

A Critical Literature Review on Nexus of Bullying and the Whisperings of Turnover Intentions in Sri Lanka's Higher Educational Sphere

L. Kevitiyagala*, K. Joshep, S. Rajapaksha, K. Illangamatilake, P. Jayasinghe and N. Rathnayake

*SLIIT Business School, Sri Lanka Institute of Information Technology, Malabe, Sri Lanka,
bm21501784@my.sliit.lk

Abstract - Workplace bullying is defined as repeated mistreatments and harassment aimed towards an organisational member by other individuals or groups within a workplace context. It remains a critical concern across the globe in various industries negatively impacting the employees' well-being and organisations' reputation to date. This critical literature review delves into the definite context of academics in the higher education sector in Sri Lanka to explore the relationship between workplace bullying and turnover intentions. This critical literature review examines the theoretical framework, methodological strategies, and empirical data to shed light on the complex relationship between workplace bullying and turnover intentions among academics in the higher education sector of Sri Lanka. By directing attention to these dual aims, this study pursues to understand the underlying mechanisms that link workplace bullying to turnover intentions. This proposed study also explores the moderating role of leadership styles on the relationship between workplace bullying and turnover intentions. The thorough evaluation of methodological strategies captures the complexities of workplace bullying experiences and the implications in the existing research studies. This critical literature contributes to further enhancing the existing literature on workplace bullying and turnover intentions by providing insights into its prevalence and influence within academics in the higher education sector of Sri Lanka. Furthermore, highlights the importance of preventing workplace bullying and creating a supportive work environment in higher education

Keywords: Leadership Styles, Turnover Intentions, Workplace Bullying, Workplace Harassment, Workplace Mobbing, Workplace Ostracism, Workplace Violence

I. INTRODUCTION

The higher educational sector, which is known as the multidimensional field, includes a wide range of organisations, services, and initiatives targeted to offer students training and post-secondary education (Karunathilake et al., 2022). The higher education system of Sri Lanka can be classified into three main categories such as universities and other educational institutions under the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE), universities and other educational institutions under other government ministries, and private universities and other private educational institutions (Asian Development Bank (ASB), 2016). Ultimately, this sector is taking necessary procedures for advancing innovation, improving quality, and expanding access to meet the demands of a rapidly moving economy.

Workplace bullying is defined as “Bullying at work means harassing, offending, socially excluding someone or negatively affecting someone’s work tasks. For the label bullying to be applied to a particular activity, interaction or process it must occur repeatedly and regularly (e.g. weekly) and over a period (e.g. about six months)” (Einarsen et al., 2003). In addition, bullying at work causes irregular work schedules, whether through absenteeism, mental illness, or more serious issues.

Employee turnover unequivocally denotes the situation in which an employee ceases to work for a company (Lazzari et al., 2022). Turnover intention measures whether employees intend to leave their jobs (AK, 2018). Depending on the reasons for leaving, employee turnover intention can be voluntary or involuntary. For example, employees may intend to leave their jobs voluntarily if they are subjected to workplace bullying or harassment. Organisations must prioritize retaining talented employees as it is paramount for fostering growth and stability.

Previous research has shown that workplace harassment and employees' perception of organisational support are two factors that influence employee turnover intention (Martins et al., 2023). When it comes to leadership styles, the reviewed literature by Hattab et al. (2022) provided insights into the effects of despotic leadership styles on employee turnover intention. It demonstrates that leadership styles create negative impressions and stifle employees' social development (Iqbal et al., 2022). Furthermore, the role of toxic workplace environments and cognitive distraction in mediating the relationship between despotic leadership styles and employee turnover intention was investigated in published research studies (Abbas, 2020).

However, the existing literature investigating the impact of workplace bullying on employee turnover intentions focusing on the academics in higher education sector of Sri Lanka remains scarce. Most of the research conducted focuses on the apparel and banking sectors of the nation (Sattar & Ahmed, 2014; Dilanthi & Rasanjana, 2020). Therefore, there is a critical necessity to examine the impact of workplace bullying on employee turnover intentions within the context of the academics in higher education sector in Sri Lanka.

