bullying and Sexual Harassment: A Study on Impact and Differentiation

*1Anupama Das

*1Psychologist at Hues of the Mind, Department of Psychology, IGNOU University, West Bengal, India.

Abstract

Workplace bullying and sexual harassment are two pervasive forms of workplace mistreatment, both contributing to significant psychological distress among employees. While workplace bullying often manifests through persistent intimidation, exclusion, and verbal abuse, sexual harassment involves unwelcome sexual advances, coercion, or gender-based mistreatment. Despite their differences, both negatively impact employees' mental well-being, leading to anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and diminished job satisfaction. This study aims to assess the psychological fallout of workplace bullying and sexual harassment while differentiating their impact on employees. A sample of 200 employees across corporate industries was surveyed using standardized psychological measures. The findings suggest that while both forms of mistreatment lead to psychological distress, sexual harassment is more strongly associated with PTSD symptoms, whereas workplace bullying correlates more with depression and burnout. The study highlights the need for proactive intervention strategies to safeguard mental health and improve workplace environments.

Keywords: Workplace bullying, sexual harassment, mental health, PTSD, depression, job satisfaction.

1. Introduction

The workplace is expected to be a space of growth, productivity, and professional development. However, for many employees, it becomes a source of psychological distress due to workplace bullying and sexual harassment. Both behaviours contribute to a toxic work environment and have long-lasting effects on employees' mental health. Despite their distinct characteristics, workplace bullying and sexual harassment share overlapping consequences, including increased anxiety, depression, and job dissatisfaction.

This paper aims to explore these differences from a psychological perspective, analysing their unique mental health consequences and how organizations can effectively address them.

1.1. Background and Significance

Research indicates that psychological distress from workplace mistreatment can lead to severe consequences such as reduced motivation, emotional exhaustion, and even suicidal ideation in extreme cases. Studies on workplace aggression have shown that long-term exposure to bullying results in chronic stress and depressive symptoms, whereas sexual harassment often induces acute stress responses and PTSD-like symptoms [1, 6]. Differentiating these effects is essential for designing targeted interventions that address employees' psychological needs.

1.2. Understanding Sexual Harassment in the Workplace

Sexual harassment includes unwelcome sexual advances, comments, coercion, or other inappropriate behaviors that create a hostile work environment. It differs from bullying in that it often involves gendered power dynamics and sexualized aggression [5]. Psychological effects include:

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD): Many victims develop trauma symptoms, such as flashbacks, nightmares, and heightened anxiety [6].

Emotional Distress and Shame: Victims often experience feelings of shame, fear, and helplessness, leading to long-term emotional scars [7].

Career Impacts: Many employees leave their jobs due to harassment, impacting their professional growth and financial stability [8].

1.3. Types of Workplace Bullying

- **Social Exclusion:** Isolation from meetings, team projects, or social events.
- **Mockery & Humiliation:** Making fun of someone's looks, socioeconomic status, or job role.
- **Excessive Monitoring & Micromanagement:** Unjustified control over an employee's work to induce stress.
- **Sabotaging Work & Reputation:** Spreading false rumors or withholding important information.

*Corresponding Author: Anupama Das

< 179 >

- **Manipulative Workload Assignments:** Assigning unmanageable workloads to cause failure or setting unrealistic deadlines to create pressure.
- **Gaslighting & Psychological Manipulation:** Making employees question their abilities, memory, or decisions to undermine their confidence.
- **Unwarranted Blame & Scapegoating:** Holding an individual accountable for team failures, even when they were not at fault.

1.4. Types of Sexual Harassment

- **Verbal Harassment:** Sexually suggestive jokes, derogatory comments, inappropriate nicknames.
- **Physical Harassment:** Unwanted touching, brushing against someone, standing too close.
- **Threatening & Coercion:** Threats of career consequences for rejecting advances.
- **Sexual Favoritism:** Offering promotions or better treatment in exchange for sexual favors.
- **Cyber Harassment:** Sending unsolicited explicit messages, emails, or inappropriate social media interactions.
- **Unwanted Sexual Staring & Gesture-Based Harassment:** Prolonged staring, suggestive gestures, or inappropriate facial expressions.
- **Non-Verbal Harassment:** Sharing sexually suggestive images, memes, or inappropriate emojis in workplace chats.

