Article

This Is Bullshit: The Relationship between Organizational Bullshitting and Employee Job Satisfaction

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Abstract: Bullshitting is a term that has been introduced lately in the literature to describe the practice of communicating with no grounding in truth. This study examines the relationship between organizational bullshit and employee job satisfaction. Using a sample of 261 employees from five organizations in Saudi Arabia, this study finds that employees are more likely to be dissatisfied when their organizations have no regard for the truth in making their decisions, and specifically, when their direct supervisor is bullshitting. This study contributes to the emerging literature on organizational bullshit and offers practical implications as well as suggestions for future research.

Keywords: bullshit; bullshitting; job satisfaction; work environment; job demand–resource; leader–member exchange

1. Introduction

The impact of organizational culture and the work environment on employees is much discussed in the literature (e.g., Amabile et al. 1996; James and James 1989; Venard et al. 2022; Zimmerman et al. 2019). An interesting element of the work environment that has received attention lately is "bullshitting", a term that describes the practice of communicating with no grounding in truth (Ferreira et al. 2022; Frankfurt 2009; McCarthy et al. 2020; Petrocelli et al. 2021; Spicer 2013, 2017). Bullshitting is everywhere in our lives and has become part of our culture around the world (Frankfurt 2009). Words are thrown right and left without much scrutiny (Luks 2017). Our daily social interactions are filled with bullshit, whether it is an advertisement of a product that a company is trying to persuade us to buy or a gathering of friends with many jokes and teasing (Christensen et al. 2019).

For organizations, communication represents a huge part of their routine, as they spend a lot of time in meetings and discussions, sending and responding to emails, preparing and reading reports, as well as other types of communication. As organizations rely more on communications, be it verbal, written, or visual, organizational bullshit has been increasing (Christensen et al. 2019; Ferreira et al. 2022; Frankfurt 2009; McCarthy et al. 2020; Spicer 2013, 2017, 2020). For example, think of a meeting in which your supervisor is bragging about the performance of his unit without any factual evidence? What about a presentation in which the presenter overwhelms you with colored charts that do not say anything? Or maybe a formal letter from the CEO of your organization that is supposed to explain his/her vision for the organization moving forward, only to find it full of jargon and ambiguous words that do not mean anything? We all, one way or another, face situations like these. This is bullshit.

While bullshitting might decorate an organization's image (Ferreira et al. 2022), it also negatively affects organizations in several ways. For example, bullshitting could contribute to things such as "...crowding out the primary task of the organization, violating (previously) valued occupational identities, and undermining stakeholder trust". (Spicer 2013, p. 655). Bullshitting might also undermine trust and rational thinking within organizations, as well as limit constructive feedback within organizations (Christensen et al.

2019; Spicer 2013, 2017), which would eventually negatively affect organizational learning (Argyris 1990; Christensen et al. 2019; Huber 1991; Senge 1990). At the individual level, bullshitting might lead to confrontations among employees and some might actually elect to escape this situation and look for jobs elsewhere (McCarthy et al. 2020).

While some research has begun to address bullshit and its impact on organizations, very few studies have addressed this issue (Ferreira et al. 2022; McCarthy et al. 2020; Petrocelli et al. 2021). Specifically, we still do not know much about how bullshitting correlates with employee's behavior in bullshitting organizations. McCarthy et al. (2020) suggests that such employees usually tend to react in four different ways: exit the organization, confront the bullshit, embrace and spread the bullshit, or neglect it. However, to the best of our knowledge, there is no empirical evidence of the relationship between bullshiting and individual outcomes. Additionally, much of the current research on bullshit focuses on bullshitting in the Western and developed countries, providing political, scientific, and social examples mainly from the US and Europe. Hence, in the current paper, I employ theories such as the Job Demand–Resources (JD-R) Theory (Demerouti et al. 2001), the dispositional theory of job attitude (Staw et al. 1986), the Leader–Member Exchange theory of leadership (Dansereau et al. 1973; Dansereau et al. 1975; Graen and Uhl-Bien 1995), and the Motivational Language Theory (Sullivan 1988) to address those gaps in the bullshit literature by examining the relationship between bullshitting and employee job satisfaction in an emerging country. In other words, the main objective of this study is to see if a correlation exists between bullshit in organizations and employee job satisfaction in Saudi Arabia.