Yet again, exploration of the moderating role of leadership style in the Sri Lankan context is inadequate. This study aims to investigate not only the direct link between workplace bullying and turnover intentions but also the moderating role of leadership style in this relationship. By seeking to address these problem areas within this field, this study aims to provide valuable insights into the dynamic relationship between workplace bullying and turnover intentions within the academics in higher education sector in Sri Lanka.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Introduction

Workplace bullying is a negative and prevalent phenomenon that is widely recognised within organisational research, and it is termed as continuous and persistent damaging actions directed towards an individual or a group within an organisational setting, which exerts a considerable obstacle for the management with adverse consequences (Biswakarma et al., 2024). This relationship between workplace bullying and turnover intentions has become a focal point of scholarly research around the globe driven by the acknowledgement of its significant implications on both workforce and organisations. Due to this, it is vital to understand the dynamics between workplace bullying and turnover intentions for any organisation aiming to build a healthy work environment.

This section focuses on consolidating the existing body of literature published on the relationship between workplace bullying and turnover intentions by offering a thorough comprehension of the current state of knowledge in this domain, addressing the key themes, and employing methodologies. By examining the published empirical studies, theories, methodological approaches, and theoretical frameworks this review aims to offer guidance for enhanced organisational practices and contribute to the ongoing

dialogue on the importance of cultivating positive work environments. This study sheds light on the importance of understanding the forms of workplace bullying and their degree of impact on turnover intentions.

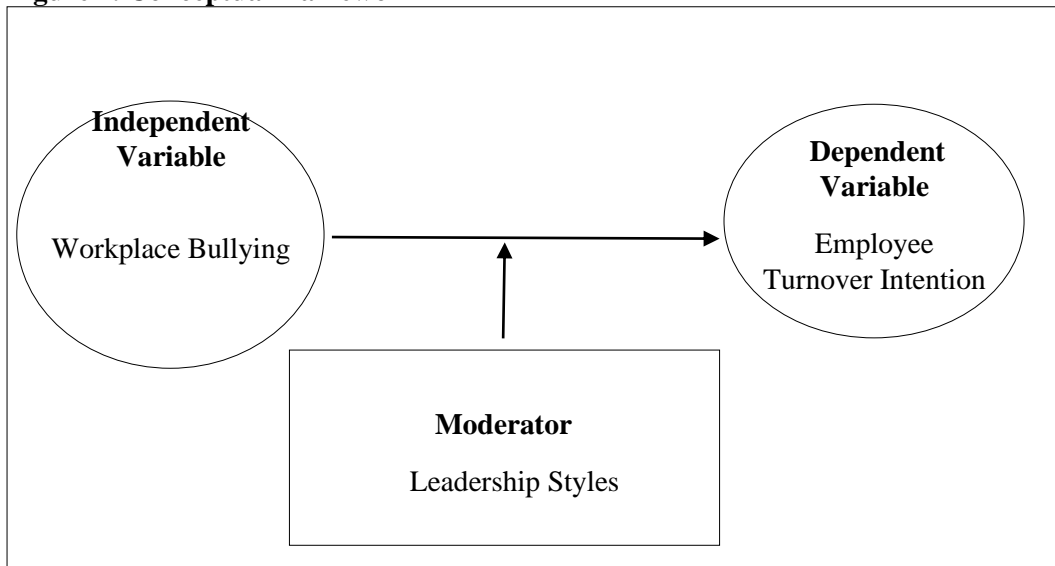
B. Theoretical Framework and Conceptual Model

The impact of workplace bullying on turnover intentions can be explored and viewed from various standpoints by utilising a theoretical framework. Researchers analysing this specific domain have commonly based their studies on two theoretical frameworks. They are the job demands-resources (JD-R) model and social exchange theory.

The JD-R model was introduced in the early 2000s by two organisational psychologists, Arnold B. Bakker, and Evangelia Demerouti (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). The model was developed to provide the framework to examine the influence of job characteristics on employee performance and well-being (Tummers & Bakker, 2021). Since its inception to till date, this model has been widely used as a framework for organisational and occupational psychology studies. As per the JD-R model theory, this research study demonstrates that bullying is identified as a significant psychological burden on academics, which reduces motivation and increases stress levels.

