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Bullying Behavior, Mediating Role of Employee Silence and their Effects on Organisational Citizenship Behavior: Evidence from Seven Iranian Metropolises[**]

Abstract

Depending on dominant organisational conditions, various factors may affect the service quality and employees' willingness to behave positively. Therefore, this study investigated the effects of bullying behaviour on organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) through employee silence. This is an applied-descriptive survey consisting of drivers (1820 in total) of private bus companies in seven Iranian metropolises. The statistical population was selected through simple random sampling. After that, questionnaires were distributed, and the collected data were analysed through structural equation modelling (SEM) in SPSS and AMOS. The results revealed the effect of bullying behaviour on employee silence and OCB. Moreover, bullying behaviour had a negative effect on OCB with the mediating role of employee silence. The analysis of employee silence can provide opportunities to prevent negative behaviours in the workplace. Since there is scant research literature on the role of employee silence in the relationship between bullying behaviour and OCB, addressing this issue can help to fill the existing research gap.

Keywords: bullying behaviour, organisational citizenship behaviour, employee silence, private bus companies
(JEL: J21, J28, M14)

Introduction

In recent years, organisations have needed employees to do things beyond their job duties. These actions are known as extra-role behaviours, spontaneous behaviours, or organisational citizenship behaviours (OCBs). Individuals will not only be effective in increasing the efficiency of their colleagues by doing OCBs but also can help increase customer satisfaction in terms of sportsmanship and altruism. Therefore, these behaviours positively affect the effectiveness of organisations (Khalili, 2017).

Hence, organisations must motivate employees to show such behaviours (Koning & Van Kleef, 2015).

Some scholars believe that OCBs can be significantly reduced if employees suffer from bullying behaviour in their workplace (Goodboy et al., 2015; Salahieh, 2015; Verdasca, 2015; Zulkarnain et al., 2016). It has been well documented that people exposed to harassment in the workplace often suffer from low self-esteem as well as poor physical, psychological, and emotional health. In particular, anxiety, depression, psychological symptoms (hostility, excessive sensitivity, and memory loss), fear and distrust, lack of concentration, isolation, loneliness, chronic fatigue, and sleep problems may be increased among such employees. With such a wide range of potential impacts, organisations should not ignore the effects of bullying behaviour because of the destructive and devastating consequences of this phenomenon (Pate & Beaumont, 2010).

Employee silence is a potential variable affecting the relationship between bullying behaviour and OCB, playing a key role in motivating interactions of employees in the organisation. Numerous pieces of evidence suggest employee silence is a critical factor affecting a wide range of attitudes and behaviours within an organisation (Acaray & Akturan, 2015; Harbalioğlu & Gültekin, 2014; Hüsrevsahi, 2015). Accordingly, recognising employee silence as a mediator variable may provide opportunities for preventing bullying behaviour and promoting employees' willingness to create OCBs. Improving the quality and quantity of services and meeting desirable standards are among the main concerns of Iranian public transport organisations. Expanding OCB among employees, especially bus drivers, can help increase user satisfaction with these services. However, the Iranian Municipal Bus Organizations have delegated many passenger transportation activities to private companies in recent years in order to lower costs and improve agility. Unsuccessful outsourcing, inadequate monitoring, unfavourable economic conditions, high rate of unemployment, and job insecurity have led to negative organisational behaviour towards bus drivers. Therefore, the fear of losing their jobs has forced them to accept unfavourable working conditions and take no action against instances of bullying behaviours such as overtime work, forced labour, undeclared work, discrimination, low wages, and short-term uninsured contracts. Nonetheless, bus drivers can be considered an appropriate group in the analysis of bullying behaviour and its effect on employee silence and citizenship behaviour. Despite such evidence, bus drivers can be a good choice for studying bullying behaviours and their impact on employee silence and citizenship behaviour.