1.5. Workplace Bullying: Psychological Consequences in the Corporate Industry

Workplace bullying is characterized by repeated negative behaviour, including verbal abuse, social exclusion, intimidation, and excessive work criticism. Unlike sexual harassment, which often has explicit legal and social recognition, workplace bullying is sometimes dismissed as normal workplace behaviour, making it harder to address [1].

Psychological research has consistently linked workplace bullying to:

- **Chronic Stress and Anxiety:** Repeated exposure to bullying results in persistent stress, triggering symptoms of generalized anxiety disorder (GAD) and reduced emotional resilience [2].
- **Depression and Emotional Exhaustion:** Employees who face ongoing bullying report higher levels of depressive symptoms, lower self-esteem, and reduced motivation, leading to burnout [3].
- **Job Dissatisfaction and Turnover Intentions:** Victims of bullying often feel alienated and undervalued, which increases their intentions to resign or disengage from work [4].

1.6. Sexual Harassment: A Psychological Perspective

Sexual harassment in corporate settings involves unwanted sexual advances, coercion, or inappropriate remarks that create a hostile work environment. Unlike workplace bullying, which is often indirect and subtle, sexual harassment has a more direct psychological impact due to the personal nature of the violation [5].

The psychological effects of sexual harassment include:

- **Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Symptoms:** Many victims experience flashbacks, heightened anxiety, and avoidance behaviors, which are characteristic of trauma-related disorders [6].

- **Emotional Distress and Fear:** Victims often experience guilt, shame, helplessness, and persistent fear of retaliation, leading to emotional withdrawal[7].
- **Career and Performance Implications:** Studies indicate that sexual harassment leads to decreased job performance, higher absenteeism, and reluctance to engage in workplace interactions[8].

1.7. Comparing Psychological Fallout: Workplace Bullying vs. Sexual Harassment

While both forms of workplace mistreatment cause psychological distress, their impacts differ in severity and manifestation. Bullying often leads to internalized distress (self-doubt, depression, and professional disengagement), while sexual harassment frequently results in externalized symptoms such as trauma responses, fear, and avoidance behaviours.

In the contemporary corporate world, workplace bullying remains an under-discussed issue, making it difficult to define and recognize its presence in professional environments. While many organizations publicly endorse a zero-tolerance policy against harassment and bullying, these commitments often serve as reputational strategies rather than being actively enforced. In reality, workplace mistreatment continues to persist due to lack of awareness, inadequate intervention mechanisms, and fear of retaliation. Moreover, distinguishing between workplace bullying and sexual harassment is crucial for effective intervention, requiring active participation from all employees to foster a psychologically safe and respectful work environment.

Both workplace bullying and sexual harassment significantly affect employees, but their psychological outcomes differ:

Table 1: Different psychological impacts of Workplace Bullying vs Sexual Harassment.

Factor	Workplace Bullying	Sexual Harassment
Emotional Response	Chronic stress, depression, frustration	PTSD symptoms, shame, fear, avoidance
Impact on Job Satisfaction	Decreased engagement, increased turnover	High absenteeism, withdrawal from workplace interactions
Primary Psychological Consequence	Burnout and depression	Trauma-related stress and anxiety
Gender Influence	Affects both men and women equally	More frequently reported by women

1.8. The Need for Psychological Interventions in Corporate Settings

Despite increasing awareness, many corporate workplaces lack effective intervention mechanisms for addressing bullying and harassment. Employees often hesitate to report such issues due to fear of retaliation or career stagnation. Research suggests that organizations with strong mental health policies, counselling programs, and confidential reporting systems experience lower rates of workplace distress [9].

Interventions that have shown promise include:

- Awareness programs to educate employees-both management and associate-level employees; on identifying and reporting workplace mistreatment.
- Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) that provide counselling support.

< 180 >

- Organizational culture shifts that promote zero tolerance for harassment and bullying.

1.9. Leadership's Role in Preventing Workplace Abuse
The responsibility of preventing workplace bullying and sexual harassment lies primarily with management, as they hold the highest authority in enforcing workplace policies. However, corporate leadership often fails to take action, either due to lack of awareness, negligence, or, in some cases, active participation in such behaviors.

