

Effect of Workplace Bullying on Employee Mental Health in Nigeria: A Hospitality Industry Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Bullying remains a pervasive issue in workplaces, often inadequately addressed despite its damaging effects on employees' mental health. Victims frequently suffer stress, anxiety, depression, and helplessness, which can escalate into severe psychological disorders. This study, therefore, examined the effect of workplace bullying on employee mental health in selected hospitality firms in Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria. The specific objectives were to analyze the effect of aggressive communication on emotional expression, assess the impact of blame-shifting on interpersonal relationships, and identify the effect of undermining actions on work engagement. The study was anchored on the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping and adopted an experimental research design. From a population of 599, a sample size of 234 respondents was determined using Krejcie and Morgan's formula. Data were gathered using structured questionnaires and analyzed with frequency tables, percentages, and arithmetic means. Hypotheses were tested using Simple Regression with SPSS (version 25), at a 5% significance level. Results revealed that aggressive communication has a statistical significant effect on emotional expression ($R^2 = .904$), blame-shifting on interpersonal relationships ($R^2 = .900$), and undermining actions on work engagement ($R^2 = .914$). The study concluded that workplace bullying in its various forms negatively affects employee well-being and organizational harmony. It emphasized the need for hospitality firms to adopt proactive strategies to mitigate bullying. The study recommended the establishment of clear anti-bullying policies, strict enforcement of behavioural standards, and provision of confidential counselling services for affected employees.

KEYWORDS: Workplace Bullying, Employee Mental Health, Aggressive Communication, Blame Shifting, Work Engagement, Undermining Actions.

INTRODUCTION

Workplace bullying, a pervasive issue in modern organizations, has attracted significant scholarly and managerial attention because of its detrimental effects on employee well-being and organizational performance. It is characterized by repeated, health-harming mistreatment of one or more employees through verbal abuse, offensive conduct, or work sabotage that creates a hostile environment (Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf & Cooper, 2020). The impact of workplace bullying on mental health is profound and multifaceted, leading to anxiety, depression, burnout, and decreased job satisfaction. Victims of bullying

often experience higher absenteeism, low morale, and increased turnover intentions (Lee et al., 2022).

The hospitality industry, known for its high-stress nature, is particularly susceptible to bullying behaviours due to long hours, constant customer interactions, and hierarchical management structures (Branch, Ramsay & Barker, 2019). These stressors contribute to environments where aggressive communication, blame shifting, and undermining actions thrive, directly harming employees' psychological health. In Nigeria, the hospitality

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sector-especially in Awka Metropolis plays an important economic role by providing jobs and contributing to tourism (Okafor, 2021). Yet poor working conditions, managerial autocracy, and cultural power distance aggravate the incidence of workplace bullying (Uche & Onyeizugbe, 2020; Eze, 2021).

The increasing prevalence of workplace bullying in hospitality firms has emerged as a major organizational problem with severe psychological consequences for employees. Bullying often goes unnoticed or unaddressed, allowing aggression and intimidation to flourish. Victims report stress, depression, and helplessness, which can escalate to chronic mental disorders if not addressed. Despite growing awareness, limited research explores how the contextual features of Nigerian hospitality firms like organizational hierarchy, managerial behaviour, and cultural norms, shape bullying experiences and mental-health outcomes (Ogunbamila, 2020). The problem is compounded by the absence of comprehensive anti-bullying policies and limited management training on recognizing or mitigating such behaviours. Consequently, employees fear retaliation for reporting bullying, which perpetuates silence and trauma, hence leading to mental and physical stress.

Cultural norms in Awka that emphasize respect for authority and avoidance of confrontation often discourage employees from challenging abusive superiors. This tolerance of hierarchy creates an enabling environment for bullying and mental distress. Organizational consequences include increased absenteeism, low morale, and high turnover, all of which could undermine service quality and competitiveness. This study, therefore, aims to examine the effect of workplace bullying on employee mental health in selected hospitality firms in Awka Metropolis, Anambra State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Analyze the effect of aggressive communication on employees' emotional expression.
2. Evaluate the effect of blame shifting on interpersonal relationships.
3. Identify the effect of undermining actions on work engagement.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Workplace Bullying

Workplace bullying is a persistent pattern of mistreatment that causes physical or psychological harm (Namie, 2019). It includes verbal abuse, non-verbal hostility, and work interference that prevent an employee from performing effectively (Branch et al., 2020). Einarsen et al. (2020) emphasized that

bullying differs from isolated conflicts because it is repetitive and sustained, aimed at humiliating or isolating victims. Victims of bullying frequently report stress-related symptoms, anxiety, and even suicidal ideation (Nielsen et al., 2020). In organizational settings, bullying erodes trust, damages teamwork, and reduces productivity. Kowalski et al. (2022) found that bullied employees display reduced job satisfaction and higher turnover intentions. Management's commitment to clear anti-bullying policies, awareness training, and early intervention can significantly curb the phenomenon (Hodgins et al., 2020).

