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Research Article

Employee Marginalization Through Workplace Bullying and Its Influence on Turnover Intention in Selected Sri Lankan Corporate Sectors

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Abstract

Workplace bullying has become a major organizational concern and a social justice challenge because of its contribution to employee exclusion, psychological harm, and workforce instability. Although workplace bullying represents distinct negative workplace behaviors, employee marginalization reflects the broader organizational consequence involving systematic exclusion from participation, recognition, and psychological safety. This research investigated the effect of workplace bullying on employee turnover intention within selected corporate organizations in Sri Lanka. A quantitative research approach was employed using a structured questionnaire administered to employees across the selected organizations. Out of 384 distributed questionnaires, 357 valid responses were analyzed using SPSS. The analysis included reliability testing, exploratory factor analysis, descriptive statistics, and multiple regression. The results indicated that workplace bullying significantly affects employee turnover intention, with the regression model accounting for 81.8% of the variation in turnover intention. Professional undermining was identified as the strongest predictor, followed by verbal abuse, intimidation, and humiliation, whereas social exclusion showed no significant effect. Exploratory Factor Analysis further revealed considerable overlap among bullying dimensions, indicating that employees view bullying as interconnected expressions of organizational marginalization rather than separate behaviors. The findings suggest that workplace bullying limits employee voice, reduces psychological safety, and strengthens exclusionary organizational practices. From a practical perspective, the study supports the development of contextually appropriate anti-

bullying policies and grievance procedures for HR practitioners and policymakers in Sri Lanka. The findings also highlight the importance of ethical leadership, stronger anti-bullying measures, and inclusive workplace environments to enhance employee well-being and long-term organizational sustainability.

Keywords:

Employee Marginalization, Sri Lankan Corporate Sector, Turnover Intention, Workplace Bullying,

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Introduction

Workplace bullying has increasingly been recognized as a significant organizational and social justice concern. While bullying refers to specific negative behaviors such as verbal abuse, intimidation, and social exclusion, employee marginalization represents the broader structural outcome the systematic exclusion of employees from organizational participation, recognition, and psychological safety (Razzante et al., 2018; Van Heugten, 2021). This distinction matters because framing bullying as marginalization shifts the focus from individual misconduct (an HR issue) to organizational injustice (a social justice concern), with direct implications for policy design and organizational accountability.

Bullying behaviors create hostile workplace climates that systematically weaken employee dignity, well-being, and organizational inclusion (Lo Presti et al., 2019). This marginalization reflects broader social justice failures, as marginalized employees are disproportionately exposed to negative workplace behaviors, limiting their participation, voice, and career progression (Tye-Williams et al., 2020; Kim et al., 2026). The World Health Organization has further identified workplace harassment and psychosocial risks as major determinants of occupational stress and reduced organizational productivity (WHO, 2024). Within South Asian contexts, hierarchical management structures, collectivist cultural norms, and high power-distance relationships can normalize bullying practices and discourage employees from reporting mistreatment (Ahmad et al., 2021; Salin et al., 2019).

Despite the growing concern regarding workplace bullying, existing research remains overwhelmingly Western-centric, offering limited guidance for understanding how bullying contributes to employee marginalization and turnover intention in Sri

Lankan corporations. This lack of contextual evidence is particularly problematic given that hierarchical management structures and collectivist cultural norms may normalize bullying practices and suppress employee reporting (Ahmad et al., 2021; Salin et al., 2019). Without such evidence, organizations risk perpetuating exclusionary practices that undermine employee well-being and organizational sustainability. Therefore, this study aims to examine the influence of workplace bullying on employee turnover intention as an act of workplace injustice, while highlighting its role in fostering marginalization within the corporate sector.

Literature Review

Marginalization through Workplace Bullying

Recent literature distinguishes between workplace bullying as specific negative behaviors and organizational marginalization as the broader structural outcome the systematic exclusion of individuals from participation, recognition, and psychological safety. In this study, marginalization is conceptualized as the mediating process through which bullying behaviors influence turnover intention. Razzante et al. (2018) explain workplace bullying through Dominant Group Theory, suggesting that dominant organizational groups maintain power and privilege by marginalizing vulnerable employees. Bullying behaviors such as exclusion, humiliation, and intimidation become mechanisms through which organizational hierarchies are preserved. Their work critically highlights that marginalized employees often experience reduced voice, limited career mobility, and psychological isolation due to unequal power relations in workplaces. The authors further argue that addressing bullying requires not only behavioral interventions but also structural transformation and active allyship from dominant organizational actors. Van Heugten (2021) further emphasizes that workplace bullying contributes to emotional abuse, professional disengagement, and occupational exclusion, particularly within helping professions such as social work. The study critically links bullying to broader socio-political and neoliberal organizational pressures that intensify workplace stress and competition. Victims and bystanders may become disillusioned not only with their organizations but also with their professions, demonstrating how bullying contributes to long-term marginalization and withdrawal. Within collectivist and hierarchical societies such as Sri Lanka, these exclusionary dynamics may become further normalized, making marginalized employees less likely to report mistreatment or challenge authority. Thus, workplace bullying is not merely an organizational behavior problem but a social justice issue requiring structural responses that restore employee voice, dignity, and equitable participation.

