Meta- analysis of the effectiv e factors of bullying in the workplace

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A R T I CL E I NFO

A B S T R A C T

One of the important challenges of organizational behavior is bullying in the workplace. The aim of the present study is to describe, analyze, and combine the analyses presented in the field of variables related to bullying in the workplace, and the meta-analysis method was used. The statistical population of this study included all scientific research articles and thesis available on the IranDoc website in Iran from 2011 to 2014. Among the studies conducted, 16 studies were selected for review based on the inclusion criteria. The data from these 16 studies were statistically analyzed based on the Pearson r correlation coefficient and the t-statistic for the Hedges' g fixed and random effects model. All statistical analyses were performed using CMA2 software. The findings showed that the average overall and combined effect size for the fixed effects model was 0.07 g=0.05, which was significant (P<0.05) and for the random effects model was 0.10 g=0.05, which was not significant (P<0.05). Therefore, the average effect size of the factors cannot be interpreted. Among the 48 factors identified, the discriminant effect size of 45 factors was significant. The factors that have the greatest impact on workplace bullying (P<0.05) include authoritative leadership (g=-1.28), demand balance (g=-1.01), fairness (g=1.01), excessive self-interest (g=1.44), contextual factors (g=1.56), jealousy (g=1.35), moral climate (g=-1.96), and moral leadership (g=-1.13). The factors that have the least impact on workplace bullying (P<0.05), behavioral suspicion (g=0.28), organizational productivity (g=-0.27), organizational profit (g=0.20), individual ethics (g=-0.20). As a result, more studies are needed to find out the factors that have the greatest impact on workplace bullying. If the results of the combined studies are statistically significant, they can be used empirically and practically in prevention and intervention planning for workplace bullying.

Introduction

One of the main assets of any organization is its human resources. One of the problems of today's organizations is the existence of mistreatment. Workplace bullying is one of the mistreatments in the workplace. These behaviors affect both the performance of organizations and interpersonal relationships and the spirit of cooperation (Gholipour et al., 2007; quoted by Khazaei, 2023). Bullying is generally defined as severe, pervasive, continuous and negative abuse in the workplace and is experienced with goals such as power imbalance in the capital that can cause discomfort, humiliation and other undesirable consequences for the organization (Fax and Kwon, 2015; quoted by Khazaei, 2023). Given the importance of bullying in the workplace, many studies have been conducted in recent years to identify the variables affecting bullying behavior in the workplace. In Khazaei's research (3023), the effect of an empowered leader and innovative work behavior on bullying in the workplace was investigated with the mediator of success, and the results showed that 61% of the effect of empowered leadership and innovative work