Social exchange theory sets the framework for the researchers to explore the relationship between workplace bullying and turnover intentions by focusing on the reciprocal nature of social interactions (Ahmad et al., 2023). In the context of work environments, the exchange between the employees and the organisation can be defined as a social interaction built upon mutual benefits and expectations (Ahmad et al., 2023). Exposure to workplace bullying can be perceived as a violation of this social exchange that the employees were expecting from the organisation, inducing feelings of injustice for the parties involved. Based on this study, it illustrates that bullying in the workplace leads to betrayal and unfair treatment of the bond between the employees and employers, so this imbalance leads to the intention to leave the organisation and decreases job satisfaction.

When it comes to the conceptual framework, it is known as a theoretical structure, which provides a clear understanding of a specific phenomenon or a problem. Based on the previous literature studies, workplace bullying, employee turnover intention, and leadership styles were selected as the variables for this research study. Therefore, in this research study, employee turnover intention is considered as the dependent variable and workplace bullying is considered as the independent variable. Leadership acts as the moderating variable. Figure 1 illustrates the main objective of this research study through the below conceptual framework.

Figure 1. Conceptual framework

Source: Authors' compilation.

C. Workplace Bullying and Turnover Intentions

Organisations aim for effective functioning by considering employee turnover intention as a critical concern, which negatively influences the workplace environment. If the employee chooses to leave rather than stay, the management needs to invest billions of dollars to recruit and train the employees in their organisations (Khan et al., 2015). This ultimately results in poor organisational performance and low revenue generation (Khan et al., 2015). Due to these adverse negative impacts, researchers have initiated an investigation into the turnover intentions.

Mainstream literature reveals that workplace bullying had a significant impact on the existing organisation setting from the past, although it was often neglected as an occupational psychological trouble. Along with its existence, the well-being and organisational performance of the workforce were overlooked based on the degree of impact of workplace bullying. It is noteworthy that, until the early 1980s, it was not addressed or analytically researched (Cinar, 2015). Heinz Leymann took the initiative to investigate this global phenomenon as a pioneer of bullying-related research (Cinar, 2015). It is right to state that he laid the foundation for the ongoing conversation on workplace bullying and turnover intentions.

Workplace bullying, also commonly known as “workplace mobbing” has several definitions based on the existing literature. Most scholars across the globe define ‘workplace bullying’ as negative acts, which include hostile verbal and nonverbal acts such as cornering, harassing and offending an organisational employee whereas this term lacks a universally accepted definition (Ocel & Aydin, 2012). Moreover, to label any action as workplace bullying, the action needs to be displayed in a systematic manner and for at least six-month period, the victims should correspondingly experience difficulty in defending themselves against the acts and should develop a feeling of unfairness and humiliation (Ocel & Aydin, 2012).

When focusing on the evolution of the term “mobbing”, Konrad Lorenz first used the term “mobbing” in 1991 to describe the behaviour of the animals by labelling the attack of a smaller group of animals on a single huge animal through a threatening mechanism (Cinar, 2015). It is evident that psychological terror or mobbing, workplace bullying, work harassment, and emotional abuse are different terms that global scholars use to label this detrimental behaviour observed in the workplace (Cinar, 2015).

Workplace bullying is classified into two types as person-related behaviours and work-related behaviours. For example, causing and hindering implications for the intellectual capabilities of the victims and cornering are considered person-related behaviours whilst expressing destructive criticisms and lack of autonomy are considered work-related behaviours (Hogh et al., 2011). The existence of power imbalance acts as the catalyst for bullying behaviours in different social settings (Presti et al., 2019).

Exposure to workplace bullying resulted in symptoms, such as poor mental health, mental disorders and psychological distress among the affected workforces. Even though these signs affected the witness, these symptoms were not confined to the victim (Tsuno et al., 2022). Inconsistent view, research by Abbas and Khan (2023) reveals workplace bullying adversely impacts the physical and mental well-being of the employees, which causes job-related stress, high levels of turnover intentions, and lower performance of the employees due to the depletion of psychological resources (Malik & Sattar, 2022).

