

# Workplace Bullying, Employees' Wellbeing and Organizational Outcomes: A Review of Trends and Future Business Implications

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## Abstract

*The authors investigate the progression of scholarly inquiry into workplace bullying and employee well-being, with particular attention to publication trajectories, influential outlets, prominent contributors, dominant research themes, and anticipated future directions. Employing a bibliometric analysis, the study answers five key questions, which discuss the quantity of publications in developed and developing countries, top-impacted journals, authors' ranking in terms of frequency of mentioning, related themes, and trends that are experienced. The results indicate a notable growth, particularly in the two domains of scholarly interests, over recent years in healthcare and organizational studies. New triangles emphasize the adverse outcomes of supervisor abuse, bullying, and work aggression on the mental condition of the employees, their work satisfaction, and performance. The moderator variables, which include support of the organization, personality, and social support structures, including the theory of conservation of resources, often come to light. The methodology is also focused more on the improvement of psychometric instruments and the application of more sophisticated statistical methods. The current bibliometric review can help to have a better insight into the intellectual environment of the workplace bullying and well-being studies, to provide the knowledge for possible future investigations in the field, and to take the necessary practical organizational action.*

**Keywords:** Employee well-being, Bibliographic analysis, Organizational health, Mental health, Job satisfaction, Psychological health, Employee wellness, Workplace bullying.

## 1. Introduction

Employee well-being (EWB) and workplace bullying (WB) have become central concerns in organizational psychology and management studies. EWB refers to the holistic experience of employees in terms of their psychological, physical, and social health, while WB involves repeated harassment or abuse that leads to psychological harm and reduced job satisfaction. Over the past two decades, research on these topics has accelerated in response to growing awareness of occupational stress, toxic workplace conditions, and the global call for healthier work environments.

Despite this progress, the literature remains fragmented. Most existing studies explore the two domains independently, with limited integration of how workplace bullying directly shapes employee well-being outcomes. Moreover, cross-national differences reveal that research is disproportionately concentrated in developed countries, while developing nations remain underrepresented. Hence, there is a need for a comprehensive bibliometric assessment to capture global publication trends, identify influential sources and authors, and highlight emerging research themes (Sarwar et al., 2024).

This paper addresses this need by applying bibliometric analysis to map the intellectual structure and research trajectory of workplace bullying and employee well-being. By synthesizing publication trends, highly cited works, and evolving themes, the study provides a macro-level overview that informs both academic research and organizational practices aimed at improving employee well-being (Kühn & Rieger, 2017).

## 2. Literature Review

Under the umbrella of UNO, the World Health Organization (WHO) in 1948, although not with a universally accepted definition, published the most useful interpretation of health: "Well-being is a situation of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not just the absence of any disease or infirmity" (Kühn & Rieger, 2017). WHO defines human healthiness with respect to social, emotional, and physical perspectives, meaning that health does not mean the absence of diseases but well-being in many areas of life. However, various concepts and disciplines offer

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profound insights into the subject of health. Discussions of public health and human progress often reference the World Health Organization's definition.

When employees, managers, or supervisors mistreat an employee, a bullying issue arises, essentially a conflict between the parties in that workplace (Gupta et al., 2017). Conservation of Resources (COR) theory describes a mediation model that highlights bullying results in having fewer resources, thus reducing the health of employees as well as their well-being (Nielsen & Einarsen, 2018). Research shows that mistreatment at workplaces can lead to many undesirable and harmful consequences, such as decreased job satisfaction, decreased work engagement, and more stress (Sarwar et al., 2023; Einarsen et al., 2020).

This bibliometric study provides a systematic overview of the evolving literature specifically addressing workplace bullying and employee well-being while considering the growing trends in the field of employee well-being. This study helps the researchers to explore the previous studies and to step into further research in these areas through the following research queries:

RQ1: How many publications are there in the field of employee well-being and workplace bullying in developed and developing countries?

RQ2: Which journals have the most citation impacts in the field of employee well-being?

RQ3: Who are the pioneers in these realms? Which authors are mostly cited?

RQ4: What topics are most related to employee well-being and workplace bullying?

RQ5: What are the dominant trends and themes in research on employee well-being and workplace bullying?

### 3. Methodology

Bibliometric evaluation has been adopted with increasing trends recently due to its ability to provide comprehensive information on a particular issue (Van Eck & Waltman, 2017). It was first proposed by Garfield (1955). This method uses a variety of computational tools to search and analyze an available list of literary records, including books, articles, and book chapters. The use of statistical methods to elucidate research questions and highlight future trends is called data analysis (Bouyssou & Marchant, 2011; De Bakker et al., 2005). Compared to standard frameworks, this approach is innovative and creative. Therefore, bibliometric studies provide the reader with information about historical trends on the subject, point out the latest developments in the field, and provide opportunities for further research (Sarwar et al., 2020; Durieux & Gevenois, 2010).

#### 3.1 Database Selection

Bibliometric analysis starts with the identification of databases that might be useful for the study. So, it is vital to use reliable and appropriate data sources for analysis to make accurate decisions (Rueda et al., 2007). Numerous observations have shown that the databases of Elsevier, Web of Science, and Scopus are reliable and up to date (Obianuju et al., 2022). The current study was done in the Web of Science, which is widely recognized as one of the leading databases utilized by scholars worldwide (Falagas et al., 2008).

