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Social Media Bullying in the Workplace and Its Impact on Work Engagement: A Case of Psychological Well-Being

Aizza Anwar [1,*], Daisy Mui Hung Kee [1] and Muhammad Fazal Ijaz [2,*]

[1] School of Management, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang 11800, Malaysia; daisy@usm.my
[2] Department of Intelligent Mechatronics Engineering, Sejong University, Seoul 05006, Korea
* Correspondence: aizzaanwar@gmail.com (A.A.); fazal@sejong.ac.kr (M.F.I.)

Abstract: The hotel industry has transformed the social and official interaction and communication landscape due to information technology. This has created a new venue for bullying, known as cyberbullying. This study aims to examine the impact of workplace cyberbullying on the work engagement of hotel employees while examining the mediating role of psychological well-being and work meaningfulness using the job demand resource model and conservation of resource theory. The data (n = 470) were collected from 4-star and 5-star hotel employees in Pakistan. The results reported that psychological well-being mediates the relationship between workplace cyberbullying and work engagement. Moreover, work meaningfulness also mediates the relationship between psychological well-being and work engagement. Findings suggest that the hotel industry of Pakistan should acknowledge the presence of cyberbullying and design policies and procedures to maintain a healthy work environment for employees' psychological well-being and ensure that hotel employees find their work meaningful.

Keywords: social media; workplace cyberbullying; work engagement; psychological well-being; work meaningfulness

Citation: Anwar, A.; Kee, D.M.H.; Ijaz, M.F. Social Media Bullying in the Workplace and Its Impact on Work Engagement: A Case of Psychological Well-Being. *Information* **2022**, *13*, 165. https://doi.org/10.3390/info13040165

Academic Editors: Marcin Ratajczak and Joanna Paliszkiewicz

Received: 23 February 2022
Accepted: 22 March 2022
Published: 25 March 2022

1. Introduction

Social media and information technology have significantly transformed the traditional workplace [1], and their increased usage can be observed by recent tech adoption in the hotel industry [2]. Researchers have started noticing these changes and investigating the use of information technology in the hotel industry [3]. Undoubtedly, there are many advantages of using information technology, such as its reduction of the significance of distance. Communication with a coworker in the same building can be the same as with one who is miles away. However, recent evidence of workplace bullying channeled through ICT or social media illustrates the potential drawbacks of such technologies [4,5]. Researchers have been encouraged to see the adverse effects on employees [3]. There are several research studies related to youngsters' negative online behaviors such as online hate and extremism [6], cyberaggression [7], and cyberbullying [8]. Nevertheless, limited studies have examined the negative use of social media or ICT for bullying in the workplace, named cyberbullying [9]. Workplace cyberbullying (WCB) refers to "all negative acts stemming from working relationships and occurring through the use of information communication and technologies (ICTs)" [10] (p. 29).

Little research has been conducted on Pakistan's hotel industry and the effects of information and technology on employees [11] (Khan et al., 2021). The concept of WCB has started to attract researchers' attention [12–14] as a recently recognized risk factor in the workplace. The hotel industry has always been marked with high job demand and violence [14]. The use of information technology and social media provides the opportunity for people to keep their identity hidden and say and express whatever they want, allowing perpetrators to target their victims on a larger scale and different social media platforms

while keeping their identity secret. Since the adoption of digitalization in the hotel industry, employees have faced adverse consequences resulting from the relatively anonymous nature of social media [15]. Thus, the work engagement of hotel workers is a significant concern for the hotel industry [16,17].

It is critical for hotel staff to have positive psychological well-being (PWB) because they work in a precarious and exploitative setting (due to, for example, customer incivility or job stress). Given that the hotel industry is a labor-intensive environment, employees have to manage several work requirements that can be emotionally or mentally demanding. Therefore, a premise of the job demand model (JD-R) [18] highlights that emotionally demanding circumstances (for example, WCB) can drain an individual's physical and mental resources and may eventually result in lower work engagement. Using the Conservation of Resource (COR) theory [19], the second objective of the study is to investigate PWB as a potential mediator between WCB and the work engagement (WE) of hotel employees.