To further support the previous findings, a research study by Larik and Aziz (2021) delves into investigating the impact of workplace bullying on employees’ attitudes and performance. The results of this study found that workplace bullying negatively affects the performance of female teachers. On the same note, a study by Biswakarma et al., (2024) provides evidence that workplace bullying and its dimensions such as workplace incivility impact negatively on the workforce performance. To solidify the claims, an empirical analysis was conducted using AMOS 21.0 to show how workplace bullying significantly impacts employee performance based on the data sample which is taken from female nurses in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (Mehmood et al., 2024).

Likewise, existing literature also provides evidence of the negative relationship between workplace bullying, satisfaction of the employees, and employee performance (Abbas & Khan, 2023; Zanabazar et al., 2023). A research study by Zanabazar et al., (2023) discovers a positive correlation between workplace bullying and job burnout. Additionally, this research study focuses on two types of bullying, such as bullying behaviours, which are directly found within the leaders and colleagues in the organisational setting and validates both these types of bullying are negatively related to job satisfaction (Zanabazar et al., 2023). According to the research conducted by Develi and Turak (2023), workplace bullying positively contributes to workplace stress whereas it negatively influences both job satisfaction and engagement of the employees.

It is significant to acknowledge that workplace bullying does not negatively affect the targeted employees whereas its negative effects extend to the entire organisation (Van et al., 2015). The relationship between workplace bullying and turnover intentions has gathered attention from researchers across the world due to the several organisational implications nowadays. The study by Odiri (2024), validates the findings of the previous studies, by discovering that employee discrimination and harassment significantly affect the firm’s productivity by analysing data from governmental tertiary institutions.

In past, organisations predominantly focused on the employee turnover rate and forgot about the actual concern, which is the intention to quit. After 2010, researchers began incorporating employee turnover intention to extend the scope of their study. It is much more difficult to connect with the employee again when the employee quits from the respective organisation, so the same logic does not apply during the turnover intention phase. The workplace still has the opportunity to retain employees during the turnover intention phase, as the intent to quit precedes the actual quitting action. Nwobia and Aljohani (2017) stated that turnover intent is the prominent antecedent of actual intention. Also, employee withdrawal intentions are one of the most important predictors of employee turnover based on several research studies (Pradhan and Jena, 2016).

Several previous studies have investigated the relationship between workplace bullying and turnover intentions reporting a positive association (Hogh et al., 2011). Recent studies on the subject advocate the same results (Ahmad et al., 2020; Gullu et al., 2020; Dewi et al., 2021; Khan et al., 2021; Sundar, 2021; Yasmin & Mubarak, 2021). Research study by Ren and Kim (2023) offers solid evidence supporting how workplace bullying negatively impacts psychological empowerment, leading to burnout feelings among employees, and contributing to turnover intentions. Furthermore, cross-sectional study by Roy et al., (2024) identified a positive association between workplace bullying and turnover intentions whilst high levels of workplace bullying lead to increased turnover intentions based on the analysis conducted on Bangladesh male nurses (Roy et al., 2024).

Furthermore, exposure to workplace bullying often pushes the victims with the option to be inclined towards leaving the workplace, either voluntarily or involuntarily breaching the employment contracts (Hogh et al., 2011). According to the research study by Beng and Mahadevan (2023), toxic work environment includes multiple factors, one of which is workplace bullying, this study supports that a toxic work environment strongly impacts employee turnover intentions.

The impact of workplace bullying extends beyond the affected employees in organisational settings as it negatively influences the employees working within the climate as well (Steele et al., 2022). As stated previously, this can adversely impact the overall performance level of the organisation. It is important to acknowledge that the other employees are involved in more counterproductive work behaviours whereas the victims of workplace bullying exhibit less organisational citizenship compared to others (Ocel & Aydin, 2012).

Moreover, further in-depth analysis of this subject reveals that victims also express organisational dissatisfaction and low commitment (Ocel and Aydin, 2012). Studies also show constant exposure to workplace bullying results in burnout among victims (Chowdhury et al., 2022). Research study by Hogh et al. (2011) investigating the impact of workplace bullying on turnover intentions among healthcare workers solidifies that bullying negatively impacts the targeted health of employees. Moreover, the results of this study highlight that the enterprise customers are dissatisfied with the services provided by the dissatisfied employees and the business incurred expenses due to employee turnover (Hogh et al., 2011).

