

How is Work Disengagement Affected by Workplace Bullying in the Hotel Industry? The Role of Authentic Leadership

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Abstract

Work disengagement is a serious challenge for every organization; it is a barrier to employee sustainable performance and establishing a sustainable competitive advantage. This study explored how hotel employees' work disengagement (WD) is affected by workplace bullying (WB), taking into account authentic leadership (AL) as a moderator. PLS-SEM technique is adopted and examined by WarpPLS 7.0 software. The full-time employees of 5-star independent hotels operating in Egypt represent the population of this study. A valid sample of 387 employees was obtained. Findings of the study demonstrated that WB positively correlates with WD. Findings also showed a negative relationship between AL, WB, and WD. Furthermore, the results indicated that AL acts as a moderator and dampens the positive relationship between WB and WD. The study contributes to the theoretical understanding of AL, WB, and WD in the context of the hotel sector. In practice, the research offers hotel management guidelines for dealing with workplace bullying and disengagement, as well as maximizing the advantages of authentic leadership. The study offered insightful recommendations to lessen workplace bullying, which might enhance hotel staff members' well-being and sustainable performance. Limitations and prospective future research areas were also addressed.

Keywords: Work disengagement, workplace bullying, authentic leadership, hotel industry

Introduction

Organizations face a variety of challenges as a result of the ongoing changes in the global business environment. Many organizations may have ethical and financial collapses as a result of these challenges (Maximo et al., 2019; Mukwevho et al., 2020; Oluwole, 2020; Khairy et al., 2023; Khairy & Elzek, 2024). Workplace disengagement is a serious challenge for every organization. Work disengagement is defined as a person's withdrawal or distancing from all parts of their work (Demerouti et al. 2010). Businesses must comprehend this issue. If the issues around this work disengagement are not adequately handled, it might have negative effects and harm the company's reputation. Workplace bullying is regarded as the most important of all the work-related problems and worries that are prevalent in every organization

(Einarsen et al., 2011; Mendiratta & Srivastava, 2023). Bullying is described as “the systematic mistreatment of a subordinate, a colleague, or a superior, which, if continued, may cause severe social, psychological, and psychosomatic problems in the victim” (Einarsen & Mikkelsen, 2003: 3).

Workplace bullying has been recognized as a very damaging psychological risk factor in hospitality organizations (Nielsen et al., 2010; Xiang et al., 2023). The hospitality industry is suffering social risk as a result of frequent employee complaints of bullying and abuse (Xiang et al., 2023). In the hospitality sector, about 16% of workers encounter unfavorable behaviors at work (Teo et al., 2020). Due to the heavy workload and their jobs requirements, employees in the hotel sector are more likely to encounter frequent disputes and workplace bullying, which has an impact on their output and level of service (Xiang et al., 2023; Srivastava et al., 2023). The labor-intensive nature of the hotel business, hierarchical structures, strict standards, and employee helplessness are all underlying factors for lots of bullying in the hotel industry (Patah et al., 2010; Xiang et al., 2023).

Authenticity, on the other hand, is commonly considered a very significant social value and an essential component of good leadership (George et al., 2007). The present study will concentrate on authentic leadership as a type of positive leadership (Stander & Coxen, 2017), which has been shown to have a beneficial influence on several organizational and employee behaviors (Coxen et al., 2016). Workplace disengagement is one of these behaviors. “The focus of AL is on a leader's interaction with his or her followers (Wong & Cummings, 2009). Many leadership theories place emphasis on the qualities and actions of a leader, but relatively few of them concentrate on the interaction between a leaders and their subordinates. AL places a strong emphasis on personal and social identity (Wong & Cummings, 2009). According to AL, personal and social identification processes are ways that enable both leaders and followers to gain self-awareness” (Maximo et al., 2019).