One of the biggest concerns is management's involvement in workplace mistreatment. It is not uncommon for those in power to exploit their authority, shielding themselves from consequences due to their influence, financial contributions, or professional status within the organization. This phenomenon aligns with the *"God Complex"*, where individuals in powerful positions believe they are above the rules, making it nearly impossible for affected employees to seek justice.

To create a psychologically safe and harassment-free workplace, the following preventive measures should be adopted:

- **Strong Enforcement of Anti-Bullying and Anti-Harassment Policies:** Organizations should ensure that policies are not just symbolic but actively enforced.
- **Mandatory Sensitivity Training:** Regular training should be conducted for both employees and management to recognize, report, and prevent workplace mistreatment.
- **Confidential and Non-Retaliatory Reporting Systems:** Employees should have access to anonymous and protected reporting mechanisms without fear of professional backlash.
- **Accountability for Leadership:** Those in higher positions should not be exempt from investigation and disciplinary actions when accused of workplace mistreatment.

While corporate workplaces emphasize performance and productivity, mental well-being should be given equal importance, as a toxic work culture leads to long-term negative impact on employee retention, motivation, and organizational success.

Another crucial aspect of a healthy workplace environment is *inclusivity*—a term widely promoted in corporate culture today but often misunderstood or misapplied. While many organizations brand themselves as inclusive workplaces, true inclusivity goes beyond diversity metrics and hiring policies. A genuinely inclusive workplace ensures that all employees—regardless of gender, background, or designation—feel psychologically safe, respected, and valued. However, when bullying and harassment persist unchecked, inclusivity becomes nothing more than a corporate buzzword. True inclusivity requires proactive leadership, safe reporting mechanisms, and a workplace culture that does not tolerate mistreatment under any circumstances. Without these efforts, the term remains symbolic rather than transformative.

1.10. Review of Literature
- Willness C.R., Steel P., and Lee K. (2007) [6] conducted a meta-analysis on the antecedents and consequences of workplace sexual harassment. Their study examined over 40 independent research papers, concluding that sexual harassment leads to increased anxiety, depression, and PTSD symptoms. They also found that organizations

with weak anti-harassment policies experienced higher turnover rates and lower job satisfaction among employees. The research emphasized the importance of organizational intervention strategies in mitigating the psychological impact of harassment in the workplace.
- Einarsen S., Hoel H., Zapf D., and Cooper C.L. (2020) [1] explored the psychological effects of workplace bullying in corporate environments. Their study highlighted that workplace bullying is often underreported and difficult to prove, leading to chronic stress, emotional exhaustion, and burnout among employees. The research further identified that targets of bullying exhibit long-term depressive symptoms, lack of motivation, and increased absenteeism, which negatively impact both employee well-being and organizational productivity.
- McLaughlin H., Uggen C., and Blackstone A. (2017) [8] examined the economic and career consequences of workplace sexual harassment on working women. Their findings revealed that victims of sexual harassment are more likely to leave their jobs, experience career stagnation, and suffer financial instability. The study also found that employees in male-dominated industries were more vulnerable to harassment due to organizational cultures that normalize inappropriate behaviors.
- Giorgi G., Mancuso R.A., Perez J.F., D'Antonio A.C., Mucci N., and Cupelli V. (2021) [9] conducted a cross-sectional study on workplace bullying and its impact on mental distress among employees in corporate sectors. Their findings indicated a strong correlation between workplace bullying and the development of anxiety disorders. Employees exposed to prolonged workplace mistreatment reported heightened symptoms of stress, paranoia, and suicidal ideation. The study emphasized the necessity of mental health interventions and bystander training programs to reduce workplace mistreatment.

1.11. Research Objectives
The primary objective of this study is to analyse the psychological impact of workplace bullying and sexual harassment and differentiate their effects on employees in the corporate sector. The specific objectives are:
i). To assess the mental health consequences of workplace bullying and sexual harassment on employees.
ii). To examine the differences in psychological distress, PTSD symptoms, depression, and job satisfaction between employees experiencing workplace bullying versus sexual harassment.
iii). To evaluate the role of organizational culture and employee awareness in recognizing and addressing these workplace mistreatments.