Aggressive Communication

Aggressive communication is a hostile style of interaction marked by dominance, insults, and verbal attacks (Infante & Rancer, 2019). It undermines self-esteem and fosters fear (Barni et al., 2020). In workplaces, it disrupts collaboration and leads to disengagement (Raver & Barling, 2021). Training in emotional intelligence and assertive communication can mitigate its occurrence (Johnson & Hackman, 2021).

Blame Shifting

Blame shifting occurs when individuals deflect responsibility and attribute failures to others (Aquino & Thau, 2020). It undermines accountability, erodes trust, and damages morale (Fast & Tiedens, 2022). In teams, habitual blame shifting reduces cohesion and increases stress among members (Anderson & Brion, 2022). Leaders who engage in such behaviour are perceived as less competent and trustworthy (Martinko et al., 2022).

Undermining Actions

Undermining actions refer to deliberate behaviours that obstruct or sabotage another employee's performance (Duffy et al., 2019). These include withholding information, spreading rumours, or questioning competence. Victims experience stress, lowered self-esteem, and job dissatisfaction (Yuan et al., 2021). High-trust cultures and transformational leadership can minimize undermining behaviors (Nguyen et al., 2022).

Employee Mental Health

Employee mental health encompasses the emotional, psychological, and social well-being of workers (Leka & Jain, 2019). It affects how employees think, feel, and perform at work. Poor mental health manifests as depression, anxiety, or burnout, often linked to workplace stressors such as bullying (Smith et al., 2020). Mental-health challenges impair productivity, decision-making, and motivation (Kessler et al., 2020). Organizations that implement counselling and Employee Assistance Programs

report improved employee satisfaction and retention (Miller & Williams, 2021).

Emotional Expression

Emotional expression is the process of conveying feelings through words, facial expressions, gestures, and tone of voice (Gross, 2019). It is essential for building relationships, empathy, and psychological well-being. Cultural norms influence emotional expression, with some societies encouraging openness and others promoting restraint (Matsumoto & Hwang, 2020). Gender differences also exist, as women tend to be more expressive than men, though this is changing across cultures (Brody & Hall, 2021). In the workplace, positive emotional expression fosters teamwork and morale, while negative emotions can cause conflict and reduce productivity (Barsade & O'Neill, 2020). Expressing emotions appropriately reduces stress and improves health, while suppression can cause psychological harm (Pennebaker & Smyth, 2021). Open expression strengthens trust and understanding in relationships (Reis & Shaver, 2020). High emotional intelligence enhances one's ability to express emotions effectively (Goleman, 2020). Non-verbal cues such as facial expressions and gestures remain powerful channels for communicating emotions (Ekman, 2021).

Interpersonal Relationships

Interpersonal relationships are connections between individuals that are vital for emotional well-being, social functioning, and life satisfaction (Hinde, 2020). In workplaces, positive relationships enhance teamwork and productivity, while poor ones cause conflict and low morale (Chiaburu & Harrison, 2021). Effective communication builds trust and understanding, forming the basis of strong relationships (Guerrero, Andersen, & Afifi, 2021). Emotional intelligence enables empathy and emotional management, improving relationship quality (Goleman, 2020). Digital communication offers new ways to connect but can weaken personal interaction, requiring balance (Baym, 2021). Cultural norms influence how relationships are formed and maintained, emphasizing respect for diversity (Ting-Toomey & Dorjee, 2021). Conflict, when managed with empathy and compromise, can strengthen relationships (Deutsch, Coleman, & Marcus, 2020). Trust remains the foundation of meaningful relationships, promoting cooperation and stability (Rotter, 2020).