Regarding “the research gap, it has recently been said that “engagement and disengagement are not opposites and that various factors may influence or hinder either construct” (Hejjas et al., 2019: 329). As stated by Macey and Schneider (2008), “non-engagement” rather than “disengagement” is more likely to be the reverse of engagement. As a result, while AL is favorably related to engagement at workplace (Demirtas 2015), it cannot be assumed that it reduces disengagement (Mostafa et al., 2021). Furthermore, while there is agreement on the detrimental consequences of WB, the research has not clearly described how bullying contributes to the outcomes (Xiang et al., 2023). Despite focused research and practice emphasis on the detrimental impacts of WB on workplaces (Islam et al., 2021; Pouwelse et al., 2021), the phenomenon continues to be a controversial issue on a global scale (D’Cruz et al., 2021; Ahmad et al., 2022). Moreover, WB has received a great attention in the Western context (Mendiratta & Srivastava, 2023) but has received less attention in the Eastern setting. Additionally, there is a debate across cultures on the impact of WB on work outcomes (Xiang et al., 2023). Those who can view bullying as a challenge rather than a barrier may not be negatively impacted and may even do better (Majeed & Naseer, 2019). Therefore, researching bullying in Egypt, a country in the Middle East, would enable us to add to the discussion on how different cultures respond to bullying at work. As a result, the current study seeks to address gaps by investigating the impact of WB on WD, taking into account the moderating role of AL in the hospitality industry context in Egypt.

Review of literature and hypotheses development

Workplace bullying and work disengagement

According to Demerouti et al. (2010), the level of work disengagement refers to how much a person separates or withdraws from all parts of their job. Disengaged employees, according to

Kahn (1990: 64), "withdraw and defend themselves physically, cognitively, or emotionally during role performances". Work disengagement also entails an "emotional, cognitive, and behavioral rejection of the job" (Bakker et al., 2004: 84). Because of this, disengaged employees not only believe that their jobs are regular but also carry them out mechanically or exhibit withdrawal tendencies (Demerouti et al. 2001). However, little research has been conducted on disengagement and its causes (Hejjas et al., 2019; Mostafa et al., 2021). Bullying, according to Srivastava and Agarwal (2020), is one of the behaviors that often negatively impact a person's job task. The first who incorporate the notion of WB into theoretical research was Leymann in 1990. Einarsen et al. (2002) defined bullying as negative hostile behavior that is regular and systematic. Scholars define workplace bullying as "a situation in which one or more individuals perceive themselves to be continually affected by the negative behaviors of one or more individuals over a period of time, and in which the target has difficulty defending themselves against these behaviors" (Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2007: 847). WB is a societal problem and is defined as aggressive behavior designed to harm or degrade a person (Livne & Goussinsky, 2018). According to Georgi et al. (2016), employees who are subjected to WB are less productive and experience greater exhaustion. This is because bullying raises people's levels of worry and anxiety. Bullying also causes psychological pain and emotional tiredness by exhausting one's emotional resources (Anasori et al., 2020).

Employee engagement is negatively impacted by workplace bullying (Ariza-Montes et al., 2017; Valentine & Fleischman, 2018; Reknes et al., 2021; Vincent et al., 2022). Previous research has found a substantial link between work disengagement and unethical behaviors such as workplace bullying (Shu et al., 2011; Moore et al., 2012). Furthermore, "moral disengagement theory" proposes that when individuals' ethical norms and moral ideals are violated "for example, as a result of workplace bullying behavior", they experience self-condemnation and discomfort (Bonner et al., 2016). Following this theory, we suggest that when employees experience bullying at work, it results in unfavorable circumstances (Raza et al., 2023), increasing work disengagement. We formulated the first hypothesis as follows:

H1: WB positively affects WD.

Authentic leadership and workplace bullying

A fast-growing collection of academic and empirical studies has been conducted since the idea of AL was first introduced to the literature around seven decades ago (Aboramadan et al., 2021). Since the beginning of this theory, AL has been regarded as one of the most critical characteristics impacting the behaviors of subordinates (Semedo et al., 2017; Shahid & Muchiri, 2019). AL is the process wherein leaders are conscious of their ideas and behavior within the setting in which they work (Gardner et al., 2005). According to Avolio and Luthans (2006) and Maximo et al. (2019), authentic leaders are frequently aware of their moral viewpoints, values, strengths, and knowledge as well as those of their subordinates. The relationship between leadership and WB has been studied in a variety of ways, including leaders as precursors to WB (Balducci et al., 2021), leaders roles in promoting or impeding WB interventions (Samnani, 2021), and styles of leadership that either encourage or discourage WB (Balducci et al., 2021; Samnani, 2021). Ahmad (2018) notes the necessity to explore moral and ethical leadership practises because the literature on the relationship between WB and leadership highlights the detrimental effects of dysfunctional and harmful leaders. Such leadership fosters an appropriate work environment that is free of WB (Islam et al., 2018). Authentic leaders provide a new moral paradigm that emphasizes principles, ethics, and consistency between words and actions, minimizing common leader concerns such as unethical

