Transactional leadership and workplace bullying among employees in Vietnam

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	Workplace bullying is negative behavior and has increasingly serious consequences. The cause of this problem is found in the characteristics of the working environment, including leadership style. Transactional leadership is a popular leadership style in Vietnam, but there have not been many studies analyzing in detail the influence of each dimension on workplace bullying. Mixed methods, including qualitative and quantitative research methods, are implemented to accomplish the above purpose. Qualitative research was carried out with group discussion and expert interview stages. After that, quantitative research, with two phases, a pilot test and a formal study, was conducted. After conducting a group discussion with 10 members, an expert interview was conducted with 06 experts who are doctors of business administration. The scale is commented on, supplemented, and revised during this period. After the pilot test with a sample of 207 respondents, the research scale was tested for reliability and adjusted, then used for the formal research. The research's sample includes 1,206 responses from employees of enterprises in Vietnam. Collected data are processed and analyzed using SPSS and SmartPLS software. All three components of manager transactional leadership, including Contingent Reward (CR), active management by exception (MEA), and passive management by exception (MEP), were found to have a negative impact on employees' workplace bullying. Although there have been many previous studies on workplace bullying and transactional leadership styles, there has not been any research analyzing the detailed influence of each component of this leadership style, especially in Vietnam. Therefore, the study results are a contribution to the theoretical basis of workplace bullying. From this result, this study suggests managerial implications to limit employee workplace bullying.

1. Introduction

Workplace bullying, once a sensitive topic in organizational life, has now become a recognized cause of social stress in both legal and theoretical research. Studies have proven that bullying in the workplace is popular around the world, with widespread and pronounced prevalence in countries across the globe. Bullying in the workplace is receiving increasing attention in organizational studies (Ågotnes, Einarsen, Hetland, & Skogstad, 2018).

Studies show that the number of workers who have experienced workplace bullying at some point in their career varies between 25 - 30% in the US (Keashly & Jagatic, 2011; Lutgen-Sandvik, Tracy, & Alberts, 2007), 15% in the UK (Rayner, Hoel, & Cooper, 2001), 8.6% in Norway (Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996), 3.5% in Sweden (Leymann, 1996). Meanwhile, in Asia, the rate is even higher. Studies on bullying in Asia show that workplace bullying occurs between 14.8% and 44% (León-Pérez, Escartín, & Giorgi, 2021). According to Samsudin, Isahak, and Rampal (2018), there are up to 95% of junior doctors say they have been bullied at work in Malaysia. Therefore, the research context makes a difference in studies on workplace bullying (León-Pérez et al., 2021). Studies on bullying in Asia are few, while research in other regions began more than 25 years ago; in Asia only started about 10 years ago (D'Cruz, Noronha, Mendonc, & Bhatt, 2021). According to D'Cruz et al. (2021), Vietnam is in the group of countries with few studies on workplace bullying with only 01 to 05 studies on this phenomenon. The previous studies of Nguyen, Teo, Grover, and Nguyen (2017a); Nguyen, Teo, Grover, and Nguyen (2019); Nguyen, Teo, and Dinh (2020) in public sector organizations in Vietnam also found a high prevalence of workplace bullying with more than 50% of workers self-reporting having been victims of workplace bullying, where between 16% to 24% of the participants claimed to have been victims within the 06 months to the time of the interview. *It can be seen that the research context is that businesses in Vietnam will contribute to theories of workplace bullying.*

The power difference in the work environment is often reflected in the management-subordinate relationship. While workplace bullying can occur at any hierarchical level in the work environment, research indicates that it is often a downward process. That is, supervisors and managers are typical perpetrators in 80% of bullying cases (Hoel, Glasø, Hetland, Cooper, & Einarsen, 2010). In fact, studies have shown that leadership style is a major predictor of bullying in the workplace (Einarsen, Skogstad, & Glasø, 2013; Francioli et al., 2018; Nielsen, 2013). Furthermore, some researchers assert that supervisors are a source of bullying (Ashforth, 1994; Einarsen et al., 2013; Tepper, 2000, 2007) . It is surprising to note that there is currently a lack of research to promote ways to address unfair situations, including workplace bullying, proactively through positive leadership styles (Ahmad, 2018). *Besides, there are not many studies exploring the relationship of each component in leadership style to workplace bullying. Therefore, the present study investigates the influence of transactional leadership style on workplace bullying in Vietnam.*

2. Theoretical basis

2.1. Workplace bullying

According to Brodsky (1976), workplace harassment is defined as repeated and persistent attempts by a person to torment, depress, frustrate, or obtain a response from others. It is the continual provocation, pressure, fear, threat, or annoyance of the target.