Work Engagement

Work engagement is defined as a positive, fulfilling work-related state characterized by vigour, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli, Bakker, & Salanova, 2021). It enhances employee well-being,

performance, and organizational commitment (Bakker & Demerouti, 2020). Engaged employees demonstrate higher productivity, creativity, and lower turnover. Leadership, especially transformational leadership, plays a key role in fostering engagement through support and recognition (Avolio, Bass, & Jung, 2020). High engagement levels improve mental health, reduce stress, and boost job satisfaction (Xanthopoulou et al., 2021). Work engagement strongly predicts job performance and reduces employee turnover (Rich, Lepine, & Crawford, 2020). It also promotes organizational citizenship behaviour, encouraging employees to go beyond their job roles (Podsakoff et al., 2020). Ultimately, engagement drives organizational success by enhancing innovation, customer satisfaction, and overall productivity (Macey & Schneider, 2021).

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping developed by Lazarus and Folkman (1984). The theory posits that stress results from the interaction between individuals and their environment, emphasizing the role of cognitive appraisal and coping strategies. In bullying contexts, employees first appraise bullying as a threat (primary appraisal) and then assess their resources to cope (secondary appraisal). When coping resources are inadequate, psychological distress occurs.

The model distinguishes between problem-focused coping (addressing the source of stress) and emotion-focused coping (regulating feelings). Effective coping moderates the impact of stressors such as bullying on mental health. The framework is relevant to this study because it explains how employees' perceptions and coping abilities influence the mental-health outcomes of workplace bullying.

Complementing this is Hobfoll's Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory (1989), which asserts that individuals strive to acquire and protect valued resources-such as self-esteem, energy, and social support- and experience stress when these are threatened or lost. Workplace bullying represents a direct resource loss, resulting in mental strain and disengagement.

Empirical Review

Chang, Huang, Wang and Yang (2025) examined whether resilience moderates the effects of workplace bullying on job performance and to determine whether this moderating effect differs between three types of bullying: personal, work-related, and physical bullying in Taiwan. A self-administered, paper-based questionnaire was distributed to full-time nurses at three regional hospitals in Taiwan. Cross-sectional data on workplace bullying behaviours,

resilience and job performance were collected from 422 nurses using a questionnaire survey. Data were collected using the Job Performance Scale, the Negative Acts Questionnaire, and the Resilience Scale (CD-RISC-10), and the resulting data were analyzed using SPSS 21 and the PROCESS macro. Results revealed that resilience moderated the positive relationship between personal, physical bullying and job performance ($b = .11$, $p < .05$; $b = .17$, $p < .05$), but did not moderate the effects of work-related bullying.

Tuckey, Li, Huisy, Bryan, Wit and Bond (2024) investigated the effects of workplace bullying on objective measures of cognitive functioning in Australia. In Study 1, 47 university employees, self-identified as current targets of bullying ($n = 24$) or non-targets ($n = 23$), completed objectively scored cognitive tasks assessing general attention and three components of working memory (central executive, visuospatial sketchpad, and phonological loop). T-test analyses showed that self identified targets performed more poorly on the suite of tests compared to non-bullied counterparts, primarily driven by deficits in central executive functioning. Study 2 recruited 70 retail and hospitality workers who completed the cognitive tasks plus measures of preoccupying cognitions and exposure to negative acts. As hypothesised, the study found significant indirect effects demonstrating that preoccupying cognitions explained the negative relationship between bullying and the three aspects of working memory. The magnitude of the cognitive deficits observed here, and their potential significance for job performance, highlights the importance of primary bullying prevention within organisations.

Mehmood, Bano, Khan and Erdey (2024) used a sample of female employees (Nurses) working in the health care units and hospitals of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJ&K), Pakistan to examine the effect of workplace bullying and incivility on employee performance: Mediating role of psychological well being. The study used AMOS 21.0 for empirical analysis to estimate the "Structural Equation Model (SEM)". The results of SEM showed that workplace bullying (WB) and workplace incivility (WI) negatively influence nurses' performance in Azad Jammu and Kashmir's health sectors. Moreover, psychological well-being (PW) mediates the association between WB and employee performance (EP). Similarly, the effects of WI decrease in the presence of PW.