In addressing the aforementioned objective, the study makes two key contributions. First, it contributes to the emerging literature on bullshit, a growing body of literature with very few studies focusing on the impact of bullshitting at the employee level. Second, the study was conducted in the understudied context of Saudi Arabia, an emerging country with huge aspirations within Vision 2030 (Saudi Vision 2030 2016), which is a comprehensive and inspiring national plan to diversify the economy. Importantly, the Human Capital Development Program is a main element of Vision 2030 that focuses on developing the Saudi workforce and providing them with the infrastructure and environment that enables them to thrive and contribute to the Kingdom's vision. Saudi Arabia also provides an interesting context to study the issue at hand because of its strong reliance on Islamic values (Shariah) that prohibit practices such as deceiving and misleading.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. Next, a brief review of the bullshit literature is introduced, developing arguments on how it impacts employee job satisfaction. The methodology section follows with a description of the sampling method, as well as the measures and analytical techniques used in the study. The following section is dedicated to describing the results of the study. The paper follows with a detailed discussion section, highlighting the theoretical and practical implications before ending with the conclusion.

2. Theoretical Background and Hypotheses Development

2.1. Bullshit in Organizations

The word "*Bullshit*" might be understood by the majority as vulgar slang that is synonym with "nonsense". Thus, the verb "*Bullshitting*" is defined as "talking nonsense". Once considered an offensive and vulgar language, it has been normalized and accepted in mundane language (Christensen et al. 2019). Importantly, it has been commonly used in academic research with a scale developed to measure it (Ferreira et al. 2022).

In organizations, bullshit describes a situation in which communication inside an organization is characterized by no regard for the truth (Ferreira et al. 2022; Frankfurt 2009; McCarthy et al. 2020). Such communications can be written (e.g., letters, emails, and reports), verbal (e.g., conversations, meetings, and interviews), or visual (e.g., charts, diagrams, and videos). It should be noted that bullshitting is different from lying (Frankfurt 2009). While the latter provides incorrect information intentionally, the former communicates without regard for the truth (Frankfurt 2009; McCarthy et al. 2020). In other words,

liars care about the truth and try to misrepresent it and hide it intentionally, while bullshitters do not care about whether what they are communicating is true (Christensen et al. 2019; Ferreira et al. 2022; Frankfurt 2009). Bullshitters bullshit mainly to mislead and overwhelm people. They make decisions with no evidence and use ambiguous language full of jargon and glorified phrases to get away with their agenda (Christensen et al. 2019; Kelly 2014). It also should be clear that bullshit does not include fruitful discussions in brainstorming sessions, for example, where employees share unproven ideas, as such practices are common and usually effective in generating innovative ideas.

While bullshitting is not new in organizations, it has reached high levels to a point where scholars have proposed a movement towards evidence-based management (Pfeffer and Sutton 2006), urging managers to base their decisions on proven evidence. Generally, research asserts that bullshit exists in organizations "whenever circumstances require someone to talk without knowing what he is talking about". (Frankfurt 2009, p. 63). In other words, managers and employees might feel obligated to talk about topics that they usually do not have enough information about, resulting in bullshitting (Petrocelli 2018). Bullshitting is also present in organizations because of the "...increasing propensity to let subjective positions and self-presentations play a bigger role in contemporary organizations". (Christensen et al. 2019). Research suggests that the social environment of an organization that normalizes bullshitting and allows it to pass with ease also encourages bullshitters to bullshit (Petrocelli 2018). Technological advances have also contributed to bullshitting. Think about a software that allows managers to present deceiving charts and graphs to mislead their audience or social media platforms that provide bullshitters with a tool to spread their bullshit. (Pundir et al. 2021).

It is unfortunate that organizations of all sizes and in different industries accept bullshit as the norm (Spicer 2017, 2020) without attempting to deal with it, knowing that it has negative impacts on organizations, as discussed earlier. One of the main reasons why bullshit is ignored or accepted is that people tend to compare it to lying, which evaluates bullshit lightly (Petrocelli 2018). In the next section, I move on to the individual level and discuss how bullshitting impacts not only organizations, but also employees.

