



Workplace Bullying and Turnover Intention: Moderating Role of Abusive Supervision among Employees of Nepali Commercial Banks

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Abstract

Background: Organizations are facing many explicit and implicit costs associated with the voluntary turnover of high-performing employees. Voluntary turnover is detrimental to organizational growth and success. Therefore, employers and practitioners try to understand what motivates people to leave. Negative employee behaviors such as workplace bullying and abusive supervision have been identified as critical variables for employee motivation to leave.

Purpose: The purpose of the paper was to investigate the moderating role of Abusive Supervision in relation to Workplace Bullying and Turnover Intention among employees in Nepali Commercial Banks.

Research Methodology: This paper applied a quantitative approach and cross-sectional survey research design to investigate the research objective. The convenience sampling method was employed to research employees of different commercial banks. Data were collected from 249 employees via self-administered questionnaires. Covariance-Based Structure Equation Modeling (CB-SEM) was applied to examine research hypotheses.

Results: The result showed that Workplace Bullying positively influences Turnover Intention among employees of Nepali commercial banks. Also, the result showed that Abusive Supervision moderates the relationship between Workplace Bullying and Turnover Intention.

Conclusion: According to the paper, employees of Nepali commercial banks intend to leave their respective banks if they experience Workplace Bullying at a different level of Abusive Supervision. Increasing Abusive Supervision in the presence of Workplace Bullying increases the intention of leaving commercial banks.

Implications: This paper has two implications. Theoretically, this paper provides a critical juncture for Nepali researchers by investing in moderating the role of Abusive Supervision on turnover intention. Managerially, it is imperative for organizations to invest in enriching their employees by creating a work environment free of bullying and abusive supervision.

Originality: This paper stands at a critical juncture in Nepali research because it is among the fewest studies investigating the moderating role of abusive supervision on workplace bullying and turnover intention.

Keywords: Abusive supervision, turnover intention, workplace bullying, structural equation modeling

JEL: M10

Introduction

Employee turnover has been a topic of interest for organizational researchers. Organizational productivity and efficiency are negatively affected by employee turnover (Shaw et al., 2005). It is imperative to examine the turnover intention of employees since there are direct costs, such as productivity loss, replacement costs, and training, as well as indirect costs, such as disruption of business processes and adjustment time for replacement employees (Dess & Shaw 2001; Morrell et al., 2004).

A turnover intention can be described as an intentional, prepared decision to leave an organization (Tett & Meyer, 1993). It is reported that turnover intention is influenced by many factors, such as abusive leadership and workplace bullying (Coetzee & van Dyk, 2018; Peltokorpi, 2019). Likewise, abusive supervision and bullying in the workplace environment are linked to high intention to leave (Coetzee & van Dyk, 2018). Moreover, several researchers have found that abusive supervision is a reason to leave the company, but few have come up with a way to counteract its effects (Ahmad & Begum, 2020; Peltokorpi, 2019; Pradhan & Jena, 2017).

Despite the plethora of studies on turnover intention, this phenomenon continues to be of interest to researchers and managers. Very few studies on Turnover Intention were undertaken in the Nepali context (Adhikari, 2021). Moreover, Chalise (2019) reported that Nepali organizations have a high turnover rate, with the percentage being much greater in the banking sector (Chalise, 2019). Therefore, the purpose of the paper is to examine the moderating role of Abusive Supervision concerning Workplace Bullying and Turnover Intention among employees in Nepali commercial banks. It draws a theoretical argument from Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977), Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), and Upper Echelon Theory (Hambrick et al., 2010) to justify the relationships.

This paper is divided into five sections. Section II examines the literature related to the present study. Section III describes the methodology, which includes the research approach, design, sample, and data collection procedure. Section IV tests the structural hypotheses. Finally, the paper discusses the findings and implications for managers and researchers.