Alenezi (2024) assessed the impact of resilience on workplace violence among mental health nurses. A cross-sectional research design was used to conduct

the study with a convenience sample of 361 nurses recruited from a governmental psychiatric hospital in Saudi Arabia. Data were collected using two tools: the first tool was the workplace violence questionnaire, which collected nurses' demographic, job, and workplace violence data, and the second was the resilience at work scale to assess nurses' resilience. Result found that 70.4% of nurses experienced workplace violence in the last year, and fewer than half were resilient at work. Close to one-third (33.5%) of nurses were terrified and confused after workplace violence. The most violent repercussions were psychological (46.8%): dread, tension, and worry. Additionally, 48.8% of nurses exhibited high work resilience. The variables of nationality (non-Saudi nurses), rotating work shift, educational levels, and exhibiting a lower level of resilience were found to have a statistically significant correlation with instances of workplace violence.

Adebayo and Obinna (2023). "Impact of Workplace Bullying on Psychological Well-being of Hospitality Staff in Awka". This study examined the impact of workplace bullying on the psychological well-being of staff in hospitality firms in Awka, involving a sample size of 200 employees. The researchers utilized structural equation modeling for data analysis, revealing a strong correlation between workplace bullying and decreased psychological well-being, supported by statistical values of $\chi^2/df = 2.89$ and $RMSEA = 0.04$. The findings demonstrated that employees who experienced bullying exhibited significantly lower levels of psychological well-being.

Ezeudu and Anyanwu (2023) in "Workplace Bullying and Its Impact on Employee Well-being in Awka's Hospitality Firms", explored the impact of workplace bullying on employee well-being within hospitality firms in Awka Metropolis, with a sample size of 240 employees. Using ANOVA for data analysis, the researchers found a significant effect of bullying on employee well-being, as indicated by a statistical value of $F(2, 237) = 17.92$ and $p < 0.001$. The findings revealed that workplace bullying led to decreased job satisfaction and increased turnover intentions among employees.

Amajioyi, Adiele and Nwabugwu (2023) focused on workplace bullying and performance of hotels in Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria. Survey research design was employed by the researcher and questionnaire served as the instrument of data collection. The study population made up of the entire 260 staff in 25 three (3) star hotels in Owerri, Imo State. Though only 240 copies of the questionnaire were returned and used.

The data collected were analyzed using simple percentage and mean. Based on the data analysis, it was discovered that verbal abuse significantly affects labour turnover intention in organization; physical attack significantly affects labour turnover intentions and productivity in the hotels.

Anasori, Soliman and Costa (2023) investigated the structural associations between workplace bullying, employee psychological distress, and work engagement within the hospitality setting. It also evaluated the moderating impact of self-compassion on the direct path between workplace bullying and employee psychological distress. Employing a quantitative approach, PLS-SEM has been applied to analyze the data, collected by survey, from full-time employees at 2-star and 3-star hotels in Antalya. The results indicated that workplace bullying significantly predicted psychological distress and deteriorated employee engagement. In addition, there is a significant effect of employees' psychological distress on their engagement. However, employee self-compassion did not significantly moderate the effect of workplace bullying on psychological distress.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Objective 1

Analyze the effect of aggressive communication on emotional expression of selected hospitality firms in Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The design was appropriate because it enabled the collection of first-hand data from employees regarding their experiences and perceptions. The target population comprised of twenty (20) hotels operating in Awka, Anambra State. Records from personnel officers revealed that the twenty selected hospitality firms have a total population of 599 staff. The study made use of Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) formula to determine the sample size of 234. The data collection instrument was a Likert structured questionnaire. Items were rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from *Strongly Disagree* (1) to *Strongly Agree* (5). Content and construct validity were established through expert review by scholars in management and psychology. Reliability was tested using Cronbach alpha, producing coefficients above 0.80 for all major constructs, indicating strong internal consistency. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize responses, while inferential statistics (Ordinary Least Squares (OLS)) regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses at a 5% level of significance.

Table 1: Distribution of responses for Aggressive Communication and Emotional Expression

S/N	Questionnaire Items	SA(5)	A(4)	N(3)	D (2)	SD(1)	Mean	Verdict
Aggressive Communication								
1	I frequently experience or observe aggressive communication (e.g., raised voices, harsh tones) from colleagues or supervisors at work.	43 (19%)	54 (25%)	57 (26%)	40 (18%)	26 (12%)	3.22	Agree
2	When confronted with aggressive communication, I tend to respond with similar aggression.	33 (15%)	49 (22%)	38 (17%)	48 (22%)	52 (24%)	2.83	Disagree
3	The overall communication climate in my workplace is frequently aggressive.	20 (9%)	76 (35%)	21 (10%)	64 (29%)	39 (18%)	2.97	Disagree
Emotional Expression								
4	I feel comfortable expressing my emotions (e.g., happiness, frustration) openly in the workplace.	72 (33%)	83 (37%)	32 (15%)	21 (10%)	12 (5%)	3.83	Agree
5	The work environment encourages open and honest emotional expression among employees.	61 (28%)	73 (33%)	33 (15%)	38 (17%)	15 (7%)	3.92	Agree
6	Management is supportive when employees express their emotions, whether positive or negative.	27 (12%)	66 (30%)	83 (38%)	21 (10%)	23 (10%)	3.24	Agree