The institutional environment where people work has a significant impact on their job characteristics, definition and effect of bullying on turnover intentions can vary across

different occupations, validating the argument of the researchers. To further solidify the phenomenon, established studies across the globe report variations in the prevalence and impact rate (Goh et al., 2022). Consequently, these differences in bullying also influence the effectiveness of the implemented interventions, so it is vital to incorporate occupation-oriented research studies to further delve into the subject aimed at reducing turnover intentions.

In recent years, scholars have addressed this argument, leading to a growing body of research exploring workplace bullying and its impact across various industries. A thorough review of the existing literature has revealed research studies investigating the relationship between workplace bullying and turnover intentions in sectors such as banking, healthcare, hospitality, IT, and education. A research study by Kabir et al., (2022) found the impact of workplace bullying on turnover intentions as a prominent example for a study investigating the healthcare professionals in Bangladesh's healthcare sector. The findings of this study reveal a positive relationship between workplace bullying and turnover intentions (Kabir et al., 2022).

Several other research studies, focusing on the healthcare sector from different regions of the world support the findings of this research study (Al Muharraq et al., 2022; Chen et al., 2022; Medina et al., 2020; Yeh et al., 2020). Turning the attention to the other sectors such as banking, hospitality, IT and education sector also provides strong evidence for a positive association between workplace bullying and turnover intentions (Nurdiana et al., 2021; Pertiwi & Satrya, 2022; Iqbal et al., 2022; Qi et al., 2022; Martins et al., 2023; Salman et al., 2023).

For instance, a research study by Martins et al. (2023); Salman et al. (2023), explore the positive relationship between workplace bullying and turnover intentions among banking employees. On the other hand, a research study by Nurdiana et al. (2021) discovers a positive association between workplace bullying and turnover intentions among the workforce in the hospitality sector.

Moreover, Loreda et al. (2024) conducted a research study primarily focusing on educational sector employees to understand the nature of workplace bullying and its impact on the working environment, resulting in providing evidence for the existence of toxicity and workplace bullying in the higher education sector. Furthermore, the study also revealed, workplace bullying negatively influences the job satisfaction of the particular workforce (Loreda et al., 2024). Similarly, several other studies, which focused on the educational sector, to investigate the relationship between workplace bullying reveal a strong positive relationship between workplace bullying and turnover intentions (Iqbal et al., 2022; Nielsen et al., 2023). So, it is right to conclude that the relationship between workplace bullying and turnover intentions turns out to be positive irrespective of the sector being investigated

It is noteworthy that even though there is existing literature analysing the relationship between workplace bullying and turnover intentions across different industries, research studies primarily focus on the healthcare sector compared to the other industries. This underlines the need for future studies to explore and uncover the impact of workplace bullying and turnover intentions in industries such as IT, education and banking, as these areas are currently underexplored. Therefore, this can hinder the

identification of new findings based on the work dynamics. So, future studies need to focus on the unexplored and underexplored industries to reveal compelling findings.

The existing literature provides evidence for factors such as employee engagement, emotional exhaustion, structural empowerment, organisational commitment, work alienation, and mental stress as mediators in the relationship between workplace bullying and turnover intentions (Bhatt et al., 2024; Jamshaid et al., 2021; Khan et al., 2021; Sundar, 2021; Pokhrel et al., 2022; Martins et al., 2023; Yadav et al., 2020). For instance, emotional exhaustion was considered as a mediator in the study conducted by Biswakarma et al., (2024), focusing on investigating the impact of workplace bullying on turnover intentions. This study analyzed data from 323 hotel employees to conclude that turnover intentions are strongly connected to workplace bullying and employees exposed to bullying tend to leave the organisation while being emotionally exhausted (Biswakarma et al., 2024).

In addition, a research study conducted by Ciby et al. (2021), utilized a serial multiple mediation model to investigate the relationship between workplace bullying and turnover intentions. In this research study, negative emotions and affective commitment were speculated as serial multiple mediators and results of the study suggest that workplace bullying gives rise to negative emotions, which impacts affective commitment, ultimately resulting in turnover intentions (Ciby et al., 2021).