According to Robinson and Bennett (1995), deviant behavior in the workplace is voluntary behavior that violates important organizational rules and does so to threaten the health of the organization or its members or both. Richman et al. (1999) define abuse in the workplace as the violation of the physical, psychological, and/or occupational of the employee, etc. demeaning without reason or discrimination. Meanwhile, Meares, Oetzel, Torres, Derkacs, and Ginossar (2004) define employee abuse as an employee interaction, distribution (lack of access to resources), procedure, or systemic abuse that occurs at both the interpersonal and organization. Namie and Namie (2009) argue that workplace bullying is the intentional, traumatic, and repetitive abuse of a target by a bully (the perpetrator), who is driven by the desire to bully, and control the goal, includes all kinds of abuse at work, as long as the actions have the effect, intended or not, to

hurt the target, if perceived by the target. In addition, Lutgen-Sandvik et al. (2007) argues that bullying in the workplace is a type of interpersonal aggression at work that goes beyond normal civility and is characterized by frequency, intensity, duration and power differential.

Although there are many different definitions of workplace bullying, most studies use the definition of Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, and Cooper (2020) because because it is rated as the most complete and clear definition of this behavior. Einarsen et al. (2020, p. 26) define workplace bullying as *"Bullying at work means harassing, offending, socially excluding someone or negatively affecting someone's work tasks. In order for the label of bullying to be applied to a particular activity, interaction or process, it has to occur repeatedly and regularly (e.g., weekly) and over a period of time (e.g., about six months). Bullying is an escalating process in the course of which the person confronted ends up in an inferior position and becomes the target of systematic negative social acts."* Therefore, the present study uses this definition for its context.

2.2. Transactional leadership

According to Burns (1978), leadership style is one of the most observed phenomena, but the least understood. The term "leadership style" is widely used in conventional and academic literature because it refers to dozens of elements of leadership, depending on the classification (Van Wart, 2013). Leadership style is defined as intentionally influencing a person and/or a group of people in directing behavior, environment, and relationships (Avolio, 2007; Bass, 1997; Yukl, 2002). Bass (1990) argues that transformational leadership focuses on clarifying task requirements and recognizing rewards. Transactional leadership refers to an exchange process between leader and subordinate in which the leader sets goals, clarifies desired outcomes, provides valuable feedback, and awards achievements to their followers (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Yukl, 1989).

According to Bass and Avolio (1994), transactional leadership is classified into three main dimensions: (1) contingent reward refers to leaders who set performance and achievement guidelines for their followers and reward them with money, praise, and promotion upon successful completion; (2) active management by exception refers to the process of paying attention to problems and having a precise monitoring and control system in place to give warnings about them. Leaders control their subordinates and perform active response action immediately when a deviation occurrs compared to the rules and expectations or when a mistake occurrs; (3) passive management by exception refers to the process of paying attention to the special rather than the ordinary. Leaders act only when they are aware of serious problems that have arisen, often providing negative feedback and punishment to subordinates.

2.3. Affective events theory

Affective Events Theory (AET) is an important theoretical addition and is commonly used in studies of workplace bullying presented by Weiss and Cropanzano in 1996. The theory suggests that people often react emotionally to events, which influences their subsequent behaviors, attitudes, and, ultimately, their judgmental behaviors.

First, the characteristics of the working environment (roles, job design, etc.) directly affect the working attitude. Second, the work environment tends to lead to certain work events, which are the underlying causes for the experiences and emotional reactions of organizational members. The concept of "event" has been defined by Weiss and Cropanzano (1996, p. 31) as "something that occurs in a certain place during a particular period of time." When experiencing events at work, each individual will have different emotional reactions. Consequences of affective reactions fall into two

categories, affective-driven behaviors and judgment-driven behaviors. In which, affective-driven behavior (e.g., work performance, absenteeism, etc.) is motivated directly by affective reactions. Meanwhile, judgment-driven behavior is mediated by work attitudes (job satisfaction, intention to quit, commitment, etc.) (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). These attitudes, in turn, influence workplace behaviors such as absenteeism, tardiness, absenteeism, and work performance.
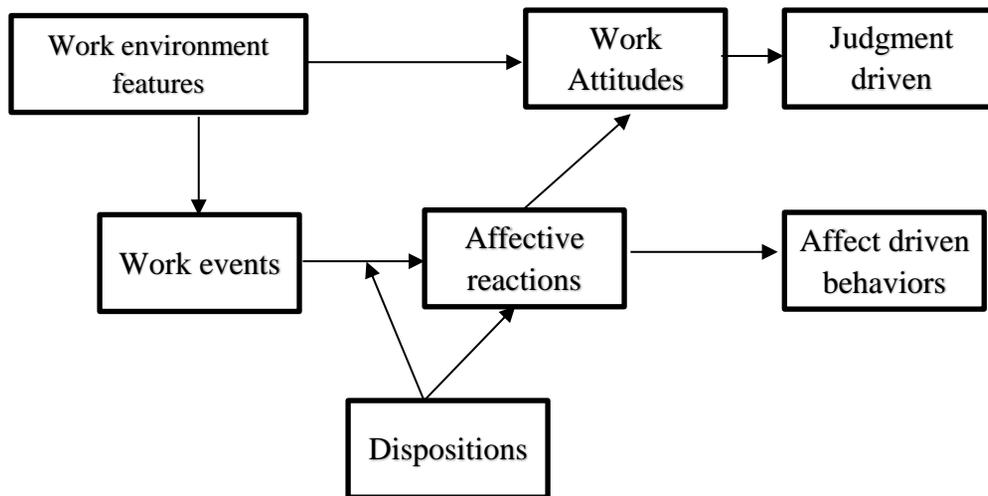