behavior on bullying in the workplace is explained through the mediator of success. In Mirzaei's research, Pourabbas Khader (2023) showed significant results on the relationship between toxic leadership and bullying in the workplace. In Haghshenas's research (2023), the relationship between narcissistic leadership and bullying in the workplace was investigated and the results were significant. Ethical leadership has a significant relationship with bullying in the workplace (Papen, 2022; Amirhosseini, 2022; and Haghdoost, 2021). The balance of demands has a significant effect on bullying (Ahmadi, 2022). Also, in other studies, various variables related to bullying in the workplace have been investigated, including Saadatabadi (2021) organizational jealousy; Alizadeh Fard, Rasoul (2021) social exchange styles; Safarzadeh, Houshmand Kashani, and Gholami Fatideh (2021) organizational moral climate; Joukar (2021) authentic leadership; Sadeghi (2021) leadership styles; Maghsoudi Nejad (2023) supervisory aggression; Shabani and Nousha (2021) work-family conflicts and basic psychological needs; Miandeh (2021) ethical leadership, interactional justice; Alizadeh Fard and Rasoul (2021) social exchange styles; Lotfipour Siahkolroudi (2018) organizational justice; Seif Elahi and Hassanzadeh (2018) dimensions of organizational mistrust in the workplace; Naderi and Haghshenas (2018) authoritative leadership; Nimuri, Hosseini & Ahmadi (2022) job and management fit in the organization; Mortami and Farrokh Seresht (2018) Organizational climate; Hassan Pourmir (2017) Transformational leadership have been examined. Moslemi, Banshi and Koushki Jahromi (2018) identified five effective factors (contextual factors, individual-psychological factors, job-professional factors, organizational factors and behavioral-attitudinal factors) on bullying in the workplace based on a case study of the executive bodies of Bandar Abbas city. Contextual factors have the most impact and job factors have the least impact on the occurrence of work. Nazeri, Hassanpour, Jafarinia & Vakili (2019) conducted a meta-analysis to identify the antecedents and consequences of workplace bullying. The results showed that the largest effect size among the antecedents of bullying is related to stress (0.56), organizational silence (0.36), human resource management (0.33), Machiavellianism (0.31) and job requirements (0.3). Badroud, Pourmand & Mohammadi (2019), based on a review of studies conducted on the factors affecting bullying in the workplace, identified 61 factors, including role ambiguity, work pressure, intense competition, continuous organizational change and transformation, poor management, Lack of appropriate communication, job-employee mismatch, lack of career development and promotion, inconsistent work habits, lack of independence and freedom of action, lack of individual participation in decision-making, organizational climate, monotony of work, unnecessary transfers, failure to follow job descriptions, job alienation, low contact with work, inconsistent and destructive behaviors, irresponsibility and lack of accountability, lack of professional ethics, jealousy of employees, abuse of power by managers, excessive supervision by managers, relationalism, major changes in work methods, lack of importance to the organization and its goals, lack of desire for power, work history, individual characteristics, inappropriate organizational structure, lack of meritocracy, discrimination and injustice, lack of transparent rules and supervision, unfair reward system, economic and financial pressure, lack of importance to employees and their needs, lack of facilities in the workplace, high-level ignorance, lack of organizational belonging, weakness of the human resources department, inadequate hiring process, self-superiority, lack of solidarity between employees, organizational silence, failure to meet individual expectations, low resilience, manipulation, nervous and psychological stress, Work, work-life balance, organizational culture, family problems, fear of unemployment, job insecurity, lawlessness, age, lack of social skills, gender. In this study, relevant and effective factors have been identified only descriptively and the factors have not been analyzed. Over the past years, multifaceted models have been developed to examine the nature of bullying. In research, various factors have also been examined in the form of correlation schemes with bullying. This path suggests that one or two limited factors cannot be considered for proper recognition and planning to reduce bullying, but rather, attention should be paid to identifying a set of effective factors in this area, considering the various factors in this field, so that these results can be used for prevention and effective planning for this behavioral problem in the workplace. Therefore, research has examined the identification of various factors, and these efforts have resulted in a plurality of research in the aforementioned field. The best method for coordinating and integrating the findings of various studies in one field and combining the results of these studies is the meta-analysis method. Therefore, in the present study, considering the plurality of studies conducted in the field of bullying in the workplace, as well as the

importance of this issue and the lack of meta-analysis research in this field, the results of the studies have been combined in order to determine which factors affect bullying? Which factors have the highest and lowest effect on the bullying variable? Is it meaningful to combine the tests of various studies in the field of factors affecting bullying?

Method

Research Method:

Considering that the aim of this research is to describe, analyze, and synthesize the studies presented in the field of variables related to bullying in the workplace based on the research conducted; the method of the present research is meta-analysis. Meta-analysis research is quantitative in terms of data and the unit of analysis in meta-analysis is the quantitative findings of the studies conducted (Delavar, 2019). The method used in terms of data collection is library. Hence, the focus is on research conducted on a specific topic. Therefore, the population studied in the present research is all studies that have been registered in journals and domestic websites in the field of variables related to bullying in the workplace in the period from 2011 to 2024. All studies published from 2011 to 2024 on the subject of the research and from the sites of the present study were searched. To search for studies, the keywords "bullying at work", "organizational bullying" in the title and abstract and the keyword were searched in the Scientific Information Databases of Jihad Daneshgahi (SID), Comprehensive Portal of Humanities, Iranian Institute of Information Science and Technology (IRANDOC), Noor Specialized Journals Database (Noormagz), and the National Publications Database (Mag Iran). For gray literature (studies that are not on the Internet, for example, a study that is merely reported in a research source or is not easily available), a search was made using the Google Scholar search engine. Also, to reduce publication bias, conference papers were not included. The search results were 97 related according to the keyword, and duplicates and studies that did not have full-text accessibility were removed. 16 studies remained for meta-analysis. The steps for selecting articles for inclusion in meta-analysis are shown in Figure (1).

