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Workplace Bullying in Taiwan: A Meta-Analysis of Multilevel Impacts on Employees and Organizations

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Abstract

This study investigates workplace bullying in Taiwan through a meta-analysis of 30 quantitative studies published between 2009 and 2024. Growing awareness of mental health issues has highlighted the prevalence of bullying, emotional coercion, and inappropriate treatment in Taiwanese workplaces, resulting in employee distress, rising turnover, and organizational dysfunction. Yet past research has largely focused on single variables or specific groups, lacking cumulative quantitative evidence. Systematic searches were conducted in the Airiti Library database (up to October 31, 2024). Using screening and coding procedures, this study synthesized effect sizes to examine the associations between workplace bullying and three domains: work-related psychological and behavioral outcomes, individual characteristics, and organizational environments and support systems. Results showed a moderate positive association with work-related outcomes (r = .215), indicating higher turnover intention, burnout, emotional exhaustion, and psychological strain. Bullying also demonstrated moderate negative associations with individual characteristics (r = − .204) and with organizational environments and support systems (r = − .112), suggesting diminished personal psychological resources and greater bullying likelihood in contexts with weak supervisory support, ethical climate, and safety culture. Overall, the findings confirm that workplace bullying produces multilevel harm to both individuals and organizations. Regarding limitations, future research should combine longitudinal and cross-cultural designs to clarify underlying mechanisms and evaluate effective anti-bullying interventions.

Introduction

As mental health has gained increasing scholarly and societal attention, non-physical forms of workplace violence have become more prominent. Statistics from the Ministry of Labor indicate a steady rise in workplace bullying and emotional coercion, exposing employees to persistent high-pressure, unsafe, and inequitable work environments that undermine psychological and physical well-being, reduce job satisfaction, and disrupt career trajectories. Despite growing calls to strengthen workplace ethics and organizational justice, structural constraints and entrenched cultures of silence continue to impede effective prevention. A series of recent incidents in Taiwan's public and healthcare sectors—including the 2024 suicide at the Ministry of Labor Northern Branch, the Kaohsiung Health Bureau kneeling case, multiple abuse-of-power events within the Ministry of Health and Welfare, and ongoing investigations involving flight attendants—illustrate how power asymmetries manifest as psychological oppression and reflect deeper systemic and cultural deficiencies. Collectively, these incidents underscore an urgent need for empirical inquiry into the antecedents, consequences, and intervention imperatives of workplace bullying.

International research similarly highlights the widespread and severe impacts of workplace bullying, particularly in nursing settings across Europe, Australia, and Canada(Tsai et al., 2014). Empirical studies consistently demonstrate that bullying contributes to elevated stress, emotional exhaustion, and negative affect, which subsequently impair work performance and interpersonal functioning. Prolonged exposure can lead to irritability, hostility, burnout, fatigue, withdrawal, diminished physical and mental

health, and compromised patient safety (Shaw et al., 2016). In military contexts, intensified work demands under the all-volunteer system further elevate bullying and burnout risk (Tai, 2020). Research also shows that bullying is associated with emotional exhaustion, reduced vitality, and emotional numbness (Chang et al., 2018), with severity predicting deeper burnout (Liu et al., 2020). Moreover, bullying heightens psychological demands, resulting in burnout, loss, and turnover intention (Feng et al., 2020). During the COVID-19 pandemic, 48.17% of personnel in public health administration agencies experienced workplace violence, largely due to low organizational justice and high public contact, with consequences such as anxiety, depression, PTSD, sleep disturbances, and absenteeism (Wang & Cheng, 2023).

Individual-level research indicates that bullying is associated with lower optimism (Lee, 2017) and diminished subjective well-being (Wu et al., 2017), while factors such as tenure, age, and team age composition influence psychological safety (Aufegger et al., 2019). Gender, marital status, education, rank, and work seniority also shape bullying experiences and outcomes (Tai, 2020). Experiences of incivility further undermine basic psychological needs—particularly autonomy—and increase the likelihood of burnout when competence, relatedness, and autonomy are compromised (Su, 2023).