2.2. Bullshitting and Job Satisfaction

Research asserts that work environment affects employee job satisfaction (e.g., Judge et al. 2000; Langer et al. 2019; Venard et al. 2022; Wright and Davis 2003), which is defined as "a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences" (Locke 1976, p. 1304). Put differently, job satisfaction describes an employee's evaluation of factors related to their job, such as pay, supervisor, co-worker, and working condition, among others (Brendel et al. 2023; Kim et al. 2023; Öksüz et al. 2023; Rayton and Yalabik 2014; Steel et al. 2019). Given that human capital is the main source of organizational competitive advantage (Hatch and Dyer 2004; Pfeffer 1995), it is crucial to study the factors that directly affect employees. The current study examines the relationship between organizational bullshit and employee job satisfaction.

Several theories have been employed to study employee job satisfaction. Among these theories is the JD-R Theory (Demerouti et al. 2001), which assumes that jobs have two high-order characteristics: job demands, which refer to the physical, psychological, social, and organizational aspects of the job that requires cognitive and emotional effort, and job resources, which refer to the job-related characteristics such as autonomy, social support, relationship with the supervisor, and performance feedback (Bakker and Demerouti 2007; Demerouti et al. 2001; Schaufeli and Bakker 2004). The theory is a leading framework in studying employee-related characteristics such as job satisfaction and wellbeing (Bauer et al. 2014). Research has long applied the JD-R theory to predict employee-related outcomes such as organizational commitment, exhaustion, work engagement, and learning, among others (Demerouti et al. 2001; Doi 2005; Halbesleben and Buckley 2004; Salanova et al. 2005; Taris and Feij 2004). When it comes to bullshitting in organizations, I argue that bullshitting is a vital factor that affects the organizational and social environments (job demands) in which

employees work. For example, research asserts that employees' wellbeing and satisfaction are negatively affected when there is much ambiguity in their work environment (e.g., Keller 1975), such as an expected situation when communications are not clear in the workplace about one's role or individual targets. One could also argue that a bullshitting environment could be emotionally stressing and demanding, especially for those with personalities that prefer direct, clear, and evidenced-based communications (more on this below).

Ferreira et al. (2022) suggests that bullshit communication is a product of three factors: no regard for the truth, bullshitting by bosses, and bullshitting language. The first factor describes situations in which decision-makers rely heavily on their own experience and assumptions rather than on the data and proven evidence (Pfeffer and Sutton 2006). Such situations not only affect the quality of the decision but might also indicate that employees are not competent and do not know what they are doing (Ferreira et al. 2022). The second factor of bullshit, bosses' bullshit, relates to the bullshit practiced by employees' direct supervisors. While organizations with no regard for the truth are dangerous and problematic, it might affect employees who are close to the upper echelon, as lower-level employees might not be exposed to such bullshit in the higher levels of the organizational hierarchy. In contrast, bosses' bullshit affects all employees, as all are supervised by a manager in one way or another. Thus, although an employee might not be affected by an organization's lack of regard for the truth, one could predict that any bullshit that comes from a direct supervisor might impact the employee. The third factor, bullshit language, refers to the use of jargon and misleading acronyms in communication within the organization. Overall, this study proposes that when communication within the organization is filled with information and presentations that have no regard for the truth, when bosses interact with their subordinates without evidence, and when the overall language inside the organization is characterized by ambiguous and misleading statements, it is a sign of an organization that is full of bullshit. I rely on these three components of bullshit and argue that such communication would lead to employee dissatisfaction. Figure 1 illustrates the model used in this study.
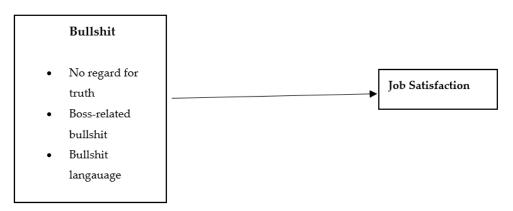

Figure 1. The relationship between bullshit and job satisfaction.