#### 3.2 Scope of Study

This bibliometric study focuses only on papers about the well-being of employees and their bullying in the workplace. We selectively focused on research centered only on employee well-being and workplace bullying while excluding similar subjects, such as bullying, strategic management, organizational management, psychological bullying, etc. We excluded studies that did not primarily concentrate on the well-being of employees. Studies that used "well-being" as a buzzword without defining employee well-being were excluded.

#### 3.3 Search Criteria

A search was conducted specifically for papers relating to employee well-being, using five distinct combinations. The advanced search feature combined five-word combinations using logical operators, namely "TITLE-ABS-KEY ("Employee Wellbeing") OR TITLE-ABS-KEY ("EWB") OR TITLE-ABS-KEY ("wellbeing")". Other options that were exercised are TITLE-ABS-KEY ("Workplace Bullying") and TITLE-ABS-KEY ("Wellbeing Practices"). When the authors initiated the search query, 157 documents about employee well-being were displayed by the database. Following this procedure, they conducted a comprehensive analysis of the abstracts of all the papers, excluding any irrelevant ones, resulting in a final count of 157.

#### 3.5 Measurement

For analysis, Bibliophagy, a web-based interface for the R-package, was used to analyze the interconnections among highly cited authors, the level of cooperation between writers, and the coordination across nations and organizations, as well as the keywords and associated knowledge about the issue. This interactive web application (GUI) built on R's Shiny framework was used for cluster or band examination or bibliometric analysis by visualizing terrestrial networking maps using matrices representing co-authorship and co-occurrence relationships (N. Van Eck & Waltman, 2010).

4. Results and Analysis

Literature on employee well-being indicates a growing interest across both developed and developing countries, with relatively greater emphasis observed in developed contexts. It has been observed that from 2001 to the present, a total of 157 documents were found by 481 different authors in the Web of Science database. These included 138 journal articles, 10conference papers, one editorial, seven review papers, and one conference review.

The trajectory of employee well-being is shown by a graph in Figure 1, highlighting the interesting information regarding the increase in employee well-being research. The graph shows that there was only one paper published in the year 2001. No paper was published during 2002and 2003. Only two papers were published in 2004, while no papers were published in 2005. The same trend continues till 2010. In 2011, this research domain gained the attention of researchers with the publication of four papers. Since 2011, the number of published papers in this research domain has shown an increasing trend. 13 papers were published in 2018, while a maximum of 23 papers were published in 2022 and 19 papers in 2023. Figure 2 highlights the gaps in the primary data sources used in this study.

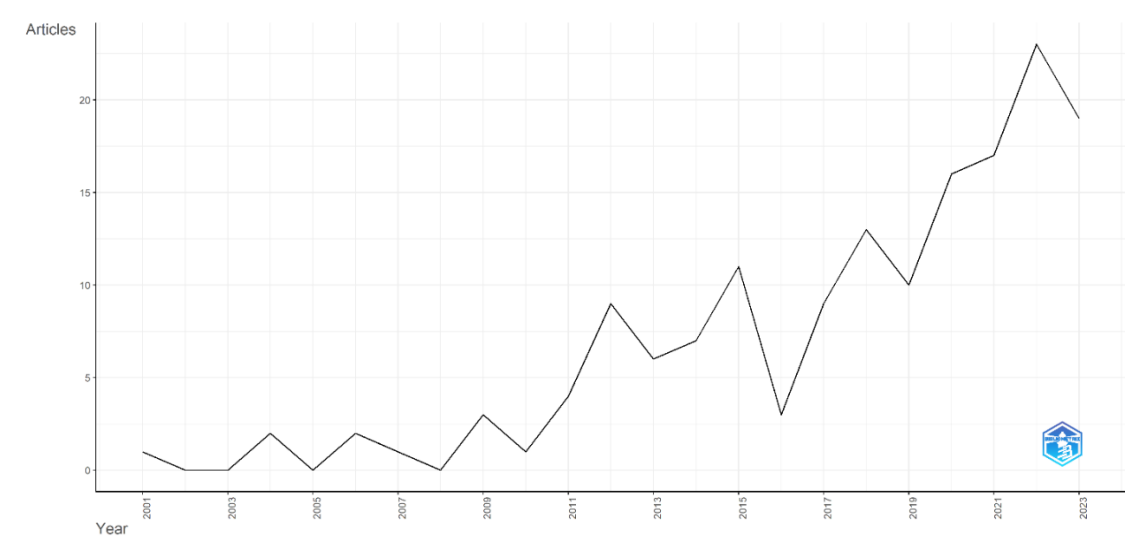


Figure 1: Annual Scientific Production in Well-being Research



Figure 2: Sources used in the Study

Figure 3 shows the research trend in the top five countries in the domain of employee well-being. These countries include Australia, Finland, Norway, the United Kingdom, and the USA. The analysis further indicates that Australia has the most significant number of articles published, with an increasing trend since 2011. In 2021, 2022, and 2023, researchers from Australia published 48, 58, and 60 articles, respectively, followed by researchers in the UK and then the USA. In UK and USA, researchers have published 39 and 29 articles, respectively. The analysis further indicates that most of the articles are co-authored, and only 12 articles are written by single authors. On average, each article received a 29.58 citation score with an average age of 6.15 years, indicating that publications have a significant impact on the key audience of this research domain.