At the organizational level, workplace bullying has been shown to degrade nurses' safety attitudes and impede overall patient-safety performance (Lin, 2015). Bullying also erodes organizational climate, destabilizes work environments, and reduces performance and productivity (Liu et al., 2020). Excessive work hours, heavy workloads, and low job control substantially increase vulnerability to workplace violence (Wang & Cheng, 2023). Among frontline social workers, frequent exposure to verbal abuse and threats contributes to emotional exhaustion and declines in service quality, ultimately disrupting organizational functioning (Su, 2023).

Taken together, evidence consistently demonstrates that workplace bullying exerts extensive and multidimensional harm—affecting employees' emotions, behaviors, psychological functioning, and physical and mental health—while simultaneously degrading organizational systems, culture, communication, safety, and productivity. Although previous research has addressed these issues from various perspectives, integrative theoretical and empirical frameworks linking workplace bullying with work-related psychological and behavioral outcomes, individual characteristics, and organizational environments remain insufficient. Consequently, a more comprehensive, evidence-based synthesis is essential for clarifying the structural nature and latent risks of workplace bullying and informing the development of effective organizational interventions.

To address this gap, the present study employs meta-analysis to systematically integrate quantitative research on workplace bullying conducted in Taiwan. Through effect-size transformation and statistical testing, the study examines the magnitude and consistency of empirical relationships and investigates potential mediating and moderating mechanisms arising from contextual or methodological variation. Specifically, the study aims to: (a) trace the conceptual development and definitions of workplace bullying; (b) analyze its associations with work-related psychological and behavioral outcomes; (c)

examine its interactions with individual characteristics and conditional factors; and (d) delineate its relational pathways within organizational environments and support systems. The findings are expected to provide robust empirical evidence to guide future workplace health policies and organizational intervention strategies.

The Relationship Between Workplace Bullying and Work-Related Psychological and Behavioral Outcomes

A synthesis of existing empirical research indicates that workplace bullying exerts substantial impacts at both individual and organizational levels, showing strong associations with employees' emotional states, cognitive appraisals, and work behaviors. Based on the 24 studies included in this research, 27 variables related to work-related psychological and behavioral outcomes of workplace bullying can be grouped into six dimensions: (a) well-being and psychological capital, (b) work demands and stress, (c) emotional exhaustion and emotional labor (job burnout), (d) work attitudes, (e) workplace justice–related constructs, and (f) safety and mental health. This classification suggests that workplace bullying is not a discrete event, but an organizational phenomenon that permeates subjective well-being, stress load, workplace interactions, and health and safety.

In the dimension of "well-being and psychological capital," psychological capital highlights positive psychological resources such as self-efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience, which foster work engagement and organizational citizenship behavior while reducing counterproductive behaviors and the negative effects of work stress (Avey et al., 2011; Bandura, 1997; Luthans et al., 2005, 2007). Subjective and psychological well-being capture individuals' overall evaluation of life and personal growth, and are strongly shaped by cultural context and interpersonal relationships (Andrews & Withey, 1976; Diener & Suh, 1999; Ryff & Keyes, 1995). When workplace bullying is frequent or long term, employees often feel their abilities are denied, future prospects are bleak, and relationships are threatened, undermining self-efficacy, hope, and optimism and reducing life satisfaction and psychological growth (Wu et al., 2017). Although psychological capital and proactive personality can buffer the negative effects of bullying and help maintain well-being (Avey et al., 2010; Cohn et al., 2009; Cenciotti et al., 2022), these positive resources may still be gradually depleted under persistent bullying, resulting in a marked decline in employee well-being.