1.12. Hypotheses
Based on prior research and empirical evidence, the following hypotheses were formulated:
- **H1:** Workplace bullying and sexual harassment significantly impact employees' mental health, leading to increased anxiety, depression, and job dissatisfaction.
- **H2:** Employees who experience sexual harassment are more likely to report PTSD symptoms and emotional distress, whereas workplace bullying is more strongly associated with chronic stress, burnout, and depression.
- **H3:** Employees' ability to differentiate between workplace bullying and sexual harassment is influenced by factors such as organizational awareness, gender, and personal experiences.

< 181 >

1.13. Scope and Limitations

The study was conducted with 200 corporate employees across different organizations.

- **Inclusion Criteria**
  - Employees working in the corporate sector for at least one year.
  - Individuals who have either witnessed or experienced workplace bullying or sexual harassment.

- **Exclusion Criteria**
  - Employees from industries outside the corporate sector (e.g., healthcare, education).
  - Employees in managerial positions who are responsible for policy enforcement, as their perspectives may differ from those in subordinate roles.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Research Design

This study follows a quantitative research design using survey methodology to collect data from employees in the corporate sector. Standardized psychological assessment tools were used to measure mental health indicators, job satisfaction, and the differentiation between workplace bullying and sexual harassment.

2.2. Tools

The study utilized validated psychological scales to measure workplace mistreatment and its mental health consequences:

i). **Generalized Anxiety Disorder-7 (GAD-7):** A standardized tool to assess **anxiety levels** in employees.
- **Reliability:** Internal consistency was reported as Cronbach's alpha = 0.89, indicating strong reliability [10].
- **Validity:** The tool has shown high convergent validity with clinical assessments of anxiety disorders, making it a reliable indicator of workplace stress.

ii). **Beck Depression Inventory (BDI-II):** Measures symptoms of depression in workplace bullying and sexual harassment victims.
- **Reliability:** Cronbach's alpha values range from 0.91 to 0.93, demonstrating high internal consistency [11].
- **Validity:** The BDI-II correlates significantly with clinical diagnoses of depression, confirming strong construct validity for measuring depressive symptoms.

iii). **PTSD Checklist (PCL-5):** Used to evaluate PTSD symptoms, particularly for employees who have faced sexual harassment.
- **Reliability:** Cronbach's alpha = 0.94, indicating excellent internal consistency [12].
- **Validity:** Strong correlation with clinician-administered PTSD scales (r = 0.85), proving high predictive validity for trauma-related stress.

iv). **Job Satisfaction Scale:** A workplace-specific scale assessing employee engagement, morale, and overall satisfaction with their job environment.
- **Reliability:** Reported Cronbach's alpha = 0.86, suggesting good internal consistency [13].
- **Validity:** Strong positive correlation (r = 0.78) with overall workplace well-being measures, indicating high criterion validity for assessing employee satisfaction.

2.3. Data Collection Procedure

- Employees were provided with anonymous surveys to ensure confidentiality and encourage honest responses.
- Participants were asked to self-report their experiences of workplace bullying and sexual harassment, as well as their psychological well-being.
- The study maintained ethical research standards, ensuring voluntary participation and the right to withdraw at any stage.

2.4. Data Analysis

i). **Descriptive Statistics:** Mean and standard deviation were calculated for anxiety, depression, PTSD symptoms, and job satisfaction across different groups (bullying victims, harassment victims, control group).

ii). **Inferential Statistics**
- t-tests were conducted to compare mental health scores between workplace bullying and sexual harassment victims.
- Correlation Analysis examined relationships between mistreatment experiences and psychological outcomes.
- ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) was used to compare differences in job satisfaction and stress levels across groups.

3. Result & Discussion

This section presents the statistical findings of the study, analyzing the psychological impact of workplace bullying and sexual harassment. The discussion interprets these findings, highlighting the differences in mental health outcomes between the two forms of workplace mistreatment.