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

Table 1 shows the distribution of responses for aggressive communication and emotional expression of the respondents. The object of analysis here is the mean, with a threshold of 3 and above. That is, any questionnaire item with a mean of 3 and above should be accepted as happening or being entrenched in the selected hospitality firms, otherwise, it will be rejected. Starting with the questionnaire items used in measuring aggressive communication, when they were asked if they frequently experience or observe aggressive communication (e.g., raised voices, harsh tones) from colleagues or supervisors at work, a mean of 3.22 shows that they agreed. However, they disagreed that when confronted with aggressive communication, do they tend to respond with similar aggression, with a mean of 2.83. A mean of 2.97 reveals that the respondents agreed that the overall

communication climate in their workplace is frequently aggressive. For questions used in measuring emotional expression, the respondents agreed as shown with a mean of 3.83 that they feel comfortable expressing their emotions (e.g., happiness, frustration) openly in the workplace. Similarly, with a mean of 3.92, the respondents agreed that the work environment encourages open and honest emotional expression among employees. A mean of 3.24 reveals they agreed that the management is supportive when employees express their emotions, whether positive or negative.

Objective 2

Evaluate the effect of blame shifting on interpersonal relationships of selected hospitality firms in Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria.

Table 2: Distribution of responses for Blame Shifting and Interpersonal Relationships

S/N	Questionnaire Items	SA(5)	A(4)	N(3)	D(2)	SD(1)	Mean	Verdict
	Blame Shifting							
1	Blame shifting (assigning responsibility to others for mistakes or failures) is common in my workplace.	26 (12%)	25 (11%)	37 (17%)	103 (47%)	29 (13%)	2.62	Disagree
2	I have personally been blamed for mistakes or issues that were not my fault in the workplace.	79 (36%)	72 (33%)	11 (5%)	36 (16%)	22 (10%)	3.68	Agree
3	The presence of blame shifting in my workplace reduces my overall job satisfaction.	65 (30%)	100 (45%)	17 (8%)	21 (10%)	17 (8%)	3.80	Agree
	Dependent Variables: (Employee Mental Health) Interpersonal Relationships							
4	I have positive and supportive interpersonal relationships with my colleagues at work.	61 (28%)	67 (30%)	13 (6%)	40 (18%)	39 (18%)	3.32	Agree
5	The workplace culture here fosters strong and healthy interpersonal relationships among employees.	47 (21%)	73 (33%)	20 (9%)	43 (20%)	37 (17%)	3.23	Agree
6	The quality of my interpersonal relationships with colleagues directly influences my job satisfaction.	41 (19%)	56 (25%)	47 (21%)	43 (20%)	33 (15%)	3.13	Agree

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

Table 2 shows the distribution of responses for blame shifting and interpersonal relationships of the respondents. The object of analysis here is the mean, with a threshold of 3 and above. That is, any questionnaire item with a mean of 3 and above should be accepted as happening or being entrenched in the selected hospitality firms, otherwise, it will be rejected. Starting with the questionnaire items used in measuring blame shifting, when they were asked if blame shifting (assigning responsibility to others for mistakes or failures) is common in their workplace, a mean of 2.62 shows that they disagreed. However, they agreed that they have personally been blamed for mistakes or issues that were not their fault in the workplace, with a mean of 3.68. A mean of 3.80 reveals that the presence of blame shifting in their workplace reduces their overall job satisfaction. For questions used in measuring interpersonal relationships, the respondents agreed as shown with a mean of 3.32 that they have positive and supportive interpersonal relationships with their colleagues at work. Similarly, with a mean of 3.23, the respondents agreed that the workplace culture here fosters strong and healthy interpersonal relationships among employees. A mean of 3.13 reveals they agreed that the quality of their interpersonal relationships with colleagues directly influences their job satisfaction.

Objective 3

Identify the effect of undermining actions on work engagement of selected hospitality firms in Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria.