Antecedents of Workplace Bullying

The literature identifies workplace bullying as a multidimensional phenomenon shaped by organizational culture, leadership behavior, work-related stressors, and socio-cultural conditions. Recent studies increasingly argue that bullying is not solely caused by individual personality differences but emerges through structural and organizational dynamics that normalize aggression and unequal power relations (León-Pérez et al., 2021; Quinn et al., 2024; Wright, 2020; Andrews et al., 2023). Organizational cultures characterized by excessive competition, poor communication, weak accountability mechanisms, and authoritarian management practices create environments where bullying behaviors are tolerated and reproduced (Pheko et al., 2017). In such contexts,

employees may fear retaliation or perceive bullying as an accepted managerial practice, thereby reinforcing silence and organizational complicity.

Leadership style is consistently recognized as a critical antecedent of workplace bullying. Webster (2016) argues that leaders influence organizational norms by either discouraging or legitimizing negative workplace behaviors. Authoritarian and inconsistent leadership approaches tend to intensify workplace hostility, whereas supportive and transformational leadership styles reduce the prevalence of bullying. Leaders who fail to address complaints or demonstrate favoritism can indirectly reinforce aggressive workplace cultures. This becomes particularly significant in high power-distance societies where employees are reluctant to challenge authority figures. Within the Sri Lankan context, Silva and Senarathna (2021) found that workplace bullying significantly influenced employees' intention to quit among sales representatives in a leading sales and distribution company. Their findings suggest that bullying behaviors originating from supervisors and coworkers were major contributors to employee dissatisfaction and withdrawal intentions. Importantly, perceived organizational support did not significantly moderate this relationship, indicating that general supportive attitudes alone may be insufficient when organizations fail to directly address bullying practices. This finding critically challenges assumptions that organizational support mechanisms automatically mitigate bullying outcomes and instead emphasizes the need for explicit anti-bullying interventions and accountability systems. Cultural dimensions further intensify the antecedents of workplace bullying in Sri Lanka (Gunawardena, 2019). Collectivist values, hierarchical organizational structures, and social norms emphasizing obedience and harmony may discourage employees from reporting abuse or confronting perpetrators. As a result, bullying behaviors may become institutionalized and normalized within workplaces. Employees who fear social stigma, career consequences, or exclusion may internalize negative experiences rather than seek organizational support. Consequently, workplace bullying in Sri Lanka cannot be fully understood without considering the interaction between organizational pressures, leadership practices, and socio-cultural power relations. Organizational tolerance for aggression, ineffective leadership, stressful job conditions, and hierarchical social norms collectively create conditions that marginalize employees and perpetuate bullying behaviors.

Impact of Workplace Bullying on Turnover Intention

The relationship between workplace bullying and turnover intention has received extensive scholarly attention due to its significant implications for employee well-being, organizational sustainability, and workforce stability. Turnover intention refers to an employee's conscious and deliberate willingness to leave an organization and is widely recognized as a strong predictor of actual turnover behavior (Duan et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2019). Contemporary literature consistently demonstrates that exposure to workplace bullying significantly increases employees' intentions to resign by weakening psychological attachment, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment (Ahmad & Kaleem, 2019). Empirical studies across multiple sectors and cultural contexts strongly support the positive association between workplace bullying and turnover intention. Research indicates that employees exposed to bullying report significantly higher levels of disengagement, absenteeism, emotional exhaustion, and intention to resign (Bentley et al., 2021; Muala et al., 2022; Malola et al., 2024).

Recent literature also emphasizes the role of mediating and moderating variables in this relationship. Asghar and Zulfiqar (2026) identified job burnout as a key mediating factor between workplace bullying and turnover intention, suggesting that bullying indirectly drives turnover by increasing emotional exhaustion and psychological fatigue. Similarly, Noopur and Burman (2021) and Baek and Lee (2022) highlight that resilience, social support, and perceived organizational support can influence how employees respond to bullying experiences. Employees with strong coping resources may demonstrate greater resistance to withdrawal intentions, whereas individuals lacking organizational support are more likely to adopt exit strategies.

Coetzee and Van Dyk (2017) found that workplace bullying reduced employees' vigor and dedication, thereby weakening work engagement and increasing intentions to leave organizations. Their findings critically suggest that bullying does not only directly affect turnover intention but also indirectly influences withdrawal behaviors through reduced psychological attachment to work. Similarly, Asghar and Zulfiqar (2026) identified job burnout as a significant mediator between workplace bullying and turnover intention among industrial employees, emphasizing that prolonged exposure to bullying depletes emotional resources and intensifies resignation intentions. Xia et al. (2023) further revealed that organizational commitment partially mediates this relationship among nurses in China, indicating that bullying weakens employees' emotional attachment to organizations before turnover intentions emerge.