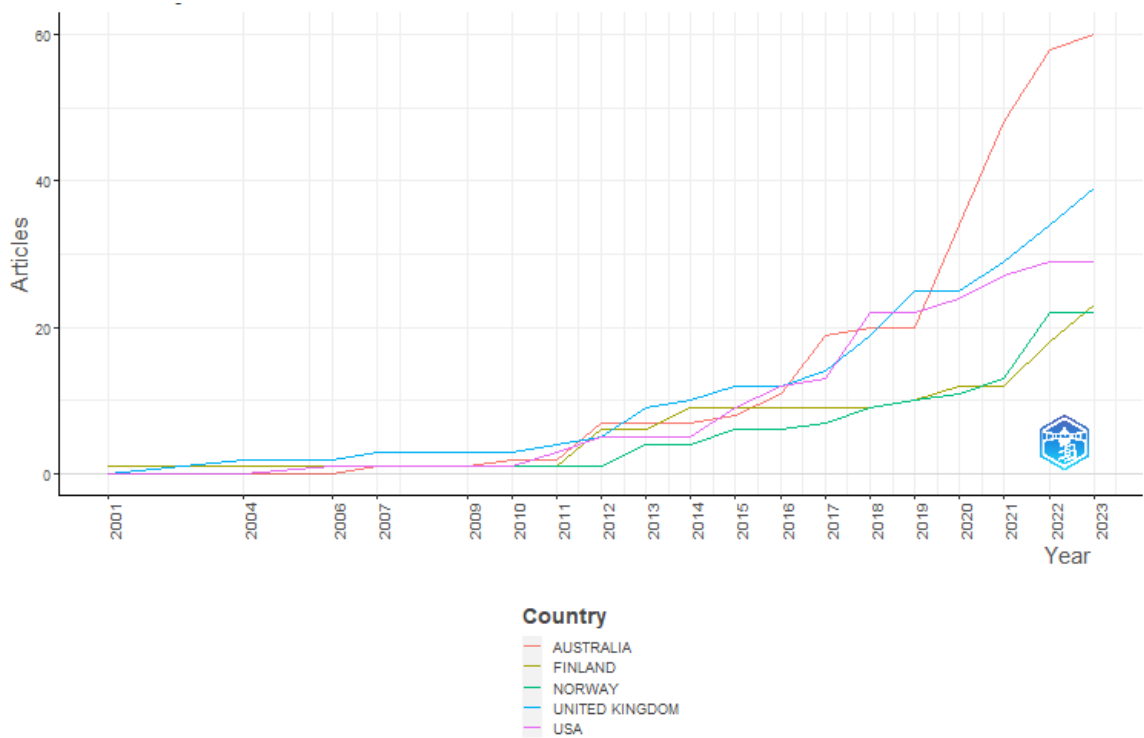


Figure 3:Country-wise production over time

The network map of different countries collaborating in the domain of employee well-being and workplace bullying is depicted in Figure 4. This map describes most of the research published in this domain belonging to the UK, Australia, and Finland. Another cluster is identified, indicating that the USA, Korea, Malaysia, and Canada comprise the second-largest group of countries conducting research in this domain. The trend of publication analysis reveals that most research in

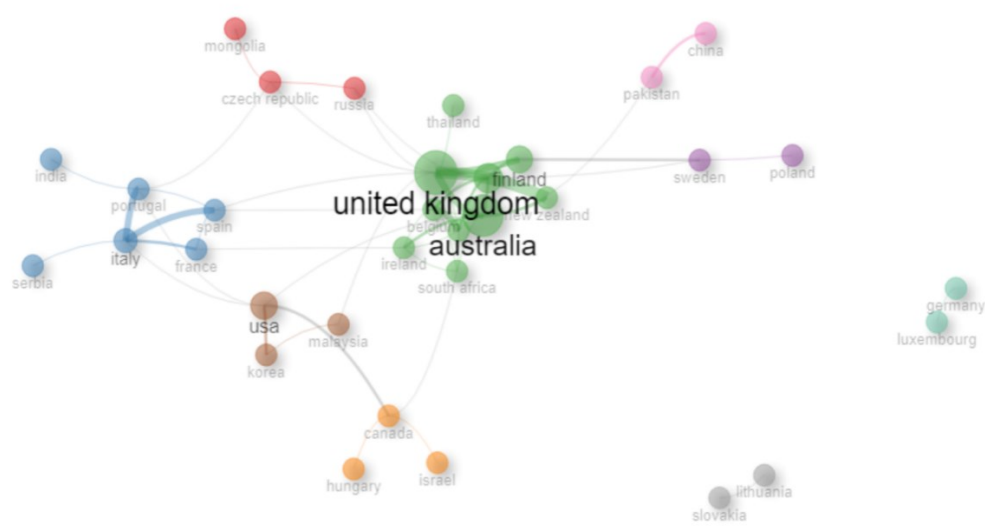


Figure 4: Worldwide Distribution of Countries Map

this domain is conducted in developed countries.