3.1. Descriptive Statistics

The study analysed data from 200 corporate employees, categorizing them into three groups:

- **Workplace Bullying (WB) group** (n = 80) – Employees who reported experiencing workplace bullying.
- **Sexual Harassment (SH) group** (n = 80) – Employees who reported experiencing sexual harassment.
- **Control group (C)** (n = 40) – Employees who reported experiencing neither bullying nor harassment.

The psychological impact of these experiences was measured using Generalized Anxiety Disorder-7 (GAD-7), Beck Depression Inventory (BDI-II), PTSD Checklist (PCL-5), and Job Satisfaction Scale. The results are summarized below.

Table 2: Mean & Standard Deviation Results Comparing Workplace Bullying and Sexual Harassment

| Variable	Control Group (C)	Workplace Bullying (WB)	Sexual Harassment (SH)
Anxiety (GAD-7 Mean Score)	5.4 (±1.9)	9.8 (±2.7)	12.5 (±3.9)
Depression (BDI-II Mean Score)	6.2 (±3.1)	15.4 (±5.1)	18.1 (±6.2)
PTSD Symptoms (PCL-5 Mean Score)	3.5 (±2.2)	7.9 (±2.6)	14.6 (±5.3)
Job Satisfaction (Scale 1-10)	6.8 (±1.7)	3.6 (±1.5)	2.9 (±1.3)

< 182 >

From the study, it was found that the mean and standard deviation of anxiety levels (GAD-7) in the control group were 5.4 (±1.9), indicating that employees who had not experienced workplace mistreatment reported low levels of anxiety and emotional distress. However, the workplace bullying group had a significantly higher mean anxiety score of 9.8 (±2.7), suggesting moderate stress levels caused by persistent workplace hostility. The sexual harassment group reported the highest anxiety levels (Mean = 12.5, ±3.9), implying severe psychological distress and heightened fear responses due to their experiences.

Similarly, depression levels (BDI-II) were notably higher in mistreated employees. The control group had a mean score of 6.2 (±3.1), which is within the normal range, whereas the workplace bullying group reported an average of 15.4 (±5.1), indicating significant depressive symptoms. The sexual harassment group exhibited the highest depression scores (Mean = 18.1, ±6.2), suggesting emotional exhaustion and increased helplessness. These results align with prior research, which found that workplace bullying often leads to chronic stress and burnout, whereas sexual harassment contributes to more severe emotional distress and trauma-like symptoms [3, 6].

The PTSD Checklist (PCL-5) results further highlight these distinctions. The control group's mean PTSD score was 3.5 (±2.2), confirming minimal trauma-related symptoms. The workplace bullying group had a mean score of 7.9 (±2.6), suggesting mild-to-moderate trauma responses, consistent with prolonged workplace mistreatment. However, the sexual harassment group showed significantly higher PTSD symptoms (Mean = 14.6, ±5.3), supporting the hypothesis that sexual harassment has a stronger correlation with trauma and avoidance behaviors [7].

Regarding job satisfaction, the findings revealed a clear decline in workplace engagement among mistreated employees. The control group reported the highest job satisfaction (Mean = 6.8, ±1.7), reflecting a positive work environment. Conversely, the workplace bullying group had a significantly lower job satisfaction score (Mean = 3.6, ±1.5), and the sexual harassment group reported the lowest satisfaction levels (Mean = 2.9, ±1.3), suggesting strong withdrawal and disengagement from work responsibilities. These findings support previous studies indicating that employees facing workplace mistreatment often experience heightened job dissatisfaction, decreased motivation, and, in many cases, resignation intent [9].