Meanwhile, researchers have also highlighted the importance of the PWB of employees [20] that helps them recognize and find meaning in their work, which eventually improves their WE [21]. Work meaningfulness (WM) refers to individuals' belief and perception that an assigned job personally matters to the employee [21]. Thus, using COR theory to increase feelings of WM would be a way to promote employees' PWB, because WM is considered an essential resource of job-related well-being [19]. Thus, this study further argues that WM mediates the relationship between PWB and WE.

Collectivism is a "set of feelings, beliefs, behavioral intentions, and behaviors related to solidarity and concern for others, and collectivistic cultures emphasize the establishment of close and harmonious interpersonal relationships" [22] (p. 17). It would be interesting to note that Pakistani culture is an example of a collectivist culture [23], with high power distance, those in power have privileges. It encourages obedience to authority [24] and, subsequently, there is a higher tolerance for work-related hostile acts and bullying [25]. At the same time, takes into account the performance-oriented nature of the hotel industry, making it very competitive industry. Thus, this paper contributes to the existing literature by investigating the impact of CWB on employees' psychological well-being and work engagement in Pakistan, which is marked with high power distance, subsequently leading to a higher tolerance for cyberbullying in the workplace.

Government officials in Pakistan are concerned about cybercrime's potential impact on national security. Under the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA) 2016, the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) has set up a cybercrime wing (CCW), which is governed by laws imposed by the FIA [26]. Moreover, the Cybercrime wing (CCW) is Pakistan's sole body that handles complaints and conducts legal action against cybercriminals and cyberbullying directly. However, people are not aware of its presence. Thus, the practical implication of this study is to highlight the existence of CWW, from which hotel employees can benefit.

Theoretical Background

The job demand-resource (JD-R) model is the most broadly cited and substantially researched model of WE [18,27]. Under this model, work environments can be classified into two general categories; job demands and job resources. Job demands are "physical, social, or organizational aspects of the job that require sustained physical or mental effort and are therefore associated with certain physiological and psychological costs" [28] (p. 501). Job resources are "physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects of the job that may [. . .] be functional in achieving work goals, reduce job demands and its related costs, or stimulate personal growth and development" [28] (p. 2001). JD-R model vigorously argues that when an employee finds his job more demanding than his existing resources, it tends to have a negative effect on the employee's WE [18]. Thus, it is argued that WCB tends to affect the employees adversely. Therefore, WCB might have a negative effect on WE.

Conservation of resources (COR) theory, stress, and motivational theory delineate how individuals are likely to be affected by stressful conditions. For example, individuals

hold certain physical (e.g., assets), social (e.g., cultural support), or personal resources (e.g., resilience) [29]. Cooper [30] argues that stress does not necessarily happen when demands surpass coping resources but when individuals struggle extraordinarily. When faced with negative workplace demands (workplace cyberbullying), individuals use their existing resources to deal with the situation [31]. The success of their struggle relies on the level of personal resources [32]. COR theory was used as the guiding framework because experiencing WCB drains an employee's energy and could decrease psychological well-being and work engagement. Moreover, with the help of the literature and COR, a mediating mechanism of PWB and WM is discussed below.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Cyberbullying and Work Engagement

Information technology has helped every organization and household possess a desktop and communicate with people around the globe. The use of technology is a dream come true for many, and it has improved the productivity and efficiency of organizations. However, if it is unsupervised and regulations are not in place, this dream can harm mankind. It has changed the traditional form of bullying that was physical and face-to-face; it is now done using information and communication technology, such as social media and the internet. Because electronic distractions and interruptions are increasingly ubiquitous in the office, it is becoming increasingly difficult for employees and managers to distinguish between their work and personal life. Constant connectedness is needed in both business and one's personal life [33]. Hence, workplace cyberbullying is not limited to office hours and official internet platforms. While most workplace cyberbullying occurs online, the victim and offender frequently meet in person. While there are online social platforms that are distinct from the offline world, such as Facebook, the real world is often intricately entwined with online social platforms [34]

The researchers have recently accepted the phenomenon of WCB as an urgent problem for both employees and employers [35]. Cyberbullying actions can victimize many people because they can be shared on social media. Further, online content can be easily saved and shared with several people worldwide. Therefore, employees can be targeted even outside the office and at their homes. WCB is a significant workplace stressor for employees [36]. It makes it more damaging for the victims because it became hard for them to evade cyberbullying behavior, resulting in feelings of powerlessness and mental strain [37] and low work engagement [38]. WCB resulted in psychological stress and predicted an adverse impact on employees such as WE [38]. According to the JD-R model, stressful job demands are negatively correlated with WE [38–40]. Thus, the following is hypothesized.