Review of Literature

Turnover Intention

No singular definition of turnover intention is available in management literature. A seminal work by Tett and Meyer (1993) defined turnover intention as a prepared and intentional desire to depart an organization. Likewise, Ozolina-Ozola (2014) defines turnover intention as the rate at which employees leave an organization compared to the average number of people employed within a given period. There can be voluntary or involuntary employee turnover within an organization. As Heneman (1998) notes, voluntary turnover is termination initiated by employees, while involuntary turnover is termination initiated by the employer, which might be due to a long-term illness, death, migration to another country, or employer-induced termination. In this paper, turnover intention refers to employees' preparedness and intention to desire to leave Nepali commercial banks.

Workplace Bullying

A review of the literature indicates that Namie (2003) first studied bullying behaviour. With the advancement in conceptualization, workplace bullying is unwelcome negative conduct —verbal or nonverbal acts— and regular, e.g., weekly occurrences over a long period (e.g., for around six months) causing psychological, emotional, or physical distress on employees (Einarsen & Raknes, 1997). Likewise, Masi (2012) states that personal derogation, intimidation, work-related bullying, and social exclusion are the four major forms of bullying behaviour in the workplace. In this paper, workplace bullying refers to work-related bullying and social exclusion among employees of Nepali commercial

banks.

Abusive Supervision

Tepper (2000) defines abusive supervision as an employee's opinions of the level to which their supervisors engage in hostile actions (for example, ridiculing, lying to, or publicly shaming subordinates). According to Ashforth (1997), dictatorial supervision includes demeaning subordinates, showing little empathy, and utilizing non-contingent punishments. Such intentional behaviours lead to dissatisfaction, powerlessness, and work alienation. Keashly et al. (2005) documented that non-physical abuse was more common than physical abuse, such as throwing things, striking, or threatening with a weapon. Those who experienced more supervisory abuse were less satisfied with their jobs. In this paper, abusive supervision refers to an employee's opinion of the level of supervisors engaging in hostile action in Nepali commercial banks.

Relationship between Variables

Workplace Bullying and Employee Turnover Intention

Workplace bullying negatively impacts victims, reduces job satisfaction, and increases their desire to leave the company (Coetzee & van Dyk, 2018). An employee who has witnessed bullying behaviour and has attempted to find causes and solutions, with the support of family, external management, or coworkers, may resign. Consequently, colleagues' support at this stage is less likely to cause conflict or trouble (van Heugton, 2012). Other studies also support the argument that workplace bullying influences turnover intention (e.g., Ahmad & Kaleem, 2020; Coetzee & van Dyk, 2018; Özkan, 2021). Social Learning Theory (SLT) can explain the relationship between workplace bullying and turnover intention. According to the SLT, employees learn from colleagues about bullying and leaving the organizations (Bandura, 1977). Employees intend to leave an organization when they perceive bullying at work. Based on the argument, the paper hypothesized that;

Hypothesis (H1): Workplace Bullying positively influences Employee Turnover Intention.

Abusive Supervision and Employee Turnover Intention

Previous studies have ascertained a substantial role in talent retention, with supervisors having a considerable impact on employees' intention to leave (e.g., Kouzes & Posner, 2002; Masibigiri & Nienaber, 2011; Rothmann, Diedericks, & Swart, 2013). Similarly, studies show that abusive supervision can lower individual job satisfaction, cause psychological strain, and increase the intention to leave (e.g., Bowling & Michel, 2011; Rodwell et al., 2014). On the other hand, task-oriented attacks of abusive supervision appear to be directly associated with turnover intention (Bowling & Michel, 2011; Rodwell et al., 2014). Hussain et al. (2020) also showed that abusive supervision significantly influences employees' psychological well-being and turnover intention. Lyu et al. (2019) also depicted that when nurse managers use an abusive leadership style, the turnover intention is higher and psychological empowerment is lower.

The Social Exchange Theory (SET) explains the relationship between abusive supervision and turnover intention. According to the SET, valued resources will continue to move only when there is a valued return in exchange (Emerson, 1976). Employees also value their time and effort. They are unwilling to sacrifice if they do not receive appropriate values from their supervisors, such as respect or recognition. Due to the reciprocity rule, Tepper et al. (2009) stated that superiors' aggressive behaviour induces subordinates' undesirable behaviours. Wherever negative behaviour is repaid or reimbursed with negative consequence behaviour, this is known as unfavourable reciprocity. When subordinates believe they are receiving benefits, supervisors should respond positively. Furthermore, any subordinates who are interested in being tricked by their superiors will tend to reciprocate by

expressing negative responses (Hussain et al., 2020). Based on empirical evidence and theoretical backgrounds, the paper hypothesized that;

Hypothesis (H2): Abusive supervision positively influences Employee Turnover Intention.