behaviors "i.e. workplace bullying" (Costas & Taheri, 2012; Aboramadan et al., 2021; Ahmad et al., 2022). So, we formulated the second hypothesis as follows:

H2: AL negatively affects WB.

Authentic leadership and work disengagement

The existing literature provides substantial evidence that AL improves organizational performance and work outcomes (Woolley et al., 2011). AL, as a type of positive leadership, decreases employee psychological discomfort and increases team members' psychological safety (Zhao et al., 2020). It also appears to have a favorable impact on numerous organizational and staff behaviors (Coxen et al., 2016). These behaviors include being engaged at work (Maximo et al., 2019; Dwesini, 2019; Chiwawa & Wissink, 2021; Khattak et al., 2022). Leadership has been identified as an important positive indicator of employee engagement (Aboramadan & Dahleez, 2020). Prior research has shown that leaders' attitudes and behaviors have an impact on their subordinates' behaviors (Aboramadan et al., 2021). May et al. (2003) claim that the better work-related behaviors of followers, "i.e., work engagement," and their performances within the company, serve as examples of the beneficial influence of AL on subordinates' behaviors. This is because the related transparency authentic leaders have helps to retain confidence and trust among leaders and employers. This inspires and motivates followers to be more engaged in their organization, therefore, decreasing employee disengagement at work (Mostafa et al., 2021). So, we postulated the third hypothesis as follows:

H3: AL negatively affects WD.

Authentic leadership as moderator

Consistent with the principle of "authentic leadership theory", AL have strong self-awareness and a sense of morality, they are aware of both their perception of themselves and how others see them. They are also aware of how their actions influence people around them, for better or worse (Avolio et al., 2004; Walumbwa et al., 2008). AL is viewed as the primary source of favorable leadership practices necessary to generate good work-related results (Avolio & Gardner, 2005), and decreasing negative work-related outcomes "i.e.g. work disengagement". It is also suggested that true leadership may make a huge impact in organizations by allowing workers to engage with their job by creating a welcoming and encouraging good atmosphere at work for both employees and their superiors (Avolio & Gardner, 2005) and reducing unethical workplace behavior "i.e. workplace bullying". Leaders with authentic traits communicate their ideas freely, have a healthy balance in their approach, realize their strengths and weaknesses, and act and interact with others according to high moral standards. This, in turn, is likely to lead to improved work outcomes (Alilyyani et al., 2018; Aboramadan et al., 2021) and help in combating bullying in the hospitality industry (Srivastava et al., 2023).

Furthermore, according to social contagion theory, a contagion effect arises when employees regard the leader as being optimistic, resilient, real, dependable, ethical, and consistent across time. This, in turn, reduces the likelihood of harmful attitudes and behaviors among employees (Avolio et al., 2004; Luthans et al., 2006; Christakis & Fowler, 2013), such as workplace bullying behavior. Moreover, "the leaders are in a position to encourage the "contagion effect" shared ideals among other employees as a result of this perception. Employees are eventually motivated to demonstrate positive behaviour, have a sense of self-worth, and feel obligated to"reciprocate (A Megeirhi et al., 2018; Ilies et al., 2005),

consequently, reducing work disengagement. Therefore, we formulate the fourth hypothesis as follows:

H4: A moderating effect of AL exists in $WB \rightarrow WD$ relationship; AL dampens $WB \rightarrow WD$ relationship.