Figure 1. Affective Events Theory

2.4. Transactional leadership and workplace bullying

Transactional leadership also includes behaviors that actively monitor subordinates' performance and take corrective action for unacceptable outcomes (Bass, 1997). Therefore, it can be inferred that management with a transactional leadership style is negatively associated with bullying behaviors in the workplace (Dussault & Frenette, 2015; Ertureten, Cemalcilar, & Aycan, 2013; Mills, Keller, Chilcutt, & Nelson, 2019). Although there are still a few studies that have not found this relationship such as Cemaloğlu (2011).

Furthermore, a recent study by Kanwal, Lodhi, and Kashif (2019) found that transactional leadership increases bullying behavior in the workplace. Since the author argues that transactional leadership is a bureaucratic and short-term leadership style for managing employees, this does not develop strong emotional relationships between leaders and employees. It leads to feelings of injustice and discrimination in the workplace. However, in general, previous literature and studies have all supported that transactional leadership is a positive leadership style that motivates employees with clear goals and criteria.

2.4.1. Contingent reward and workplace bullying

Studies on stress show that transactional leadership styles, especially rewarding behaviors with clear goals, desired, and effectiveness criteria, reduce work-related stress, thereby reducing aggression and conflict in the working environment (Ertureten et al., 2013; Hauge et al., 2011; Sosik & Godshalk, 2000).

Transactional managers make it clear to subordinates that only performance is rewarded, which encourages focus on achieving work goals (Yukl, 1989). Under the transactional leadership style from managers, team or organization members pay attention to the behavior-consequence relationship, and those consequences (reward or punishment) facilitate the social learning process (Piccolo, Greenbaum, Hartog, & Folger, 2010). In this way, management can achieve high

efficiency in communicating to employees about their behavioral awareness - their outcome expectations and directing the employee's behavioral goals in the desired direction. Transactional managers set expectations that harassment within the organization will not be tolerated and impose penalties on employees who behave differently from normal expectations (i.e., treat others respectfully in the workplace). For example, observing or hearing about managers giving punishments to harassers or perpetrators of bullying will lead employees to learn about the consequences of engaging in bullying behavior. This, in turn, motivates employees to focus on avoiding negative outcomes or losses and adhering to expectations, making them less likely to engage in deviant behaviors such as harassment or bullying.

According to the Affective Events Theory of Weiss and Cropanzano (1996), with a contingent reward dimension, employees will perceive more positive events brought about by transactional leadership styles, namely, good behaviors that bring good results will be rewarded or negative behaviors that bring negative results will be punished. Taken together, the theory and the previous studies suggest that transactional-style managers define expectations of acceptable behavior within the organization and establish a clear link between bullying behavior and negative outcomes, thus preventing bullying in the workplace. The proposed research hypothesis is proposed as follows:

H1: Contingent reward of transactional management has a negative relationship with workplace bullying

2.4.2. Active management by exceptions and workplace bullying

With active management by exception, transactional managers actively monitor behavior and take corrective actions for employee performance (Yukl, 1989). In addition, for workplace bullying behaviors, managers proactively intervene when workplace integrity and employee effectiveness are at stake (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). Studies have shown that transactional leadership with active management by exception is most effective by exception when the problems to be solved are simple and well-defined (Sosik & Godshalk, 2000). In transitional leadership, proactively devising rules, procedures, and standards plays an important role in minimizing employee clutter while carrying out assigned tasks (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). This provides incentives for leaders to proactively correct their inappropriate behaviors, if any (e.g., threats, punishments based on unclear or unannounced standards), and employees if they perceive their employees to be aggressive, bullying, or uncivilized with others.

According to the Affective Events Theory of Weiss and Cropanzano (1996), employees under the transformational leadership style receive active supervision and adjustment from management. As a result, they will experience more positive events, less negative events, and less bullying in the workplace. Thus, according to the above arguments, the fact that transactional managers with active management by exceptions will help reduce bullying situations in the workplace of employees, therefore, the proposed research hypothesis is as follows:

H2: Active management by exceptions of transactional management has a negative relationship with workplace bullying

2.4.3. Passive management by exceptions and workplace bullying

With the passive management by exception dimension, managers pay more attention to the unsettled than to the normal. They act only when they are aware of serious problems arising, and there is negative feedback and punishment for subordinates (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Passive

management by exception creates a comfortable atmosphere for employees, making employees aware of their duties and obligations (Waldman, Ramirez, House, & Puranam, 2001), thereby promoting employee morale and independence. However, when there are uncertainties in the working process, there may be conflicts affecting work efficiency, and management will intervene to deal with or even punish employees with negative behavior. Passive management by exception intervenes when there are incidents that negatively affect work performance, including workplace bullying, thus, when bullying behavior occurs, management will intervene and prevent it.