Hypothesis 1 (H1). *Workplace cyberbullying negatively influences the work engagement of hotel employees*.

2.2. Mediating Role of Psychological Well-Being

The PWB of employees is regarded as one of the most critical issues in workplace stress literature [41,42] and is associated with employees' physical health, longer lives, and happiness. It can help attain work goals and enable them to better cope with the toxic workplace [43]. In the hotel industry, employees with high levels of well-being tend to be healthier [44] and display better employee engagement [45]. Individuals with higher levels of PWB behave differently. Higher PWB is expected to lead to higher levels of WE [20] [46]. A study was also conducted on 550 employees in South Korea, which reported that PWB and WE were positively associated [47]. A recent study on social workers in Italy reported a strong association between social worker PWB and their engagement level [48]. PWB equips individuals with the personal strength to positively view the environment and respond more engagingly. Thus, it argues that PWB can improve WE [49,50]. PWB is associated with higher WE level [48]. The following is hypothesized using the COR theory [29].

Hypothesis 2 (H2). *Psychological well-being mediates the relationship between workplace cyberbullying and work engagement.*

2.3. Mediating Role of Work Meaningfulness

Employees' WM has been found to play a significant role in organizations. It is a significant means to assist employees in exhibiting positive workplace behaviors, particularly regarding WE [51,52]. It is vital in developing WE strategies [53]. The construct of meaningful work provides a means by which connections between PWB and engagement can be further explained [54]. For instance, a research study [55] has shown that PWB is positively related to WM. Previous studies have confirmed that PWB has a significant relationship with WE [45,49,55]. Meanwhile, it is also shown by the previous studies that meaningfulness is positively associated with WE [21,56,57]. Some research studies [58] reported that meaningfulness is an important predictor of WE. It can argue that work meaningful might mediate the influence of PWB on motivational outcomes such as engagement, using COR theory. It is further claimed that resource gain begets future gain, which in this case, meaningfulness and thus generating 'gain spirals'. These gain cycles are plausible because greater resources become available when initial gains are made, resulting in improved work engagement. Therefore, the following can be hypothesized. The relationships among study variables have graphically representative in the theoretical framework in Figure 1.

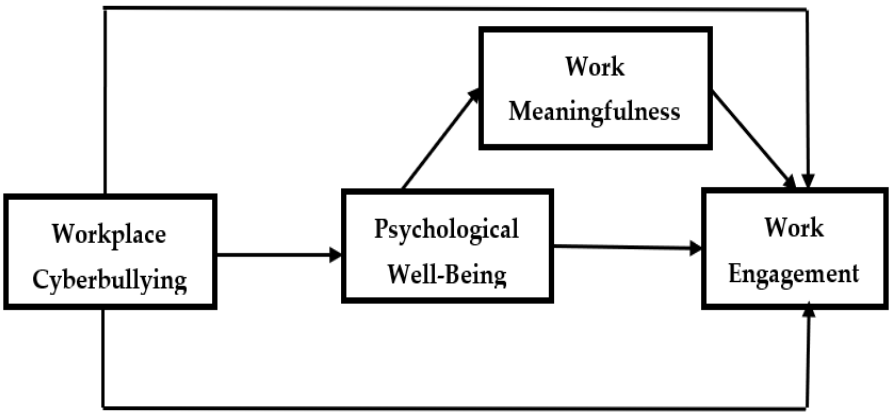

Figure 1. Theoretical Framework.