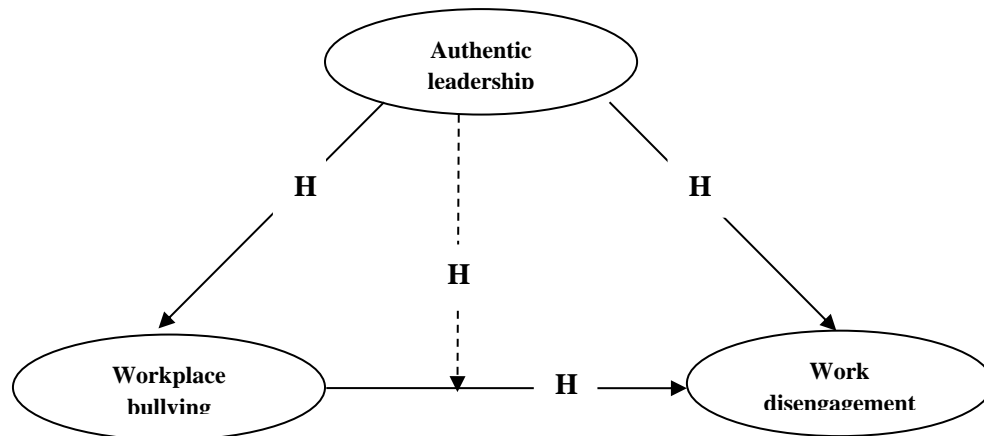


Figure 1: Theoretical study model

Methodology

Measures

An 8-item scale adapted from Phuong and Takahashi (2021) was used to evaluate employees' perception of authentic leadership. For example, "My leader demonstrates beliefs that are consistent with actions" and "My leader listens carefully to different points of view before coming to conclusions". Workplace bullying was assessed by an 8-item scale adopted from Catley et al. (2013). For instance, "Your hotel understands the problem of workplace bullying well enough to manage the problem effectively" and "People in your hotel understand what is acceptable in terms of bullying and the consequences for such behavior". The work disengagement was examined by a 9-item scale extracted from Schaufeli (2006). For instance, "I am not enthusiastic about my job" and "When I get up in the morning, I do not feel like going to work".

Sampling, data collection, data analysis

Data were gathered from employees working in independent hotels operating in Egypt. Independent hotels were chosen for investigation because they suffer from intrinsic disadvantages (Holverson & Revaz, 2006; Connell et al., 2015). Also, they are dominated by family enterprises and demonstrate restricted development owing to non-economic objectives, limited marketing, quality assurance concerns, pricing practices, and a lack of financial resources. Furthermore, underutilized assets, deteriorating profit margins, and greater vulnerability to occupancy and seasonal swings than bigger hotels create competitiveness concerns. Such unfavorable working circumstances foster a hostile workplace climate, which may lead to instances of bullying (Anasori et al., 2020). Therefore, a sample of 15 independent hotels operating in Egypt's Greater Cairo region was examined.

For this study, to gather information from hotel staff, a questionnaire was employed. There were two sections in the questionnaire. While the first section contained the respondents' demographic profile, the other contained the items used to measure the latent variables. All items were graded from 1 "strongly disagree" to 5 "strongly agree".



The dissemination of questionnaires to hotel staff conducted via an online and self-administered survey. Two different sampling techniques were used. The initial step was to adopt a self-selection sampling approach by distributing the questionnaire in person and sharing the survey-created online link via the LinkedIn web site. The survey link was then delivered to surveyors through their LinkedIn profiles using a convenient sampling approach. A total of 387 valid responses (252 online plus 135 self-administered) were obtained and analyzed between June and July 2023. There are no official figures detailing the total number of staff employed in Egypt's independent hotels. As a result, the current investigation used sampling equation proposed by Cochran's (1963). This equation gives a representative sample of 385 replies for large populations when a list of populations is unobtainable, such as in the current investigation. Thus, the 387 valid responses obtained were sufficient for testing the proposed model of the study.

The current study used a prominent analytical method in hotel studies (Hair et al., 2020), namely, the PLS-SEM technique to evaluate the study's "measurement and structural model", as well as to test the hypotheses.