Within the Sri Lankan context, workplace bullying appears particularly significant due to hierarchical organizational cultures and collectivist social norms that discourage confrontation and complaint reporting. Employees may tolerate hostile treatment to preserve workplace harmony or avoid retaliation, leading to prolonged psychological distress. Silva and Senarathna (2021) found that workplace bullying significantly increased intention to quit among Sri Lankan sales representatives, reinforcing the argument that bullying directly undermines employee retention within local organizations. Their findings also revealed that perceived organizational support alone was insufficient to reduce turnover intention when bullying behaviors remained unaddressed. Collectively, these studies highlight that workplace bullying operates through complex psychological pathways involving disengagement, burnout, and reduced organizational commitment. However, most existing studies treat turnover intention as an HR outcome rather than a justice outcome. Within marginalized populations, the decision to leave an organization may reflect the absence of procedural justice, psychological safety, and inclusive workplace practices.

Verbal abuse, including yelling, insults, ridicule, and offensive remarks, is consistently identified as one of the most prevalent forms of workplace bullying associated with turnover intention. Research shows that repeated verbal aggression damages employees' psychological well-being, self-esteem, and organizational trust, increasing withdrawal behaviors and resignation intentions (Acquadro Maran et al., 2022; Rosenthal et al., 2018). Coetzee and Van Dyk (2018) further found that bullying behaviors reduce work engagement, which subsequently increases turnover intention. Similarly, Asghar and Zulfiqar (2026) reported that bullying-related stress and burnout significantly predict turnover intention. Within collectivist workplaces, verbal abuse may further marginalize employees by silencing workplace voice and reinforcing power inequalities. From a Social Exchange Theory perspective, verbal abuse violates reciprocal exchange relationships, increasing withdrawal intentions (Mortimer et al., 2025).

H1: Verbal Abuse (VA) has a significant influence on Employee Turnover Intention

Humiliation in workplace settings, particularly public criticism and embarrassment, has been strongly associated with psychological distress and employee withdrawal intentions. Nielsen et al. (2022) argue that humiliation damages employees' professional identity, confidence, and emotional stability, thereby reducing organizational attachment. Meyer (2025) conceptualizes humiliation as a form of structural and symbolic violence embedded within organizational cultures that marginalize employees and suppress psychological safety. Xia et al. (2023) further demonstrated that bullying weakens organizational commitment, indirectly intensifying turnover intention through reduced emotional attachment to organizations. Dominant Group Theory explains that humiliation functions to reinforce organizational power hierarchies (Razzante et al. 2018).

H2: Humiliation (HU) has a significant influence on Employee Turnover Intention

Social exclusion significantly weakens employees' sense of belonging and organizational inclusion. Research indicates that excluded employees often experience emotional isolation, reduced morale, and disengagement, which subsequently increase turnover intention (Zafar et al., 2021). Razzante, Tracy and Orbe (2018) explain that exclusionary practices reinforce organizational power hierarchies and marginalize vulnerable employees within workplaces. Similarly, Van Heugten (2021) highlights that bullying-related exclusion contributes to professional disengagement and withdrawal from organizational participation. Coetzee and Van Dyk (2018) further found that reduced engagement resulting from bullying significantly predicts employees' intentions to leave organizations. Social Exchange Theory suggests exclusion violates norms of reciprocity, weakening organizational attachment (Tan et al., 2021).

H3: Social Exclusion (SE) has a significant influence on Employee Turnover Intention

Intimidation and threat-based behaviors create hostile and psychologically unsafe work environments that significantly contribute to turnover intention. Fear-inducing managerial practices, verbal threats, and coercive supervision increase employee anxiety, stress, and emotional exhaustion (Zhang et al., 2022; Hussain et al., 2020; Bortolon et al., 2019). Stress-based theories suggest that persistent exposure to intimidation depletes emotional coping resources, making organizational withdrawal a coping mechanism (Rastogi et al., 2018). Meyer (2025) further argues that intimidation reflects institutionalized power imbalances that reinforce marginalization within organizations. Asghar and Zulfiqar (2026) similarly found that workplace bullying contributes to job burnout, which mediates the relationship between bullying exposure and turnover intention among employees. Stress-based perspectives explain that intimidation depletes coping resources, motivating exit behaviors.

H4: Intimidation (INT) has a significant influence on Employee Turnover Intention

Professional undermining, including withholding information, unfair criticism, sabotage, and obstructing career development, significantly damages employees' professional confidence and organizational commitment. Abdulmuhsin et al. (2021) similarly argue that professional sabotage weakens trust in management and organizational fairness. Meyer (2025) further conceptualizes professional undermining

as a structural mechanism of marginalization that silences employees and limits professional recognition. Xia et al. (2023) also demonstrated that reduced organizational commitment resulting from bullying behaviors increases employees' intentions to resign from their organizations. Dominant Group Theory frames undermining as a mechanism for preserving organizational hierarchies (Tesi et al., 2019).