According to the Affective Events Theory of Weiss and Cropanzano (1996), employees can work in a comfortable atmosphere, take initiative, and receive intervention from management when there are unstable events, which helps them to be less exposed to negative events and less bullied at work. Based on the above arguments, the following research hypothesis is proposed:

H3: Passive management by exceptions of transactional mangement has a negative relationship with workplace bullying
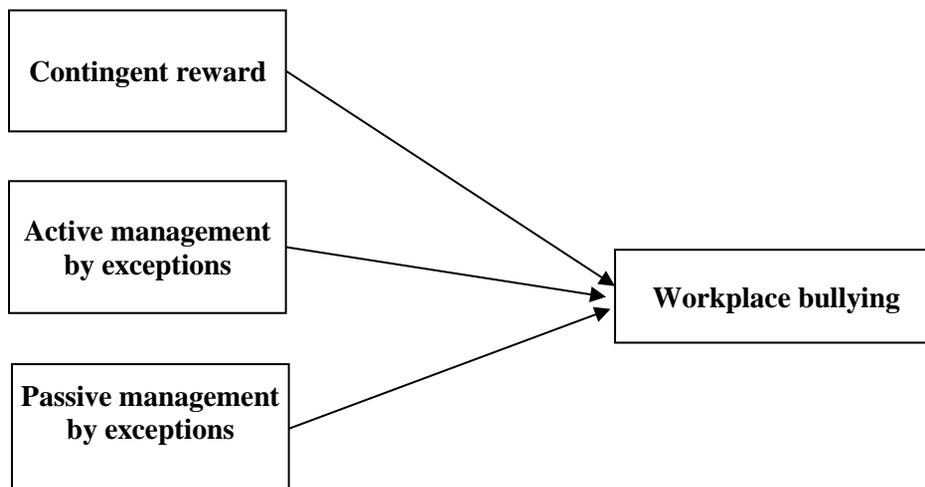
2.5. Proposed research model

Figure 2. Proposed research model

3. Research method

The study used mixed methods, including qualitative and quantitative methods.

3.1. Measurement

The scale of "Workplace bullying" is used from the Negative Behavior Questionnaire-Revised of 22-question by Einarsen, Hoel, and Notelaers (2009), which includes 22 questions. This is the scale used in most research on bullying. The scale of transactional leadership is measured by the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ 5X). MLQ was developed primarily by Avolio and Bass (2004). The survey questionnaire is designed according to a Likert five-point scale. With the "Workplace bullying" scale, respondents rate it on a scale from 1 to 5 with "1-Never", "2-Now and then", "3-Monthly ", "4-Weekly", "5-Daily". With other scales, respondents rate on a scale from 1 to 5 with "1-Totally disagree", "2-Disagree", "3-Neutral", "4-Agree", "5-Totally agree" .

3.2. Qualitative research

Qualitative research is used to comment on the ease of understanding of definitions and scales for factors in the research model. Qualitative research is conducted through 02 stages: group

discussion and expert interview. At the same time, the discussion group can also propose questions to add to the research scale. Furthermore, during this process, the participants can propose questions to add to the research scale.

3.2.1. The group discussion stage

This study implemented a non-probability sampling method, and conducted a conversation with a group of 10 staff members who are working at enterprises in Vietnam, in the fields of telecommunications, electricity force, event organization, banking, etc. Which the participants are working in many different types of enterprises such as joint-stock enterprises, state-owned enterprises, private enterprises, and foreign-invested enterprises. At this stage, this study edits the words to suit the research context from the original scale. After the discussion, the study added 02 observed variables to the scale of "Transactional leadership" and 03 observed variables to the scale of "Workplace bullying".

3.2.2. The expert interview stage

This study conducted interviews with 06 experts, who have a Doctor of Business Administration degree, with experience and scientific research capacity. Selectively absorbing expert opinions, the study removed 01 observed variable of the factor "Workplace bullying" and removed 01 observed variable of the component "Contingent reward" of transactional leadership. The above observed variables were added from the group discussion stage but did not match the definitions of variables in the research model.

3.3. Quantitative research

3.3.1. The pilot test stage

This study conducted a survey with a sample size of 207 employees working in enterprises in Vietnam. The sampling method is non-probability. The survey questionnaire was designed, then surveyed directly with a paper questionnaire and sent the link to the survey questionnaire via the Internet (skype, email, facebook, etc.) via Google form for respondents to answer by themselves. The collected data will be analyzed for reliability and convergence by the Cronbach Alpha coefficient test and Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) by SPSS software. The survey implementation period is the first 18 days of March 2022.

After analyzing, the scale "Workplace bullying" excludes 04 observed variables because the Corrected Item-Total Correlation of these variables is less than 0.7 when performing the Cronbach Alpha test (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). The scale is then unchanged after the EFA process.

3.3.2. The formal quantitative research stage

The survey questionnaire was adjusted from a pilot test, then sent to the respondents to answer directly on printed paper, as well as conduct the survey via the internet (Skype, Email, Facebook, etc.) by Google Form link. The survey period is from April to June 2022. The research sample is employees working at enterprises in Vietnam. With the non-probability sampling method, the study collected 1,206 valid responses from 1,383 responses. Responses that tend to be neutral or have the same rating for the observed variables are considered omitted. After screening, the data is analyzed using SPSS and SmartPLS software.