In contrast, developing countries, such as Pakistan, India, and other Asian nations, have a minimal impact in this area of research. Therefore, it can be concluded that advanced countries have a substantial impact on developing nations in terms of producing literature related to employee well-being and workplace bullying. These findings align with the prevailing research trend in other management fields, where research is predominantly driven by developed countries in America and Europe, with Asian cultures trailing and exhibiting a growth pattern.

4.1 Influential Journals Having the Highest Citation Score

The second objective of the study was to identify influential journals, assess their impact, compile a list of published articles, and evaluate their citation factors. Out of all the papers, the 10 most regularly mentioned journals accounted for 42 articles, making up 27% of all articles. The distribution of the articles throughout various publications offered a further understanding of the influence of factors on EWb. Table 1 outlines the top 10 journals that published the majority of the articles during this period. This information will be beneficial for new researchers who are planning to publish in this domain.

Table 1: Most Cited Journals

| Sr. | Name of journal  | Rank |
|-----|--|------|
| 1   | Frontiers in Psychology  | 1    |
| 2   | Work and stress  | 2    |
| 3   | IJERPH<br>(Int. Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health) | 3    |
| 4   | IAOCEH<br>(Int. Archives of Occupational and Environmental Health)   | 4    |
| 5   | IJWHM<br>(Int. Journal of Workplace Health Management)               | 5    |
| 6   | JOHP<br>(Journal of Occupational Health Psychology)                  | 6    |
| 7   | BMC Public Health  | 7    |
| 8   | IJSM<br>(Int. Journal of Stress Management)                          | 8    |
| 9   | JBE<br>(Journal of Business Ethics)                                  | 9    |
| 10  | Current Psychology   | 10   |

4.2 Pioneer Authors in EWb Research

An additional advantage of a bibliometric study is its capacity to ascertain the renowned authors within a particular research domain (Nerur et al., 2008). During this study, we analyzed pioneer studies in the field of EWb and WB, which have the highest citation scores. Figure 5 describes the researchers with the most citations in the EWb literature, as determined by Web of Science data. The study done by Bowling and Beehr (2006) is considered to be the most impactful study, which has a citation score of 801, followed by the work done by Vartia (2001) and Cooper et al. (2004), which have a citation score of 319 and 192, respectively. The article published by Gray et al. (2019) falls at serial no. 10, which has a citation score of 98. Therefore, analyzing Figure 5 reveals that only a limited number of scholars are considered leading authorities in the field of EWb. This discovery reinforces our claim that EWb is yet a lessexplored and evolving concept. Table 2 presents leading and pioneering authors in this realm and the realm of bullying in the workplace.

Presently, Bowling and Beehr (2006) hold the top position as the foremost and most impactful researchers in the field of EWB, based on total Web of Science citations received. Their study emphasized the development of a meta-model describing the victim's views about bullying in workplaces. Initially, the authors provided a model centered on attribution and reciprocity, aiming to elucidate the connection between harassment and its potential origins and effects. Subsequently, they carried out a meta-analysis to scrutinize potential precursors and outcomes associated with workplace harassment. The results of the meta-analysis indicated that both environmental factors and individual differences potentially played a role in the occurrence of harassment. Additionally,



the study found a negative correlation between harassment and the well-being of both individual employees and the organizations they work for. Harassment remained a significant contributor to various outcomes, even after adjusting for two frequently studied occupational stressors, role ambiguity and role conflict.

**Table 2:** *Most Cited Pioneers in The Field of EWB and WB*

| Author   | Year | Name of Journal   | DOI                          | Total Citations |
|--|------|---|------------------------------|-----------------|
| Bowling and Behr   | 2006 | JAP(Journal of Applied Psychology)                                | 10.1037/0021-9010.91.5.998   | 801             |
| Vartia   | 2001 | SJWEH(Scandinavian Journal of Work, Environment & Health)         | 10.5271/sjweh.588            | 319             |
| Cooper, H.& Faragher   | 2004 | British Journal of Guidance & Counselling                         | 10.1080/03069880410001723594 | 192             |
| Einarsen & Nielsen   | 2015 | Int. Archives of Occupational and Environmental Health            | 10.1007/s00420-014-0944-7    | 161             |
| Notelaers, Einarsen, De Witte & Vermunt                      | 2006 | Work & Stress   | 10.1080/02678370601071594    | 157             |
| Berdahl, C., Glick, L.& Williams                             | 2018 | Journal of Social Issues  | 10.1111/Josi.12289           | 145             |
| Rodríguez-Munoz, Baillien, De Witte, Moreno-Jiménez & Pastor | 2009 | Work & Stress   | 10.1080/02678370903227357    | 110             |
| Rasool, Wang, Tang, Saeed,& Iqbal                            | 2021 | IJERPH (Int. Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health) | 10.3390/ijerph18052294       | 107             |
| Schütte, C., Malard, P.-T., Vermeylen&Niedhammer             | 2014 | IAOEH(Int. Archives of Occupational and Environmental Health)     | 10.1007/s00420-014-0930-0    | 101             |
| Gray, S., Naicker, K., Yassi, &Spiege                        | 2019 | IJERPH(Int. Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health)  | 10.3390/ijerph16224396       | 98              |

**4.3 Research Keywords—Emerging Themes**

The research landscape in these domains of well-being and workplace bullying has seen a significant evolution, with various terms and concepts shaping the discourse. Among these, perceived organizational support stands out as a pivotal factor influencing employees' well-being (Lima et al., 2023). Research has delved into understanding how employees perceive the level of backing they obtain from their organizations and how this perception relates to various outcomes. Consequences of workplace bullying and abusive supervision have been central areas of investigation, shedding light on the detrimental effects on employees' mental health, job satisfaction, and overall work performance.

