



Volume and Issues Obtainable at Center for Business Research and Consulting,  
IBMAS, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur Pakistan

## South Asian Review of Business and Administrative Studies

ISSN: 2710-5318 ; ISSN (E): 2710-5164

Volume 4, No.2, December 2022

Journal homepage: <https://journals.iub.edu.pk/index.php/sabas>

### When Knowledge Workers Suffer: How Affective Commitment and Sexual Harassment from Pupil on Educators Tie with Burnout

**Muhammad Asif Zaheer**, University Institute of Management Sciences, PMAS-Arid Agriculture University, Rawalpindi, Pakistan

**Shuja Ilyas Chaudhary**, University Institute of Management Sciences, PMAS-Arid Agriculture University, Rawalpindi, Pakistan

**Zoia Khan**, University Institute of Management Sciences, PMAS-Arid Agriculture University, Rawalpindi, Pakistan

**Kaleem Ullah**, University Institute of Management Sciences, PMAS-Arid Agriculture University, Rawalpindi, Pakistan

#### ARTICLE DETAILS

#### ABSTRACT

##### History

*Revised format:*

*Nov 2022*

*Available Online:*

*Dec 2022*

##### Keywords

*Pupil-on-knowledge worker sexual harassment, Burnout, Affective commitment*

Knowledge workers are raising concerns about students harassing them with dirty jokes, provocative glances, and other forms of inappropriate behavior. Because of this, the current research analyzed how sexual harassment by students affects teachers' exhaustion. Using a sample of 269 female knowledge workers from an educational institutions located in Rawalpindi and Islamabad, the capital of Pakistan. According to the data, educators who are subjected to sexual harassment from their pupils are more likely to experience burnout and affective commitment negatively influence burnout. The research has some limitations, but it does contribute to theorizing in many important ways. It offers useful suggestions to university administration that can be used to curb sexually offensive student behavior and protect against teacher burnout and work withdrawal among those who have been the victims of such behavior.



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Corresponding author's email address: [dr.asif@uaar.edu.pk](mailto:dr.asif@uaar.edu.pk)

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.52461/sabas.v4i2.1512>

#### Introduction

Knowledge workers, who are generally held in high esteem, have recently raised concerns about disrespect, maltreatment, and abuse in the classroom. There have been reports of this kind for decades, but schools have generally ignored them or the teachers involved have been too ashamed to speak up. However, situations are increasingly highlighted and frequently gain considerable coverage due to the rising use and impact of social media. As a result, academics now pay particular attention to how classroom conditions affect teachers' health and happiness (Alat, 2015; King & Piotrowski, 2015; Fogelgarn, Burns, & Billett, 2019). Workplace abuse in academia, which develops and breeds conflict and disagreement between professors and students, is now generally acknowledged to have negative consequences on teachers' psychosomatic wellbeing, job

satisfaction, and work and career commitment (Robinson, 2000; Thompson, 2009; Makura & Zireva, 2013; Kim & Lee, 2014). Hostility, physical violence, bullying, aggression, and sexual harassment are all forms of mistreatment that frequently occur in schools (Fogelgarn, Burns, & Billett, 2019; O'Mochain, 2019).

### **Literature Review and Hypotheses Development**

The primary concept of affective events theory is that employees in the service sector respond to situations and events in the workplace with emotional reactions that shape their actions and perspectives on the job. According to the notion, people's subsequent actions, perspectives, and emotional states at work are all formed by their early reactions to work events. In addition, according to affective events theory, the characteristics of the workplace can have a role in shaping occupational incidents (Cropanzano & Dasborough, 2015; Cropanzano, Dasborough & Weiss, 2017).

### **Pupil-on-Knowledge Worker Sexual Harassment and Burnout**

The pervasive problem of sexual harassment by students against professors is exacerbated by the fact that such behaviour occurs frequently in schools. Catcalling, vulgar comments, unwanted touching, flirtation, and requests for sexual favors are all examples of activity that could be considered sexual harassment (Alat, 2015; Fogelgarn, Burns & Billett, 2019). Research shows that instructors who are subjected to persistent sexual harassment from their pupils are more likely to have mental health problems like depression, fatigue, and apathy in the workplace (Ferfolja, 2010; Robinson, 2012; Anderman et al., 2018).