Table 1- Included studies for meta-analysis

1. Search for the keyword "workplace bullying" on SID, Humanities Portal, Irandoc, Noormagz, Iranmag.
2. After evaluating the titles and selecting relevant articles, (97) studies remained.
3. After removing duplicate studies, removing studies that were not available in full text, and removing studies that did not meet the Word criteria, (16) studies remained.

Study Inclusion Criteria

The inclusion criteria for studies in the meta-analysis were developed based on research related to the topic (Rasoolzadeh, 2023; Ganjif Taghavi, & Azimi, 2015). The inclusion criteria were:

- Quantitative research published between 2011 and 2024.
- Bullying was used as a criterion variable in the research.
- The research presented one of the F, T, R, χ^2 statistics.
- The research was in the form of theses, dissertations, and articles in scientific and research journals.

Data Analysis Method

To analyze the data, first, descriptive indicators (t-statistics, correlation coefficient, sample size, and significance level) reported in the articles that are necessary to calculate the effect size were collected and recorded in the CMA2 software. Then, fixed and random effects meta-analysis models were used to analyze the descriptive data, and Hedges' g index was used to calculate the disaggregated and total effect sizes of the studies. According to Cohen's d criteria, Hedges' g index estimates less than 0.3 are considered small, less than 0.6 are considered medium, and more than 0.6 are considered large effect sizes. All data were analyzed using the second version of CMA software.

Method of assessing publication bias

Funnel plots and the Doual Tweedie correction and fitting test were used to examine the number of missing studies, and the error-free N test was used to examine the number of missing studies. The funnel

plot shows the relationship between sample size and effect size, with small sample studies with relatively large variance dispersion appearing at the bottom and large sample studies appearing upwards around the mean effect size. Studies that fall outside the funnel shape are at high risk of bias. The Doual and Tweedie tests were used to quantify the extent of the publication bias effect. The classic safe number test indicates the number of missing studies, i.e., the number of studies supporting the null hypothesis that must be added to the analysis to obtain a statistically insignificant overall effect size and change the result.

Results

After reviewing research related to workplace bullying and selecting studies according to the mentioned inclusion criteria, 16 studies met the criteria for inclusion in the meta-analysis, which are presented in Table (1).

Table 1- Information on selected studies for meta-analysis

Sr/No.	Researcher	Year	Title	Effect size	Statistics
1	Merzaei, Pourabbas Khader	2023	Investigating the relationship between toxic leadership and intention to quit: the mediating role of workplace bullying and job insecurity	291	t
2	Papne	2022	Investigating the mediating role of workplace bullying in the relationship between ethical leadership and employee well-being	234	t
3	Ahmadi	2022	Investigating the effect of job demands and resources balance on psychological well-being with the mediating role of workplace bullying (case study: Sepehr Andisheh Scientific and Cultural Institute)	291	r
4	Amirhosseini	2022	Investigating the effect of ethical leadership style on workplace bullying with an emphasis on the mediating role of the moral climate of the Education and Training Organization of Tehran Region 13	247	t
5	Saadatabadi	2021	Analyzing the effect of envy in the organization on job burnout with the mediating role of workplace bullying (case study: Isfahan General Directorate of Cooperatives, Labor and Social Welfare)	136	t
6	Alizadeh Fard, Sadatrasoul	2021	Predicting bullying in the workplace of nurses based on social exchange styles	250	r
7	Joukar	2021	Explaining the effect of authentic leadership on employee health with the mediating role of workplace bullying in Shiraz Telecommunications Company	201	t
8	Haghparast	2021	The effect of ethical leadership on workplace bullying with the mediating role of transactional justice	90	t
9	Sadeghi	2021	Identifying the relationship between leadership styles, organizational health and bullying in the workplace (case study in the National Post Company in	120	t