Hypothesis 3 (H3). *Work meaningfulness mediates the relationship between psychological well-being and work engagement.*

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Data Collection

In this study, a quantitative research design was applied. The data were collected online via Google form because the data collection was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic (March 2021 to September 2021), when social distancing was strictly practiced, and employees and employers preferred to work from home. The study was cross-sectional, and a purposive sampling technique was used. Aligned with a previous study [59] recommendations, it was ensured that employees have a minimum of 6 months of working experience, "over the last six months, how often have you been subjected to the following negative acts at work through different forms of technology?". The survey participants were assured that their participation was entirely voluntary, and informed consent was secured. The participants were assured that their answers would be kept strictly confidential and used solely for research purposes. It was divided into different sections according to study variables, and it was mandatory to fill in each question to ensure no missing value issue.

The data (n = 470) were collected from 4-star and 5-star hotel administrative-level employees in Pakistan. The sample comprised 333 males (71%) and 137 females (29%). The majority of participants were from 5-star hotels (62%), whereas 176 (37.4%) worked in 4-star hotels. The sample were aged 19–22 years old (n = 18, 3.8%), 23–30 years old (n = 171, 36.5%), 31–40 years old (n = 176, 37.4%), 41–50 years old (n = 58, 12.3%), 51–60 years old (n = 46, 9.8%) and 25–26 years old (n = 27, 5.1%). In terms of education, there were 32 (6.8%) high school graduate participants, 86 (18.3%) intermediate participants, 275 (58.5%) bachelor-level participants, 74 (15.7%) master's-level participants and 3 (0.6%) diploma holder participants. In terms of work experience, the majority of participants, 300 (63.8%), had 2 to 5 years' work experience.

3.2. Measurement Instrument

This research conducted a pretest and pilot test before the data collection. The pre-testing ensures that the questionnaire measures what it is supposed to and that people understand and can quickly answer it [60]. The participants were allowed to comment on the instrument and provide insight into ground realities, apart from answering the questions [61]. Thus, 3 academic professors and 12 hotel industry professionals has adequate knowledge about the research study. Some changes were made to the instrument. Moreover, a pilot study checked the instrument's reliability and validity.

The workplace cyberbullying instrument was adopted from [10], measured using 13 items. It is used to understand the negative behavior using information communication technology (internet, social media, etc.). For example, "someone forwards my emails in order to harm me". The data were collected using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Never) to 5 (Daily). PWB was measured using the 5-item Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) developed by [62]. A sample item is, "I am satisfied with my life". WM was measured using a 5-item scale [58]. A sample item is, "The work I do on this job is meaningful to me". This was measured on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. The data of PWB and WE were collected on a 7-point rating scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Work Engagement was measured on a 3-item scale [63]. An example is, 'I am immersed in my work'.

4. Results

The study used a structural equation model (SEM) to examine the proposed relationship [64] using Smart PLS 3.0 software. The study's objective was to investigate the direct relationship between WCB and WE. Moreover, to determine the mediating role of PWB between WCB and WE, along with the mediating role of WM between PWB and WE. Firstly, the measurement model was examined to determine the instruments' validity and reliability in Table 1. The composite reliability (CR), average variance extracted (AVE), outer loading of each variable is above than recommended value, CR and AVE are above 0.7 [65]. If an indicator's reliability is low and eliminating that indicator goes along with a substantial increase of composite reliability, it makes sense to discard this indicator [66]; thus, outer loadings is 0.6 and above. Moreover, it is further recommended that while deleting the outer loadings between 0.4 and 0.7, the researchers should be mindful in a way that only deletes the items if it assists in improving the reliability.

The discriminant validity is measured by using Fornell and Larcker [67] presented in Table 2 and Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) [68] shown in Table 3. In terms of discriminant validity, Table 2 indicates that the square root of each variables' AVE has to be greater than its highest correlations with any other construct [65].

Table 1. Factor loading and validity.