Hobfoll's (2011) resource conservation theory explains why and how sexual harassment by students against teachers causes burnout. The term "burnout" refers to a state in which a person's mental and physical reserves have been depleted as a result of persistent stress brought on by an excessive amount of work (Schaufeli, Leiter, & Maslach, 2009). According to the theory, people make firm decisions to build and keep certain capacities, such as social networks, emotional resilience, and motor skills, especially in the workplace. These items have intrinsic value or can be traded for something else of equal or greater value (Hobfoll, et al., 2018). Most people have finite coping mechanisms, and pressures like sexual harassment quickly deplete them. When the stores are depleted to a certain point, the individuals in question are said to have hit burnout (Hobfoll & Freedy, 2017). Proponents of the hypothesis stress that incidents of student-on-teacher sexual harassment can drain a teacher's mental, emotional, and even physical reserves. Whether or not resources are depleted as a result of sexual harassment committed by students depends on the teacher's reaction and the availability of means to restore such resources. Deficiency of resources is an important consideration in studies of burnout (Schaufeli, Leiter, & Maslach, 2009; Hoboll, 2011).

H1: Pupil-perpetrated sexual harassment is positively related with teachers' burnout.

### **Affective commitment and Burnout**

According to research by Irving and Coleman (2003), high-affective-commitment workers feel higher stress on the job when their organizational identities are threatened by their roles. Higher-affective-commitment individuals see themselves as part of the organization and work hard to attain and preserve their organizational identities by characterizing themselves in the same ways that the organization characterizes itself (Burke, 1991; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). The term "affective commitment" describes the degree to which workers feel a sense of belonging, pride, and responsibility toward their workplace (Allen & Meyer, 1996).

Workers who feel emotionally connected to their jobs are more likely to adopt the company's beliefs and priorities as their own (Mayer & Schoorman, 1992). Reilly (1994) observed that when a stressful event diverted nurses' attention away from their professional goals, they experienced more emotional weariness. Affective commitment has been shown to have positive main effects on a number of personal and professional outcomes for employees (Meyer et al., 2002), but some research suggests that it may amplify the positive relationships between stressors and strain outcomes because more committed employees are more invested in and identified with organizations, making them more susceptible to stressor experiences (e.g., Irving & Coleman, 2003; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Meyer & Maltin, 2010). Researchers Kabat-Farr et al. (2016) discovered that high-commitment persons were more likely to experience unpleasant emotions like guilt when exposed to incivility in the workplace.

H2: Affective commitment is negatively related with teachers' burnout.

### Research Methodology

Since women are disproportionately affected by sexual harassment and assault in academia, a computer-based survey was conducted recently among female faculty members at educational institutions located in Rawalpindi and Islamabad, the capital of Pakistan. Confidentiality was ensured by not requesting their names or the names of their institutions. Several female knowledge workers took part in the study by completing an online questionnaire. Sample of 269 female knowledge workers are used to identify the consequences of pupil-on-knowledge worker sexual harassment and affective commitment on burnout.

Since the study's intended participants were professors at elite universities, an English survey based on a five-point Likert scale was developed (Asada et al., 2020; Junoh et al., 2019; Basheer et al., 2019a; Muneer et al., 2019; Basheer et al., 2019b; Basheer et al., 2018). To avoid overwhelming busy teachers during the busiest time of the semester, we kept it brief. Four questions were modified based on the research of McKinney (1990) to measure sexual harassment committed by students. Four items were modified from the Copenhagen Burnout Inventory developed by Kristensen et al. (2005) were modified to assess burnout symptoms. Meyer, Allen, and Smith (1993) developed a 6-item scale to assess individuals' level of affective commitment.

### Data Analysis

The private university teaching workforce, in particular, is hamstrung by a lack of options and forced to accept poor working conditions in order to keep their jobs. We chose to survey educational institutions located in Rawalpindi and Islamabad, the capital of Pakistan. There were 269 participants in the analysis; all participants were women, from qualification point of view 26% were graduates and 74% were postgraduates. In addition, 13.8% of participants had experience between 1 and 4 years, 24.9% had experience between 5 and 8 years, 32.7% had experience of less than 1 year, and only 28.6% had experience of 8 years or more. The majority of workers (49.8%) were between the ages of 26 and 40; the next largest group (3.5%) were those aged 25 or younger; and the smallest group (46.7%) were those aged 40 and older.