On the other hand, perceived organisational support, leadership styles and self-esteem were found to moderate the strength and direction of the relationship between workplace bullying and intent to withdraw from the organisation (Harris, 2020; Li et al., 2020). Additionally, studies have focused on identifying the factors that act as buffer systems in the relationship between workplace bullying and turnover intentions. Research study by Ashraf and Khan (2022) discovers psychological capital acts as a buffer, counterbalancing the negative impacts of workplace bullying on turnover intentions.

D. Leadership Styles

Prior studies have extensively examined the factors leading to turnover intentions among employees (Pradhan & Jena, 2016). The most prominent power-imbalance relationship exists between the leaders and subordinates of the organisations, so this gives the necessity to investigate the moderating effect of different leadership styles on the relationship between workplace bullying and turnover intentions. Moreover, research on the Indian IT sector, revealed that supervisors were the main committers of bullying and upward bullying turns out to be the most common type of bullying relative to other forms (Ciby & Sahai, 2021). The findings of this study strengthen the need to focus on the moderating effect of leadership styles.

Research by Blomberg et al. (2024) sheds light on the importance of leadership styles, which have the potential to act as a buffer system in a negative work climate caused by workplace bullying. According to this study, supportive leadership minimize the detrimental impact of workplace bullying on the workforce (Blomberg et al., 2024). Identifying the huge influence on this subject, several researchers have investigated the influence of different leadership styles on the relationship between workplace bullying and turnover intentions.

Mainstream literature reveals the moderating influence of inclusive, resonant, authentic, transformational, abusive, and tyrannical on the relationship between workplace bullying and turnover intentions explored by the researchers. Furthermore, previously published studies focusing on the moderating effect of different leadership styles on the relationship between workplace bullying and turnover intentions discover positive connection and trust between subordinates and direct leaders to reduce the negative effects of workplace bullying on turnover intentions (Pertwi & Satrya, 2022).

A study by Shafaei et al., (2024) primarily focuses on the inclusive leadership style and the findings to establish a negative relationship between workplace bullying and inclusive leadership style. On the same note, it is evident that resonant leadership style also influences workplace bullying negatively (Faeq et al., 2022). In addition, a study conducted by Alkarabsheh et al. (2022) brings a new perspective to the existing literature by incorporating two different leadership styles in one study. Investigation of this study on the authentic and transformational leadership types reveals these styles aid in mitigating turnover intentions (Alkarabsheh et al., 2022). Furthermore, a meta-analysis study by Bhatt et al. (2024) focusing on the impact of authentic leadership on turnover intentions spanning across ten years, from 2011 to 2021, provides evidence for the influence of authentic leadership on turnover intentions. This study not only confirms the negative relationship between authentic leadership and turnover intentions, it also proves that the same effect exists across diverse studies (Bhatt et al., 2024). This suggests healthy leadership styles negatively influence workplace bullying, thereby significantly contributing to the reduction of turnover intentions among employees.

In contrast, several research studies across different industrial sectors suggest abusive leadership behaviours cause the intent to leave the organisation to increase (Ozkan, 2022). For example, a research study conducted by Pokhrel et al. (2022) focusing on the employees of a Nepali commercial bank reveals a positive relationship between workplace bullying and turnover intentions and suggests abusive leadership moderates this relationship, the existence of abusive supervision amplifies the turnover intent caused by workplace bullying. These studies offer empirical evidence to prove the negative effects of toxic leadership on workplace bullying and turnover intentions (Patro et al., 2024).

The study by Agyei et al. (2024), employs hierarchical regression analysis to focus on the influence of abusive supervision on turnover intentions. This research analyzes data from 379 frontline employees of the Ghana Hospitality sector to conclude that abusive supervision results in high turnover intentions among the workforce (Agyei et al., 2024). Moreover, research conducted by Trepanier et al. (2023) shed light on the influence of tyrannical leadership on the relationship between workplace bullying and turnover intentions. This study validates tyrannical leadership fosters workplace bullying behaviours, eventually contributing to the increase in turnover intentions among employees (Trepanier et al., 2023). In the same line of view, the results of the research by Naeem and Khurram (2020) on the banking sector of Pakistan provides evidence suggesting the existence of toxic leadership within the organisational setting results in a higher level of turnover intentions. Furthermore, according to this study, toxic leaders negatively influence employee engagement levels and well-being (Naeem & Khurram,

2020). So, these studies validate undesirable relationship between the direct supervisor and the employee figures triggers intentions to leave, leading to actual quitting.