Another theoretical umbrella the paper builds on is the dispositional approach to job attitude. In organizational research, contrary to other theories that emphasize the role of situations in shaping employee job attitude (e.g., the job enrichment and social information-processing theories), the dispositional approach highlights the relationship between personalities and individual-level factors on one hand and job attitude on the other hand (Staw et al. 1986). Building on this approach, previous studies have found that employee job satisfaction can be predicted by personality (e.g., Cucina et al. 2018; Furnham et al. 1999; Judge et al. 2000; Judge and Larsen 2001; Staw and Cohen-Charash 2005; Steel et al. 2019). This stream of research builds on a century-old proposition by Parsons (1909), in which success at work is proposed to be a result of one's understanding of their values, interests, and capabilities, as well as the understanding of the work itself

and the required skills and conditions to succeed. Put differently, employees, based on their personalities, tend to assess the fit between their values and capabilities on the one hand, and the values and requirements of their jobs and organizations on the other hand. Studies have found that misfits in values between organizations and employees usually lead to lower levels of job satisfaction (e.g., Gabriel et al. 2014; Wheeler et al. 2007). Thus, when it comes to organizational bullshit, one can argue that bullshitting at some point would reach a level where it is unacceptable and annoying for employees, as they tend to prefer open and honest communication (Cooper-Thomas et al. 2018). Such dishonesty can eventually lead to the disengagement and exit of employees with personalities that value honesty and straightforwardness (McCarthy et al. 2020; Rusbult et al. 1988; Turnley and Feldman 1999). Thus:

H1. *There is a negative relationship between employee job satisfaction and the disregard for truth in their organizations.*

Such an impact is expected to be even more significant when the bullshitter is the direct boss of an employee. Research posits that leadership has a direct impact on employee job satisfaction (e.g., Braun et al. 2013; Cansoy 2019; Janssen and Van Yperen 2004). It is paramount to have a solid relationship between bosses and their subordinates as it relates directly to employees' ability to not only perform their job (Zhu et al. 2022), but also to establish trust and make employees more comfortable at their job (Kelloway et al. 2012). In particular, the way leaders communicate with subordinates is key to establishing trust and respect between them. In fact, leadership communication has been widely recognized as an important factor that affects employee attitudes and behaviors (e.g., Men et al. 2022; Zhu et al. 2022), given supervisory day-to-day interactions and communication with employees (Van Quaquebeke and Felps 2018). Specifically, research asserts that one-to-one contact between supervisors and subordinates is related to employee self-efficacy (Mellor et al. 2007).

This argument is better explained using the Leader–Member Exchange theory (Dansereau et al. 1973, 1975; Graen and Uhl-Bien 1995; Richter-Killenberg and Volmer 2022), which is a unique leadership theory that focuses on the dyadic relationships between a leader and his/her subordinates, rather than focusing on leadership as a function of the personal characteristics of the leader (Gerstner and Day 1997). According to the theory, high-quality dyadic exchange between leaders and their subordinates leads to trust and respect, which increases the level of employee job satisfaction (Toscano et al. 2022). By contrast, low-quality dyadic exchanges between leaders and subordinates tend to dissatisfy employees (Janssen and Van Yperen 2004). Thus, bullshitting by supervisors are argued to have a negative relationship with employee job satisfaction, as employees are expected to lose trust and respect for their bullshitting leaders.

Additionally, the Motivation Language Theory (Sullivan 1988) is another intriguing theory that supports the bullshit–job satisfaction argument. The theory emphasizes the crucial role of the language spoken by leaders and their impact on subordinate-related outcomes (Mayfield et al. 1995), For example, several researchers have found relationships between leaders' oral communication and employee outcomes such as goal attainment, employee engagement, decision making, and career progression (e.g., Conger 1991; Fairhurst 1993; Lamude et al. 1988; Mayfield and Mayfield 2016; Tao et al. 2022). Specifically, employee job satisfaction has been found to be directly influenced by the language leaders use in their communication (Mayfield et al. 2021; Rowley Mayfield et al. 1998; Nguyen et al. 2021). Thus, I argue that employees who are exposed to honest and clear communication from their bosses are usually more satisfied than employees whose bosses are bullshitters. In other words, the level of employee satisfaction is predicted to have a negative relationship with the use of bullshit language in organizations.