From the perspective of "work demands and stress," work stress is commonly defined as the physiological and psychological tension and discomfort that arise when individuals perceive that work demands or environmental threats exceed their available resources and capabilities (Chen, 1985; Gmelch & Swent, 1982; Jamal, 1984; Parker & De Cotiis, 1983). Studies in Taiwan and abroad consistently show that excessive job demands, role ambiguity, resource insufficiency, and lack of control lead to anxiety, frustration, and helplessness, further affecting job performance and physical and mental health (Chen, 1999;Chen, 2011; Ke, H. Y., 2009Pithers, 1995; Pearson & Moomaw, 2005). Against this backdrop, workplace bullying is regarded as a critical situational factor that significantly increases work

stress: victims must cope not only with existing job demands but also with inappropriate treatment and threats from supervisors or coworkers, which substantially intensify perceived demands and psychological load. Research shows that bullied nurses report significantly higher levels of psychological load and stress and lower perceptions of organizational justice, which in turn heighten turnover intentions (Feng et al., 2020；Liu et al., 2020). Without adequate emotion regulation and psychological flexibility, employees may develop self-denigration or resort to extreme reactions, creating risks for both individuals and organizations(Linehan, 1993；Lee, 2002；Tang et al., 2002；You, 2017).

In the dimension of “emotional exhaustion and emotional labor (job burnout),” burnout is conceptualized as a state of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced professional efficacy arising from prolonged exposure to high-pressure environments (Maslach et al., 1996, 2001). When job demands consistently exceed personal resources, employees may shift from initial enthusiasm and engagement to detachment and defensiveness and begin doubting their professional competence (Crawford et al., 2010; Lambert et al., 2018). Numerous studies have confirmed a significant positive relationship between work stress and burnout and have further shown that burnout reduces job performance and job satisfaction while increasing turnover intention(Huang & Huang, 2014;Wang & Huang, 2018；Tai, 2020). Within this process, workplace bullying functions as a crucial trigger and amplifier. Chang et al. (2018) found that workplace bullying significantly and positively predicts emotional exhaustion, which in turn negatively predicts mental health and mediates the relationship between bullying and mental health. In service industries and healthcare settings, bullying not only increases emotional labor but may also prompt emotional distancing or passive coping as self-protective strategies; over time, these patterns lead to severe burnout and professional disenchantment (Han et al., 2019；Liao & Song, 2018；Wu et al., 2023).

At the level of “work attitudes,” job satisfaction, work engagement, intention to stay, turnover intention, and workplace deviant behavior are key indicators of employees’ evaluations of the organization and their behavioral tendencies (Lin et al., 2021; Spector, 1997). Prior research suggests that reasonable pay and benefits, supportive leadership, and positive interpersonal relationships enhance job satisfaction and organizational commitment, which in turn foster engagement and intention to stay (Burke, 1989; Guest, 1999; Kahn, 1990; Kyndt et al., 2009; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Conversely, when bullying persists, employees’ trust in and sense of belonging to the organization rapidly diminish; engagement and intention to stay decline, while turnover intention and deviant behaviors increase. Tsai et al. (2014) found that nurses’ turnover intention is positively correlated with workplace bullying, identifying bullying as a key predictor of turnover intention. Chang (2021) further showed that even bystanders who are not direct victims may develop higher turnover intention when they chronically perceive bullying in their workplace, suggesting a spillover effect on organizational climate and employee attitudes. A bullying climate can also erode positive personality traits that normally promote job satisfaction and performance; for instance, conscientiousness and responsibility no longer translate into higher job satisfaction under intense bullying(Chang et al., 2024). Thus, bullying undermines individual attitudes and disrupts person–job fit and the effective functioning of human capital.

The dimension of “workplace justice–related constructs” focuses on distributive, procedural, and interactional justice. Fair resource allocation, transparent procedures, and respectful and honest interpersonal treatment form the core of employees’ perceptions of organizational justice (Colquitt, 2001; Colquitt et al., 2001; Greenberg & Cropanzano, 1993). When workplace bullying occurs and is not properly addressed, employees may question whether the organization is willing to protect victims or instead sides with perpetrators, leading to sharp declines in perceived procedural and interactional justice and framing the situation as institutional injustice (Okechukwu et al., 2014). Research has indicated that when employees perceive higher organizational justice, the risk of occupational injury and illness associated with sexual harassment and other mistreatment can be partially reduced (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission [EEOC], 2015;Tsai, 2016). In contrast, contexts marked by low organizational justice and strong bullying climates are more likely to elicit anger, retaliatory intentions, passive compliance, and other deviant behaviors, generating long-term threats to organizational functioning.