Table 3: Distribution of responses for Undermining Actions and Work Engagement

S/N	Questionnaire Items	SA(5)	A (4)	N (3)	D (2)	SD(1)	Mean	Verdict
	Undermining Actions							
1	13. I have witnessed or experienced undermining actions (e.g., sabotage, belittling) by colleagues or supervisors in the workplace.	71 (32%)	63 (29%)	13 (6%)	42 (19%)	31 (14%)	3.46	Agree
2	14. Undermining actions from others negatively impact my ability to perform my job effectively.	47 (21%)	73 (33%)	20 (9%)	43 (20%)	37 (17%)	3.23	Agree
3	15. I have personally felt undermined by a colleague or supervisor in my workplace.	30 (14%)	52 (24%)	39 (18%)	55 (25%)	44 (20%)	2.86	Disagree
	Work Engagement							
4	16. I feel enthusiastic and motivated to perform my job duties every day.	61 (27%)	73 (33%)	33 (15%)	38 (17%)	15 (7%)	3.92	Agree
5	17. I am fully committed to my work and take pride in the tasks I complete.	79 (36%)	72 (33%)	11 (5%)	36 (16%)	22 (10%)	3.68	Agree
6	18. I regularly feel a sense of accomplishment from the work I do.	72 (33%)	83 (38%)	32 (15%)	21 (10%)	12 (5%)	3.83	Agree

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

Table 3 shows the distribution of responses for undermining actions and work engagement of the respondents. The object of analysis here is the mean, with a threshold of 3 and above. That is, any questionnaire item with a mean of 3 and above should be accepted as happening or being entrenched in the selected hospitality firms, otherwise, it will be rejected. Starting with the questionnaire items used in measuring undermining actions, when they were asked if they have witnessed or experienced undermining actions (e.g., sabotage, belittling) by colleagues or supervisors in the workplace, a mean of 3.46 shows that they agreed. Similarly, they agreed that undermining actions from others negatively impact their ability to perform their job effectively, with a mean of 3.23. A mean of 2.86 reveals that they disagreed to having personally felt undermined by a colleague or supervisor in their workplace. For questions used in measuring work engagement, the respondents agreed as shown with a mean of 3.92 that they feel enthusiastic and motivated to perform their job duties every day. Similarly, with a mean of 3.68, the respondents agreed that they are fully committed to their work and take pride in the tasks they complete. A mean of 3.83 reveals they agreed that they regularly feel a sense of accomplishment from the work they do.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One

Aggressive communication has no significant effect on emotional expression of selected hospitality firms in Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria.

Table 4: Regression Result for Hypothesis One

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	t	F	Sig
1	.951 ^a	.904	.904	1.06037	45.319	2053.775	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Aggressive Communication

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 4 shows that the value of R is 0.951, which indicates a very strong positive correlation between the independent variable (aggressive communication) and the dependent variable (emotional expression). The R Square value of 0.904 means that 90% of the variance in the dependent variable can be explained by the independent variable. The Adjusted R Square is 0.904, which is the same as the R Square, implying that the predictor added to the model is meaningful and contribute to explaining the variance in the dependent variable effectively without unnecessarily complicating the model. The standard error of the estimate is 1.06037, a lower standard error indicates a better fit of the model. This model appears to be very strong, with a high level of explanatory power. The t is 45.319, the F is 2053.775 and the probability value (p-value) as represented by sig is .000. The model's fit is also confirmed by the low standard error of the estimate. The overall model is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), indicating that the independent variable (in this case, "aggressive communication") significantly has an effect on the dependent variable (emotional expression).

Decision: Reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis which concludes that there is a significant effect of aggressive communication on emotional expression of selected hospitality firms in Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria.

Hypothesis Two

Blame shifting has no significant effect interpersonal relationships of selected hospitality firms in Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria.

Table 5: Regression Result for Hypothesis Two

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	t	F	Sig
1	.949 ^a	.900	.899	1.32905	44.212	1954.669	.000
a. Predictors: (Constant), Blame Shifting							

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

Table 5 shows that the value of R is 0.949, which indicates a very strong positive correlation between the independent variable (blame shifting) and the dependent variable (interpersonal relationships). The R Square value of 0.900 means that 90% of the variance in the dependent variable can be explained by the independent variable. The Adjusted R Square is 0.899, implying that the predictor added to the model is meaningful and contribute to explaining the variance in the dependent variable effectively without unnecessarily complicating the model. The t is 44.212, the F is 1954.669 and the p-value as represented by sig is .000. The model's fit is also confirmed by the low standard error of the estimate. The overall model is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), indicating that the independent variable (in this case, "blame shifting") significantly has an effect on the dependent variable (interpersonal relationships).