H5: Professional Undermining (PU) has a significant influence on Employee Turnover Intention

Extensive literature confirms that overall workplace bullying has a strong positive relationship with employee turnover intention across industries and cultural settings. Workplace bullying weakens organizational commitment, psychological well-being, work engagement, and employee trust, ultimately encouraging withdrawal behaviors (Durrah et al., 2025). Coetzee and Van Dyk (2018) found that workplace bullying indirectly increases turnover intention through reduced work engagement, while Asghar and Zulfiqar (2026) identified job burnout as a significant mediator. Xia et al. (2023) further demonstrated that bullying negatively affects organizational commitment, thereby increasing turnover intention. These findings collectively suggest that workplace bullying creates psychologically unsafe environments that marginalize employees and undermine organizational sustainability. Social Exchange Theory, Dominant Group Theory, and stress-based perspectives collectively support this relationship.

H6: Overall Workplace Bullying has a significant influence on Employee Turnover Intention

Literature Gap

Although workplace bullying has been widely examined in international literature, significant gaps remain within the Sri Lankan corporate context. Most existing studies are concentrated in Western countries where organizational structures, labor protections, and cultural dynamics differ considerably from South Asian environments. Limited research has explored workplace bullying as a process of employee marginalization within Sri Lankan organizations, particularly regarding how hierarchical cultures and collectivist values normalize exclusionary practices. Furthermore, prior Sri Lankan studies have largely focused on turnover intention without critically examining broader issues of psychological exclusion, organizational inequality, and employee vulnerability. There is also limited empirical evidence investigating the combined influence of specific bullying dimensions such as verbal abuse, social exclusion, intimidation, humiliation, and professional undermining on turnover intention. Beyond addressing this geographic gap, the study contributes theoretically by distinguishing bullying (behavior) from marginalization (outcome) and conceptualizing marginalization as a mediating mechanism. It also provides comparative evidence on the relative influence of five bullying dimensions, informing targeted interventions. Therefore, this study addresses these gaps by examining workplace bullying through a marginalization perspective while providing context-specific evidence from Sri Lankan corporations regarding its impact on employee turnover intention and organizational sustainability.

Methodology

Research Design

This research adopted a quantitative design to investigate the association between workplace bullying, employee marginalization, and turnover intention within Sri Lanka's corporate sector. A quantitative method was selected because it supports the systematic collection of standardized numerical information and enables statistical examination of relationships among study variables (Creswell, 2014). The investigation focused on five workplace bullying dimensions: verbal abuse, humiliation, social exclusion, intimidation, and professional undermining. The study was theoretically grounded in Social Exchange Theory (Cropanzano et al., 2017) together with stress-related perspectives, which explain that prolonged exposure to bullying diminishes employee commitment and increases intentions to withdraw from the organization (Rastogi et al., 2018). Data were collected through a structured questionnaire employing a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree to assess employees' perceptions of workplace bullying and turnover intention. This study is theoretically informed by Social Exchange Theory, stress-based perspectives, and Dominant Group Theory. Social Exchange Theory suggests that employees expect fair and respectful treatment, and persistent workplace bullying violates these reciprocal expectations, reducing organizational commitment and increasing turnover intention (Cropanzano et al., 2017). Stress-based perspectives explain that repeated exposure to bullying depletes employees' psychological resources, encouraging withdrawal behaviours (Rastogi et al., 2018). Dominant Group Theory further conceptualizes workplace bullying as a mechanism through which organizational power inequalities marginalize vulnerable employees (Pheko, 2018). Collectively, these perspectives support the view that workplace bullying functions as both an interpersonal stressor and a structural form of organizational marginalization.

Conceptual Framework

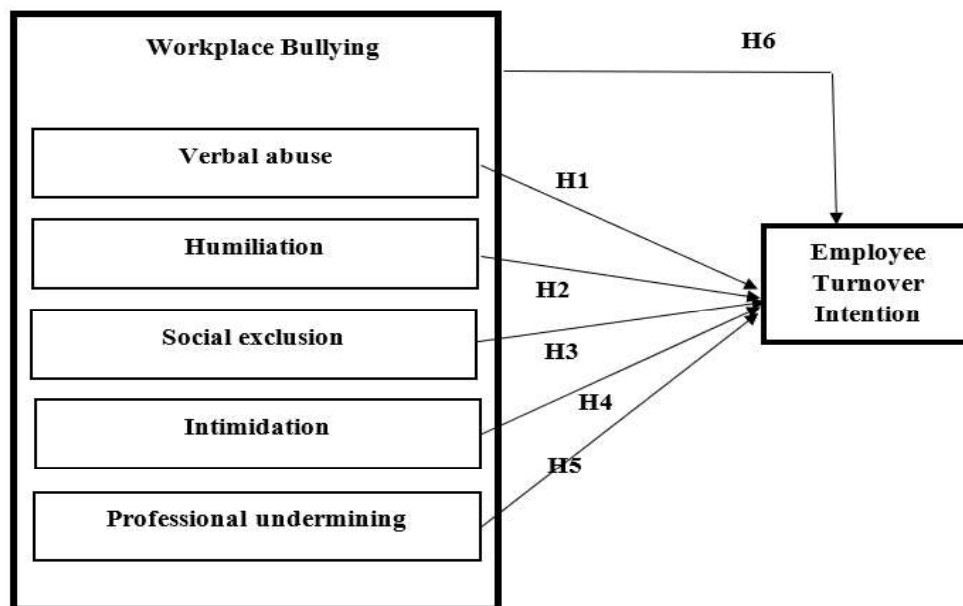


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework
Source: Developed by Author, 2025