			2019)		
10	Eslami Miandeh	2021	Investigating the mediating role of interactional justice in the impact of ethical leadership on bullying in the workplace	163	t
11	Loutifpour	2017	The relationship between organizational justice and bullying in the workplace. Study subject: employees of Omran Maskan Shomal Company (Namak Abroud)	181	r
12	Shaabani, Nyusha	2021	Predicting occupational bullying through work-family conflicts and basic psychological needs in nurses and paramedics	131	r
13	Safarzadeh et al.	2021	The effect of organizational moral climate on bullying behaviors from the perspective of a novice accountant	385	t
14	Seifollahi & Hassanzadeh	2017	Investigating the dimensions of organizational mistrust on bullying in the workplace	317	t
15	Moslemi et al.	2018	Identifying and evaluating factors affecting bullying in the workplace (case study: executive bodies of Bandar Abbas city)	240	t
16	Nadi & Haghshenas	2016	Trustworthy leadership on the experience of bullying in the workplace, emotional exhaustion and maintaining consequences	225	r

For each of the studies used, based on their influential variables on workplace bullying, the effect size index, upper and lower limits of this index, z value, and significance level were separately calculated. The disaggregated results of each study in the meta-analysis are presented in Table (2). The effect size was based on the Hedges g index. This index is interpreted according to Cohen's d criteria. In the Cohen d, estimates of the Hedges index less than 0.3 are considered small, less than 0.6 are considered medium, and more than 0.6 are considered large effect sizes. The inverse effect size indicates the inverse relationship of the factor with bullying. According to Table (2), the disaggregated effects of each study are reported, and a total of 48 factors have been identified as influential variables on workplace bullying, of which 45 factors affecting workplace bullying behavior have calculated significant effect size and z values ($p<0.05$). The research findings show that the factors of education (effect size 0.00), age (effect size 0.08), gender (effect size 0.19), cooperative ethical climate (effect size - 0.19), friendly ethical climate (effect size - 0.06), competence (effect size - 0.21), emotional mistrust (effect size - 0.01), authentic leadership (effect size - 0.22), fair leadership (effect size - 0.15), procedural justice (effect size - 0.05), ethical leadership (effect size - 0.04) are not significant at the significance level of 0.95. The factors that have the greatest impact on workplace bullying include authoritative leadership (effect size 1.28), balance of demands (effect size - 1.01), fairness (effect size 1.01), excessive self-interest (effect size 1.44), contextual factors (effect size 1.56), jealousy (effect size 1.35), ethical climate (effect size - 1.96), and ethical leadership (effect size 1.13). The factors that have the least effect on workplace bullying are behavioral suspicion (0.28), organizational productivity (effect size -0.27), organizational profit (effect size 0.20), and individual ethics (effect size -0.20). Therefore, the findings indicate that the factors affecting bullying have been identified, and the factors that have the most and least effect have also been identified, and the first and second research questions have been answered.