In the dimension of “safety and mental health,” mental health is understood as a holistic state of physical, psychological, and social adaptation, not merely the absence of disease but also the presence of emotional stability, harmonious relationships, and adaptive capacity (Antonovsky, 1979; Maslow & Mittelman, 1941;Tian et al., 2016; WHO, 2022; Zheng et al., 2005). Workplace bullying and violence have been shown to substantially impair employees’ mental health. Sansone and Sansone (2015) reported that victims frequently experience sleep disturbances, fatigue, depression, and anxiety, and may even face elevated risk of work-related suicide. Suggala et al. (2021) likewise found that prolonged bullying intensifies psychological stress and undermines self-esteem. Wang and Cheng (Wang & Cheng, 2023) reported that under conditions of long working hours, high psychological and physical demands, low job control, and low organizational justice, workplace violence is significantly more prevalent, and those who have experienced it report poorer self-rated health and mental health. Among public-sector social welfare workers, clients’ incivility and unreasonable demands are also classified as workplace aggression and bullying, significantly increasing emotional exhaustion and reducing work–life quality (Su, 2023Zulkarnain et al., 2023). From a public mental health perspective, if organizations fail to actively prevent and intervene in bullying, such inaction undermines not only individual employees’ mental health but also the broader development of a workplace culture grounded in human dignity and safety(Guo, 2022).

In sum, the literature suggests that workplace bullying affects employees’ work-related psychological and behavioral outcomes through multiple pathways: it erodes well-being and psychological capital, increases work stress and emotional exhaustion, and ultimately leads to burnout, deviant behaviors, and heightened turnover intention; simultaneously, it undermines perceptions of justice and safety, with its impact spreading to bystanders and the wider organizational climate, thereby constraining positive resources and personality traits that would otherwise support organizational development. In other words, the stronger employees’ perceptions of bullying or a bullying climate, the more pronounced their negative emotional reactions and maladaptive behaviors toward the work environment, manifesting as

decreased well-being, increased stress, intensified burnout, deteriorating work attitudes, and impaired mental health. On this basis, the present study proposes the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1

Workplace bullying is positively associated with work-related psychological and behavioral outcomes.

The Relationship Between Workplace Bullying and Individual Characteristics and Conditional Factors

This study synthesized 12 empirical investigations on workplace bullying and identified 17 variables related to “individual characteristics and conditional factors,” including healthcare productivity, family social capital, conscientiousness, openness, neuroticism, physical health, value congruence, subordinate competence, locus of control (internal–external), optimism, safety climate, safety attitudes, attitudes toward unit management and work environment, marital status, gender, educational level, and need for autonomy. These variables can be broadly categorized into three dimensions: (a) internal personality traits and psychological resources, (b) attitudes and perceptions toward the work environment, and (c) external background conditions, providing a framework for examining their associations with workplace bullying.

With respect to personality traits, Costa and McCrae’s (1992) Five-Factor Model—openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism—has become a core framework in contemporary personality research. Empirical studies show that employees who display creativity, diligence, integrity, kindness, and conscientious self-discipline tend to exhibit better job performance and job satisfaction(Chi, 2013;Deng, 2019；Lin et al., 2021), indicating that personality traits have predictive power and substantive influence on work behaviors (Lin et al., 2017；Wang & Wang, 2019；Wen et al., 2021). In the context of workplace bullying, positive traits such as conscientiousness, optimism, and agreeableness can facilitate proactive coping with stress and the maintenance of positive interpersonal relationships, thereby reducing conflict and misunderstanding. These traits also function as psychological defense resources, making employees less likely to fall into cycles of prolonged victimization and emotional dysregulation. By contrast, individuals high in neuroticism are more prone to anxiety, insecurity, and self-doubt; in high-expectation, high-risk environments, they may be especially sensitive to perceived threats and rejection, which can interact with bullying experiences to intensify negative emotions and psychological exhaustion (Dongeun & Sun Joo, 2025).