4. Result

4.1. Descriptive statistics of sample

Table 1

Descriptive statistics of the study sample

		N = 1,206	
		Frequency	**Percentage (%)**
Gender	Male	493	40.9
	Femal	713	59.1
Age	18 - 25 years old	379	31.4
	26 - 35 years old	515	42.7
	36 - 45 years old	212	17.6
	Above 46 years old	100	8.3
Marital status	Single	744	61.7
	Married	462	38.3
Regions	Northern	359	29.8
	Central	196	16.3
	Southern	651	54.0
Enterprise type	Limited/Private Enterprises	318	26.4
	Joint Stock Enterprises	387	32.1
	Foreign investment Enterprises	184	15.3
	State-owned Enterprises	235	19.4
	Others	82	6.8

Gender and Marital status: The number of female respondents accounted for 59.1%, higher than that of men, only 40.9%. Meanwhile, 61.7% of the study participants are single and 38.3% of the respondents are married. This shows that the study participants are mostly female, while the sample has a slightly higher rate of single than married.

Age: The majority of study participants were at a young age, with a rate of 31.4% for the group of respondents aged from 18 to 25 and especially 42.7% for the group of respondents from 26 to 35 years old. These are the two groups of respondents with the highest percentage. Next is the group of respondents with the age from 35 to 46, accounting for 17.6% and the remaining group of respondents over 46 years old.

Regions: The survey sample accounted for the majority of employees working in the South with the rate of 54.0% while the number of employees in the North accounted for 29.8% and finally the least group of employees working in Central region with 16.3%.

Enterprise type: The sample is quite diverse in terms of enterprise types, accounting for the highest proportion of joint stock enterprises with 32.1%, followed by two groups of limited/private enterprises and State-owned enterprises accounted for 26.4% and 19.4% respectively. Finally, there are two groups of foreign-invested enterprises with 15.3% and other types of enterprises with 6.8%.

4.2. Descriptive statistic of observed variables

Table 2

Decriptive statistic of observed variables

Code	Content	Source	Mean	Min	Max	Stan.Dev.
Transactional leadership						
Contingent reward						
CR1	My manager provides me with assistance in exchange for my efforts.	Avolio and Bass (2004)	3.511	1	5	1.032
CR2	My manager discusses in specific terms who is responsible for achieving performance targets.		3.609	1	5	1.024
CR3	My manager makes clear what one can expect to receive when performance goals are achieved.		3.679	1	5	1.012
CR4	My manager expresses satisfaction when others meet expectations.		3.571	1	5	1.145
Active management by exceptions						
MEA1	My manager focuses attention on irregularities, mistakes, exceptions, and deviations from standards.		3.727	1	5	0.836
MEA2	My manager concentrates his/her full attention on dealing with mistakes, complaints, and failures.	Avolio and Bass (2004)	3.734	1	5	0.851
MEA3	My manager keeps track of all mistakes.		3.759	1	5	0.845
MEA4	My manager directs my attention towards failures to meet standards.		3.712	1	5	0.988
Passive management by exceptions						
MEP1	My manager fails to interfere until problems become serious.	Avolio and Bass (2004)	3.601	1	5	1.036
MEP2	My manager waits for things to go wrong before taking action.		3.609	1	5	1.025
MEP3	My manager shows that he/she is a firm believer in "If it isn't broke, don't fix it".		3.642	1	5	1.004
MEP4	My manager demonstrates that problems must become chronic before taking action.		3.643	1	5	1.011
MEP5	My manager always does it the old-fashioned way if there's no problem.	Qualitative research	3.580	1	5	1.084

Code	Content	Source	Mean	Min	Max	Stan.Dev.
Transactional leadership						
Workplace bullying						
WPB1	Being humiliated or ridiculed in connection with your work.	Einarsen et al. (2009)	3.347	1	5	1.173
WPB2	Having key areas of responsibility removed or replaced with more trivial tasks.		3.338	1	5	1.139
WPB3	Spreading of gossip and rumors about you.		3.284	1	5	1.157
WPB4	Being ignored or excluded.		3.239	1	5	1.123
WPB5	Having insulting or offensive remarks made about your person, attitude, or private life.		3.384	1	5	1.133
WPB6	Hints or signals from others that you should quit your job.		3.350	1	5	1.128
WPB7	Repeated reminders of your errors or mistakes.		3.349	1	5	1.143
WPB8	Being ignored or facing a hostile reaction when you approach.		3.307	1	5	1.156
WPB10	Practical jokes are carried out by people you do not get along with.		3.357	1	5	1.137
WPB11	Having allegations made against you.		3.255	1	5	1.053
WPB12	Being the subject of excessive sarcasm.		3.356	1	5	1.156
WPB13	Someone withholding information which affects your performance.		3.357	1	5	1.164
WPB15	Having your opinions ignored.	Einarsen et al. (2009)	3.319	1	5	1.172
WPB16	Being given tasks with unreasonable deadlines.		3.353	1	5	1.154
WPB17	Excessive monitoring of your work.		3.299	1	5	1.159
WPB19	Being exposed to an unmanageable workload.		3.348	1	5	1.171
WPB20	Asking to complete work with higher results than usual.	Qualitative research	3.335	1	5	1.144
WPB21	Being not recognized for your work achievements.	Qualitative research	3.351	1	5	1.169
WPB22	Being shouted at or being the target of spontaneous anger.	Einarsen et al. (2009)	3.250	1	5	1.221
WPB23	Intimidating behavior such as finger-pointing, invasion of personal space, shoving, and blocking your way.		3.306	1	5	1.228