According to the literature, most studies on bullying behaviours and OCBs have been carried out in developed countries. Considering the different economic and social conditions of developing countries (*e.g.*, Iran) and the lack of research on the role of employee silence in the relationship between bullying behaviours and OCBs, analysing this issue may fill the research gap in this area. Therefore, the main

problem addressed in this study was the effect of bullying behaviours on OCBs through the mediating role of employee silence in private Iranian bus companies.

Introducing the Conceptual Model of Research and Its Hypotheses

Bullying Behaviour and Employee Silence

Bullying behaviour has recently been considered a major issue in working environments. Workplace bullying occurs when an employee is exposed to abuse continuously or during a particular period by supervisors, colleagues, subordinates, or clients (Nielsen et al., 2016). Despite the lack of a definitive list of bullying behaviours, the three main categories of such behaviours include work-related bullying, person-related bullying, and physically intimidating bullying (verbal and non-verbal threats) (Einarsen et al., 2009). By definition, "Work-related bullying" refers to work-related measures causing difficulties for victims in carrying out their duties, involving some or all of their responsibilities (Bashir & Hanif, 2011). Work-related bullying behaviours include unfulfilled tasks, impossible work deadlines, meaningless workloads or providing unspecified information, security threats, *etc.* (Yahaya et al., 2012). "Person-related bullying" is considered a type of stress with possible negative effects on employees' health, potentially leading to psychological symptoms such as anxiety-depression disorder and post-traumatic stress disorders (Yahaya et al., 2012)." Physically intimidating bullying "occurs when a bully directly insults victims. This kind of threat is highly different from person-related bullying in the sense that bullying takes place face-to-face through physical intimidation (Ramely & Ahmad, 2017). According to a literature review (An & Kang, 2016; Einarsen et al., 2009; Harb et al., 2019; Hsieh et al., 2019; Hsu et al., 2019; Khalique et al., 2018), most studies have focused on the dimensions of work-related bullying, person-related bullying, and physically intimidating bullying. Considering their relevance to the present study, these dimensions were employed to analyse bullying behaviours.

Employees often have ideas, opinions, and information that can improve the work process and organisational performance. However, some employees are reluctant to express their ideas but prefer to remain silent, a phenomenon called "employee silence" by Morris and Millikan (2000). Voice and silence are strategically relevant and intertwined forms of communication and may seem contradictory in behaviour, sound, and silence (Moaşa, 2012). However, silence is not really a phenomenon as opposed to employee voices. In fact, silence and voice do not differ in speaking but in motivating employees to refrain from expressing information, ideas, and opinions (Brinsfield et al., 2009).

According to the silence literature, victims of bullying behaviour tend to increase their silence as one of the possible reactions to such behaviours (Taş et al., 2013). However, when an employee avoids complaints and remains silent, new ideas do not occur, and the group's view becomes a norm. This is why finding and solving a

problem becomes extremely difficult. Therefore, employee silence is a behavioural issue in which employees do not express their thoughts, opinions, or suggestions (Elçi et al., 2014). According to Milliken et al. (2003), 22.5 % of participants expressed the fear of retaliation or punishment as a cause for not speaking about anxiety or problems in the workplace (Duan et al., 2018).

Brinsfield (2013) recently introduced a new category of silence based on the relationship between supervisors and subordinates and listed six types of silence as follows (Rai & Agarwal, 2018):

1. *Deviant silence* (without giving out the necessary information) occurs when an employee intentionally or unknowingly misses any information that may be useful to the organisation.

2. In *disengaged silence*, employees are occasionally reluctant to participate in corporate affairs and are not actively involved in events and ceremonies.

3. *Diffident silence* (lack of confidence or trust in the expression of ideas) stems from employees' uncertainty and low self-esteem, preventing them from discussing any concern or issue within the organisation.

4. *Ineffectual silence* stems from the belief that speaking is useless and ineffective (Sonika & Kaushik, 2017).

5. *Defensive silence* is the deliberate deletion of work information due to the fear of retaliation. Sometimes, people use defensive silence because of self-restraint (protecting their position) (Perkins, 2014).