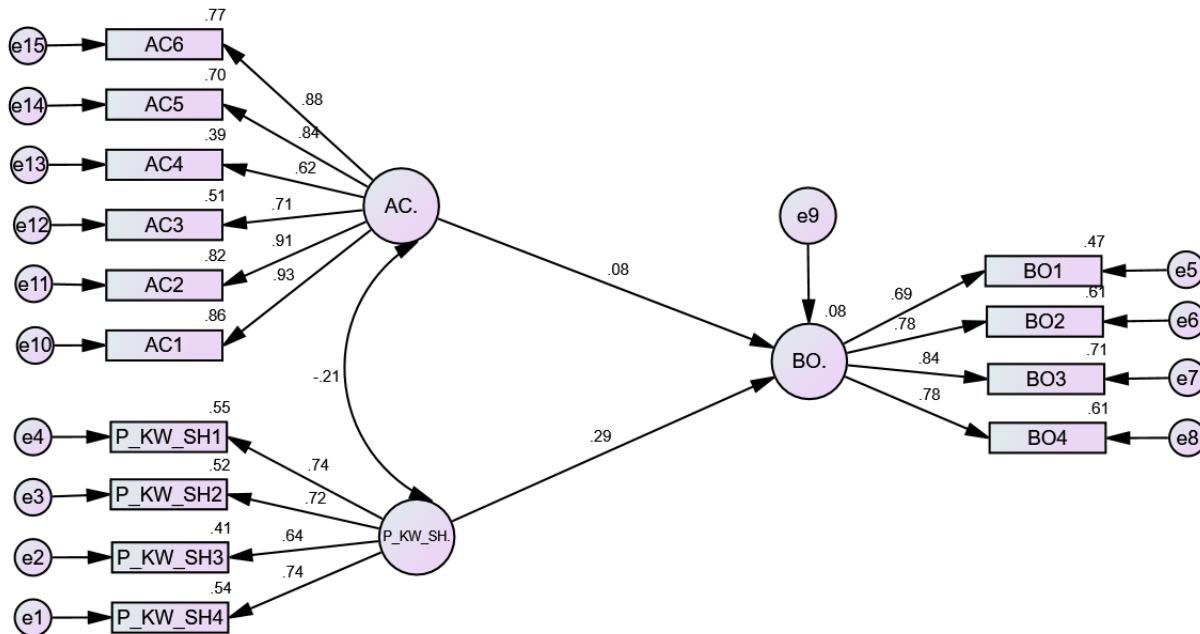
**Table 1.** Descriptive Statistics, Reliability and Correlation Analysis

Variables	Mean	S.D	P_KW_SH	AC	BO
P_KW_SH	2.4545	0.90269	(0.761)		
AC	2.5607	1.023374	(0.150)*	(0.923)	
BO	2.5288	0.91518	0.264**	0.011	(0.803)

Where N = 269, P\_KW\_SH = pupil-on-knowledge worker sexual harassment, AC = affective commitment, BO = burnout. \*\*p < 0.01 and \*p < 0.05

**Results and Discussion**

Analyses were conducted using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) (Raouf et al., 2021; Abdulmuhsin et al., 2021; Hameed et al., 2021; Yan et al., 2020; Nuseir et al., 2020), and instrument validity was checked using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). Sexually harassing and exploiting students by teachers is a horrible moment that has been going on for a long time. But the way power works in academia has changed a lot over the years. Students used to be the most common people who were harassed, but now students are the ones who harass teachers by giving them dirty jokes, dirty looks, cat calls, and other things. In light of this troubling problem, the goal of this study was to find out how sexual harassment by students and burnout affect each other.



**Figure 1.** SEM Model

In model fitness indexes,  $\chi^2/df = 2.812$ , AGFI = 0.864, TLI = 0.924, CFI = 0.938, GFI = 0.904 and RMSEA = 0.082. Specifically, hypothesis 1 which claimed that Pupil-perpetrated sexual harassment is positively related with teachers’ burnout was confirmed. Similarly, hypothesis 2 which claimed that affective commitment is negatively related with teachers’ burnout which is also confirmed.

**Table 2.** Direct Effects

Path	Coefficient	SE
P_KW_SH → BO	.281***	0.076
AC → BO	0.058	0.049

**Conclusion**

When we talk about sexual harassment in schools, we usually talk about male teachers who touch students inappropriately, ask them for favors that aren't appropriate, or make rude comments about them. What we don't talk about, at least in Pakistan, is how students sexually harass female teachers. This study looks into the relationship between student-on-teacher sexual harassment and teacher burnout. This is a controversial topic that is rarely talked about. Its results show that teacher pupil-on-knowledge worker sexual harassment have significantly positively effect on burnout and affective commitment have negatively effect on burnout. Taking this into account, academic

institutions should handle teachers' feelings about sexual harassment and burnout in a sensitive way to improve not only their job satisfaction and teaching skills, but also their commitment to the job and the teaching profession as a whole.

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