Construct	Item	Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Workplace Cyberbullying	CB2	0.105	0.975	0.978	0.785
	CB1	-			
	CB3	0.097			
	CB4	0.094			
	CB5	0.091			
	CB6	0.088			
	CB7	0.103			
	CB8	0.088			
	CB9	0.096			
	CB10	0.093			
	CB11	0.091			
	CB12	0.089			
	CB13	0.092			
Psychological Well-Being	PWB1	0.252	0.909	0.936	0.785
	PWB2	0.285			
	PWB3	0.299			
	PWB4	0.292			
	PWB5	-			
Work Meaningfulness	WM1	0.318	0.801	0.862	0.558
	WM2	-			
	WM3	0.197			
	WM4	0.239			
	WM5	0.295			
	WM6	0.293			
Work Engagement	WE1	0.389	0.890	0.932	0.820
	WE2	0.372			
	WE3	0.343			

Notes: CR, composite reliability; AVE, average variance extracted. (the items dropped are denoted via "-".)

Table 2. Assessment of discriminant validity using Fornell–Larcker.

	Psychological Well-Being	Work Engagement	Work Meaningfulness	Workplace Cyberbullying
Psychological Well-Being	0.886			
Work Engagement	0.472	0.905		
Work Meaningfulness	0.135	0.132	0.747	
Workplace Cyberbullying	−0.315	0.400	−0.080	0.886

Note: Diagonal values represent the square root of average variance extraction, while off-diagonal values represent the correlation.

Table 3. Heterotrait–Monotrait (HTMT) ratio for the Constructs.

	Psychological Well-Being	Work Engagement	Work Meaningfulness	Workplace Cyberbullying
Psychological Well-Being	-	-		
Work Engagement	0.523	-	-	-
Work Meaningfulness	0.154	0.15	-	-
Workplace Cyberbullying	0.335	0.426	0.112	-

Table 3 shows the HTMT criterion. Cut-off values of 0.90 for HTMT ratio are recommended by Hair [69].

Hypothesis Testing

The bootstrapping procedure is used to calculate direct, indirect, and total effects of various relationships are presented in Table 4. The results indicate that WCB has a significant and positive relationship with employee WE ($B = 0.417$, $p < 0.05$). So, hypothesis H1 of this study was rejected. Furthermore, WCB has a significant and negative relationship

with PWB (B= −0.315, $p < 0.05$). PWB has a significant and positive relationship with WE (B = 0.653, $p < 0.05$). PWB has a significant and positive relationship with WM (B = 0.135, $p < 0.05$). WM and WE have a positive and significant relationship (B = 0.093, $p < 0.01$). PWB mediates the relationship between WCB and WE (B= −206, $p < 0.05$). WM mediates the relationship between PWB and WE (B = 0.013, $p < 0.05$). The structural model is presented in Figure 2.

Table 4. Direct and indirect path.

Hypotheses and Path		*B* Value	*t*-Value	*p*-Value	Confidence Interval (95%)	Decision
H1	Workplace Cyberbullying -> Work Engagement	0.417	13.926	0.000	[0.367, 0.465]	Supported
H2	Workplace Cyberbullying -> Psychological Well-Being -> Work Engagement	−0.206	6.368	0.000	[−0.273, −0.145]	Supported
H3	Psychological Well-Being -> Work Meaningfulness -> Work Engagement	0.013	2.064	0.039	[0.004, 0.028]	Supported

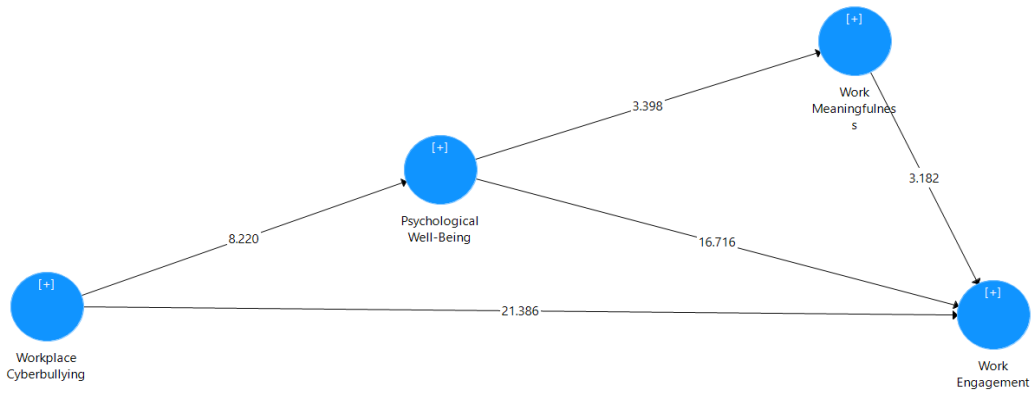

Figure 2. Structural Model.