Results

Participant's characteristics

According to Table (1), there were 332 (85.8%) males and 55 (14.2%) females among the 387 participants in this research. There were 185 (47.8%) responders had ages fewer than 30, and 146 (37.7%) had ages between 30 and 40. Furthermore, the bulk of them (n=307, 79.3%) had a bachelor's degree. In addition, 140 (36.2%) had work experience of fewer than two years, 120 (31.0%) had two to five years, 51 (13.2%) had six to ten years, and 76 (19.6%) had more than ten years.

Table 1. Participant's characteristics (N=387).

		Freq.	%
Gender	Male	332	85.8
	Female	55	14.2
Age group	Fewer than 30 yrs	185	47.8
	From 30 to < 40 yrs	146	37.7
	From 40 to < 50 yrs	47	12.1
	More than 50 yrs	9	2.3
Educational level	High schools	48	12.4
	Bachelor degree	307	79.3
	Master/PhD degree	32	8.3
Work experience	Fewer than 2 yrs	140	36.2
	From 2 to 5 yrs	120	31.0
	From 6 to 10 yrs	51	13.2
	More than 10 yrs	76	19.6

Factor loading and descriptive statistics

Table 2 illustrates factor loading results. The computed item loadings varied from 0.573 to 0.877. Hair et al. (2010) believed that factor loading values which greater than 0.5 are to be acceptable. Table (2) also showed the mean scores of authentic leadership, workplace bullying, and work disengagement as perceived and reported by hotel employees were (2.25±0.84), (3.54±0.71), and (4.18±0.64), respectively.

Reliability and validity

For all variables, as shown in Table 3, "Cronbach's alpha" and "composite reliability" values were more than 0.7. Also, since the AVE values exceed 0.5, the scales' convergent validity can



be established using the Hair et al. (2020) criteria. Further, multicollinearity concern was also checked through "full collinearity VIF" confirming that there is no multicollinearity issue.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics and factor loading.

	Mean*	SD	Item loading**
Authentic leadership (AL)	2.25	0.84	-
"AL.1. My leader seeks feedback to improve interactions with others.	2.32	1.08	0.744
AL.2. My leader accurately describes how others view his or her capabilities.	2.77	1.21	0.805
AL.3. My leader says exactly what he or she means.	2.02	1.03	0.754
AL.4. My leader is willing to admit mistakes when they are made.	2.50	1.20	0.815
AL.5. My leader demonstrates beliefs that are consistent with actions.	2.08	1.15	0.573
AL.6. My leader makes decisions based on his/her core beliefs.	2.20	1.19	0.817
AL.7. My leader solicits views that challenge his or her deeply held positions.	2.68	1.26	0.783
AL.8. My leader listens carefully to different points of view before coming to conclusions."	1.77	0.99	0.738
Workplace Bullying (WB)	3.54	0.71	-
"WB.1. Your hotel understands the problem of workplace bullying well enough to manage the problem effectively.	3.51	1.11	0.697
WB.2. People in your hotel are accepting of bullying behaviors.	3.55	.90	0.780
WB.3. Your hotel's HR response has been effective in cases of bullying.	3.07	1.18	0.775
WB.4. Your hotel has an effective reporting system that allows employees and management to report cases of bullying.	3.27	1.04	0.863
WB.5. People in your hotel understand what is acceptable in terms of bullying and the consequences of such behavior.	3.40	1.03	0.809
WB.6. Leaders in your hotel are willing to stand up to bullies.	3.97	0.86	0.777
WB.7. Bullying in your hotel harms staff motivation.	4.00	0.87	0.695
WB.8. Bullying in your hotel harms staff morale."	3.51	1.02	0.628
Work disengagement (WD)	4.18	0.64	-
"WD.1. At my work, I do not feel bursting with energy.	4.25	0.69	0.803
WD.2. At my job, I do not feel strong and vigorous.	4.29	0.72	0.877
WD.3. I am not enthusiastic about my job.	4.30	0.73	0.830
WD.4. My job does not inspire me.	4.06	0.85	0.718
WD.5. When I get up in the morning, I do not feel like going to work.	4.19	0.81	0.762
WD.6. I do not feel happy when I am working intensely.	4.31	0.70	0.825
WD.7. I am not proud of the work that I do.	4.07	0.97	0.717
WD.8. I am not immersed in my work.	4.06	0.79	0.790
WD.9. I do not get carried away when I am working."	4.16	0.76	0.717