Decision: We reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis which concludes that there is a significant effect of blame shifting on interpersonal relationships of selected hospitality firms in Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria.

Hypothesis Three

Blame shifting has no significant effect on interpersonal relationships of selected hospitality firms in Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria.

Table 6: Regression Result for Hypothesis Three

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	t	F	Sig
1	.956 ^a	.914	.914	1.08666	48.152	2318.657	.000
a. Predictors: (Constant), Undermining Actions							

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

Table 6 shows that the value of R is 0.956, which indicates a very strong positive correlation between the independent variable (undermining actions) and the dependent variable (work engagement). The R Square value of 0.914 means that 91.4% of the variance in the dependent variable can be explained by the independent variable. The Adjusted R Square is 0.914, which is the same as the R Square, implying that the predictor added to the model is meaningful and contribute to explaining the variance in the dependent variable effectively without unnecessarily complicating the model. The t is 48.152, the F is 2318.657 and the p-value as represented by sig is .000. The model's fit is also confirmed by the low standard error of the estimate. The overall model is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), indicating that the independent variable (in this case, "undermining actions") significantly has an effect on the dependent variable (work engagement).

Decision: We reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis which concludes that there is a significant effect of undermining actions on work engagement of selected hospitality firms in Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria.

Summary of Findings

A. There is a statistically strong positive significant effect of aggressive communication on emotional expression of selected hospitality firms in Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria, that a 90.4% change in the dependent variable (emotional expression) is a result of changes in the independent variable (aggressive communication) in the studied

hospitality firms ($R = .951$, $R\text{-Square} = .904$, F statistics = 2053.775, $t\text{-value} = 45.319$, $p\text{-value} < .05$).

B. There is a statistically strong positive significant effect of blame shifting on interpersonal relationships of selected hospitality firms in Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria, that a 90% change in the dependent variable (interpersonal

relationships) is accounted for by changes in the independent variable (blame shifting) in the studied hospitality firms ($R = .949$, $R\text{-Square} = .900$, $F\text{ statistics} = 1954.669$, $t\text{-value} = 44.212$, $p\text{-value} < .05$).

- C. There is a statistically strong positive significant effect of undermining actions on work engagement of selected hospitality firms in Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria, that a 91.4% change in the dependent variable (work engagement) is a result of changes in the independent variables (undermining actions) in the studied hospitality firms ($R = .956$, $R\text{-Square} = .914$, $F\text{ statistics} = 2318.657$, $t\text{-value} = 48.152$, $p\text{-value} < .05$).

Conclusion

This study concludes that workplace bullying is a pervasive and damaging phenomenon within Awka's hospitality industry. Its manifestations- aggressive communication, blame shifting, and undermining actions- collectively diminish employees' emotional well-being, social relationships, and engagement at work. The findings affirm that the psychological consequences of bullying extend beyond individual suffering to broader organizational outcomes such as reduced productivity, absenteeism, and high turnover. Consistent with the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping, employees' appraisal of bullying as a threat and their limited coping resources amplify stress and mental strain. The study therefore underscores the urgent need for organizational policies, managerial training, and cultural reorientation to combat bullying and promote mental health in Nigerian hospitality firms.

Recommendations

1. Hospitality firms should establish and enforce clear anti-bullying policies that explicitly define unacceptable behaviors such as aggressive communication, blame-shifting, and undermining actions. These policies should be complemented by regular training programs aimed at educating employees and management about the detrimental effects of workplace bullying on mental health, interpersonal relationships, and work engagement.
2. To address the mental health impact of workplace bullying, organizations should create a support system that includes access to confidential counseling services, mental health resources, and peer support groups. This system should be easily accessible to all employees and should provide a safe environment where individuals can report bullying incidents without fear of retaliation.
3. Leadership plays a crucial role in setting the tone for organizational culture. Therefore, it is

essential to invest in leadership development programs that emphasize the importance of ethical leadership, empathy, and emotional intelligence. Leaders should be trained to recognize and address bullying behaviors promptly and to model positive behaviors that encourage open communication, teamwork, and mutual respect.

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