The R^2 value is the most often used metric to predict the accuracy of a model's estimates [65]. It summarizes the cumulative impact of the independent variables on the dependent variable [70]. The effect ranges from 0 to 1, with 1 indicating total accuracy in the measurement. R^2 values of 0.75, 0.50, and 0.25, respectively, indicate significant, moderate, and modest levels of predictive accuracy, respectively [71]. The R^2 value of psychological well-being was 0.099, suggesting that 9.9% of the variance in psychological well-being was explained by workplace cyberbullying, The R^2 value of work meaningfulness was 0.018, suggesting that 1.8% of the variance in work meaningfulness was explained by psychological well-being and R^2 value of work engagement was 0.566, indicating that 56.6% of the variance in work engagement was explained by workplace cyberbullying, psychological well-being and work meaningfulness.

More recently, scientists have advocated that, in addition to calculating the (R^2), effect sizes (f^2) be reported in order to quantify the predictive power of each independent construct [69]. The results ranging from 0.35 to 0.15 to 0.02 indicate a big, medium, and small effect, respectively [69]. The variables WCB (f^2 = 0.779) and PWB (f^2 = 0.872) reported a large effect size in relation to work engagement, the rest all reported a small effect size.

Another metric that must be evaluated in the structural model is predictive relevance (Q2), or even blindfolding. This is intended to determine whether the model has predictive power in this particular research [72,73]. In this investigation, the Q2 values were more than zero, which indicates that the model had predictive validity. There were 0.066 values for psychological well-being and 0.009 values of job meaningfulness, and 0.439 values of work engagement in the Q2 survey.

5. Discussion

The present study, based on the COR theory [19,74] and JD-R [18], aimed to test the theoretical model in a sample of 4- and 5-star hotel employees in Pakistan in which WCB was assumed to work as an initiator of a loss process, leading the target to experience reduced PWB, and, in turn, reduced WE, while WM mediates the relationship between PWB and WE, by using COR theory notion of 'gain spirals' because when initial gains are made, greater resources become available that result in an improved level of work engagement.

This research study contains novel findings. The first hypothesis, there is a positive and significant relationship between WCB and WE, implies that WCB promotes WE among hotel employees. Although the existing literature on traditional bullying and WE reported a negative and significant relationship [75], the results align with a previous study that showed cyberbullying behavior has a significant direct and positive relationship with WE [76]. Moreover, another study [77] with a similar construct workplace cyberostracism is positively and significantly related to online work engagement of employees in Pakistan.

In this study, the positive effects of WCB may be because of collectivist culture. Pakistan's culture has higher power distance and low individualistic characteristics. This culture tends to have an uncertainty avoidance attitude that implies overall unquestioning respect for authority [78,79]. Moreover, the hotel industry of Pakistan is also performance-oriented, making employees more tolerant of workplace bullying acts [25]. Furthermore, a previous study [80] on workplace bullying highlighted that workplace bullying in high-performance-orientated cultures/countries is more acceptable by employees because some forms of bullying (like insulting) are considered work tactics to improve employee performance. The rationale is that bullying behaviors are detrimental to performance. The use of technology by hotel employees in Pakistan is relatively new [11], so chances are high that they may not even understand it as a form of bullying, because cyberbullying is difficult to interpret and ambiguous, so they would not know about it [81] and end up accepting it as a cultural norm.

The second hypothesis, that WCB has a significant indirect effect on WE through PWB, is supported. Our findings align with the COR theory [19], which states that stressful situations or adverse events may lead individuals to deplete their personal resources (such as PWB). This loss may be associated with further losses such as lower employee engagement among hotel employees. A previous study has proven the relationship between WCB and employees' well-being [76]. The result is similar to a study on the mediating effect of a toxic workplace environment (bullying, ostracism, and harassment) on PWB, which, thereby, can have negative consequences on the WE of employees [76].