Locus of control further helps explain how individuals position themselves and respond in stressful situations. Rotter (1966) distinguished between “internal” and “external” locus of control: individuals with an internal locus of control believe that success or failure is determined by their own behaviors, abilities, and effort, whereas those with an external locus of control tend to attribute outcomes to luck, other people, or fate (Hsu et al., 2010). Related studies have found that employees with an internal locus of control are generally more proactive and responsible, show high enthusiasm for their work, and, when

facing complex situations, actively gather information and voice their opinions, thereby demonstrating higher effectiveness and participation (Ng et al., 2006; Spector, 1982). Within organizations, these employees are more likely to identify with innovative cultures and to display innovative behaviors in response to incentive systems(Tsai, 2017). In contrast, employees with an external locus of control are more inclined toward passivity and compliance and, when confronted with stress or unfair treatment, are more likely to experience helplessness and avoidance, making them relatively vulnerable to workplace bullying (Garson & Stanwyck, 1997; Lefcourt, 1972; Phillips & Gully, 1997).

Basic psychological needs add a motivational perspective to understanding work behaviors. Hwang (2011) and Yang (2004) argued that proactive needs—such as needs for autonomy, self-sufficiency, personal achievement, and efficacy—can positively mediate voluntary learning behaviors through psychosocial work dependence and work engagement, thereby enhancing career development and organizational performance (Li, & Liang, 2022). When employees have stronger needs for autonomy and competence, they are more likely to respond to unfair or oppressive situations with active strategies—such as communication, filing complaints, or using institutional resources—rather than passive endurance. Conversely, when needs for autonomy and competence are repeatedly thwarted, employees may develop self-deprecating and withdrawn tendencies, increasing the likelihood of becoming targets of bullying and experiencing enduring negative emotions.

In terms of personal attitudes and subjective perceptions, employees' views of safety culture and managerial support are closely linked to how they interpret and respond to workplace bullying. Sexton et al. (2006) developed the Safety Attitudes Questionnaire (SAQ), which assesses clinical personnel's safety attitudes across dimensions such as teamwork climate, safety climate, job satisfaction, stress recognition, perceptions of management, and working conditions. Studies show that those with managerial or supervisory responsibilities tend to score higher on most indicators, whereas frontline nurses commonly report insufficient staffing and resources and lower identification with management (Huang et al., 2021). Further evidence suggests that when safety climate is weak, work–life balance tends to be negatively associated with perceived safety; the weaker the safety culture, the greater the uncertainty and risks borne by frontline staff, leading to increased stress and anxiety. Similar patterns have been observed among other allied health professionals (Ke et al., 2024). These findings imply that when employees hold negative perceptions of safety culture and managerial support, they are less willing to disclose errors or report unfair treatment, making workplace bullying more likely to remain concealed and persistent.

Psychological safety, from a subjective appraisal perspective, reflects whether employees believe their ideas and expressions will be accepted. James and James (1989) argued that psychological safety influences workplace attitudes and behaviors: when the environment is perceived as supportive and trustworthy, employees are more willing to voice opinions and make suggestions; when support and trust are lacking, employees are more likely to suppress their views, withdraw, and remain silent. Butzer and Kuiper (2006) noted that ongoing negative experiences erode trust in the organization and in psychological safety, thereby lowering participation and engagement. Bhatti and Ahmed (2021) further

found that in poor workplace climates, individuals may feel helpless and isolated, whether they directly experience or merely witness inappropriate behaviors, leading to heightened alienation, diminished belonging, and increased turnover intention. Thus, when employees perceive the workplace as neither safe nor fair, they may be adversely affected by the bullying climate regardless of direct victimization.

At the level of personal conditions, healthcare productivity, family social capital, and demographic variables are also closely related to experiences of and responses to workplace bullying. Fu et al. (2016) reported that among various potential predictors of healthcare productivity, only the “degree of bullying” was statistically significant and negatively associated with productivity; background factors such as age, gender, tenure, and unit showed no significant relationships. This suggests that workplace bullying is itself a major risk factor directly impairing productivity. Healthcare workers chronically exposed to bullying contexts are prone to emotional breakdown, fatigue, and feelings of loss, leading to reduced work engagement and job satisfaction and even intentions to transfer or resign. New employees may likewise experience reality shock and adjustment difficulties due to bullying, weakening learning motivation and team interaction and ultimately undermining care quality and patient safety.