Workplace Bullying and Turnover Intention: Moderating Role of Abusive Supervision

Several studies reported workplace bullying positively influences turnover intention (e.g., Ahmad & Kaleem, 2020; Coetzee & van Dyk, 2018; Özkan, 2021). Likewise, abusive supervision significantly influences turnover intention (e.g., Kouzes & Posner, 2002; Masibigiri & Nienaber, 2011; Rothmann, Diedericks, & Swart, 2013). This study, however, aims to investigate the moderating role of abusive supervision in relation to workplace bullying and turnover intention. The paper assumes that abusive supervision can strengthen the relationship between workplace bullying and turnover intention. The Upper Echelons Theory (UET) supports the argument. In the UET, employees view bosses as role models and copy their behaviours. Subordinates are more likely to bully when their role models do so. As a result, bullying intensifies in the organization, increasing turnover intention. Based on empirical evidence and theoretical background, the paper hypothesizes that;

Hypothesis (H3): Abusive Supervision moderates the relationship between Workplace Bullying and Turnover Intention.

Research Methods

Research approach

The paper applied a quantitative approach to investigate the phenomena of interest. We can investigate the moderating role of abusive supervision with the help of a positivist ontology and quantitative approach because it believes in a singular reality.

Research design

Since the objective of the paper was not to manipulate the independent variable (workplace bullying) and moderating variable (abusive supervision) to examine their influence on the dependent variable (turnover intention), a cross-sectional survey design was, therefore, employed in the paper. It is consistent with the previous study (Lama & Pokhrel, 2019).

Population and Sample

Participants in this study were employees of 27 commercial banks in the Kathmandu Valley. The majority of commercial banks are located in the Kathmandu Valley, with 2,640 branches (Kathmandu Post, 2022). As a result, we selected the Kathmandu Valley as a representative sample. According to Compdata (2018), the banking and finance industry has one of the highest turnover rates, at 18.6 per cent. As a result, the research was conducted on commercial banks in the Kathmandu Valley. Considering the accessibility of respondents, the location of banks, and the timeframe to complete the study, we used non-probability sampling (Convenience Sampling method).

In advanced multivariate analyses such as structural equation modeling, Hair et al. (2016) recommend that the sample size should be five times (minimum) or ten times (maximum) larger than the items to be used. This study used 14 items to assess three variables. Based on the recommendations of Hair et al. (2016), the sample size could range from 70 to 140. We collected data from 250 employees for the study that exceeds the number of non-respondents required to overcome non-response biases and approach potential respondents.

Instruments/Measurements

We measured the responses on a five-point Likert scale of 14 items, ranging from 1= strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. We adopted Gottman et al.'s (1998) workplace bullying scale. The sample item includes: "I am ridiculed (teased) at the workplace by the manager." We adopted Kelloway, Gottlieb and Barham's (1999) turnover intention instrument. Four items were used to measure this construct. The sample includes: "I am thinking about leaving this organization." It comprises four items. We adopted Mitchell and Ambrose's (2007) abusive supervision. The sample item includes: "My supervisor ridicules me". It has five items.

Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

Prior to full-scale data collection, the questionnaire was pilot tested with 30 employees. Apart from completing the 14-item questionnaire, respondents were requested to comment on the ease and clarity of the questionnaire. Since Cronbach's alpha coefficient values were greater than 0.60, the full-scale survey was administered (Pallant, 2020).

We conducted the survey among employees of commercial banks in the Kathmandu Valley. Respondents were assured of confidentiality and anonymity, and participation was voluntary. Employees of several banks were given printed questionnaires to distribute to their colleagues. A total of 350 questionnaires were sent to employees of several commercial banks from May to July 2022.