* "Low: 1.00 to 2.33, Average (Moderate): 2.34 to 3.66, High: 3.67 to 5.00", SD" Standard Deviation", ** p value<0.05

Table 3. Reliability and convergent validity

Construct	CA	CR	AVE	Full col vif
Authentic leadership (AL)	0.892	0.914	0.573	1.100
Workplace Bullying (WB)	0.891	0.914	0.572	1.342
Work disengagement (WD)	0.921	0.935	0.615	1.338

CA "Cronbach's alpha", CR "Composite Reliability", AVE "Average Variance Extracted".

Results in Table 4 prove the discriminant validity of the study because as proposed by Franke and Sarstedt (2019), "the correlation between two latent variables must be significantly less than unity". The "findings indicated that each variable' AVE value is more than the highest" common value.

Table 4. Results of discriminant validity

	AL	WB	WD
Authentic leadership (AL)	0.757	-0.231	-0.125
Workplace Bullying (WB)	-0.231	0.756	0.472
Work disengagement (WD)	-0.125	0.472	0.784

The research model's fit and quality indices

The current study met all ten of Kock's (2021) model fit and quality index requirements (see Table 5).

Table 5. Model fit and quality indices

	Assessment	Criterion	Supported/Rejected
Average path coefficient (APC)	0.239, P<0.001	P<0.05	Supported
Average R-squared (ARS)	0.187, P<0.001	P<0.05	Supported
Average adjusted R-squared (AARS)	0.184, P<0.001	P<0.05	Supported
Average block VIF (AVIF)	1.118	acceptable if ≤ 5 , ideally ≤ 3.3	Supported
Average full collinearity VIF (AFVIF)	1.215	acceptable if ≤ 5 , ideally ≤ 3.3	Supported
Tenenhaus GoF (GoF)	0.359	small ≥ 0.1 , medium ≥ 0.25 , large ≥ 0.36	Supported
Sympson's paradox ratio (SPR)	1.000	acceptable if ≥ 0.7 , ideally = 1	Supported
R-squared contribution ratio (RSCR)	1.000	acceptable if ≥ 0.9 , ideally = 1	Supported
Statistical suppression ratio (SSR)	1.000	acceptable if ≥ 0.7	Supported
Nonlinear bivariate causality direction ratio (NLBCDR)	1.000	acceptable if ≥ 0.7	Supported

The results of testing study hypotheses

The results of testing study hypotheses are presented in Figure (2). Figure 2 shows that WB positively correlates with WD ($\beta=0.48, P<0.01$), which means that when WB increases, WD tends to be high. H1 is therefore supported. Also, AL negatively correlates with WB ($\beta=-0.24, P<0.01$) and WD ($\beta=-0.11, P<0.01$). When AL is higher, WB and WD tend to be low. H2 and H3 are therefore supported. Moreover, AL had a moderating effect on WB→WD relationship ($\beta=-0.13, P<0.01$). This means that AL dampens the relationship between WB and WD. H4 is therefore supported.