In this study, employee marginalization is conceptualized as a process through which employees become psychologically, socially, and professionally excluded within organizational environments due to persistent exposure to workplace bullying behaviors. Bullying practices such as social exclusion, intimidation, professional undermining, and verbal abuse suppress employee voice, reduce participation in organizational processes, weaken professional recognition, and reinforce unequal workplace power relations. Therefore, workplace bullying is examined not only as an interpersonal organizational behavior issue but also as a mechanism of marginalization and workplace injustice. The study first examines the individual effects of each workplace bullying dimension on employee turnover intention through multiple regression analysis. Subsequently, an overall workplace bullying index was computed by aggregating all bullying dimensions to examine the collective influence of workplace bullying on employee turnover intention.

Population and Sample

The theoretical population comprised all employees working in Sri Lankan corporate industries including banking and finance, IT-BPM, apparel, and telecommunications, estimated at 3.6 million employees (Department of Census and Statistics, 2023). These industries were selected because they are characterized by competitive work environments, hierarchical structures, and high performance expectations, which can increase vulnerability to workplace bullying (Silva and Senarathna, 2021). This distinction is important because the findings reflect the accessible population and are generalized to the theoretical population with appropriate caution. No formal institutional ethics committee approval was obtained, as the study was conducted independently through social media without university, institutional, or organizational intervention. Participation was entirely voluntary, and no employee was required or pressured to participate by their organization. The required sample size was 384 respondents, which was considered adequate based on Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sampling recommendations for large populations.

A non-probability convenience sampling method was adopted due to practical limitations in accessing employee databases across organizations. This sampling method is commonly used in similar studies such as Bussu et al., (2023), Ng & Chan, (2021), and Fahie & McGillicuddy, (2021). On the other hand, access to organizational employee databases was restricted and workplace bullying represents a sensitive topic. Further, Respondents were informed that the questionnaire addressed sensitive workplace experiences, were given the option to skip any question, and could discontinue participation at any time. They were also encouraged to seek professional support or organizational assistance if they experienced distress.

Data Collection and Analysis

The questionnaire contained 30 statements, including five items each measuring verbal abuse, humiliation, social exclusion, intimidation, and professional undermining (25 workplace bullying items), together with five items assessing employee turnover intention. Responses were recorded using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Representative statements included: "I am often spoken to in a disrespectful tone in my workplace" (verbal abuse), "I have been made to feel embarrassed by my colleagues or superiors in front of others" (humiliation), "I am often left out of group activities or social gatherings at work" (social exclusion),

"Some people at work use intimidation to control or influence others" (intimidation), and "I feel that some colleagues deliberately question my competence" (professional undermining).

Primary data were gathered using a structured self-administered questionnaire adapted from established workplace bullying and turnover intention instruments (Nielsen et al., 2022). A pilot test involving 30 employees was undertaken to improve the clarity and reliability of the survey instrument. Statistical analyses were conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics summarized respondents' demographic characteristics and workplace bullying patterns, while correlation and multiple regression analyses examined the relationships between bullying dimensions and turnover intention. Construct validity was evaluated through Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) using principal component extraction with varimax rotation, producing two principal factors that explained 62.68% of the total variance (Table 4). EFA was selected instead of Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) because the research adopted an exploratory approach to examine how the five bullying dimensions operate within the relatively underexplored Sri Lankan context. In comparison, CFA is generally used to validate previously established factor structures across different populations (Boer et al., 2018).

Internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, where coefficients above 0.70 were considered satisfactory (Taber, 2018). Ethical standards, including informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation, were maintained throughout the study. A total of 384 questionnaires were distributed to employees from selected Sri Lankan corporations using convenience sampling. Among these, 357 completed questionnaires were suitable for analysis, yielding a response rate of 92.97%. One limitation of the research was the lack of formal institutional ethics committee approval because data collection was conducted independently through social media (WhatsApp) without organizational involvement. Nevertheless, participation remained entirely voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all respondents before completing the questionnaire. Participants were approached individually through social media (WhatsApp) using the researcher's professional networks, with no organizational involvement in participant selection. They were informed about the research objectives, while anonymity and confidentiality were maintained throughout the study. All collected information was used solely for academic purposes and securely stored to protect respondents' privacy.