6. *Relational silence* (affiliation) is due to the fear of harming relationships in the workplace. In other words, employees remain silent to maintain their relationships (Khalid & Ahmed, 2016). Brinsfield (2013), Davis (2018), Dedahanov et al. (2016), Fatima et al. (2017), and Khalid and Ahmed (2016) have presented a complete segmentation for the dimensions of employee silence, including deviant silence, disengaged silence, diffident silence, ineffectual silence, defensive silence, and relational silence. This study also benefits from these dimensions.

Many studies have addressed employee silence, threatening behaviour, harassment, and abuse in recent years. These behavioural cases induce fear among subordinates and make employees more likely to remain silent instead of complaining or protesting. In such situations, not only will the work environment be associated with fear and anxiety, but the existing conditions will also exacerbate the abusive behaviour of supervisors (Harlos & Knoll, 2018).

The relationship between bullying behaviour and employee silence is aligned with Hobfoll's conservation of resource theory (COR) (Hobfoll, 1989). According to the COR theory, harassment in the workplace leads to the loss of resources, so employees are likely to be silent to preserve their remaining resources (Rai & Agarwal, 2018). Hence, silence is a passive but, at the same time, vital reaction for

subordinates who are victims of bullying in the workplace to preserve their remaining resources and reduce their psychological distress and emotional exhaustion (Xu et al., 2015).

A recent qualitative study by Rai and Agarwal (2018) on the victims of bullying behaviour showed the use of strategic silence by victims. The reasons are, firstly, to prevent the negative consequences of speaking (defensive silence); secondly, to maintain communication with their supervisors (relational silence); and thirdly, to use it as a way of expressing the acceptance of organisational conditions (ineffectual silence) (Rai & Agarwal, 2018). Elci et al. (2014) also found a significant relationship between the high level of bullying behaviour and employee silence (Elçi et al., 2014). On the other hand, Hüsrevsahi (2015) studied the relationship between organisational bullying and silence behaviours among teachers and found a positive relationship between bullying and silence behaviours. Therefore, the first hypothesis may be formulated as follows:

Hypothesis 1: Bullying behaviour has a positive effect on employee silence.

Bullying Behaviour and Organisational Citizenship Behaviour

Organ (1988) suggested that OCB is individual and optional behaviour, not directly or explicitly recognised by the formal reward system, improving effective organisational performance (Song et al., 2018). Vandyne et al. (1995) regarded OCB as additional roles and behaviours beyond the current expectations and roles aiming at promoting the welfare of individuals and organisations. Several components have been presented for OCB in the literature. The most widely used components of OCB introduced by Organ (1988) include altruism, courtesy, sportsmanship, and organisational conscientiousness. "Altruism" is defined as voluntary behaviors in which an employee helps a person with a particular problem to complete his/her work under unusual circumstances. "Courtesy" refers to how an employee is treated and encouraged while discouraging and weakening the spirit of other colleagues to progress in the work environment. "Sportsmanship" is defined as inevitable problems and those without any objection. In other words, it shows tolerance and forgiveness under non-ideal organisational conditions without complaints and grumbling. This component can increase the morale of the working group and thereby reduce employees' willingness to leave. Organ (1988) also defined "organisational conscientiousness" as loyalty and commitment to work so that employees go beyond the formal rules of long hours of voluntary work like a person who works more than usual or an employee who does not spend much time resting (Lo & Ramayah, 2009; Tong & Hawley, 2009). Various dimensions of organisational citizenship behaviour have been introduced in the literature. Presented by Organ (1988), the four dimensions of this behaviour are altruism, courtesy, sportsmanship, and organisational conscientiousness. Not only are they identified as the most relevant dimensions to the case study in this paper (bus organisations), but they are also

known as the most significant dimensions of citizenship behaviour. For example, some scholars such as Abbass (2016), Akkog and Demir (2018), Leelamanothum et al. (2018), and Singh (2020) have used the dimensions described by Organ (1988).