Personality traits have been examined as potential predictors of susceptibility to workplace aggression and bullying, offering insights into individual differences that may influence how employees recognize and respond to negative behaviors. Additionally, the role of support from society within the working atmosphere and outside during the remaining hours of the day has been



result in higher stress, sickness risk, and burnout, as well as lower engagement, job satisfaction, and performance among victimized employees. Predictors and outcomes are now targeting high-risk populations, such as nurses in healthcare systems, given the influence nurse work environments can have on patient health outcomes.

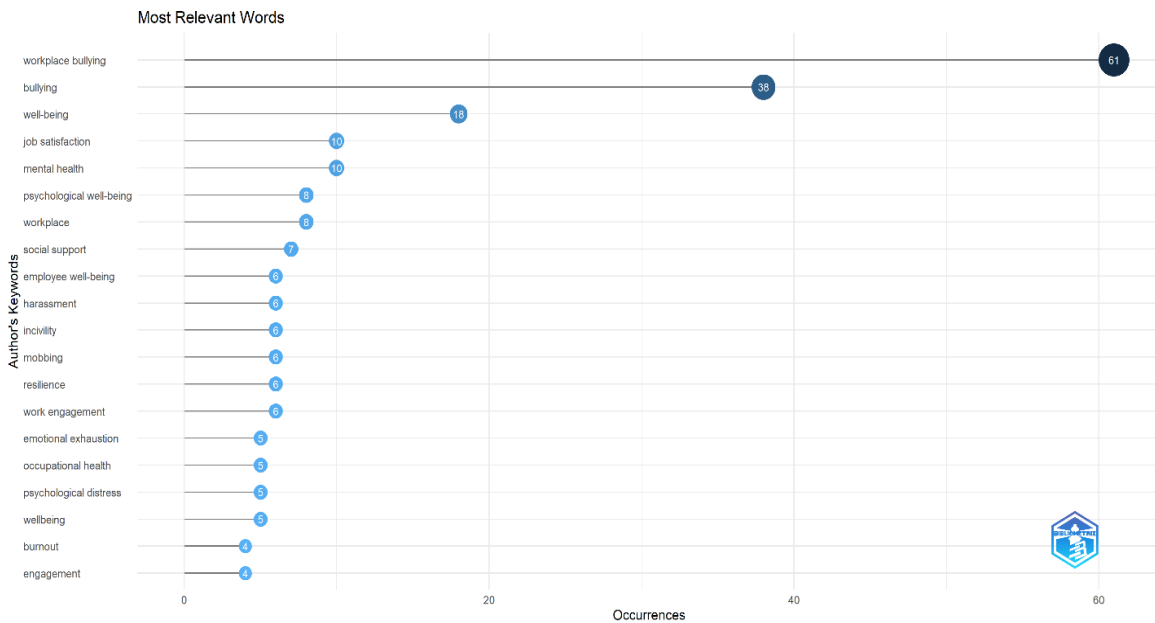


Figure 6: Most Relevant Keywords found in WOS Database

Methodologically, there are calls for improving psychometric evaluations and validation of measurements used to assess workplace bullying behaviors across different cultures and industries. Recent studies incorporate advanced statistical analyses and modeling techniques to establish better mediating and moderating mechanisms linking abusive supervision to employee well-being and attitudinal outcomes. There is also interest in delineating specific effects related to cyberbullying and harassment via digital communications, which were accelerated during the recent pandemic of COVID-19 and extensive online work-from-home arrangements. Overall, these trends aim to provide finer-grained understandings that organizations can operationalize into tailored interventions, training programs, and best practices for mitigating employees' exposures to counterproductive workplace behaviors and sustaining worker health.

4.4 Research Trends in Recent Years

Figure 7 shows the two divisions of research trends in this research area. It is observed that articles published between 2001 and 2015 focused on more generalized terms like workplace environment, bullying, workplace bullying, and employee well-being when observed through keyword-based cluster analysis. Articles published after 2015 (2016-2023) are more focused on impacts and specific research areas. For example, research trends in the extent of workplace bullying kept pace during the second phase of research, too. At the same time, research in the area of employee well-being has focused more on identifying its factors. Similarly, the research trends in the area of bullying and workplace environment focused more on its impacts, like psychological distress induced by workplace bullying and the chances of mobbing or other behavioral outcomes of the bullying. The analysis further indicates that a considerable number of articles focused on workplace bullying as the main keyword during the second phase (2016-2023). A large pink tally represents the ratio of articles using workplace bullying as the main keyword in their study area.



From these observations, it is inferred that research in the workplace bullying field has focused more on its psychological impacts and behavioral outcomes in recent years.