The data cleaning process helps to correct incomplete data, unengaged responses, and incorrect entries. The researcher cleaned the data after receiving 250 responses. We used descriptive statistics to check for missing data and incorrect entries. Incorrect entries were corrected using MS Excel. A standard deviation of less than 0.3 is also removed as an unengaged response. A total of 249 responses were then analyzed. Data analysis was performed using IBM AMOS 23 and SPSS 26.

Most of the respondents to the study were female (n=105, 52%), and most have completed a Master's degree. Almost equal numbers of males and females responded, but fewer than half were males. Most respondents (n =91, 45%) worked in commercial banks for less than five years and were between 21 and 30 years old.

Data Analysis and Result

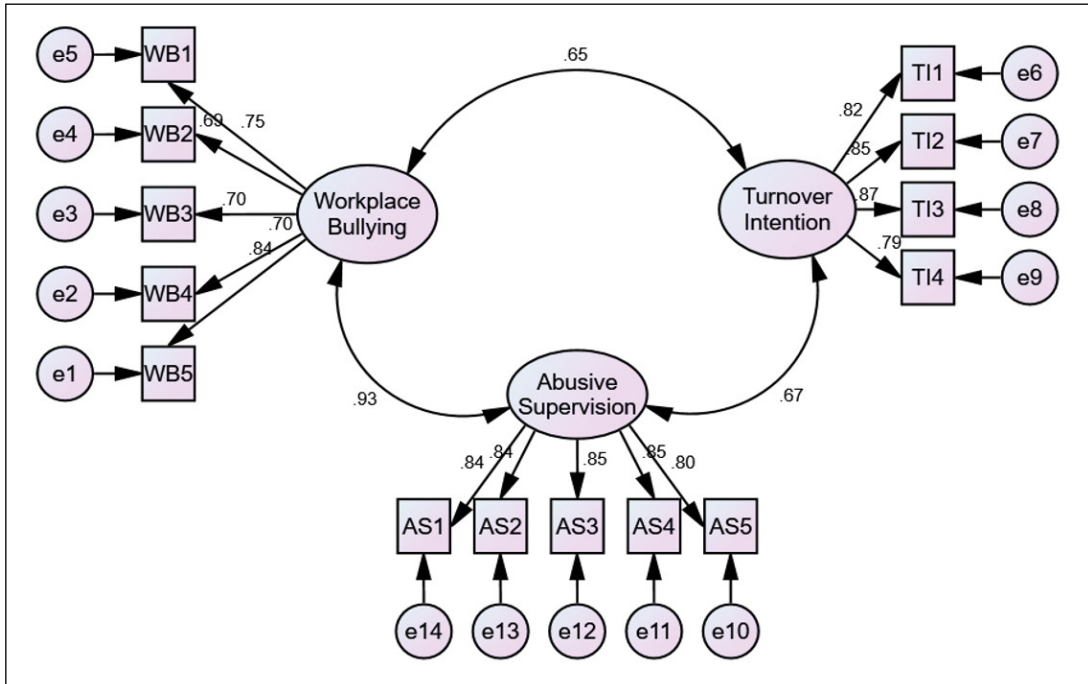
Structural Equation Model

The structural equation model (SEM) is widely used to analyze cause-and-effect relationships among latent components (Hair et al., 2016). The two types of structural equation modeling are covariance-based structural equation modeling (CB-SEM) and variance-based structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). CB-SEM was used to estimate the measurement and structure models in this paper.

Measurement Model

Ringle et al. (2015) proposed three criteria for the measurement model such as reliability analysis, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. We evaluated each construct individually before assessing the measurement model as a whole.

Figure 1 Measurement model



Model Fit Indices

Model fit refers to the relationship between variables in a dataset suggested by a model. Different model fitness indicators must be satisfied to estimate the structural model, such as CMIN/DF, RMSEA, GFI, AGFI, PCFI, and PNFI (Gaskin, 2020). This method satisfies model fitness since Table 1 shows the threshold value for each indicator together with its observation value.