The researchers argued that people exposed to an abusive supervisor might refrain from performing certain behaviours and practices. There is, in fact, a negative relationship between an abusive supervisor and OCBs. Other studies (Gregory et al., 2013; Rafferty & Restubog, 2011) investigated the relationship between abusive supervision and OCBs based on the Social Exchange Theory (SET). It can be argued, according to this theory, that employees threatened by bullying behaviours are more likely to respond to such behaviours by refraining from OCBs towards others and the organisation as a way to balance. According to the SET, if employees perceive that they receive favours from their colleagues/organisations, they will reciprocate and give something back to colleagues/organisations. Furthermore, they show the highest levels of positive behaviour, such as OCB (Akgunduz & Sanli, 2017; Chang & Jung, 2013). On the other hand, some studies (Liu & Wang, 2013; Rafferty & Restubog, 2011) pinpointed OCB as a multidimensional structure related to workplace bullying. In this regard, Salahieh (2015) found a negative relationship between workplace bullying and organisational and individual dimensions of citizenship behaviour. In another study, Zulkarnain et al. (2016) found that workplace bullying, personal harassment, and physical harassment were negatively related to OCBs (Zulkarnain et al., 2016). Moreover, Goodboy et al. (2015) argued that the high-level behaviours of graduated students at work were negatively related to OCBs, such as civic virtue, adolescence, and donor behaviours (Goodboy et al., 2015). The following hypothesis is suggested considering the above explanation:

Hypothesis 2: Bullying behaviour has a negative impact on OCB.

Employee Silence and Organisational Citizenship Behaviour

Although citizenship behaviour improves organisational performance, employee silence can weaken it (Fatima et al., 2015). According to the SET, employee silence arises in the absence of social relations in an organisation. However, under favourable organisational conditions, in addition to greater employee satisfaction, it can pave the way for higher levels of employee citizenship behaviour. When employees receive benefits from activities (such as a courtesy from the other party), they become more committed. Hence, OCB can be considered the most effective factor in having fair social relations in organisations and striving for compensation and reciprocity.

Therefore, OCB can be considered as the most effective factor of having fair social relations in the organisation. A review of the literature shows that there is a negative relationship between employee silence and organisational citizenship behaviour (Çınar et al., 2013; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Şehitoğlu, 2010). In this regard, Cinar et al. (2013) found a decrease in citizenship behaviour by not

allowing employees to express their opinions. Consequently, new ideas, thoughts, creative solutions, and more effort than job duties that are highly useful to the organisation will be lost (Çınar et al., 2013). Organ showed that one of the seven OCB dimensions, i.e., the sportsmanship mood, had a direct relationship with altruism (Organ, 1988). Therefore, the third hypothesis is formulated as follows:

Hypothesis 3: Employee silence has a negative effect on OCBs.

The Mediating Role of Employee Silence

Behaviours of disregarding others (e.g., giving short answers, showing negative faces, or using silence) often occur with more prevalence of mistreatment and physical violence. This negligence is a widespread phenomenon that, if leading to silence, will hurt the organisation and its employees and impose high costs. Employees may quit their jobs over time (Sguera et al., 2011). Brinsfield (2009) found that employee silence is inclusive, multidimensional, and measurable and also significantly related to other aspects of important organisational behaviours (Zehir & Erdogan, 2011). The literature on employee silence shows that victims of bullying behaviour tend to increase their silence (Elçi et al., 2014; Hüsrevsahi, 2015; Rai & Agarwal, 2018; Taş et al., 2013). In this regard, Erdirencelebi and Şendogdu (2016) stated that a person facing bullying behavior and harassed by his or her directors and colleagues takes actions such as cyberloafing, taking long-term leaving or job turnover, eventually reducing the effectiveness of the organisation (Erdirencelebi & Şendogdu, 2016; Saghih & Nosrati,2020). Moreover, employees' silence and lack of expression of opinions and ideas will lead to a lower level of citizenship behaviour (Çınar et al., 2013). Factors affecting intra-organizational silence and OCBs are essential for healthy organisational performance and survival. As a result of employee silence, the sense of belonging to the company and, thereby, the company's efficiency is reduced (Killclar & Harbalioglu, 2014). Therefore, one can claim that if employees are sufficiently supported to express their opinions on their tasks, organisation, and management, the level of OCBs will increase, and employees will feel they are useful as a member of the organisational family (Manafzadeh et al., 2018). Accordingly, the following hypothesis is suggested:

Hypothesis 4: Bullying behaviour has a negative impact on OCBs through the mediating role of employee silence.