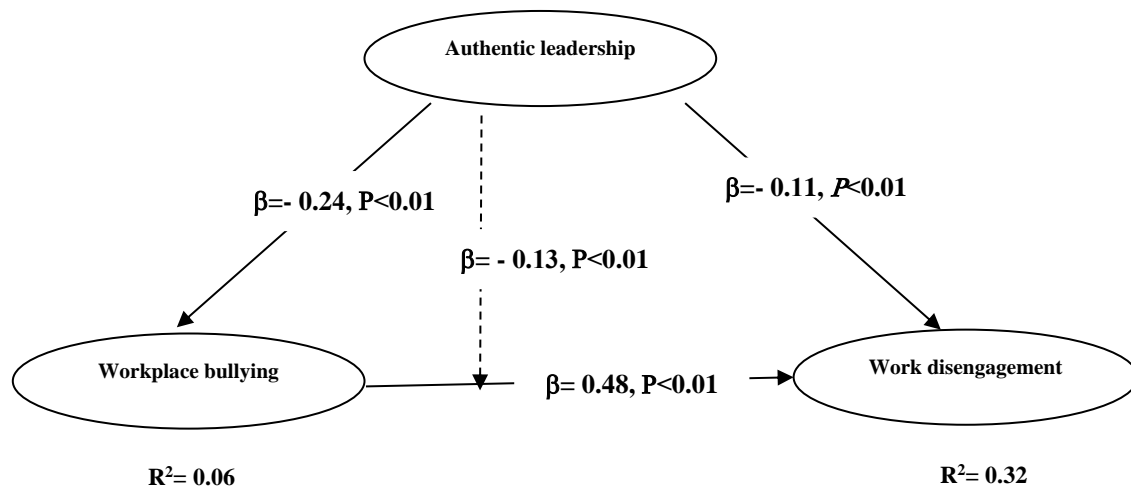


Figure 2: The structural model for testing study hypotheses

Figure 2 also showed that authentic leadership interpreted 6% of the variance in workplace bullying ($R^2=0.06$). Moreover, authentic leadership and workplace bullying interpreted 32% of the variance in work disengagement ($R^2=0.32$).

Discussion

The current paper explored hotel employees’ perception of WB and how it affects their WD. The paper also examined the moderating impact of AL in WB→WD relationship. The results showed that hotel employees’ perception of WB positively affects WD. This is consistent with prior research of Ariza-Montes et al. (2017), Valentine and Fleischman (2018), Arnetz et al. (2019), Reknes et al. (2021), Vincent et al. (2022), and Raza et al. (2023) who claimed that employees perceptions of workplace bullying increase their work disengagement. On one hand, Ram (2018) claimed that power imbalances are frequently linked to bullying. Hotels have significant work pressure, little discretion, and a lack of managerial control and work

organization (Bohle et al., 2017). On the other hand, employees cannot be engaged in their jobs unless their intrinsic needs are met (Deci et al., 2001); these needs are dampened by workplace bullying, which lowers the intrinsic drive to work (Goodboy et al., 2020). Also, employees who have been bullied frequently experience a lack of support from their coworkers and difficulty relating to others (Tracy et al., 2006). Bullying, according to Bryant and Buttigieg (2009), is also associated with a range of negative outcomes, from crying and refusing to go to work to more extreme responses such as suicide and homicidal impulses. Unhealthy working conditions can have major consequences for an employee's health, including poor judgment, impatience, anxiety, aggression, inability to focus, and memory loss (Appelbaum & Roy-Girard, 2007). Bullying victims at work experience higher levels of anxiety and sadness, as well as decreased perceived self-esteem. They also leave their existing jobs to pursue jobs elsewhere (Zapf, 1999), as a consequence of work disengagement.

Results also showed that AL had negative effects on WB and WD, which are consistent with earlier research (Aboramadan et al., 2021; Balducci et al., 2021; Samnani, 2021; Ahmad et al., 2022), who claimed that authentic leadership decreases employees perceptions of workplace bullying, and consistent with (Maximo et al., 2019; Aboramadan et al., 2021; Mostafa et al., 2021; Khattak et al., 2022), who claimed that authentic leadership decreases work disengagement. Authentic leadership fosters a pleasant environment that does not tolerate bullying (Hauge & colleagues, 2011). Bullying tends to be common in the stressful work contexts when individuals' efforts to achieve their job goals become difficult for several reasons, including excessive expectations, role overload, and role ambiguity. These factors appear to be less prevalent when hospitality leaders constantly connect with followers openly and transparently and display integrity in their decision-making. More interestingly, authentic leadership practices decrease bullying by increasing employee engagement (Laschinger et al., 2012). This is due to the climate of trust and psychological safety authentic leaders create (Meskelis & Whittington, 2020).