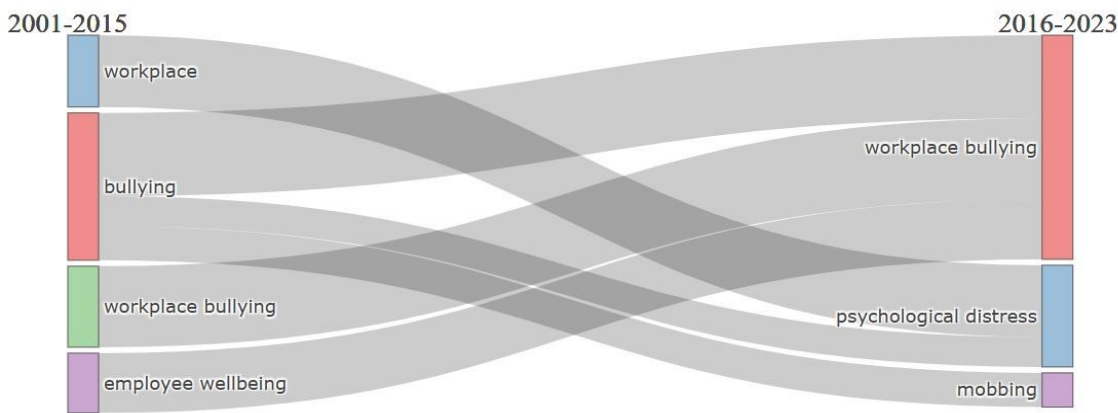


Figure 7: Thematic Evaluation of Trend Topics

5. Discussion

The findings of this study directly correspond with the identified research gaps and objectives. The results reveal that publication activity has grown significantly since 2011, particularly in developed countries such as Australia, the UK, and the USA, while developing nations remain underrepresented. The identification of top journals (e.g., *Frontiers in Psychology*, *Work and Stress*) and pioneering authors (e.g., Bowling & Beehr, Vartia) validates the central contributions shaping the field. Furthermore, the keyword analysis shows that while early research focused on general well-being and bullying, more recent studies have shifted toward specific outcomes such as psychological distress, burnout, and abusive supervision. These results not only confirm the fragmented nature of earlier literature but also highlight the increasing sophistication of methodological approaches, aligning with the aim of this study to map past, present, and emerging trends.

The current study offers a bibliometric review of literature on two main variables, viz., bullying of employees and their well-being at the workplace, from 2001 to 2023 by using the extensive range of articles accessible in the WOS database. This study seeks to provide a thorough examination of research on bullying and its impact on the well-being of employees. The objective is to clarify prevailing themes and identify emerging trends in this field. By charting the path of citations and publications, the study provides not only a valuable understanding of the historical progression of the subject but also acts as a guide for scholars exploring this critical area. The results have significant consequences for both scholars and professionals. Initially, the identification of emergent research paths serves as a crucial point of convergence for cooperation between academicians and practitioners, enabling a detailed examination of how current academic investigations correspond to practical difficulties in the workplace. The study highlights potential connections between research and management practices, addressing growing concerns about workplace bullying and its impact on employee well-being.

Moreover, our investigation serves as a guiding light for newcomers entering the arena of these two critical variables. The study provides a comprehensive understanding of the historical, current, and potential future developments in this topic, enabling new researchers to acquire the necessary expertise to contribute valuable reviews and empirical models. Policymakers and journal editors may use this understanding to evaluate areas that need further attention to develop strategies that promote employee well-being.

Furthermore, our bibliometric study suggests that workplace bullying and employee well-being, which are within the scope of organizational psychology, make a substantial contribution to the broader discourse on workplace dynamics. In the future, journals should prioritize studies that extensively explore these crucial subjects, emphasizing the need to foster a psychologically secure work environment.

Importantly, the study travels beyond just looking at past events and also explores possibilities for future research. Through the identification of recurring topics and highly referenced articles, it

functions as a significant tool for researchers in search of inspiration and reference sources. This advice applies to editorial teams of journals, assisting them in identifying topics that are favorable for future research expansion. This study provides valuable information for prospective students by offering insights into locations and institutions that succeed in workplace bullying and employee well-being studies. Policymakers may use this information to identify the foremost nations in this field, hence influencing their approaches to research and development endeavors.

In conclusion, our investigation presents an outlook for the future of studies on workplace bullying and the well-being of employees. Nevertheless, it highlights a notable gap between academic achievement and practical application. Future academics are encouraged to close this gap by integrating theoretical findings with practical applications. The study proposes an in-depth investigation into the effects and ramifications of bullying employees in work settings and their effects on employee well-being. This aims to bridge the gap between academic research and the need to create healthier and more supportive workplaces.