According to the literature and research hypotheses, the basic conceptual model displaying the relationship between the research variables is shown in Fig. 1:

Figure 1. Conceptual Model of the Research
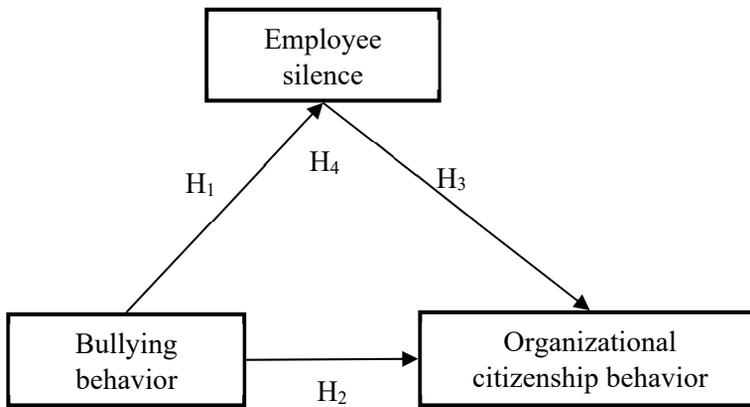
Methodology

This is a descriptive/survey study in terms of the data collection method and an applied study in terms of purpose. After developing the initial conceptual model, the relationships between the model variables were tested. To this end, a questionnaire containing 55 items was designed according to the standard measures in the literature. The questionnaire measured bullying behaviour with 18 items adopted from Einarsen et al. (2009). An example item is "someone withholding information which affects your performance." Employee silence was measured using 22 items adopted from Brinsfield (2013), Fatima et al. (2017), and Davis (2018). An example item is "I did not want to create tension with co-workers; I am silent about issues." OCB was also measured with 15 items adopted from Organ (1998), Akkoc & Demir (2018), and Singh (2020). An example item is "Help others who have heavy workloads".

The back-translation method was used to adapt the questionnaire measures to the conditions of Iranian private bus companies. This method helps collect high-quality, accurate data by increasing the validity of the questionnaire (Chan & Pollard, 2001).

The face and content validity of the final questionnaire was verified by 15 experts in organisational behavioural and human resource management. The specialists had at least a master's degree and 15 years of working experience in the organisation's human resources (HR) departments. The questionnaire was provided to the experts to match the items of the questionnaire with the studied conditions. Out of 55 items, 41 items with average scores above the mean (3) were selected. Some of the questions eliminated in this process include "Appear interested in hearing about these types of issues" and "No one was interested in taking appropriate action" from the employee silence questionnaire, "Being ordered to do work below your level

of competence" and "Having your opinions ignored" from the bullying behaviour questionnaire, finally "Dose not make problems bigger than they are" and "Never takes long lunch or break" from the OCB questionnaire.

The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to measure the reliability of the questionnaire. In this method, a preliminary prototype including 30 questionnaires was pre-tested. Values above 0.7 showed the reasonable reliability of the questionnaire. All the measures were assessed using a 5-point Likert scale in the range of "1 = completely disagree" to "5 = completely agree".

The statistical population consists of all drivers of private bus companies in seven Iranian metropolises: Tehran, Mashhad, Isfahan, Shiraz, Tabriz, Yazd, and Kerman. Simple random sampling was used to select the sample. As a rule, some drivers employed in private bus companies from different provinces of Iran participated in this study as the sample. By inserting the standard deviation (0.65) in Cochran's formula with an estimated accuracy and confidence level of 0.95, an error value of 0.05, and an approximate population of 5,500, a minimum sample size of 359 was obtained. After that, 2,200 questionnaires were distributed face to face or via e-mails, of which 1820 questionnaires were available for analysis and entered the test process.