H2. *There is a negative relationship between employee job satisfaction and bosses' bullshit practices in their organizations.*

Given the impact of language on employees' attitudes, as conceptualized by the Motivational Language Theory (Sullivan 1988), research has found that employees tend to assess the language organizations use in their communication and that the way organizations communicate with employees has a direct effect on job satisfaction (Giri and Kumar 2010; Pincus 1986). For example, a recent study on health workers found that employees who communicate in a shared language have higher levels of job satisfaction than those who communicate in different languages (Stühlinger et al. 2019). Research also affirms that employees are more satisfied with communications in which the language used is honest, direct, and transparent (Cooper-Thomas et al. 2018). Subsequently, I argue that in organizations where the official language is bullshitty (i.e., filled with excessive use of jargon and acronyms), employees are more likely to be dissatisfied.

H3. *There is a negative relationship between employee job satisfaction and the use of bullshit language in their organizations.*

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Sample

The data were collected using surveys. The survey was translated from English to Arabic by a Saudi professional fluent in both languages. To ensure that there were no changes in the meanings of the questions (Brislin 1986), the survey was back-translated by the author, who is also fluent in both languages. In addition to electronic mail, WhatsApp was used to send a link to the survey to potential respondents. As the most popular communication mode and a major tool for doing business in Saudi Arabia (Saudi Arabia Social Media Statistics 2020), WhatsApp is commonly used in research in the Saudi Arabian context (Fallatah and Ayed 2023; Pérez-Nordtvedt and Fallatah 2022).

A purposive sampling technique was used to survey employees from governmental organizations in the western region of Saudi Arabia. Budget limitations did not allow the researcher to target employees from other regions of the kingdom. The final sample was generated from five different organizations that gave consent. A total of 475 employees received a link to the survey. Furthermore, convenient sampling was used to select respondents who were willing and able to participate in the survey. A text reminder was sent to potential respondents one week after they received the link for the first time. The author also made personal calls to encourage employees in the five organizations to answer the survey. The total number of completed surveys was 261, with a response rate of 55%. Among our sampled employees, all were Saudis, of which 42.5 percent were 35–45 years old, where about 55 percent being females and about 84 percent had a college degree or higher. Additionally, the study required that all participants have at least one year of experience, so they could have enough time to express the level of their job satisfaction.

3.2. Measures

To measure the dependent variable, *job satisfaction*, I used an adapted version of the scale developed by Brayfield and Rothe (1951), which has been commonly used in similar studies (e.g., Judge et al. 2000; Puranik et al. 2021). The scale included four items, such as "I feel fairly satisfied with my present job" and "I find real enjoyment in my work". The measure was internally consistent with Cronbach's alpha value of 0.87.

To measure the independent variables, the Organizational Bullshit Perception Scale (OBPS) was adopted (Ferreira et al. 2022). The scale categorizes organizes bullshit into three different factors. First, *no regard for truth* was measured using seven items, including items such as "In my organization, evidence must be presented to support decisions made" and "In my organization, people take the time to gather and analyze data before making decisions". The second factor, *Boss-related bullshit*, was measured with four items such as "*My boss will say whatever it takes to pursue their agenda*" and "*My boss often says things that may or may not be true*". Finally, *bullshit language* was measured with four items such as "*In*

my organization, my boss loves to use jargon" and "*In my organization, people use acronym far too often*".

To assess the adopted scale and to ensure that the three variables measure organizational bullshitting, I employed exploratory factor analysis using the principal components analysis extraction method (Hair et al. 2014) with rotation. Using Kaiser's criterion of eigenvalues greater than one (Kaiser 1960), the results suggested a three-factor model, consistent with Ferreira et al. (2022), explaining 58.5% of the variation in the data. Specifically, factor 1 (i.e., regard for truth) had an eigenvalue of (4.67), loading seven items that explained (24.4%); factor 2 (i.e., boss-related bullshit) had an eigenvalue of (2.87), loading four items that explained (18.9%); and factor 3 (i.e., bullshit language) had an eigenvalue of (1.23), loading four items that explained (15.2%).