Table 2 Factors affecting workplace bullying

Researchers	Effective factor	Lower bond	Upper bond	Sig.	Z	Effect size of G
Nadi and Haghshenas (2017)	Trusted leadership	-1.59	-.97	.001	-8.05	-1.28
Sheybani & Nyusha (2021)	Work – family conflict	1.09	.36	.001	3.88	.72
	Basic psychological needs	.36	1.09	.001	-.99	-.63
	Autonomy	-1.11	-.38	.001	-3.98	-.74
	Competence	-.55	.14	.24	-1.17	-.21
	Need for communication	-.99	-.27	.001	-3.42	-.63
	Work – family conflict	.31	3.03	.001	3.88	.67
Mirazi, Pour Abbas Khader 2023)	Toxic leadership	.56	1.06	.001	6.34	.81
Ahmadi,2022)	Balance of claims	-1.27	-0.76	.001	-7.69	-1.01
Saifollahi (2018)	Emotional mistrust	-.21	.23	.92	.10	0.1
	Behavioral mistrust	.05	0.50	0.01	2.44	.28
	Cognitive mistrust	.31	.77	.001	4.64	.54
Alizadeh Fard, Rasoul (2021)	Social exchange styles — Fairness	.73	1.29	.001	7.09	1.01
	Extreme self-interest	1.14	1.75	.001	9.21	1.44
	Follow-up	.53	1.06	.001	5.82	.79
	Individualism	.18	.69	.001	3.35	.43
	Extreme investment	.15	.66	.001	3.13	.40
Moslemi et al. (2018)	Behavioral-motivational factor	-1.80	-.52	.001	-5.59	-.80
	Contextual factor	-1.89	-.123	.001	-1.23	-1.56
	Individual-psychological factor	-1.22	-.65	.001	-.65	-.93
	Organizational factor	-.79	-.26	.001	-3.84	-.53
	Occupational-professional factor	-.83	-.29	.001	-4.08	-.56
Safarzadeh et al. (2021)	Age	-.13	.28	.46	.74	.08
	Ethical atmosphere based on teamwork	-.39	.01	.06	-1.86	-.19
	Education	-.20	.20	.96	-.05	-.00
	Ethnicity	-.20	.20	1.00	-.01	-.00
	Friendly moral atmosphere	-.26	.14	.57	-.57	-.06
	Gender	-.01	.39	.06	1.86	.19
	Individual Ethics	-.40	.00	.05	-1.94	-.20
	Organizational Productivity	.07	.47	.01	2.62	.27
	Organizational Profit	-.41	.00	.05	-2.00	-.20
	Ethical Climate Based on Social Responsibility	-.97	-.54	.001	-6.91	-.75
	Organizational Rules and Procedures	-.67	-.26	.001	-4.42	-.46
	Profiteering	.88	1.34	.001	9.50	-1.11
Saadabadi (2021)	Jealousness	.95	1.76	.001	6.47	1.35
Jokar (2021)	Authentic Leadership	-0.49	.05	.12	-1.57	-.22
Pine (2021)	Ethical Leadership	-0.79	-.26	.001	-3.86	-.52
Amir Hosseini (2021)	Ethical Climate	-2.31	-1.61	.001	-10.96	-1.96
	Ethical Leadership	1.42	-.85	.001	-7.72	-1.13
Loutifpour Siahkalroudi (2018)	Distributive Justice	-1.09	-.46	.001	-4.84	-.78
	Interactional Justice	-0.40	1.02	.001	4.46	.71
	Organizational Justice	-0.66	-.07	.02	-2.41	-.37
	Procedural justice	-.35	.24	.72	-.36	-.05
Sadeghi (2021)	Fair Leadership Behaviors of Managers	-.21	.51	.41	.86	-.15

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	Organizational Health	.34	1.11	.001	3.72	.73
	Transactional Leadership Behaviors of Managers	.24	.99	.001	3.20	.62
	Transformational Leadership Behaviors of Managers	.13	.87	.01	2.65	.50
Haghparast (2021)	Transactional Leadership	.09	.95	.02	2.37	.52
	Ethical Leadership	.05	.90	.03	2.17	.47
Islami Miandehi (2021)	Ethical Leadership	-.35	.27	.80	-.25	-.04
	Transactional Justice	-.74	-.11	.01	-2.62	-.42

The overall results of the meta-analysis in Table (3) showed that using the random effects model, the total effect size of factors affecting workplace bullying was 0.10 at the 0.95 level.

Table 3- Overall effect size of studies based on fixed and random effects models

Model	Overall effect size	Lower bound	Upper bound	Z	Sig.
Fixed	.07	.11	.04	3.82	.001
Random	.10	.28	.08	1.10	.27

The results of the findings show that the random model of the total effect size of the factors affecting bullying in the workplace is 0.10, which is not significant at the 0.05 level. The total effect size using the fixed effects model is 0.07, which is significant at the 0.05 level. As a result, the hypothesis of effective combination of data is rejected.

One of the important issues in meta-analysis is the assessment of publication bias. Publication bias means that a meta-analysis cannot include all studies conducted on the subject under study. The most common way to identify publication bias is to display it using a Funnel plot. This plot (1) shows the status of studies.
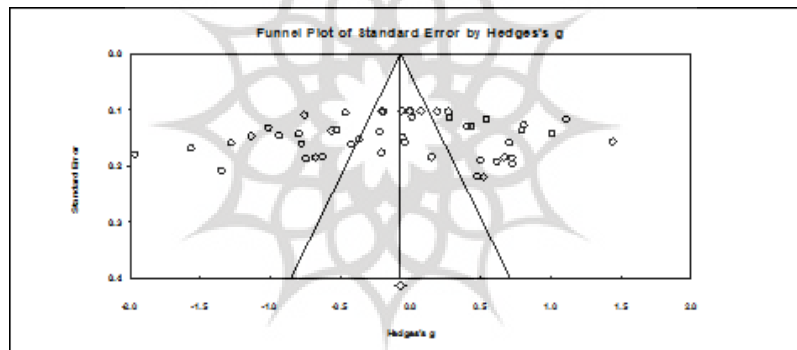
Figure 1: Funnel diagram of workplace bullying