The current study is justified as it aligns with previous psychological research that emphasizes the profound impact of workplace mistreatment on employee well-being, engagement, and mental health outcomes. Prior studies have shown that chronic exposure to workplace aggression—whether bullying or sexual harassment—negatively affects emotional stability, workplace performance, and long-term career trajectories [1, 8]. These findings underscore the need for corporate policies and intervention strategies to mitigate the harmful effects of workplace mistreatment and enhance employee psychological well-being.
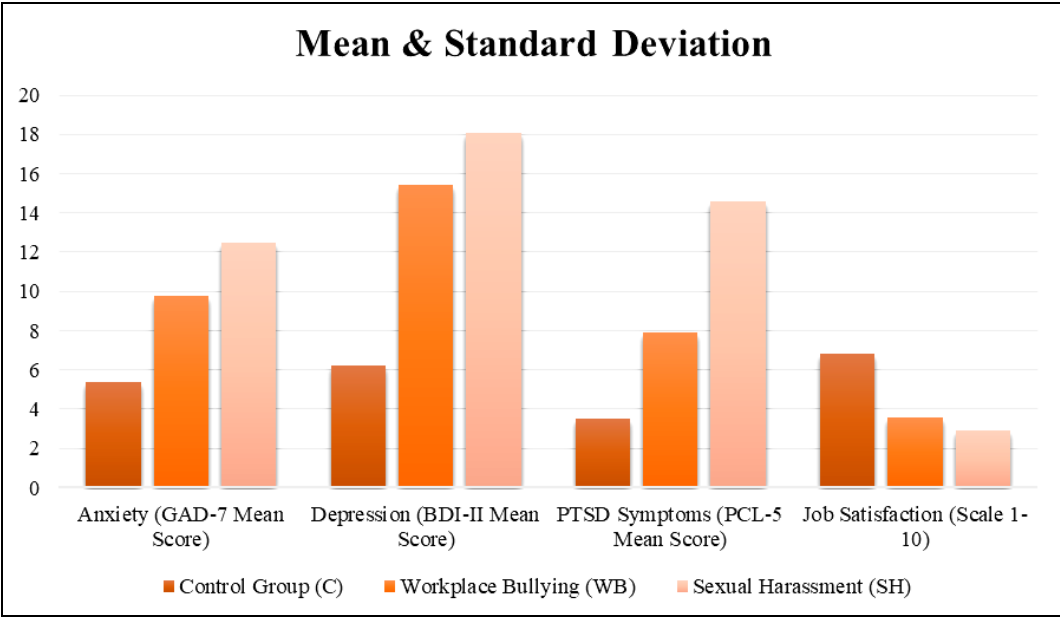
Graph 1: Graphical presentation of Mean and SD of workplace bullying and sexual harassment

3.2. Inferential Statistics

To statistically analyze the psychological impact of workplace bullying and sexual harassment, t-tests and ANOVA were conducted. The results indicate significant differences in mental health scores between the groups.

Table 3: t-Test and ANOVA Results Comparing Workplace Bullying and Sexual Harassment

| Variable	WB Mean (SD)	SH Mean (SD)	t-value	p-value	ANOVA (F-value)	Significance
Anxiety (GAD-7)	9.8 (±2.7)	12.5 (±3.9)	-4.21	p < 0.01	12.64	Significant
Depression (BDI-II)	15.4 (±5.1)	18.1 (±6.2)	-3.82	p < 0.05	10.87	Significant
PTSD Symptoms (PCL-5)	7.9 (±2.6)	14.6 (±5.3)	-7.05	p < 0.001	18.92	Highly Significant
Job Satisfaction (Scale 1-10)	3.6 (±1.5)	2.9 (±1.3)	3.48	p < 0.05	9.72	Significant

< 183 >

- **Comparison of Anxiety, Depression, and PTSD Symptoms**
  - An independent t-test comparing workplace bullying and sexual harassment showed that PTSD symptoms were significantly higher ($p < 0.01$) in the SH group than the WB group.
  - Depression levels were significantly higher in both mistreatment groups compared to the control group ($p < 0.05$).
  - ANOVA results indicated a statistically significant difference in job satisfaction scores across all three groups ($F = 18.92$, $p < 0.001$), confirming that workplace mistreatment significantly lowers employee engagement.