Active management by exceptions: The observed variables of this component are evaluated with the lowest level of 1 and the highest of 5. In which, the mean value of the observed variables is greater than 3. The highest mean value achieved is 3.759 at the MEA3 and the lowest mean value is 3.712 at the MEA4. This shows that the employees of enterprises in Vietnam appreciate the timely detection of errors in the working process from their managers, however, they believe that managers often fail to draw attention to common mistakes at work.

Passive management by exceptions: The observed variables in the scale are rated the lowest at 1 and the highest at 5. The mean values of the observed variables reach a value greater than 3 and this value is also smaller than the *Active management by exceptions* component. This shows that employees of enterprises in Vietnam have the ability to proactively manage from their managers. The highest mean is 3.64 at the MEP3 and the MEP4 variables and the lowest mean is 3.58 at the MEP5. As such, employees in enterprises in Vietnam assess that their managers believe in the view "if it ain't broken, don't fix it" and demonstrate that problems must become chronic before taking action.

Contingent reward: The observed variables are evaluated from level 1 to level 5. The mean value of the observed variables is not much higher than the mean, greater than 3 but much lower than 4 (Agree). This shows that employees do not clearly feel that they will be rewarded according to their performance. In which, the mean value of CR3 reached the highest value of 3.679 and the mean value of variable CR1 reached the lowest value of 3.511. As such, employees feel that their manager has little support to motivate them even though they have been communicated and clearly stated by the manager about what can be received when achieving the set goals.

Workplace bullying: The evaluations of employees for questions on the workplace bullying scale reached the minimum value of 1 and the maximum value of 5, and all the mean values are greater than 3. However, the mean value of the observed variables does not reach level 4 and has nearly equivalent values. Employees do not yet perceive much that they are being bullied at work. Which WPB5 has the highest mean value of 3.384, which shows that employees in Vietnam regularly receive rumors or derogatory comments about their personal attitudes or private lives.

4.3. Reliability of scale and Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

4.3.1. Cronbach's Alpha

The testing results show that Cronbach's Alpha coefficients of all the factors in the model are all greater than 0.7. At the same time, the corrected item-total correlation of each observed variable is greater than 0.3. Thus, it can be concluded that the scale is reliable (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Therefore, all observed variables, as shown in Table 3, are all qualified to be added to EFA.

Table 3

Cronbach's Alpha coefficients

Factor/Cronbach's Alpha coefficients	Observed variable	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Workplace bullying					
Workplace bullying/Cronbach's Alpha = 0.943	WPB1	63.138	380.318	0.899	0.943
	WPB2	63.146	381.887	0.891	0.943
	WPB3	63.201	380.921	0.899	0.943

Factor/Cronbach's Alpha coefficients	Observed variable	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
	WPB4	63.245	382.315	0.894	0.943
	WPB5	63.100	381.833	0.897	0.943
	WPB6	63.134	382.173	0.894	0.943
	WPB7	63.135	381.802	0.890	0.943
	WPB8	63.177	380.988	0.898	0.943
	WPB10	63.127	381.953	0.891	0.943
	WPB11	63.229	385.523	0.875	0.943
	WPB12	63.129	381.217	0.893	0.943
	WPB13	63.127	380.742	0.897	0.943
	WPB15	63.165	380.498	0.896	0.943
	WPB16	63.131	380.838	0.903	0.943
	WPB17	63.185	380.659	0.903	0.943
	WPB19	63.136	380.541	0.896	0.943
	WPB20	63.149	381.422	0.898	0.943
	WPB21	63.133	380.755	0.893	0.943
	WPB22	63.235	385.926	0.738	0.945
	WPB23	63.178	385.579	0.741	0.945
Transactional leadership					
Active management by exceptions/Cronbach's Alpha = 0.916	MEA1	11.205	5.790	0.864	0.874
	MEA2	11.198	5.907	0.804	0.893
	MEA3	11.173	5.845	0.832	0.884
	MEA4	11.220	5.494	0.753	0.916
Passive management by exceptions/Cronbach's Alpha = 0.939	MEP1	14.473	13.800	0.849	0.922
	MEP2	14.466	13.842	0.854	0.921
	MEP3	14.433	13.887	0.869	0.918
	MEP4	14.431	13.988	0.845	0.923
	MEP5	14.495	14.023	0.764	0.938
Contingent reward /Cronbach's Alpha = 0.920	CR1	10.860	8.270	0.847	0.886
	CR2	10.761	8.356	0.838	0.890
	CR3	10.692	8.408	0.840	0.889
	CR4	10.799	8.144	0.751	0.922

4.3.2. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

The results of EFA analysis are shown in Table 4 and Table 5, the KMO coefficient is 0.976 (ranging from 0.5 to 1), the significance level of Bartlett's test is 0.000 < 0.05, eigenvalue coefficient > 1, total variance extracted > 50%. This shows that the observed variables in the factors have a high degree of correlation and cohesion, as well as factor analysis, is appropriate (Hair, Risher, Sarstedt, & Ringle, 2019).