As can be seen in Figure (1), most of the studies are symmetrically outside the funnel, indicating that there is bias in the selection of studies in this study. To complete the funnel plot and quantify the effect of bias, the Dual and Tweedy correction and fitting method was used. This method is used to display point estimates and obtain the Q value.

Table 3- Doual and Tweedy correction and fitting

Index	Fixed effect			Random effect			Q value
	Point estimate	Lower bound	Upper bound	Point estimate	Lower bound	Upper bound	Required studies
Observed value	-.07247	-.10966	-.03528	-.10100	-.28018	-.07818	1144.87654
Adjusted value	-.07247	-.10966	-.03528	-.10100	-.28018	-.07818	1144.87654

As can be seen in Table 3, the fixed and random effects did not change in the initial state and after adjustment, so the publication bias according to these data is non-existent or insignificant and therefore does not affect the results of the study. The error-free N test was used to check for the number of missing studies (Table 4).

Table 4-Classical error-safe N calculations

Z value for observed studies	-4.51329
P value for observed studies	0.0001
Alpha	0.05
Residuals (sequence)	2.00
Z for alpha	1.96
Number of observed studies	51
Missing studies that bring the P value to alpha	220

As reported in Table (4), it is necessary to add 220 studies to the research to lose significance. Given that this number of studies is large, we accept that the effect of bias in this research is negligible or non-existent.

Discussion and Conclusion

The main objective of the present systematic review and meta-analysis was to identify factors affecting workplace bullying in Iran and domestic research and to summarize them. Considering the inclusion criteria for meta-analysis, 16 studies were included and statistically analyzed. To answer the first research question, what are the factors affecting bullying? The results of the meta-analysis showed that out of the 16 studies reviewed, 48 effect sizes were obtained, of which 45 were statistically significant. This result is consistent with the findings of the research of Nazeri et al. (2018), which reported 14 significant antecedents for bullying. It was also consistent with the results of the research of Badroud et al. (2019), which identified 61 factors affecting workplace bullying in a review.

In response to the second research question, which factors have the highest and lowest effect on the bullying variable? The results of the present study showed that authoritative leadership has the greatest effect on workplace bullying. Authoritative leaders create trusted work environments that interact with followers through balanced processing, relationship clarity, internal moral perspective, and self-awareness. By helping to find meaning in work, increasing optimism, and creating verbal relationships, they build trust and strengthen and promote a positive moral climate, which in turn increases job satisfaction, reduces emotional exhaustion, and intention to quit. On the other hand, authoritative leadership leads to the formation of behaviors that reduce the likelihood of bullying in the workplace (Nadi and Haghshenas, 2017). Another factor that had a significant effect on bullying is the balance of job demands, which is in line with the results of Ahmadi's (2021) research. Given that the balance of job demands refers to the degree of fit between job expectations and individual resources for performing the job, when this balance is disrupted in an organization or department, job pressure and stress increase, which is a precursor to bullying. Because work pressure affects interpersonal interactions (Nazeri et al., 2019). The fairness factor had a high impact on bullying. Fair social exchange in interpersonal relationships in the workplace has the highest correlation with bullying and can predict it well. In a way, it can be concluded that fair behavior has led to a greater perception of bullying. Fairness is a perceptual cognition that includes judgment about other unauthorized actions that cause harm or threat, and it is inferred that in situations of bullying, unfair behaviors are common in the workplace (Alizadeh Fard & Sadatrasoul, 2021). The extreme self-interest factor, this factor is considered a kind of selfishness as a moral criterion in organizational decision-making and is the focus of analysis at the individual level. Selfishness at this level takes into account the individual needs and priorities of individuals. In the dimension of self-interest, organizational members seek to gain their own personal benefits rather than worrying about the benefits of others. Personal benefit is promoted over physical health, satisfaction, power, and happiness (Safarzadeh et al., 2022), as a result, conditions are created for bullying in interpersonal interactions. Also, contextual factors have been obtained based on part of the results of the study by Moslemi et al. (2018). Contextual factors include power imbalance, work history, individual characteristics, inappropriate organizational structure, lack of meritocracy, discrimination and injustice, lack of a performance evaluation system, lack of transparent rules and supervision, unfair reward system, economic and financial pressure, lack of welfare facilities, lack of attention to employees and their needs, lack of facilities in the workplace, and competition. As a result, all factors that are generally known as