Results

Table 1: Demographic Data

Demographic Factors	Category	Frequency	Percent (%)
Age Group	20–25 years	46	12.9
	26–30 years	90	25.2
	31–35 years	108	30.3
	36–40 years	53	14.8
	41–45 years	40	11.2
	46–50 years	20	5.6
Educational Qualification	A-Level / Diploma	85	23.8
	Bachelor's Degree	213	59.7

Work Experience in Current Organization	Postgraduate Degree or Higher	59	16.5
	Less than 1 year	46	12.9
	1-3 years	62	17.4
	4-6 years	103	28.9
	More than 6 years	146	40.9
Job Role	Frontline	98	27.5
	Administrative	129	36.1
	Technical staff	65	18.2
	Executive	65	18.2

The age group indicates that majority of the respondents lie within the 31-35 years (30.3%), and 26-30 years (25.2%) age group. Employees who are younger (20-25 years old) constitute 13.3% and older ones (41-45 years old and 46-50 years old) constitute 11.2 and 5.7 respectively. The majority of respondents (59.7%) hold a Bachelor's degree, indicating a predominantly undergraduate-qualified workforce. Another 23.8% have A-Level or Diploma qualifications, while 16.5% possess postgraduate degrees or higher. This distribution shows that the sample is largely educated at tertiary level, supporting reliable insights from individuals with strong academic and professional backgrounds. The majority of the respondents have a significant tenure level in their organizations, and 40.9% of the respondents have over six years of experience and 28.9% have 4-6 years of experience. The individuals with 1-3 years of experience constitute 17.4% and the comparatively new experiences (less than one year) constitute 12.9%. The sample as a whole represents a well-organized work force that has extensive organizational experience, which increases the level of credibility of their perceptions. The sample covers a wide variety of job positions, the largest of which is the administrative employees (36.1%). Frontline employees occupy a 27.6-percent share whilst the technical employees and executives occupy an 18.2% share. Such equal distribution means that there is representation at the operational, technical, and managerial levels, which aids in overall understanding of the experiences at the workplace.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Indicators	Mean	Std. Deviation
Verbal abuse	VA 1	3.64	1.110
	VA 2	3.57	1.096
	VA 3	3.59	1.092
	VA 4	3.56	1.068
	VA 5	3.62	1.081
Humiliation	HU1	3.52	1.116
	HU2	3.50	1.070
	HU3	3.53	1.069
	HU4	3.46	1.066
	HU5	3.51	1.143
Social exclusion	SE1	3.64	1.215
	SE2	3.62	1.164

		3.57	1.201
	SE3		
	SE4	3.59	1.199
	SE5	3.60	1.220
Intimidation	INT1	3.64	1.097
	INT2	3.64	1.053
	INT3	3.57	1.088
	INT4	3.55	1.074
	INT5	3.58	1.130
Professional undermining	PU1	3.71	1.065
	PU2	3.62	1.070
	PU3	3.54	1.113
	PU4	3.56	1.073
	PU5	3.55	1.087
Employee Turnover Intention	ETI1	3.64	1.068
	ETI2	3.65	1.095
	ETI3	3.63	1.062
		3.60	1.073
	ETI4		
	ETI5	3.66	1.095

The findings relating to verbal abuse indicate a moderately high level of negative verbal interactions within the workplace. Mean scores ranging from 3.56 to 3.64 suggest that employees frequently encounter disrespectful communication and hostile verbal behavior. Likewise, humiliation recorded relatively high mean values between 3.46 and 3.53, indicating that many respondents regularly experience embarrassing, degrading, or dignity-reducing treatment at work. Results for social exclusion also produced consistently high mean scores (3.57–3.64), with median values of four across all items, demonstrating that exclusionary practices are commonly experienced. Respondents reported being excluded from workplace activities, ignored during discussions, and socially isolated by colleagues, reflecting a strong sense of disconnection within their work teams. Similarly, intimidation and threats recorded consistently high mean scores ranging from 3.50 to 3.58, while all median values remained at four, suggesting that fear-based behaviors are prevalent within the workplace. Employees reported feeling threatened, pressured to comply with unreasonable demands, or reluctant to express their opinions due to concerns about possible retaliation..

Table 3: Reliability

Reliability		
Construct	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
VA	5	0.873
HU	5	0.923
SE	5	0.766
IN	5	0.897
PU	5	0.934
ETI	5	0.931

The reliability assessment confirmed satisfactory internal consistency for every study construct. Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranged between 0.766 and 0.934, exceeding the minimum acceptable threshold of 0.70 recommended by Taber (2018). These findings demonstrate that the measurement items consistently and reliably captured the intended workplace bullying dimensions as well as employee turnover intention.

Table 4: Validity

Validity Indicator	Value
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure	0.969
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (Sig.)	0.000
Number of Extracted Factors	2
Total Variance Explained	62.68%
Minimum Factor Loading	0.531
Maximum Factor Loading	0.826
Harman's Single-Factor Test - Variance Explained by First Factor	69.914%

The KMO value of 0.969 and significant Bartlett's Test ($p < 0.001$) confirmed strong sampling adequacy for factor analysis. Although six theoretical constructs were proposed, exploratory factor analysis extracted two dominant factors explaining 62.68% of total variance, with factor loadings ranging from 0.531 to 0.826. Further, the first factor accounted for 69.914% of the total variance, exceeding the 50% threshold (Podsakoff et al., 2003). This suggests that employees perceive workplace bullying dimensions as overlapping manifestations of broader organizational marginalization rather than entirely distinct behaviours, supporting the multidimensional nature of workplace bullying. Procedural remedies were implemented during data collection, including psychological separation of measures, anonymity assurances, and varying response formats. The strong theoretical relationship between workplace bullying and turnover intention, well-established in previous literature (Ahmad & Kaleem, 2019; Coetzee & Van Dyk, 2018; Xia et al., 2023), provides substantive justification for the relationships observed. Therefore, while method effects may contribute to the observed relationships, the substantive findings align with established theoretical expectations and prior empirical evidence.