Table 4

KMO test result

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy		0.976
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	46396.797
	df	528
	Sig.	0.000

Table 5

Rotated matrix

	Component			
	1	2	3	4
WPB17	0.913			
WPB3	0.912			
WPB15	0.912			
WPB1	0.912			
WPB6	0.910			
WPB20	0.909			
WPB5	0.909			
WPB13	0.908			
WPB19	0.908			
WPB16	0.907			
WPB4	0.906			
WPB10	0.905			
WPB8	0.903			
WPB7	0.903			
WPB12	0.903			
WPB2	0.902			
WPB21	0.900			
WPB11	0.887			
WPB22	0.763			
WPB23	0.759			

	Component			
	1	2	3	4
MEP3		0.922		
MEP1		0.909		
MEP2		0.909		
MEP4		0.901		
MEP5		0.844		
CR1			0.925	
CR3			0.920	
CR2			0.911	
CR4			0.846	
MEA1				0.930
MEA3				0.911
MEA2				0.893
MEA4				0.856
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.				
Rotation Method: Promax with Kaiser Normalization.				

4.4. Reliability, convergent and discriminant validity

Next, the research data tested for convergence, reliability, and discriminant of scale, then regression analysis and testing of research hypotheses by SmartPLS software.

According to the analysis results from Table 6, the overloading of the factors is greater than 0.7, and the AVE coefficient of these factors is also greater than 0.5. Therefore, it can be concluded that the research scale reaches convergence validity (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2021). Besides, the CR coefficient of the factors in the model is all greater than 0.7, so the research scale reaches reliability validity (Hair et al., 2021).

Table 6

Reliability, convergent and discriminant validity results

Factor	Number of Observed variables	Outerloading		Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
		Min	Max		
Transactional leadership					
MEA	4	0.861	0.930	0.943	0.806
MEP	5	0.854	0.925	0.954	0.805
CR	4	0.866	0.922	0.938	0.792
Workplace bullying					
WPB	20	0.758	0.914	0.956	0.797

The HTMT indexes in the matrix, which range from 0.074 to 0.137, are all smaller than 0.85, therefore, the scale reaches discriminant validity (Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2015).

Regression analysis

The VIF values of all endogenous variables and exogenous variables, which range from 1.009 to 1.015, are all less than 2, within the acceptable threshold. Therefore, the phenomenon of multicollinearity does not occur (Hair et al., 2019). The analysis results also show that the SNMR = 0.029 (less than 0.08), so the model fit is accepted (Henseler et al., 2015).

The adjusted R^2 is 0.049. Thus, the endogenous variables (WPB) has a suitable level of explanation from the exogenous variables (MEA, MEP, CR) in the research model (Cohen, 2013). The coefficient $f^2 \geq 0.02$ and the results of blindfolding with $Q^2 = 0.039 > 0$, so there is a predictive relationship of the model to the endogenous variables (Cohen, 2013; Hair et al., 2019).

Results and discussions

The study carried out bootstrapping with 5,000 samples to test the hypotheses in the proposed research model. According to the results in Table 7, the study's hypotheses are accepted at the 1% significance level due to the p-value < 0.01.

Table 7

Research hypothesis test results

Hypothesis	Relationship	β	Stand.	t-value	p-value	Result
H1	CR -> WPB	-0.135	0.020	6.819	0.000	Accepted
H2	MEA -> WPB	-0.115	0.027	4.348	0.000	Accepted
H3	MEP -> WPB	-0.104	0.026	3.955	0.000	Accepted

According to the analysis results, the *contingent reward* has a relationship with workplace bullying with the coefficient β = -0.135 and p-value = 0.000. Therefore, hypothesis H1 is accepted. This is the negative relationship with a confidence level of 99%. As such, the better a manager with a transactional leadership style practices *contingent reward*, the less likely their employees are to be bullied in the workplace. The above results are consistent with the Affective Events Theory of Weiss and Cropanzano (1996). This can be explained by the clear communication of rewards and punishments by management when assigning tasks to employees, helping employees understand the benefits they gain when completing the work. More specifically, being rewarded helps employees have a clear goal at work and focus on achieving that goal (Sosik & Godshalk 2000), and rewards (material or immaterial) are positive events that affect employees during work. In addition, punishing when goals are not achieved or when conflicts arise, which affect work results will also reduce conflicts or causes of stress in the workplace. Especially in Vietnam, employees often have high power distance and fear of managers, so forms of deterrence and punishment will be more effective than in many other countries.