contextual factors are effective in bullying in the workplace because the effect of these cases creates job stress, which is closely related to bullying (Nazeri et al., 2019).

The factor of envy is a positive factor affecting workplace bullying. This finding is consistent with the results of Saadat Abadi (2021). Jealousy in the workplace is a negative feeling that stems from comparing an individual with his colleagues. Jealousy has significant negative effects, including the deterioration of interpersonal relationships and various behaviors. Jealousy also creates the ground for bullying behaviors. The factor of ethical leadership is an inverse factor affecting bullying. This finding is consistent with the results of Payne (2022). Ethical leadership is in the field of appropriate behavior through respect for ethics and values, as well as the rights and dignity of others. The concepts of honesty, integrity, trust, and fairness are vital for ethical leadership (Hassanzadeh et al., 2011, quoted in Payne, 2022). In an organization whose managers behave based on the principles of ethical leadership, interpersonal interactions will be more positive and bullying will be less. The factor of ethical climate is inversely related to bullying. This finding was obtained from the research of Amir Hosseini (2022). Ethical climate represents the characteristics of an organization and is an organizational variable that can change and improve work conditions and expresses the procedures, practices, and policies of an organization with a consensus of ethical opinion. The cultural and social environment, the psychological climate of the organization, organizational history and ethical codes and standards, training programs in the field of ethics, management and communication methods, are all factors that contribute to the formation of an ethical climate in an organization (Gholipooar, 2017; quoted by Amir Hosseini, 2022). As a result, if the ethical climate is properly prevailing in any organization, bullying in interpersonal interactions will decrease.

The results of the present study showed that the factors that have the least effect on workplace bullying are personal ethics, behavioral suspicion factor, organizational productivity factor, and organizational profit factor. It is possible that issues such as research method, tools, and sample size in these factors cause less effectiveness. It may be due to the nature of the components, although based on the theoretical definition, each of these components is related to bullying, and in addition, this relationship has been confirmed in the research of Seifollahi and Hassanzadeh (2018), Lotfipour (2018). At the same time, it is suggested that more standard research be conducted to determine these factors.

To answer the third question of the present study, whether the combination of tests of various studies in the field of factors affecting bullying is meaningful? The results showed that the combination of studies in the present meta-analysis using the random effect model was not significant and it can be concluded that the factors affecting bullying in the workplace are not effective in combination and as a whole. No published internal research has been conducted in this field. One of the main reasons for rejecting this hypothesis is that the number of studies that have been researched on a factor was small in the present study. For example, only two studies have examined ethical leadership and most of the factors that have been studied in the studies have been conducted in a single case, as a result of which the aggregation and combination are not meaningful. One of the principles of combination is that a large number of studies have been conducted on a specific factor and for whatever reason the results are heterogeneous or due to the breadth of the studies and the aim of summarizing them, meta-analysis research is used. Given that the researcher was aware that a factor was not studied repeatedly, this research question was examined as a sub-question and the main purpose of the present study was to summarize the research. One of the limitations of the present study is that the selection of studies was done solely by one researcher, so the validity of the research was not calculated. In addition, most of the studies that were available in this field were related to master's theses. This problem may be because many of the studies that have been conducted in this field have not been published due to confidentiality and protection issues. It is suggested that researchers, taking into account the results of this study and the importance mentioned for each variable, conduct research in various organizations to investigate the effectiveness of factors affecting workplace bullying in order to better understand the role of these factors. In addition, research should also be conducted in the form of a combination of studies so that practical planning can be made based on the results.

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