Although six theoretical constructs were proposed, EFA extracted two dominant factors explaining 62.68% of total variance. This outcome is consistent with recent workplace bullying literature, which argues that employees experience bullying as interconnected forms of organizational marginalization rather than discrete behavioral categories (Meyer, 2025; Razzante et al., 2018). The two factors likely represent: (1) direct interpersonal aggression (verbal abuse, humiliation, intimidation) and (2) structural exclusion (social exclusion, professional undermining).

Table 5: Multiple Regression WB antecedents and ETI

Model R	R Square (R ²)	Adjusted Square	R	F-value
0.904	0.818	0.815		315.460**
Variable / Statistic	Beta (β)	t-value	Sig. (p)	VIF
VA	.222	4.650	.000	4.400
HU	.150	3.312	.001	3.978
SE	.035	.941	.347	2.648
IN	.212	4.283	.000	4.709
PU	.357	7.137	.000	4.817

The regression results indicate that Verbal Abuse significantly influenced Employee Turnover Intention ($\beta = 0.222$, $p < 0.001$); therefore, H1 was supported. Humiliation also demonstrated a significant positive influence on turnover intention ($\beta = 0.150$, $p = 0.001$), supporting H2. Intimidation significantly influenced turnover intention ($\beta = 0.212$, $p < 0.001$); thus, H4 was supported. Professional Undermining emerged as the strongest predictor of turnover intention ($\beta = 0.357$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H5. However, Social Exclusion did not significantly influence turnover intention ($\beta = 0.035$, $p > 0.05$); therefore, H3 was not supported. VIF values ranged from 2.648 to 4.817, below the conventional threshold of 10 (Hair et al., 2019). These values are closer to 5, which reflect potential multicollinearity. While multicollinearity may affect the stability of individual regression coefficients, it does not threaten the overall model validity (Hair et al., 2019). The significant overall F-value (315.460, $p < .001$) confirms that the model remains robust despite these limitations. However, the values approaching 5 for Professional Undermining (4.817), Intimidation (4.709), and Verbal Abuse (4.400) indicate some degree of multicollinearity, consistent with the conceptual interconnectedness of workplace bullying dimensions discussed in the EFA results. This multicollinearity may affect the interpretation of individual dimension coefficients, though it does not threaten the overall model validity.

Table 6: Multiple Regression – Overall WB and ETI

Model R	R Square (R ²)	Adjusted R Square	F-value
0.904	0.817	0.816	1584.302
Variable	Beta (β)	t-value	Sig. (p)
WB	0.904	39.803	0.000

Workplace Bullying (WB) has a very high correlation with Employee Turnover Intention (ETI) ($R = .904$). The value of R^2 (.817) suggests that WB alone accounts 81.7% of the variance of ETI. The relatively high explanatory power ($R^2 = 0.817$ – 0.818) is consistent with previous studies. Asghar and Zulfiqar (2026) reported $R^2 = 0.64$ among industrial employees. The slightly higher R^2 in the present study may reflect the conceptual overlap among bullying dimensions confirmed by the EFA and the cumulative nature of bullying experiences in the Sri Lankan context. These consistent findings across contexts suggest that workplace bullying explains substantial variance in turnover intention, reflecting the strong theoretical relationship between these constructs.

The overall WB has a strong positive impact on Employee Turnover intention ($B = 0.904$, $p = .000$), supporting the H6. The relatively high explanatory power of the

regression models ($R^2 = 0.817\text{--}0.818$) should be interpreted within the theoretical and methodological context of the study. Workplace bullying dimensions are conceptually related and represent interconnected forms of negative workplace experiences, which may collectively explain substantial variation in turnover intention. The factor analysis findings support this interpretation by demonstrating overlap among bullying dimensions.

Discussion

The findings of the study indicate that workplace bullying significantly influences Employee Turnover Intention (ETI) among employees in the Sri Lankan corporate sectors represented in this study. The regression model explained 81.8% of the variance in turnover intention ($R^2 = 0.818$), demonstrating strong predictive power. This finding supports prior literature which identified workplace bullying as a major determinant of employee withdrawal behaviors, disengagement, and turnover intention (Ahmad & Kaleem, 2019; Bentley et al., 2021; Malola et al., 2024). The significant overall model ($F = 315.460$, $p < .001$) confirms that bullying dimensions collectively contribute to employees' intentions to resign.

The study found that Verbal Abuse significantly increased turnover intention ($\beta = 0.222$, $p < .001$), supporting previous studies which showed that repeated insults, yelling, and offensive communication damage employees' psychological well-being and organizational trust (Acquadro Maran et al., 2022; Rosenthal et al., 2018). Humiliation also had a significant positive effect on turnover intention ($\beta = 0.150$, $p = .001$), supporting Nielsen et al. (2022) and Xia et al. (2023), who argued that humiliating experiences weaken employees' emotional stability and organizational attachment. Intimidation and threats similarly influenced turnover intention significantly ($\beta = 0.212$, $p < .001$), supporting stress-based perspectives that hostile and fear-based environments intensify emotional exhaustion and withdrawal behaviors (Xi et al., 2021; Rastogi et al., 2018).