The reliability of the whole scale was evaluated, which showed a Cronbach alpha (Cronbach 1951) value of 0.83, while the three individual factors obtained alpha values of 0.73, 0.86, and 0.72, respectively. The results confirm the reliability of the scale, as all values were above 0.70 (Nunnally 1978).

As is typical of similar research (e.g., Davidescu et al. 2020), I controlled for employees' human capital, as it might affect their job satisfaction. I carried this out by controlling for factors such as employees' age, gender, education, and experience as well as the industry of their organization.

4. Results

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics and correlations of all variables. The robustness of the model was evaluated prior to testing the hypothesized relationships. First, to assess whether multicollinearity was a significant problem, the variance inflation factors (VIF) were calculated. Multicollinearity was not a significant issue in this study, as all VIF values were well below 10 (highest VIF = 3.25) (Hair et al. 2014).

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and correlations.

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Age	2.87	0.84	1											
Male Employees	0.45	0.50	0.01	1										
Education	4.01	0.87	0.08	0.08	1									
Work Experience	2.36	1.11	−0.59	−0.45	0.11	1								
Industry2	0.24	0.43	−0.04	0.28	−0.09	−0.16	1							
Industry3	0.25	0.43	−0.04	0.25	−0.07	0.14	0.56	1						
Industry4	0.30	0.46	0.10	0.17	0.04	−0.10	−0.60	−0.58	1					
Industry5	0.05	0.22	0.01	0.15	−0.15	0.02	0.37	0.41	0.40	1				
TruthBS	2.85	0.50	−0.03	−0.02	0.05	−0.01	−0.07	−0.01	0.10	0.06	1			
BossBS	3.12	0.58	−0.01	−0.01	0.14	0.07	0.03	0.12	−0.06	−0.06	−0.37	1		
LanguageBS	3.34	0.73	0.05	−0.03	−0.53	0.08	−0.03	−0.01	−0.04	0.01	−0.13	−0.36	1	
Job Satisfaction	3.71	0.87	−0.05	−0.15	−0.20	−0.09	−0.05	−0.35	−0.17	−0.16	−0.40	−0.14	0.25	1

Furthermore, to assess common method variance (CMV), I administered the survey following recommended steps such as changing the order of scale items, defining ambiguous terms, guaranteeing confidentiality, and using clear response guidelines (Podsakoff et al. 2003). In addition, I ran a principal components analysis, which revealed that the first factor explained only 24.4 percent of the variance in the data. In addition, as explained earlier, the measurement model suggests discriminant validity among the constructs, indicating that these constructs measure different things. Overall, although a common method bias cannot be completely ruled out, the tests concluded that CMV was not a major problem in this study.

I used Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression analysis to test the hypotheses. The results of this study are presented in Table 2. Model 1 included only the control variables, while the independent variables were included in model 2. Hypothesis 1 proposed that

employee job satisfaction is more likely to decrease as the level of no regard for truth increases in an organization, which is supported by the model ($\beta = -0.60$, $p < 0.01$). Hypothesis 2 proposed that employee job satisfaction is more likely to decrease as bosses' bullshit practices increase, which is also supported by the model ($\beta = -0.18$, $p < 0.05$). Finally, the model did not support Hypothesis 3 ($\beta = 0.33$, $p < 0.01$), which proposes that employee job satisfaction decreases with an increase in bullshit language within the organization. Although the results indicated a significant relationship, they were in the opposite direction.

Table 2. Results of the OLS regression (DV = Job satisfaction). N = 261. Estimates are unstandardized. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$. Note: BS = Bullshit.

Variables	Model 1	Model 2
Age	−0.02 (0.09)	0.02 (0.08)
Male Employees	−0.26 (0.14)	−0.26 * (0.13)
Education	−0.22 (0.06)	−0.13 * (0.06)
Work Experience	0.02 (0.08)	−0.03 (0.07)
Industry2	0.13 (0.18)	0.17 (0.16)
Industry3	0.30 (0.18)	0.25 (0.17)
Industry4	0.15 (0.16)	0.04 (0.15)
Industry5	0.47 (0.27)	0.42 (0.24)
TruthBS		−0.60 ** (0.10)
BossBS		−0.18 * (0.09)
LanguageBS		0.33 ** (0.07)
Adjusted R2	0.06	0.25
F-Value	3.24	9.25

I performed a minor post hoc analysis to check the robustness of the model, in which I ran the regression analysis without any control variables to improve the power of the regression test. The conclusions remained the same for all the three hypotheses.