Regarding family social capital, Coleman (1988) conceptualized family structure and interaction patterns as components of family social capital, including parent–child interactions and links to external networks such as schools and communities. Subsequent research has shown that family social capital is positively related to social support and adaptive capacity (Horvat et al., 2003; Israel et al., 2001; Lin, 2002; Lee & Brinton, 1996; Werum, 2000). Wu et al. (2017) found a significant positive relationship between family social capital and well-being, indicating that employees with better family interactions and support tend to report higher subjective well-being. However, the same study noted that family social capital does not effectively buffer the negative impact of workplace bullying on well-being, consistent with the “domain specificity” perspective proposed by Nohe and Sonntag (2014), which posits that when stress originates in the work domain, resources from the same domain (e.g., coworker support, supervisor care) are needed to mitigate its effects.

Demographically, gender, marital status, and tenure are frequently associated with differences in work stress, burnout, and turnover intention. Tai (2020) reported that male military personnel showed higher emotional exhaustion, and married individuals displayed higher levels of both burnout and turnover intention, likely due to dual family and work demands. Regarding rank and tenure, noncommissioned officers exhibited significant differences in bullying, burnout, and turnover intention, especially newly appointed and mid-tenure personnel, whose burnout was higher due to role ambiguity, limited promotion prospects, or stalled development. By contrast, Chang (2021) found that most participants in her study were young employees with short tenure, and the relationship between psychological safety and turnover intention did not reach significance, suggesting that early in their careers, employees may prioritize stable performance and error avoidance over voice and expression.

In service settings, client incivility also interacts with personality traits, psychological needs, and bullying experiences. Dongeun and Sun Joo (2025) found that nurses with higher levels of neuroticism and

impostor phenomenon reported more severe workplace bullying. Drawing on self-determination theory, Su (2023) showed that clients' rude behaviors are positively associated with emotional exhaustion and differentially impair autonomy, competence, and relatedness needs, with autonomy being most affected. When employees feel they lack choice and voice, resilience and stress-coping capacity decline, making them more susceptible to burnout. Although the need for autonomy can support emotional regulation, under intense external pressure a single psychological need is insufficient to offset negative effects; thus, organizational support and structural improvements are required to effectively buffer the impact of bullying and incivility.

In summary, prior literature indicates that personal traits (e.g., conscientiousness, optimism, internal locus of control, and proactive needs), personal attitudes (e.g., perceptions of safety climate, views on management and work environment, and psychological safety), and personal conditions (e.g., healthcare productivity, family social capital, gender, marital status, and tenure) are all closely linked to workplace adjustment, emotional states, and work performance. Employees with stronger internal resources and more supportive conditions are better able to enact proactive behaviors and emotional regulation, manage workplace stress and mistreatment, and thus reduce the likelihood of entering bullying relationships or mitigate their adverse effects. Conversely, individuals with weaker resources who are embedded in unsupportive and structurally unfavorable work environments are more likely to perceive and experience workplace bullying, and their mental health, work engagement, and intention to stay are more easily eroded (Fu et al., 2016;Su, 2023Wu et al., 2017).

Based on the above theoretical and empirical context, this study infers that the more positive personality traits and psychological resources employees possess, and the more favorable their personal conditions and support systems, the less likely they are to perceive high levels of workplace bullying; conversely, when traits are more vulnerable and resources more limited, the risk of encountering or perceiving bullying is relatively higher. Therefore, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2

Workplace bullying is negatively associated with individual characteristics and conditional factors.

The Relationship Between Workplace Bullying and Organizational Environments and Support Systems

This study synthesized 13 empirical investigations on workplace bullying and, based on 25 variables such as job tenure, job control, supervisory support, social support, organizational culture, safety performance, and job demands, grouped the relevant constructs into three major dimensions: (a) organizational and social support, (b) organizational culture and ethics/career resilience, and (c) working conditions and job demands. Overall, the literature suggests that workplace bullying is more likely to occur—and exerts deeper negative effects on employees' physical and mental health and organizational

functioning—when organizational and social support are scarce, when corporate and ethical cultures are weak, and when job demands and workload are imbalanced.