Findings

Among the statistical sample, 46 % had a work experience of 10 to 14 years, indicating the highest proportion of the sample. A few drivers had a job experience of 25 years or more (13 %). The collected data was analysed, and the hypotheses concerning the relationship between the conceptual models were tested by the SEM technique with the help of AMOS 18 and SPSS 19. Table 1 shows the mean, standard deviation, and Pearson correlation for all the studied variables.

Table 1. Mean, Standard Deviation, Reliability and Correlation of Variables

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3
1- Bullying behavior	3.80	0.72	(0.81)		
2- Employee silence	3.29	0.77	0.73**	(0.90)	
3- Organisational citizenship behavior	3.72	0.48	-0.60**	-0.53**	(0.74)

Description of the table above: ** Correlation at the significant level of $p < 0.01$, the values of the parentheses represent the Cronbach's alpha coefficient.

According to the results, bullying behaviour, employee silence, and OCB were significantly interrelated. To this end, the indices of the goodness of fit of the questionnaire were evaluated. As shown in Table 2, all the indices were in the standard range.

Table 2. Goodness-of-Fit Indices of the Questionnaire

$\mathfrak{m}^2$/df	RMSEA	CFI	TLI	SRMSR	PNFI	PGFI
2.65	0.025	0.92	0.97	0.073	0.54	0.61

Before evaluating the proposed structural model, it is necessary to consider the regression weight of various questionnaire constructs in predicting the related items to ensure the fitness of the measurement models. This was performed using the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) technique. All the items were confirmed to be significant at the level of 0.05. Data normality was investigated using two indicators, namely, skewness and kurtosis. Moreover, the average variance extracted (AVE) was used to determine the convergent validity, and the results are shown in Table 3.

Table3. Results of Confirmatory Factor Analysis for Questionnaires

Variables	Dimension	Lead factor	P	Skewness	Kurtosis	AVE
Bullying behavior	Person-related bullying	0.79	0.001	-0.05	0.12	0.57
	Work-related bullying	0.79	0.001	-0.05	-0.25	
	Physically intimidating bullying	0.68	0.001	-0.25	-0.37	
Employee silence	Relational silence	0.55	0.001	-0.31	-0.69	0.52
	Defensive silence	0.79	0.001	0.13	-0.75	
	Diffident silence	0.79	0.001	-0.74	0.17	
	Ineffectual silence	0.75	0.001	-0.51	-0.72	
	Disengaged silence	0.63	0.001	0.33	-0.40	
	Deviant silence	0.81	0.001	-0.71	0.20	
Organizational citizenship be-havior(OCB)	Altruism	0.99	0.001	0.28	-0.81	0.60
	Courtesy	0.67	0.001	0.93	0.29	
	Sportsmanship	0.70	0.001	-0.21	-0.36	
	Conscientiousness	0.73	0.001	0.06	-0.45	

Reasonable values were obtained for the fitting indices of this model. Therefore, the results of this model can be used for testing the research hypotheses. Table 4 presents the goodness of fit indices and the desirable values. The data in Table 4 confirm the goodness of fit and the general validity of the proposed model.

Table 4. Fit Patterns for Research Models

Indices	X^2/df	RMSEA	CFI	TLI	SRMSR	PNFI	PGFI
Value in the structural model	1.87	0.066	0.96	0.95	0.061	0.64	0.53
Allowed amount	>3	>0.08	<0.9	<0.9	>0.1	<0.5	<0.5

As seen, the coefficient indicating the influence of bullying behaviour through the silence of employees on OCB is β = 0.19. Other results obtained from the analysis of the simultaneous structural equations for the fitted model are shown in Fig. 2.

Figure 2. Structural Research Model Along With Standardised Coefficients

The indirect effects of the model variables on each other were tested by the bootstrap method. Table 5 summarises the results of testing the research hypotheses at a significant level (p-value) of less than 0.05. According to the results, all the research hypotheses were confirmed.