5. Discussion

As a common phenomenon in organizations and life, bullshit has recently become an interesting area of study (Ferreira et al. 2022; McCarthy et al. 2020; Petrocelli 2018; Petrocelli et al. 2021). Building on the JD-R model, the positional approach of job attitude, the Leader–Member Exchange Theory, and the Motivating Language theory, this study aimed to contribute to the literature by examining the impact of bullshitting on employee job satisfaction in Saudi Arabia. The study used the bullshit scale developed by Ferriera and colleagues (2020), which broke down bullshit into three factors: the no regard for truth, bosses' bullshit, and the bullshit language.

First, the results found that employees are less likely to be satisfied when communication within the organization has no regard for truth. To explain, research has long associated a lack of job resources, including a positive social environment, with undesired employee outcomes (e.g., Demerouti et al. 2001; Lee and Ashforth 1996). Importantly, in an organizational culture where social support is lacking, employees are less likely to receive feedback (Bakker et al. 2014), which is a condition that research has found to exist

in bullshitting organizations (Christensen et al. 2019; Spicer 2013, 2017). Consequently, employees in organizations with no constructive feedback tend to be less satisfied (Anseel and Lievens 2007; O'Reilly and Anderson 1980), which is a conclusion that is aligned with the JD-R model (Demerouti et al. 2001). Additionally, the results could be explained using the positional approach to job attitude (Judge and Larsen 2001; Staw et al. 1986), which asserts that employees' job attitudes, including job satisfaction, are heavily influenced by their personality. Thus, one could argue that employees with personalities that value truth and straightforwardness do not stand for non-evidence-based decisions, ambiguous presentations, misleading letters, or meaningless meetings. The level of satisfaction decreases with an increase in such bullshit in their organizations.

Second, the study examined the relationship between bosses' bullshit and employee job satisfaction. The results revealed that when bosses are bullshitters, employees' job satisfaction is more likely to decrease. These results are consistent with leadership theories that emphasize the impact leaders have on their subordinates, especially when it comes to job satisfaction (Braun et al. 2013; Cansoy 2019). Particularly, the results support the Leader–Member Exchange theory that relates high quality dyadic exchange between leaders and subordinates to high levels of trust and respect (Dansereau et al. 1973, 1975; Graen and Uhl-Bien 1995). Previous studies also confirm that employees are more engaged and satisfied when communication within the organization is open and honest (Cooper-Thomas et al. 2018).

Finally, the study examined the impact of using bullshit language (i.e., excessive use of jargon and acronyms) in organizational communication. It hypothesized that employees would be less satisfied the more bullshity the language within an organization is. Contrary to the study's hypothesis, bullshit language in an organization's communication was not a significant factor that negatively affected employee job satisfaction. In fact, the relationship, although not significant, was in the opposite direction. This could be explained by the fact that while somewhat annoying, the excessive use of acronyms and jargon does not directly affect employees' ability to perform their job, as illustrated via the JD-R model (Bakker et al. 2014; Demerouti et al. 2001). Another explanation is that fancy words could picture a rosy, although misleading, environment for employees about the organization and its status, a situation that research has warned about (Spicer 2013, 2017).