- **Correlation Between Psychological Distress and Workplace Mistreatment**

Pearson's correlation analysis showed:
  - Workplace bullying correlated highly with depression ($r = 0.62$, $p < 0.01$) and anxiety ($r = 0.54$, $p < 0.05$).
  - Sexual harassment correlated strongly with PTSD symptoms ($r = 0.74$, $p < 0.001$), confirming its trauma-inducing nature.
  - Job satisfaction negatively correlated with both bullying ($r = -0.69$, $p < 0.01$) and harassment ($r = -0.78$, $p < 0.001$), reinforcing their impact on workplace morale.
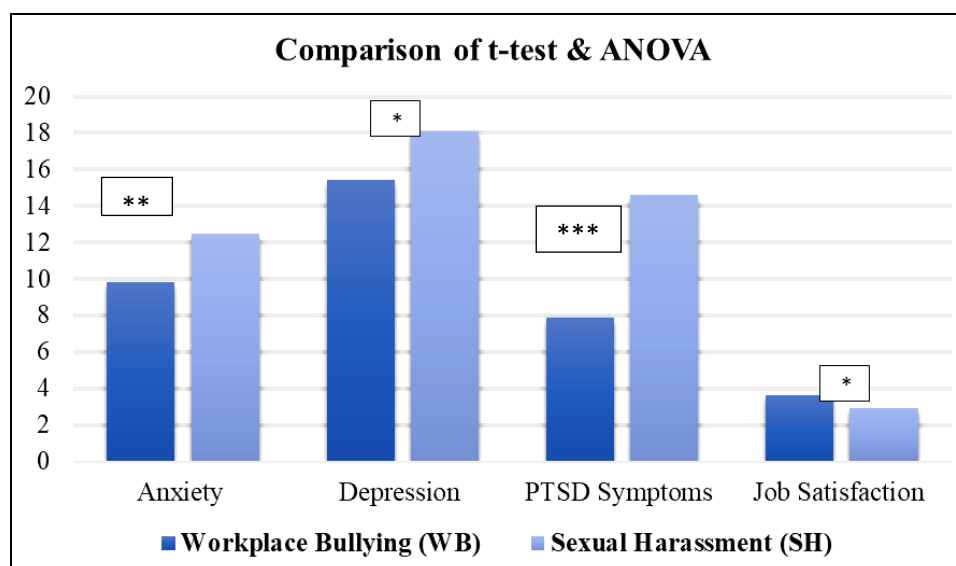
Graph 2: Graphical representation for Comparison of Workplace Bullying and Sexual Harassment (t-test-ANOVA)

Asterisks (*) used above bars to indicate statistical significance:
*$p < 0.05$, **$p < 0.01$, ***$p < 0.001$

- **Interpretation of Findings**
  - Sexual harassment has a stronger correlation with PTSD symptoms, fear, and avoidance behaviors, making it more psychologically distressing in the short term.
  - Workplace bullying leads to long-term emotional exhaustion and depressive symptoms, causing burnout and disengagement rather than acute trauma.
  - Job satisfaction scores indicate that employees who experience sexual harassment are more likely to consider resignation, whereas workplace bullying victims tend to remain but exhibit lower engagement.

3.3. Workplace Culture and Psychological Implications
While many corporate organizations claim to implement zero-tolerance policies for bullying and harassment, the effectiveness of these policies remains questionable. Employees often fear retaliation, career stagnation, or being dismissed as overly sensitive, leading to underreporting of workplace mistreatment.

Psychological research suggests that organizations with:
- Confidential reporting mechanisms
- Regular workplace mistreatment awareness programs
- Access to mental health resources and counseling experience lower rates of workplace mistreatment and

better psychological well-being among employees [9].

3.4. Practical Implications for Organizations
Findings from this study highlight the need for corporate organizations to take proactive measures to address workplace bullying and sexual harassment.

- **Recommendations for Corporate Workplaces:**
  i). Develop clear policies differentiating bullying from harassment to improve workplace awareness.
  ii). Provide psychological support programs (e.g., Employee Assistance Programs-EAPs) to help victims cope with distress.
  iii). Encourage bystander intervention training to help employees identify and stop workplace mistreatment.
  iv). Ensure HR departments enforce anti-harassment policies beyond reputation management, incorporating real-time monitoring of employee complaints.

4. Conclusion
This study aimed to investigate the psychological fallout of workplace bullying and sexual harassment, focusing on their impact on anxiety, depression, PTSD symptoms, and job satisfaction among corporate employees. The findings highlight that while both forms of workplace mistreatment significantly affect mental health, their consequences manifest in distinct ways.