Professional Undermining emerged as the strongest predictor of turnover intention ($\beta = 0.357$, $p < .001$). This finding aligns with Abdulmuhsin et al. (2021) and Meyer (2025), who emphasized that sabotage, unfair criticism, and withholding opportunities damage professional identity and organizational commitment. In hierarchical Sri Lankan workplaces, where career advancement depends on supervisory patronage, professional undermining severs future career prospects a fundamental breach of the employee-organization exchange relationship (Cropanzano et al., 2017; Gunawardena, 2019).

However, Social Exclusion did not significantly influence turnover intention ($\beta = 0.035$, $p > .05$). This non-significance may reflect Sri Lanka's collectivist culture, where exclusion is normalized as a mechanism for enforcing hierarchy and group conformity, reducing its unique predictive power (Gunawardena, 2019). The EFA results support this, as exclusion items loaded with other dimensions, suggesting employees experience it as part of broader marginalization rather than an isolated predictor.

The overall workplace bullying variable strongly predicted turnover intention ($\beta = 0.904$, $p < .001$), explaining 81.7% of variance in ETI. This finding supports Coetzee and Van Dyk (2018), Asghar and Zulfiqar (2026), and Silva and Senarathna (2021), confirming that workplace bullying weakens work engagement, increases burnout, and reduces

organizational commitment, ultimately encouraging employee exit behaviors. The high R^2 values (0.817-0.818) reflect conceptual overlap between bullying dimensions, as employees experience these behaviors as overlapping forms of organizational exclusion.

For Sri Lankan organizations, these findings suggest prioritizing transparent career development practices (given professional undermining's dominance), leadership training on respectful communication, and holistic anti-bullying policies that address all dimensions collectively. However, the cross-sectional design and convenience sampling limit causal claims and generalizability beyond the organizations represented.

Conclusion

This study examined the impact of workplace bullying on employee turnover intention within the Sri Lankan corporate sector by focusing on five bullying dimensions: verbal abuse, humiliation, social exclusion, intimidation, and professional undermining. The findings confirmed that workplace bullying significantly influences employees' intentions to leave their organizations, creating psychologically unsafe and exclusionary work environments. Professional undermining emerged as the strongest predictor of turnover intention, followed by verbal abuse, intimidation, and humiliation, while social exclusion was not statistically significant.

Exploratory Factor Analysis further revealed substantial overlap among bullying dimensions, with extracted factors explaining 62.68% of total variance. These findings suggest that employees perceive workplace bullying experiences as interconnected forms of organizational marginalization rather than entirely separate behaviors. Bullying suppresses employee voice, weakens professional recognition, and reinforces unequal workplace power relations, thereby contributing to psychological exclusion and organizational injustice.

The study contributes to the literature by extending workplace bullying research beyond traditional organizational behavior perspectives toward issues of employee dignity, marginalization, and social justice.

The dominance of professional undermining as the strongest predictor necessitates transparent promotion criteria, objective performance appraisal systems, and confidential grievance mechanisms specifically addressing career sabotage and information withholding. Given Sri Lanka's high power-distance culture where subordinates are reluctant to challenge supervisors, leadership development programs should emphasize respectful communication, managerial accountability, and mechanisms for subordinates to raise concerns without fear of retaliation. Anti-bullying policies should adopt a holistic approach, recognizing that employees experience bullying as interconnected marginalization rather than isolated incidents; such policies must include clear reporting procedures with robust protection against retaliation. Organizations should also conduct regular climate surveys to identify bullying patterns and evaluate intervention effectiveness, embedding these practices within broader diversity, equity, and inclusion frameworks.

Several limitations should be acknowledged. The cross-sectional design prevents causal inferences; longitudinal research is needed to establish directionality. Self-report measures may be subject to social desirability and recall bias, and the absence of

organizational-level variables (e.g., culture, leadership styles, HR policies) limits understanding of contextual influences. The convenience sample restricts generalizability beyond the organizations represented. Future research should adopt longitudinal designs, incorporate multi-source data (e.g., supervisor ratings, objective turnover), and examine moderating variables such as organizational culture and leadership style. Comparative cross-industry and cross-cultural studies across South Asian contexts would further illuminate how cultural factors shape bullying dynamics. Finally, future research should examine workplace bullying not only as an HR concern but as a social justice issue, investigating how bullying perpetuates systemic inequality and whether anti-bullying interventions meaningfully restore employee voice and organizational justice.

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Authors' Contributions

D. L. Thilakasiri contributed to the conceptualization of the study, manuscript writing, literature review, and overall supervision of the research. N. Chandrasiri contributed to data collection and data analysis.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this study.

Ethical Approval

Ethical considerations were strictly maintained throughout the study. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all respondents prior to data collection. Respondents were assured of anonymity and confidentiality, and the collected data were used solely for academic and research purposes. The study complied with accepted ethical standards for social science research.

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