Table 5. Test Results of Testing Hypotheses

H	Hypothesis path	Beta	P	confidence intervals		results
				Lower pc	Upper pc	
1	Bullying behaviour →Employee silence	0.46	0.001			Confirmed
2	Bullying behaviour → Organisational citizenship behaviour	-0.38	0.001			Confirmed
3	Employee silence → Organisational citizenship behaviour	-0.41	0.002			Confirmed
4	Bullying behaviour → Employee silence → Organisational citizenship behaviour	-0.19	0.000	-0.034	-0.228	Confirmed

The coefficient indicating the influence of bullying behaviour on employee silence is positive and significant (β= 0.46), confirming the first hypothesis. The coefficient showing the impact of bullying behaviour on OCB is estimated to be β= -0.38, indicating the negative effect of bullying behaviour on OCB. Therefore, the second hypothesis is also confirmed. The coefficient of employee silence on OCB is significant (β= -0.41). As a result, the third hypothesis concerning the negative effect of employee silence on OCB in private Iranian bus companies was confirmed. Moreover, the coefficient indicating the mediating role of employee silence was estimated at β= -0.19, whereas there was no zero between the confidence intervals obtained from the bootstrap method (-0.034, -0.228). This justifies the mediating role of employee silence in the relationship between bullying and OCB.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study investigated the effect of bullying behaviour on OCB through the mediating role of employee silence at private bus companies in seven Iranian metropolises. For this purpose, the basic conceptual model and its related hypotheses were first extracted through a literature review. The SEM technique was then adopted to test the relationships between the variables in the conceptual model.

Analysing the results of testing Hypothesis 1 showed the positive effect of bullying behaviour on employee silence. In other words, the intensified bullying behaviour may significantly affect employee silence at private bus companies in seven Iranian metropolises. These findings are consistent with those reported by Rai and Agarwal (2018), Elci et al. (2014), and Tas et al. (2013). Based on the Conservation of Resources (COR), the drivers who are subject to instances of bullying such as workplace insensitivity, forced overcrowding, low interest, discrimination, and low-paid shifts will fear being fired from work and losing their jobs. This would lead to increased silence among drivers. Hence, the silence of drivers as the most important organisational capital will have certain outcomes, such as reduced willingness for participation and inability to identify and correct organisational mistakes. In

fact, organisations cannot continue to operate without the active participation and responsible behaviour of their employees. To preserve the rights of bus drivers, it is beneficial for the Iranian Municipal Bus Organization to review their contracts with private companies. For this purpose, it is essential to utilise appropriate monitoring methods (*e.g.* using regular and intrusive inspections and receiving a copy of the drivers' contract) to ensure the proper implementation of contracts (especially with respect to the rights of bus drivers).

The results of testing Hypothesis 2 showed the negative effect of bullying behaviour on OCB. Resentment, harassment, deprivation, or negative effects on employee performance can negatively affect the OCB dimensions (altruism, courtesy, sportsmanship, and conscientiousness). Therefore, the practice of bullying (*e.g.* inattention to the financial situation of drivers, mandatory work for drivers during their free time, and lack of respect for their personality) by private bus companies in seven Iranian metropolises can eventually lead to negative behaviour in the workplace (*e.g.* abusive behaviour towards passengers, refusing to stop a bus at stations, and refraining from the supervisor orders). In general, such behaviour can result in negligence of duties. This will affect serving citizens and will negatively affect organisational effectiveness. According to the SET, the employees who are not supported by their organisations but are threatened and treated with bullying behaviour will experience lower levels of organisational commitment and have less willingness to show OCB. The results of this section are consistent with those reported by Zulkarnain et al. (2016), Salahieh (2015), Verdasca (2015), Goodboy et al. (2015), Devonish (2013), Liu and Wang (2013), and Organ (1988). It is also suggested that a representative from the Iranian Municipal Bus Organization (as an official and governmental organisation) be present in the committee of private companies to investigate cases of driver violations. This representative can monitor the votes issued against drivers; therefore, bullying will be reduced in private companies. At the same time, private companies should use OCB indicators to reward and encourage the drivers to encourage citizenship behaviour among them.