The body of empirical research supports the hypothesis that WM mediates the relationship between PWB and work engagement. The results are aligned with previous studies; meaningfulness was significantly and positively related to WE [21,57]. Individuals with higher levels of PWB tend to lead to higher levels of engagement [20]. According to COR theory [74] when employees have WM, this appears to increase employees' WE.

5.1. Theoretical and Managerial Implications

The empirical result of this study reported that work stressors, which have already been investigated in relation to traditional bullying, are found to have an association with workplace cyberbullying, according to the findings of this study. The research findings enrich the literature on workplace cyberbullying by demonstrating that the PWB mediated the relationship between workplace cyberbullying and work engagement. This finding better understands the connection between PWB and work engagement when mediated by work meaningfulness. This, in turn, contributes to the literature, as a gap is highlighted by a recent call for papers by a Special Issue on mental health at the workplace [82].

There are substantial implications for managers and researchers interested in current work-related issues such as WCB. The findings suggest a few practical applications, such as encouraging the hotel industry to enhance the PWB and WM of employees. It is essential for hotel managers to understand that a new form of bullying has been identified

in the hotels and has deleterious effects on employees' WE. Considering that employee job resource has a positive impact on work engagement, hotel management may initiate a job support program in which employees are allowed to participate in policymaking for any new workplace issues. For practitioners, cyberbullying raises challenges about when and where to intervene because of its boundary-blurred nature. Cyberbullying poses new challenges for workplace health and safety rules; thus, hotel policies must consider the changing nature of the workplace and the potential dangers that may arise as a result of it. It is understandable that many organizations are unsure how to handle and respond to this new form of workplace cyberbullying. Ad hoc tactics are employed, such as attempting to pacify the perpetrator or referring the target to external counsel. However, target victimization might happen again if there are inadequate management practices. Thus, hotel management needs to ensure proper counseling policies and procedures. The practitioners can provide their staff with training to help them better handle a stressful work environment and to better control their feelings. For example, it has been shown that stress-management interventions involving altering thoughts and then reinforcing active coping abilities (i.e., a cognitive-behavioral approach) are helpful. Moreover, they can collaborate with the Cybercrime wing (CCW), FIA, to handle complaints and conduct legal action against cyberbullying in the workplace.

5.2. Limitations and Future Research Directions

The study limitations offer opportunities for researchers to further contribute to the literature. This study employed a quantitative research technique. Future researchers can adopt a mixed-method approach to improve the rigor of the research. The participants of this study were from Pakistan, which has a collectivist culture; thus, the study results cannot claim generalizability with other countries' hotel industries, especially if they have an individualist culture. Therefore, it is recommended to study WCB in different sectors and countries. This research used an online and cross-sectional methodology for data collection. Future researchers can examine it using the longitudinal survey technique.

The sample size indicates that participants were willing to bring up the problem of workplace cyberbullying in the hotel industry of Pakistan. Moreover, it would be interesting to note that there are a few limitations of online surveys [83], such as low response rates that could compromise the quality of web surveys; in this study, all four and five-star hotels were targeted to ensure appropriate sample size and hence it took seven months for data collection (March 2021 to September 2021). Moreover, the interest in the survey topic can encourage the respondents to feel motivated to fill out web surveys.

This study examines the mediating role of individual resources, PWB and WM, and how they can assist in working against cyberbullying. Future researchers can examine the moderating role of the hotel industry climate. In addition, it is necessary to research the prevention of workplace cyberbullying. Researchers should examine more closely how cyberbullying victims express themselves online to understand the phenomenon better. Intervention studies that focus on how bystanders of cyberbullying can intervene to support the target and prevent the cyberbullying situation would be an important contribution to the research area.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, A.A.; methodology, A.A. and D.M.H.K.; software, A.A. and M.F.I.; validation, A.A., D.M.H.K. and M.F.I.; formal analysis, A.A.; investigation, A.A.; resources, A.A.; data curation, A.A.; writing—original draft preparation, AA.; writing—review and editing, A.A., D.M.H.K. and M.F.I.; visualization, AA, D.M.H.K. and M.F.I.; supervision, D.M.H.K.; project administration, A.A. and M.F.I. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: Not applicable.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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