5.1. Theoretical Contributions, Limitations, and Future Research

The current study provides several contributions to the emerging literature of bullshit. First, while some research has conceptualized bullshit (e.g., Frankfurt 2009), studied organizational bullshit (e.g., Christensen et al. 2019; Spicer 2013, 2017), developed a framework of dealing with bullshit (McCarthy et al. 2020), or developed a scale to measure bullshit (Ferreira et al. 2022), the extant study uniquely examines the direct impact of bullshit on employee job satisfaction. In doing so, the study highlights that bullshitting is a dangerous issue that should be dealt with seriously, as it affects employees significantly. Second, the study validates the newly developed measure of bullshit (Ferreira et al. 2022), which is an important step as the concept is gaining more attention in the academic community. Third, this study contributes to the literature by examining the bullshit phenomenon in a unique context. Saudi Arabia is understudied in the management literature despite being a wealthy country and a key player in the world economy (Fallatah 2021; Pérez-Nordtvedt and Fallatah 2022). With the launch of Vision 2030, the Kingdom has emphasized the development of human capital, with a focus on providing employees with an encouraging environment that enables them to contribute to Vision 2030, which aims to diversify the economy of the oil-producing nation (Saudi Vision 2030 2016). Thus, it would be ideal to study the job satisfaction of employees in such an environment.

Although the study was built on proven theory and despite the appropriate methodological and analytical techniques used, it still has some minor limitations. First, while the study took the necessary steps of robustness, the data could still suffer from CMV, given its cross-sectional nature and self-reporting, which limits the results to a correlation

relationship only. Future research should examine the proposed model by using panel data in order to test a possible causation link between bullshit and employee job satisfaction. Second, while the Bullshit scale has been validated (Ferreira et al. 2022) and confirmed again in this study, the results of the study could still be impacted because the scale still has not been tested sufficiently. Future research should test the scale in different contexts, preferably with a larger sample size. Importantly, researchers should ensure that the second factor (boss-related bullshit) and the third factor (bullshit language) are not correlated, as the measure of bullshit language contains some boss-related statements. Fourth, our study could have controlled for additional variables to build a more complex and robust model. For instance, we are also informed by the job-fit literature that employees are more satisfied when there is perceived value incongruence with the organization in which they work (Kristof 1996). Given that the study employs the dispositional approach and links job satisfaction to personality, I controlled only for demographic factors of the employees, but did not control for behavioral traits. Future research that controls for personality (e.g., the Big Five) should produce more robust results. Lastly, our context of Saudi Arabia, while ideal to test the model, might limit the generalizability of the results, given that employees in different countries with different cultures might handle bullshit differently.

That said, I believe that the extant study drew from solid and proven theories, used rigorous methodology, and applied an adequate statistical analysis, which should make the results accurate and reliable.

5.2. Practical Implications

This study offers invaluable practical implications for organizations. First, as suggested via the JD-R model and the dispositional approach to job attitude, organizations should pay attention to their work environment as it impacts the job satisfaction of their employees. The results of the current study confirm that organizational bullshit has a negative effect on employees. Specifically, organizations should base their decisions on data instead of relying on random opinions with no evidence (Pfeffer and Sutton 2006). Such practice would not only improve the decision-making process of the organization but would also increase employee job satisfaction. Second, organizations should recognize that bullshitting would eventually result in an organizational culture that does not encourage open and honest communication, a dangerous situation that would limit constructive feedback (Christensen et al. 2019; Spicer 2013, 2017; Zhu et al. 2022) and undermine organizational learning (Argyris 1990; Huber 1991; Senge 1990). McCarthy et al. (2020) provide a framework on how to deal with bullshitting in organizations, highlighting four necessary steps (i.e., comprehend bullshit, recognize it, act against it, and prevent it).

Additionally, this paper highlights the importance of clear and straightforward communication between bosses and their subordinates. To increase trust and respect within the organization, managers are encouraged to have open and honest communication with their subordinates and avoid the use of jargon and acronym words. As proven in this study, employees are less satisfied when their managers elect to be fancy and misleading in their conversations.

6. Conclusions

Building on the JD-R model and the dispositional approach to job attitude, along with the Leader–Member Exchange Theory and the Motivational Language Theory, this study proposed and found evidence that bullshit impacts employee job satisfaction. Specifically, using the unique context of Saudi Arabia, the findings reveal that when organizations have no regard for the truth in their communications and when bosses use language that is ambiguous and full of jargon, employees are more likely to be dissatisfied. This study contributes to the emerging literature on bullshit and provides ample theoretical and practical implications. Future research should build on the findings of this study and advance our understanding of the bullshit phenomenon and its complex implications.

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