According to the analysis of Hypothesis 3, employee silence negatively affected OCB. This is consistent with the findings reported by Acaray and Akturan (2015), Fatima et al. (2015), Harbalioğlu and Gültekin (2014), Cinar et al. (2013), Şehitoğlu (2010), Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002), and Organ (1988). When employees decide to remain silent for any reason, they do not share their knowledge, experience, and opinions with their bosses or colleagues. They also refuse to communicate with their colleagues to solve work problems and engage in negative behaviours to adapt to work environment conditions. This process can decrease the continuous progress of an organisation. According to the results of testing this hypothesis based on the SET, drivers thought that if they raised a problem or issue in the organisation, they would be labelled as a complainant or an agitator. For this reason, they decided to remain silent against organisational issues. This will gradually lead to staff indifference, a reduction in organisational commitment,

and unwillingness to engage in positive behaviour, especially urbanism behaviour. Therefore, drivers fail to perform their duties properly over time and will not attempt to conform to organisational changes. Most importantly, the organisation will be deprived of creative behaviour and ideas. To mitigate employee silence, it is advisable to establish further interactions between bus drivers and Municipal Bus Organization managers by developing two-way communication channels. In this way, bus drivers can address problems and issues related to the bullying behaviour of private companies through social networks or e-mail. At the same time, the inspectors of the Municipal Bus Organization can survey the bus drivers to analyse the performance of private companies while maintaining the confidentiality of individuals.

Finally, the results of testing Hypothesis 4 showed the significant negative effect of bullying behaviour on OCB through the mediating role of employee silence. In other words, bullying behaviour can reduce OCB among drivers in private bus companies of seven Iranian metropolises if they exacerbate employee silence, which is an important organisational behaviour that arises in the absence of fair social relationships (Acaray & Akturan, 2015). Thus, most employees perceive that they are treated unfairly in the workplace; however, they refuse to complain and decide to remain silent against bullying behaviours. This behaviour can negatively affect their work. Accordingly, Oliver (1990) described employee silence as a mediating variable causing anxiety and reducing efforts to achieve organisational goals. This can also lead to a reduction in the success and creativity of staff and also their inability to show innovative work behaviour (Tan, 2014). This finding can be justified by arguing that continuous inappropriate behaviour towards drivers will cause them to refrain from commenting on organisational issues and will gradually make them silent. As a result, employee attitudes and tendencies for positive behaviour, especially OCB, will be negatively affected. Creating such an atmosphere in an organisation will certainly reduce productivity and customer satisfaction. Therefore, the Municipal Bus Organization should pay more attention to manpower indicators in the performance evaluation of private companies. Moreover, it should have a representative always present in companies with many violations in order to have full authority over their activities (especially their attitude toward drivers). By doing so, it is expected that bullying will be reduced, and employee silence will then decrease. Therefore, the staff motivation for performing positive organisational behaviour (*e.g.* OCB) will increase.

Research Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

The main limitation of this study was the influence of some variables, such as the motivation and different psychological states of respondents, on the answers to the questions. This was out of the control of the researcher and may influence the study results. It is, therefore, suggested to carry out research based on the qualitative and

mixed-method design to obtain more reliable and generalised results. As another limitation, demographic variables such as education and work experience were not considered moderating variables in this study. It seems that each of these factors can influence employees' handling of unpleasant behaviours in the workplace and the better management of the consequences of such behaviours. For example, employees with longer work experience and skills may be able to manage bullying behaviour in the workplace more effectively. Therefore, it is suggested to investigate the moderating role of these variables in future studies.

It is also suggested to examine the impact of other variables, such as organisational support and authentic leadership, on the relationship between bullying behaviour and citizenship behaviour. Authentic leadership creates a positive work environment and supports employees' efforts to succeed in a respectful environment. This, in turn, reduces workplace bullying. Authentic leadership is a response to the flaws of other leadership styles, paying less attention to ethics.

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