The results also show that the *active* and *passive management by exceptions* also has a relationship with the employee's workplace bullying with coefficients β = -0.115 and p-value = 0.000 (for active management by exception) and coefficients β = -0.104 and p-value = 0.000 (for passive management by exception). Therefore, hypotheses H2 and H3 are accepted; the above relationships are negative with a 99% level of confidence.

Among the components of transactional leadership, active management by exception and contingent reward have a strong impact on employees' workplace bullying. This demonstrates

that the better a manager is able to actively/passively manage by exceptions, the less likely their employees are to be bullied in the workplace. Transactional managers intervene when the workplace integrity and employee's performance are threatened (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). As a result, managers will deal with negative workplace events that affect overall work performance, which reduces bullying behaviors in the workplace.

With *active management by exception*, managers also set rules and standards for work to avoid conflicts that may occur when performing. Thus, according to the Affective Events Theory of Weiss and Cropanzano (1996), employees under the transactional leadership style receive positive supervision and adjustment from managers with the goal of completing the task, so they are less likely to be bullied in the workplace. In Vietnam, employees are more afraid of their managers, so it is more effective for management to have support or intervention measures in the process of doing the job because employees will often comply with what their managers ask or suggest. Therefore, conflicts or bullying behaviors in the workplace can be resolved as soon as management intervenes or offers solutions to accomplish goals at work for the common goal. This explains why *active management by exception* has the strongest impact on reducing workplace bullying across components of transactional leadership.

Among them, the MEA and CR were found to be the most effective in limiting employee bullying, followed by the MEP. Clearly, managers proactively setting standards and rules to handle and resolve conflicts in the workplace is the most effective in limiting bullying in the workplace. In additon, recognition and reward based on work results help employees focus on the set goals, so they pay less attention or "dive" into conflicts with managers or colleagues. Meanwhile, the lack of initiative when managing and monitoring work, although it also contributes to limiting bullying behaviors, will be less effective. Overall, managers with transactional leadership styles will reduce employee bullying in the workplace. This result is similar to previous studies of Cemaloğlu (2011); Nielsen (2013); Ertureten et al. (2013); Dussault and Frenette (2015); Kanwal et al. (2019), Mills et al. (2019).

5. Conclusions and managerial implications

5.1. Conclusions

With the aim of understanding the relationship between components of transactional leadership style and workplace bullying, the study used both qualitative and quantitative research methods. Qualitative research is used to edit and supplement the scale to suit the research context. It is carried out within two phases: group discussion and expert interview. After that, the study conducted a pilot test with a sample of 207 respondents, to check the reliability and convergence of the scale using SPSS software. Finally, the formal study was conducted with 1,278 respondents, the collected data was analyzed using SPSS and SmartPLS software.

All three components of manager transactional leadership, including *Contingent Reward* (CR), *active management by exception* (MEA), and *passive management by exception* (MEP), were found to have an impact on reducing employee workplace bullying behaviors. Managers with a transactional style offer rewards and punishments that help employees focus more on work and avoid negative workplace behaviors. In addition, both management and monitoring (active or passive) help managers limit and intervene in conflicts that occur in the working process and help employees focus on work results. At a more specific level, the current study also found the impact of each component of the transactional leadership style on the workplace bullying of employees of enterprises in Vietnam.

5.2. Managerial implications

The transactional leadership style of management can create a positive working environment and reduce workplace bullying behaviors among employees in Vietnamese enterprises. Therefore, human resource managers need to design training programs, fostering content related to this leadership style for managers or individuals who are planning to thrive in management positions. Especially in the training program, it is possible to focus on fostering ethics, dedication, and belief in the purpose and mission of managers. In addition, training programs for managers should pay attention to fostering negotiation and communication skills in order to consider reasonable rewards or punishments with employees and the ability to track, check, and support employees in a variety of situations that occur as they perform their jobs. According to Tuckey, Li, and Chen (2017), fostering leadership styles for managers is important because it can be seen as the only way to create a safe and healthy work environment Therefore, these training programs should be held regularly and periodically at the enterprise.

Next, for senior managers or leaders in the business, it is also necessary to improve their own management capacity so that they can become an image for lower management levels. Since then, they together create a safe and healthy working environment. For example, senior managers or leaders need to have clear and strict reward and punishment policies for bullying behavior if it occurs; and take measures to monitor, intervene, and support employees to resolve conflicts that occur during task performance.

5.3. Limitation and future research

First, the current sample is only employees of enterprises in Vietnam, so the sample is not representative. Further studies can be carried out with samples from other institutions or countries to make the results more representative. In addition, the survey collects research data from the respondent's self-assessed, so it will be difficult to avoid skewed responses due to emotional responses, which can be exaggerated in terms of the degree of own bullying. Next, the present study is a cross-sectional study, so future studies should be longitudinal. Finally, as most research on bullying is focused on the victim or target, further research should learn more about the perpetrator.

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