Table 1 Model fitness indicators

Fit Indicators	Authors	Threshold values	Observation values
CMIN/df	Hair et al. (2009)	< 3	1.850
RMSEA	Meyers et al. (2005)	< 0.50	0.058
GFI	Segars and Grover (1993)	> 0.90	0.926
AGFI	Hair et al.(2016)	> 0.80	0.895
PCFI	Meyers et al. (2005)	> 0.50	0.792
PNFI	Meyers et al. (2005)	> 0.50	0.769

Reliability Analysis

The reliability of model was estimated using values of composite reliability and Cronbach’s alpha. The Cronbach’s alpha coefficients of scale are greater than 0.60, indicating measurement model is reliable (Pallant, 2011). Furthermore, the construct’s composite reliability (CR) must be greater than 0.7 to be reliable. Since all the values of CR are higher than 0.7, the construct shows the reliability of the measurement model.

Convergent Validity

To attain adequate convergent validity, Factor loadings and AVE need to be more than 0.7 and 0.5, respectively (Hair et al., 2016). Since the factor loadings and AVE values are more than 0.70 and 0.50, respectively, Table 2 ensures the model's validity.

Table 2 Reliability and Convergent validity

Constructs	Items	Factor Loadings	Average Variance Explained	Composite Reliability	Cronbach's Alpha
	WB 1	0.746			
	WB 2	0.686			
Workplace Bullying	WB 3	0.705	0.543	0.855	0.854
	WB 4	0.698			
	WB 5	0.839			
	TI1	0.820			
Turnover Intention	TI2	0.850			
	TI3	0.867	0.695	0.901	0.921
	TI4	0.795			
	AS1	0.841			
Abusive Supervision	AS2	0.841	0.700	0.921	0.900
	AS3	0.841			
	AS4	0.849			

Discriminant Validity

In discriminant validity, the extent to which one concept and its indicators are different from another concept and its indicators are determined (Bagozzi et al., 1991). Fornell and Larcker (1981) state that correlations between items within any two constructs should be less than the square root of the average variance shared by items within the construct. It has shown in the diagonal of Table 3.

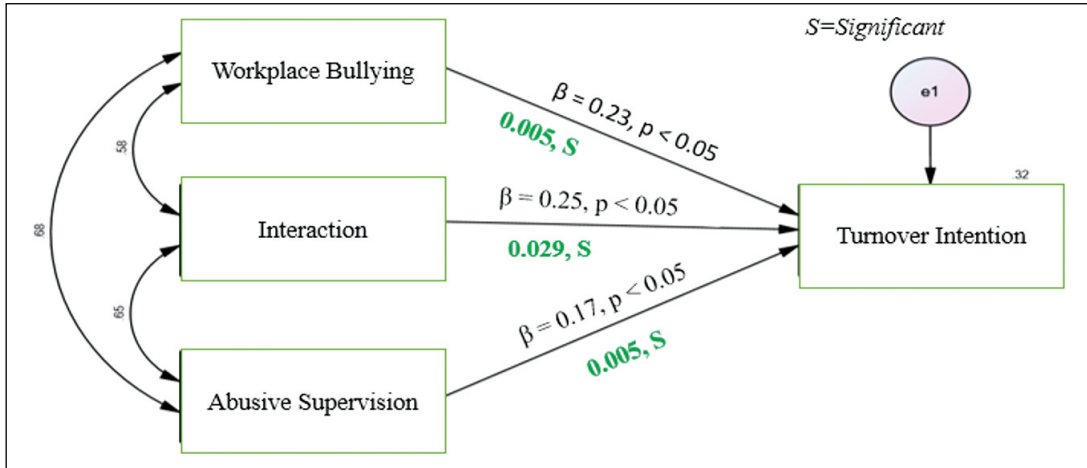
Table 3 Discriminant validity (Fornell and Larcker's Criteria)

Constructs	1	2	3
1. Workplace Bullying	0.850		
2. Abusive Supervision	0.830	0.890	
3. Turnover Intention	0.610	0.580	0.850

Structural Model

The structural model estimates each potential dependency based on path analysis (Bagozzi et al., 1991). The structural questions were used to express the relationships in the proposed structural model.