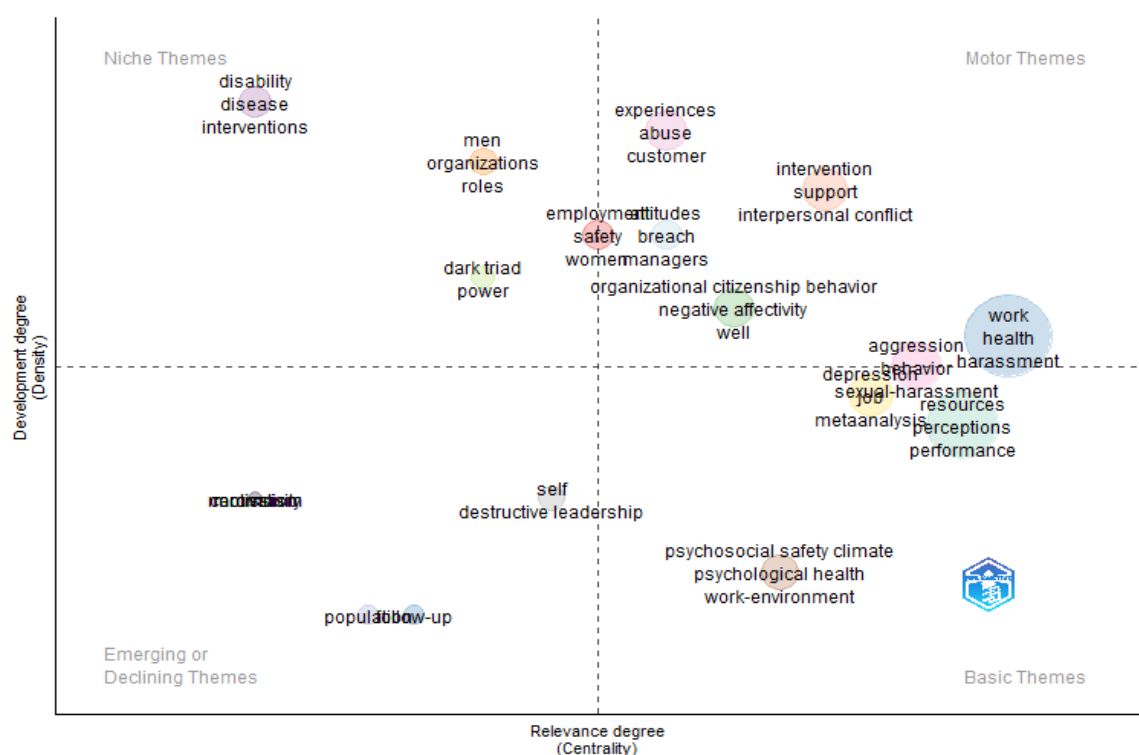
## **6. Future Research Directions and Research Gap**

The data obtained from the Web of Science provides interesting information regarding future research direction and existing research gaps. As a result of the bibliometric analysis, we observed different trend keywords and their existing frequency with respect to their distribution over the years. The data is presented in Figure 7. The current phenomenon of bullying and its impact on employee well-being in the workplace involves several essential aspects that require further investigation. Significantly, the psychological dimensions of the implications of bullying actions continue to be the significant areas of interest, requiring a thorough comprehension of the elements that predict and increase the likelihood of becoming a victim. Furthermore, the impact of bullying actions in different areas of services remains unexplored in different cultural settings. Although many studies have examined the connection between harassment in the workplace and mental health effects, there is an apparent lack of research in understanding the complex impact of job demands, resources, and the preservation of these assets on the occurrence of bullying and its resulting health implications. It is crucial to create and verify reliable questionnaires that can accurately evaluate exposure to workplace violence, taking into account the unique aspects of job satisfaction, stress, and depression.

A co-wordnet is presented in Figure 8, based on keywords and trend terms found in research articles. It is observed that the current body of research primarily focuses on immediate results, creating a significant gap in our understanding of the lasting consequences, such as extended periods of illness and enduring mental health effects. Furthermore, studies have not focused on finding the factors that foster the psychological contract between the employee and the organization. There is a need to investigate the factors that play a role in psychological contract breaches in a bullying environment. An all-encompassing framework that combines personal and institutional elements, analyzing the interaction between work requirements, assets, and behavioral tendencies, is crucial for a thorough comprehension of workplace harassment and its repercussions translated into the well-being and job satisfaction of employees. It is crucial to address these discrepancies to develop specific treatments that foster a healthier and more supportive work environment.

A thematic map of developing research topics visually illustrates the prevailing patterns and significant areas of interest in a specific academic discipline. Figure 9 presents a thematic map regarding workplace bullying and employee well-being to identify critical areas of focus and develop research areas. The main idea behind this thematic map is to comprehensively represent the emerging aspects of workplace bullying research. It serves as a visual reference for academics and practitioners, offering insights into both existing and upcoming patterns within this subject. It aids in identifying areas that require further inquiry and investigation to enhance our comprehension and inform the formulation of efficient actions and policies.





**Figure 10: Thematic Map of Basic and Emerging Research Themes**

In the end, this study provides a valuable resource for researchers investigating the complex realm of employee well-being and workplace bullying, offering them a thorough summary of existing research patterns and possible avenues for further investigation. Through careful examination of the development of citations and publications in this particular area, we can get a valuable understanding of the ever-changing environment of research on EWb and WB. These results have substantial ramifications for both scholars and professionals. First and foremost, the identification of new research paths serves as a means to facilitate cooperation and communication between practitioners and researchers.