Despite volumes of literature focusing on leadership styles and their influence on the relationship between workplace bullying and turnover intentions, most of these studies revolve around the abusive leadership employed by the leaders and fail to capture the essence of different types of leadership styles and their impact. This identified gap needs to be bridged by focusing on the influence of different leadership styles elaborated in the three-dimensional leadership model.

The three-dimensional model of leadership styles proposed by Bernard Boss in the year 1985 is utilized to distinguish the existing leadership patterns across the world (Flynn, 2016). This model has been used to investigate the nature and impact of different leadership styles from various viewpoints. This model identifies transformational leadership, transactional leadership and non-leadership as the three main components. Even though several other scholars have raised concerns about the classification of the three main components, these styles are widely accepted and in use within the mainstream literature (Flynn, 2016). These three leadership styles have their characteristics and can be considered opposites to one another.

Ballard (2012) describes transactional leadership as follows: “a style of leadership in which the leader acts as an agent of change, making meaningful exchanges with employees that result in productivity improvements – a constructive transaction”. On the other hand, Ballard (2012) defines transformational leadership style as a leadership pattern which consists of inspirational behaviours from the leader influencing and motivating the subordinates to work towards a common goal. It is right to state that transformational and transactional leadership styles fall on the opposite end of the leadership spectrum due to their unique attributes.

A critical analysis of the existing literature reveals a prominent gap in analysing the relationship between workplace bullying and turnover intention in Sri Lanka's background, particularly focusing on the moderating effect of leadership styles. Even though this subject has been investigated for several years, few have delved into the context of the higher education sector. This study aims to bridge this gap by investigating how leadership styles moderate the influence of workplace bullying on turnover intentions among higher education sector employees. By addressing this gap, this research study will contribute to the ongoing dialogue and offer valuable insights into turnover intentions and workplace bullying.

A thorough critical examination of the mainstream literature, results in the identification of two significant gaps: predominant focus on only a few occupational groups, with inadequate to no investigation on the others and limited research focusing on developing countries like Sri Lanka. Even though, existing literature incorporates research studies which are occupation-oriented, the lack of focus on the broader occupational diversity is evident. Most of the published research to date across the globe primarily highlights the impact of workplace bullying on turnover intentions among healthcare professionals.

In contrast, exploration of other occupational groups such as the higher education sector, banking industry and IT employees turns out to be very limited in number. This under-exploration hinders the comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of

workplace bullying in different occupational settings. So, this research aims to bridge this identified gap by investigating the relationship between workplace bullying and turnover intentions focusing on higher education sector employees.

In addition, despite the fact, that workplace bullying has been researched from various viewpoints for over 25 years, Asian countries began to explore this research area only a few years back (D’cruz et al., 2021). It is vital to deepen the nation-specific knowledge to design customized interventions considering the sociocultural differences across the world. Even though a Bibliometric review of the previously published study by Dhall and Aarti (2023), offers evidence for the existence of workplace bullying in established and emerging nations, developed nations such as the United States, followed by Australia and Canada lead the way and Asian countries fall far behind when it comes to investigating the relationship between workplace bullying and turnover intentions (Dhall & Aarti, 2023). Moreover, the mainstream literature provides rich information on workplace bullying in high-income countries, as most of the research studies predominantly focus on European nations (Vijayakumar & Rajagopal, 2024). When the attention is shifted to emerging nations, the information available is limited. This lack of exploration results in the second knowledge gap.

It is noteworthy that there is a high probability for workplace bullying to occur in lower-standard working conditions and among disadvantaged groups, due to which significant attention is required to stimulate workplace bullying and turnover intentions research in low-income and middle-income nations (Vijayakumar & Rajagopal, 2024). In recent years, Asian countries have taken steps towards the right direction by focusing on understanding the relationship between workplace bullying and turnover intentions. Since published studies predominantly focus on the prevalence of workplace bullying and its impact on turnover intentions of the developed nations, only limited studies are available to explore the same in the context of Sri Lanka, which is an emerging nation. To bridge this gap, this presented study focuses on investigating the prevalence of workplace bullying and the nature of the relationship between workplace bullying and turnover intentions among the higher education sector employees of Sri Lanka, which is yet to be explored.