Figure 2 Structural model



First, H1 examines whether workplace bullying positively influences employee turnover intention. The result showed that workplace bullying significantly influences turnover intention ($\beta = 0.23, p < 0.05$). Hence, H1 was supported.

Second, H2 examines whether abusive supervision positively influences employee turnover intention. The result shows that abusive supervision significantly influences turnover intention ($\beta = 0.25, p < 0.05$). Hence, H2 was supported.

Finally, the paper estimated the moderating role of abusive supervision on the relationship between workplace bullying and turnover intention. The results revealed a positive significant moderating influence of abusive supervision on the relationship between workplace bullying and turnover intention ($\beta=0.17, t = 2.177, p < 0.05$), supporting H3. The moderation analysis summary is presented in Table 4.

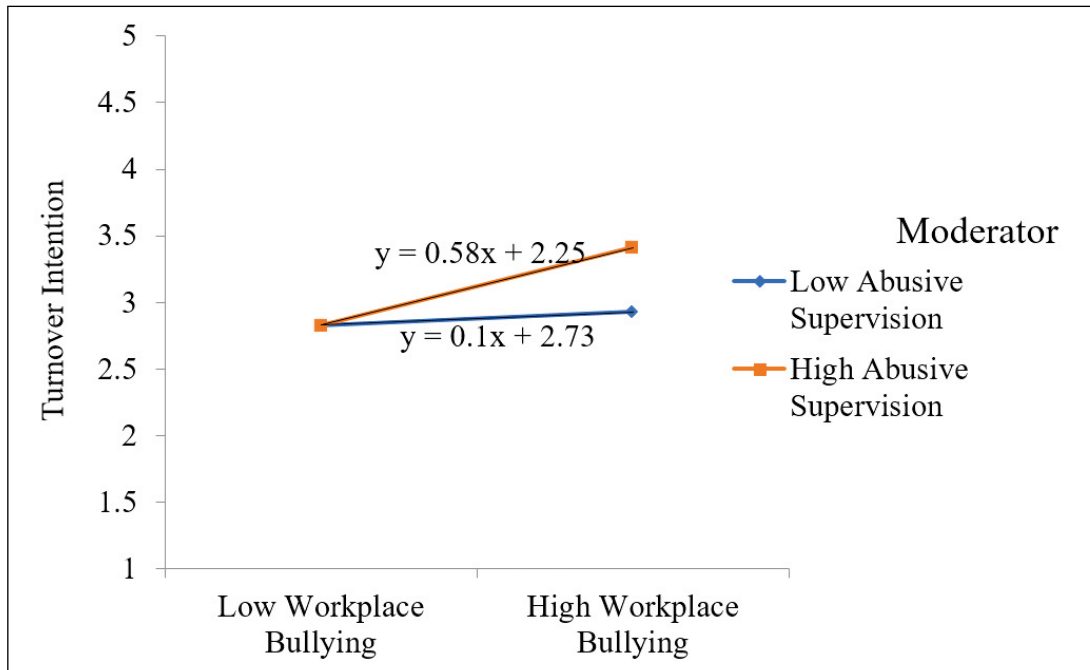
Table 4 Structural model

SN	Hypotheses	Estimate	SE	CR	P label	Findings
H1	TI <--- WB	0.229	0.082	2.791	0.005	Significant
H2	TI <--- AS	0.246	0.088	2.796	0.005	Significant
H3	TI <--- INT	0.116	0.053	2.177	0.029	Significant

Note. TI= Turnover Intention, WB= Workplace Bullying, AS= Abusive Supervision, INT= Interaction Term

To explain the relationship of moderating effect on independent and dependent variables, the researcher has used the Stats Tools Package of Gaskin (2016). Figure 3 shows the results of a simple slope analysis conducted to understand better the moderating effects' nature. As seen in Figure 3, the line is much steeper for Low AS; this shows that at a High level of AS, the impact of WB on TI is much stronger compared to Low AS. As shown in Figure 3, as the level of AS increased, the strength of the relationship between WB and TI increased. Therefore, it infers that the TI of employees increases with increasing levels of AS and WB.