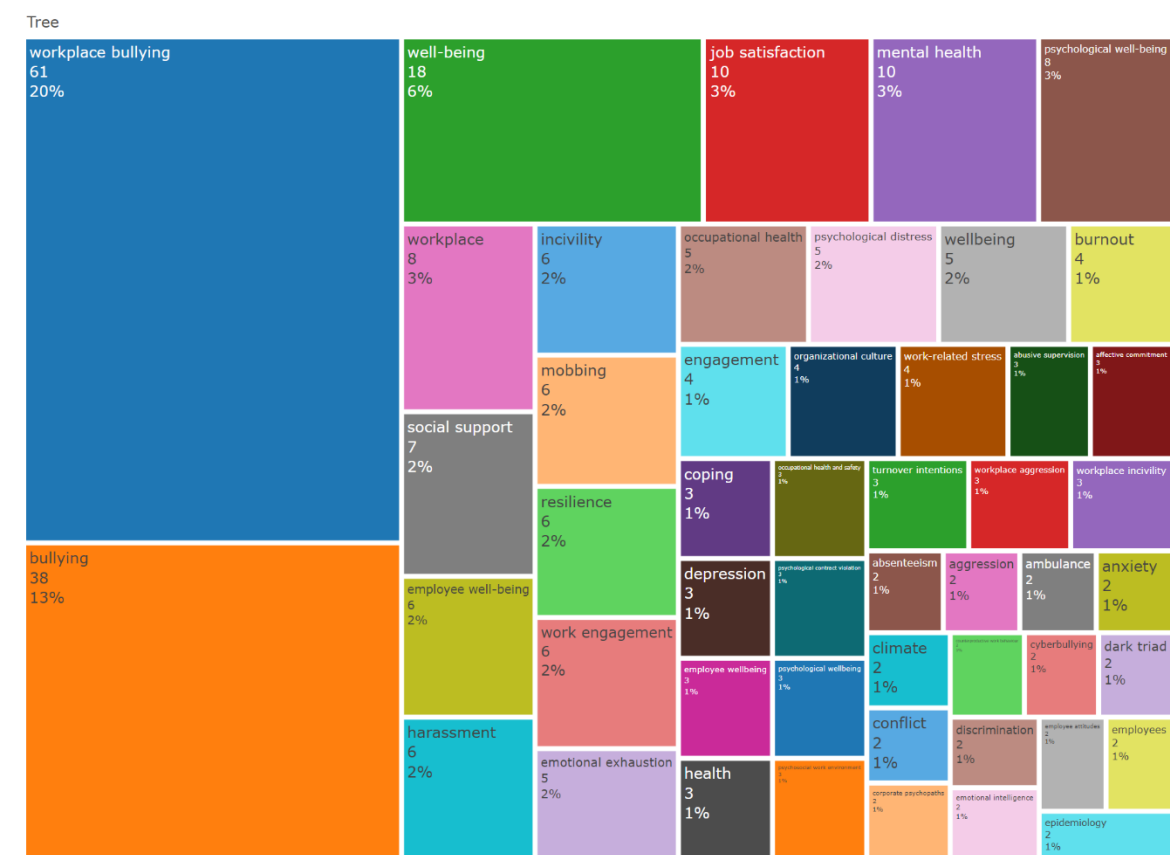
The identification of future needs in this field provides academics with a guideline to kick-start further exploration in this area. One example of this is the increased focus among managers on creating work environments that are both sustainable and helpful. This has become a central subject of interest, highlighting the seamless connection between the practical world of work and the academic sphere. This synchronization can not only enhance the relevance of research but also establish it as a significant asset for addressing current workplace challenges.

**Table 3: Gaps and Prospective Areas of Research**

| Sr. No | Gaps in the Research | Prospective Areas of Research   |
|--------|----------------------|---|
| 1      | Outcomes             | What are the psychological health outcomes of bullying issues at the workplace?<br>What are the results and consequences of bullying in the workplace on the mental health of HR, leading to psychological distress through various mechanisms? |
| 2      | Coping               | What are the different coping mechanisms when an employee is working in a bullying environment? What is the role of resilience in influencing how individuals respond to workplace bullying?  |
| 3      | Strategies           | What are the different organizational strategies that can help mitigate workplace bullying in different cross-cultural environments?  |
| 4      | Impact               | What are the behavioral impacts of constant exposure to hostile behavior and the emotional toll in terms of mental and psychological well-being, psychological contract breach, and employee job satisfaction?                                  |
| 5      | Factors              | What factors play their role between a predictor and an outcome? How can a particular outcome be avoided, or at least its severity be reduced?  |

This bibliometric study fills several critical gaps in the existing literature. First, previous studies examined workplace bullying and employee well-being separately, but few have integrated these two areas to provide a holistic overview of their interrelationship.

Second, while numerous articles exist on bullying and well-being, no systematic bibliometric analysis has been conducted to map global publication patterns, identify pioneering authors, and highlight influential journals in this domain. Third, most prior research is concentrated in developed countries, leaving a gap in understanding how these issues are studied in developing contexts such as Pakistan and other Asian nations. Finally, methodological gaps exist, as earlier works have not systematically traced keyword evolution, emerging themes, and co-authorship networks. By addressing these issues, this study offers both a consolidated knowledge base and directions for future research.



**Figure 11: Tree Map of Research Trends showing Percentage and Frequency of Keywords Found in the WOS Database**

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