III. METHODOLOGY

The structure below outlines the literature search strategy and selection criteria that were utilised to pinpoint the publications on the moderating role of leadership styles between workplace bullying and turnover intentions. At the initial stage, 130 relevant research papers were found through a comprehensive literature search across different databases such as Science Direct, Springer, Wiley Online Library, Emerald Insight, and Research Gate. These 130 research papers were found in the databases by using keywords such as “Employee Turnover Intention”, “Leadership Styles”, “Staff Attrition”, “Workplace Bullying”, “Workplace Harassment”, “Workplace Mobbing”, “Workplace Ostracism”, “Workplace Violence”.

To refine the search on this domain, the keywords specified in the diagram were used, which resulted in 130 relevant research materials. As the next step, the screening stage was initiated for the selected research materials. During the process of screening, 42 research papers were eliminated for non-relevancy, insufficient information, and overlapping concerns, which resulted in the acceptance of 88 research studies. 88

publications that were published in high-ranking journals according to Scopus, Scimago, and ABDC Journal lists were shortlisted. The identified research findings were further classified into specific areas such as global and Sri Lankan context.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The impact of workplace bullying on employee turnover intention among academics in higher education sector in Sri Lanka was investigated through different past studies. Specifically, this relationship highlights that academics who experience workplace bullying are more likely to exhibit intentions to leave the organisation. Many past studies support the results obtained for this positive relationship. A study conducted by Roy et al., (2024) confirmed the same positive relationship between workplace bullying and employee turnover intention identified in the present study. Further, the studies conducted by Rosario-Hernández et al., (2018); Iqbal et al., (2022); Nielsen et al., (2023) supported the present research findings of the positive relationship between workplace bullying and employee turnover intention. Moreover, a study on the positive relationship between workplace bullying and turnover intentions supported the results of this research study (Kabir et al., 2022).

Even the findings of this insightful information, further research studies are important with the changes that could occur with the dynamic environment prevailing in the higher education sector in Sri Lanka (Imran et al., 2022; Talukder et al., 2018; Pertiwi & Satrya, 2022). Workplace bullying will lead academics to leave the organisation resulting in high turnover rates. Therefore, taking action to eliminate workplace bullying should be implemented within the higher education sector of Sri Lanka to reduce the negative impacts towards academics as well as the organisation.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As stated, this review highlights several critical findings and prominent gaps in the existing literature. Even though the existing literature explores the multifaceted relationship between workplace bullying and turnover intentions extensively from various standpoints and strongly emphasizes the link between them, space for further investigation is apparent. A prominent gap identified is the examination of this specific relationship within the higher educational industry, particularly in the context of Sri Lanka. Multiple studies have analysed the relationship between workplace bullying and turnover intentions across several industries, yet there remains a notable scarcity of research focusing specifically on the academics in higher education sector in Sri Lanka.

Despite the rising dominance of the higher education industry in the country's economy and workforce, restricted focus is shed upon understanding how workplace bullying influences turnover intentions among the academics in higher education sector in Sri Lanka. Due to which there is a critical need for studies that bridge the identified gap in the literature and provide valuable insights into the exclusive challenges faced by academic higher education sector professionals in the Sri Lankan context. It is essential to address the identified gaps not only for advancing theoretical understanding but also for building up organizational policies aimed at enhancing employee well-being and organisational effectiveness.

Moreover, another significant gap in the literature lies in the examination of the various types of workplaces bullying and their degree of influence on turnover intentions. Most of the studies have explored workplace bullying as a single construct overlooking the nature of its various forms. Few, if any, studies have analysed the unique forms of

workplace bullying such as intimidation, discrimination, ostracism, and verbal abuse, and their influence on the turnover intentions among the ever-growing academic higher education sector professionals in Sri Lanka.

In conclusion, this literature review emphasizes the need for further research on workplace bullying and turnover intentions among academics in higher education sector in Sri Lanka. Therefore, to resolve these identified gaps, the subsequent methodology section will outline the research design that will be utilized to assess the prevalence and impact of workplace bullying on turnover intentions among academic Sri Lankan higher education sector professionals.

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