Furthermore, the results showed that AL dampens the positive relationship between WB and WD. This result comes to be in line with previous research of Aboramadan et al. (2021) and Srivastava et al. (2023) who argued that AL helps in improving work outcomes and in combating bullying. The current study result also proves the “social contagion theory” principle that ideas, attitudes, and behaviors arise as a result of mutual interaction. When employees see the leader as positive, resilient, authentic, dependable, ethical, and consistent over time, a “contagion effect” occurs. As a result, the risk of detrimental attitudes and behaviors among employees, such as workplace bullying, is reduced. Moreover, because of this view, the leaders are in a position to encourage “contagion effect” common values among other workers. Employees are eventually encouraged to behave in good manners, possess a sense of self-worth and believe that they must return the favor, which reduces workplace disengagement.

Theoretical implications

This is among the pioneering studies that examine how AL could dampen the effect of WB on WD in the setting of the hotel industry. The paper responds to the call of Mendiratta and Srivastava (2023) for more research on WD in the Eastern cultural context. The study also attempted to address the controversy about the influence of WB on work outcomes (Xiang et al., 2023). The study also responds to Okumus's (2020) appeal for further studies on leadership in hospitality and tourism, since there is still a dearth of knowledge and various knowledge gaps that need to be filled. Moreover, considering that the majority of research on AL was based on Western experiences, this is one of the few studies that investigate AL in a Middle Eastern/African setting, namely Egypt (Malila et al., 2018). Furthermore, the current study

contributes to the knowledge on WD, as most of the studies conducted on work engagement; however, few research has been carried out on disengagement and its causes (Hejjas et al., 2019; Mostafa et al., 2021). Finally, by adopting the social contagion theory in studying how authentic leadership could dampen the increased effect of WB on WD in the context of the hotel industry, this study provides new insight and extends the empirical evidence supporting the contagious effects in the context of hospitality management.

Managerial implications

The findings of this study give empirical support for the theoretical claim that AL lowers WB and WD. The results support the use of AL in management processes within the hospitality industry, which may enhance teamwork, performance, motivation, and engagement while discouraging bullying behaviors. Human resource development professionals need to review the study's findings because they're useful for their work. Workshops that help managers develop their authentic leadership abilities must be held. An AL development program will help leaders adopt actions that show followers a great deal of respect and mindfulness while also motivating them to adopt actions that will have a good effect on the organization's bottom line. A bullying work environment can lead to depression, anxiety, and stress. Employees who are depressed, worried, or agitated are more likely to make mistakes when delivering services to customers. Additionally, policies and procedures should focus on eradicating and avoiding occurrences of bullying as well as enhancing employee work engagement. Since authentic leadership emphasizes the moral and ethical facets of leadership, it can encourage hotels to make ethical decisions that lessen unethical practices like bullying. As a result, HR professionals should collaborate with organizational leaders to create procedures and guidelines that actively promote and encourage ethical behavior. Similarly, HR professionals should design programs that foster a healthy work environment and foster positive interactions among workers and between employees and supervisors. Furthermore, it is necessary to have policies and standards that ensure zero tolerance for any sort of bullying behavior. Hotels should have procedures in place to help employees who report feeling stressed, anxious, or depressed such as seeking consultation from professional organizational psychologists.

Limitations and directions for future research

This paper includes some limitations that open up new research directions. First, this study investigated the role of AL in dampening the positive relationship between WB and WD. Future studies should look into other leadership styles such as benevolent leadership or ethical leadership, in addition to moderating variables like psychological safety or workplace spirituality. Second, although employee self-reporting should be utilized to evaluate work disengagement, information on workplace bullying and authentic leadership may also be gathered using more objective methods. Thus, participant observations at work, for instance, might be utilized to objectively collect data on bullying at work for future studies. Third, to ensure the generalizability of the current study paradigm, it should be implemented in other hospitality businesses, such as restaurants. The amount of authentic leadership in those organizations, as well as its impact on workplace bullying and work disengagement, should be investigated to develop managerial implications for boosting work engagement among hospitality personnel. Comparative studies are also needed between independent and chain hotels in their workplace bullying, authentic leadership, and work disengagement. Lastly, because human attitudes and behaviors change over time, longitudinal studies can be used in future research to validate causation interactions between variables. Further studies can be undertaken in another developing nation “i.e. MENA counties” to determine if different results may be obtained.

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