Figure 3 Moderation Analysis



Discussion

The paper found that workplace bullying significantly influences employee turnover intention. This finding is consistent with several studies (e.g., Ahmad & Kaleem, 2020; Coetzee & van Dyk, 2018; Özkan, 2021). It implies that an increase in workplace bullying could result in a higher level of turnover intention among employees of Nepali commercial banks. It is possible to improve employee retention by managing the amount of workplace bullying that commercial bank employees’ experience. This study aligns with the Social Learning Theory of Bandura (1977).

In addition, the paper found that abusive supervision has a significant positive influence on employee turnover intention. This result is consistent with several studies (e.g., Bani-Melhem et al., 2021; Hussain et al., 2020; Lyu et al., 2019). It implies that a rise in abusive supervision may increase turnover intention among Nepali commercial bank employees. We can improve the level of turnover intention among employees by reducing the amount of abuse employees’ face from supervisors. The argument is aligned with Social Exchange Theory of Blau (1964).

Furthermore, the paper found that abusive supervision has a significant moderating influence on workplace bullying and employee turnover intention. An increase in abusive supervision strengthens the association between workplace bullying and turnover intention among employees of Nepali commercial banks. By limiting the amount of supervisory authority exercised by commercial bank employees, they could minimize the likelihood of workplace bullying and turnover intention. The argument is consistent with Upper Echelon Theory Hambrick et al., (2010).

Conclusion

This study offers valuable insights for researchers and managers regarding the moderating role abusive supervisions play in workplace bullying and turnover intention among employees in Nepali commercial banks. From a theoretical perspective, the study examined how abusive supervision moderates

workplace bullying and turnover intention. This paper attempted to investigate these phenomena with the theoretical rationalization of Upper Echelon Theory (Hambrick et al., 2010), Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977), and Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964). It provides a critical outlook on investigating turnover intention in the Nepali context.

We anticipate that the study will provide managers and companies with some interesting insights from a contextual or management perspective. Organizations can enrich their employees' lives by creating a bullying-free work environment. According to Cemaloglu's (2011) research, leadership style influences organizational health. Moreover, transformational leaders improve organizational health and reduce bullying in the workplace. Additionally, positive behaviours such as motivation, effective communication, problem-solving, participative decision-making, and reward (observed by transformational leaders) may reduce workplace bullying. Abusive supervision also influences employee turnover intention, according to the study. The importance of team leaders cannot be overstated. Organizations must identify abusive leaders and implement interventions to reduce abusive supervision. It would be helpful to emphasize abusive supervision and its implications through leadership training programs, including classroom lectures, group discussions, and role-playing exercises. The identification of abusive leaders and their participation in these programs could be mandatory. Thus, managers could reduce negative practices such as workplace bullying and abusive supervision techniques to control employee turnover.

The majority of respondents were between the ages of 21 and 40. They worked in operational or middle management positions. As a result, a few respondents were from Nepali commercial banks' management levels. It is, therefore, recommended to research on managerial-level employees. Furthermore, the turnover intention could be investigated with other respondents through probability sampling. Finally, the role of leadership style could be investigated with our study framework in future studies.

Conflict of Interest

Author declares no conflict of interest while preparing this article.

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Appendix

Statement	Indicator	Questions
Workplace Bullying (Gottman et al.,1998)	WB1	I am ridiculed (teased) at the workplace by the manager.
	WB2	I get repeated reminders of my blunders in the workplace from the manager.
	WB3	There is often slander or rumours about me at the workplace.
	WB4	I am socially excluded from coworker work group activities.
	WB5	I am verbally abused by the manager.
Abusive Supervision (Kelloway, Gottlieb & Barham, 1999)	AS1	My supervisor ridicules me.
	AS2	My supervisor tells me my thoughts or feelings are stupid.
	AS3	My supervisor puts me down in front of others.
	AS4	My supervisor makes negative comments about me to others.
	AS5	My supervisor tells me I'm incompetent.
Turnover Intention (Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007)	TI1	I am thinking about leaving this organization.
	TI2	I am planning to look for a new job.
	TI3	I intend to ask people about new job opportunities.
	TI4	I don't plan to be in this organization much longer.