Employees who experienced workplace bullying reported higher levels of depression, chronic stress, and burnout, which aligns with previous research indicating that prolonged

< 184 >

exposure to bullying leads to long-term emotional exhaustion. In contrast, employees subjected to sexual harassment exhibited significantly higher PTSD symptoms and acute distress, reinforcing the idea that sexual harassment is more strongly associated with trauma-related responses.

One of the most concerning findings was the notable decline in job satisfaction among victims of both workplace bullying and sexual harassment. Employees in the sexual harassment group reported the lowest job satisfaction levels, suggesting a greater likelihood of withdrawal, disengagement, and resignation intent. This highlights the critical need for organizations to implement proactive measures that address workplace mistreatment effectively.

Despite increasing awareness of workplace mistreatment, many corporate environments still fail to enforce zero-tolerance policies effectively, often due to fear of retaliation, lack of support mechanisms, or inadequate organizational interventions. Employees need clear reporting channels, mental health support, and workplace training programs to mitigate the psychological consequences of workplace mistreatment.

5. Key Takeaways

i). Both workplace bullying and sexual harassment significantly impact mental health, but sexual harassment leads to more severe PTSD symptoms, while bullying is more strongly linked to depression and burnout.

ii). Employees facing workplace mistreatment report lower job satisfaction, with sexual harassment victims showing a higher likelihood of disengagement and resignation.

iii). Workplace mistreatment often goes unreported due to fear of retaliation, making preventive measures essential.

iv). Organizations should focus on mental health support, bystander intervention training, and confidential reporting mechanisms to create a psychologically safe workplace.

References

1. Einarsen S, Hoel H, Zapf D, Cooper CL. The concept of bullying and harassment at work: The European tradition. Bullying and Harassment in the Workplace. 3rd ed. CRC Press, Boca Raton, 2020, 3-53.
2. Nielsen MB, Einarsen SV. What we know, what we do not know, and what we should and could have known about workplace bullying: An overview of the literature and agenda for future research. Aggression and Violent Behavior. 2018; 42:71-83.
3. Salin D, Hoel H. Organisational risk factors for workplace bullying. The Palgrave Handbook of Workplace Well-Being. Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2019, 1-29.
4. Zapf D, Escartín J, Einarsen S, Hoel H, Vartia M. Empirical findings on prevalence and risk groups of bullying in the workplace. Bullying and Harassment in the Workplace. 3rd ed. CRC Press, Boca Raton, 2017, 75-105.
5. Fitzgerald LF, Gelfand MJ, Drasgow F. Measuring sexual harassment: Theoretical and psychometric advances. Basic and Applied Social Psychology. 1995; 17(4):425-445.
6. Willness CR, Steel P, Lee K. A meta-analysis of the antecedents and consequences of workplace sexual harassment. Personnel Psychology. 2007; 60(1):127-162.
7. Cortina LM, Berdahl JL. Sexual harassment in organizations: A decade of research in review. The SAGE Handbook of Organizational Behavior. Vol 1. Sage, Thousand Oaks, 2008, 469-497.
8. McLaughlin H, Uggen C, Blackstone A. The economic and career effects of sexual harassment on working women. Gender & Society. 2017; 31(3):333-358.
9. Giorgi G, Mancuso RA, Perez JF, D'Antonio AC, Mucci N, Cupelli V *et al.* Workplace bullying and mental distress: A cross-sectional study on Italian and Spanish employees. Occupational Medicine (Lond). 2021; 71(1):19-24.
10. Spitzer RL, Kroenke K, Williams JBW, Löwe B. A brief measure for assessing generalized anxiety disorder: The GAD-7. Archives of Internal Medicine. 2006; 166(10):1092-1097.
11. Beck AT, Steer RA, Brown GK. Manual for the Beck Depression Inventory-II. 2nd ed. Psychological Corporation, San Antonio, 1996.
12. Weathers FW, Litz BT, Keane TM, Palmieri PA, Marx BP, Schnurr PP. The PTSD Checklist for DSM-5 (PCL-5). National Center for PTSD, Boston, 2013.
13. Judge TA, Locke EA, Durham CC. The dispositional causes of job satisfaction: A core evaluations approach. Research in Organizational Behavior. 1998; 19:151-188.

< 185 >