Regarding organizational and social support, social support is conceptualized as information and resources provided by others that enable individuals to feel cared for and respected and to perceive themselves as part of a communication and interaction system, thereby enhancing environmental adaptation and physical and mental health (Caplan, 1974; Cobb, 1976). Thoits (1986) noted that social support is primarily provided by "significant others," such as family members, friends, neighbors, and coworkers, and includes emotional, instrumental, and informational support that can help adjust cognitive and emotional responses. Taiwanese scholars likewise emphasize that when individuals perceive themselves as loved, cared for, respected, and valued, they experience lower stress in the face of adversity and cope more effectively (Huang, 2010;Li, 2010). In helping professions, support from peers and family members—relatively free of hierarchical power differences—is particularly effective in reducing compassion fatigue and turnover intention (Wang et al., 2020).

Sources of social support can be divided into supervisors, managers, peers, and family members. Among these, "supervisory support" is regarded as one of the most critical workplace resources. Rooted in organizational support theory, supervisory support refers to employees' perceptions that supervisors value their contributions, care about their needs, and assist in accomplishing work tasks (Rhoades et al., 2001). Because supervisors are often viewed as agents of the organization, their attitudes and behaviors shape employees' overall perceptions of organizational support and fairness (Cheng, 1990;Durham et al., 1997). Eisenberger et al. (2002) pointed out that supervisory encouragement and care enhance job satisfaction and serve as important job resources that help employees achieve goals, reduce exhaustion, and promote development (Griffin et al., 2001; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Empirical studies show that higher supervisory support is associated with lower turnover intention and improved job performance and organizational citizenship behavior (DeConinck & Johnson, 2009Lo & Chou, 2006). Research on occupational health nurses further indicates that both supervisory and coworker support can enhance intention to stay by reducing work stress and health hazards (Yao & Tsai, 2022).

In terms of the structure of social support, Cobb (1976) differentiated emotional, esteem-related, and network support, whereas House (1981) proposed four dimensions: emotional, instrumental, informational, and appraisal support. Subsequent categorizations by Cohen and Wills (1985) and Heaney and Israel (2008) are largely consistent with these dimensions, suggesting their conceptual stability. Shen & Lai (2022) found that elementary school teachers' perceived social support was moderately high overall, with emotional support rated highest and instrumental support lowest, indicating that although teachers often receive listening and encouragement, tangible resources and manpower remain insufficient. In bullying contexts, if organizations offer only emotional consolation but lack structural interventions and practical assistance, they are unlikely to curb the continuation of bullying and its consequences effectively.

From the perspective of “organizational support and silence,” Ho et al. (2025), using an agent-based social simulation, found that even when organizations have ethical infrastructures, many victims still choose to “do nothing,” and only a minority use formal internal reporting channels. Their findings suggest that enhancing perceived organizational support (POS) can reduce internal silence and encourage victims to shift from inaction to external voice, breaking cycles of powerlessness and apathy. Similarly, Iqbal Junaid et al. (2025) reported that workplace bullying significantly increases burnout, and that burnout fully mediates the negative relationships between bullying and organizational citizenship behavior, affective commitment, and innovative behavior, indicating that without substantive organizational support and intervention, bullying harms both individual health and organizational innovation and cohesion.

In the domain of organizational culture and ethics/career resilience, theoretical perspectives emphasize the deep influence of shared values and norms on member behavior. From a cultural anthropological standpoint, culture is viewed as a set of shared beliefs, values, and behavioral patterns (Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1954; Mintz, 1974). Hofstede (1980) further proposed cultural dimensions such as power distance, collectivism, and uncertainty avoidance to explain how culture shapes power relations and interpersonal interactions. Extending these ideas to corporate settings, Deal and Kennedy (1983), Schein (1992), and O’Reilly and Chatman (1996) argued that organizational culture consists of shared values and behavioral guidelines developed to cope with external pressures and achieve internal integration, which are internalized through rituals, stories, and everyday interactions. Research has shown that supportive and innovative cultures are more conducive to autonomy and performance, especially in remote work contexts; conversely, when organizations ignore or tolerate bullying and misconduct, bullying may become “culturalized” and normalized as an implicitly accepted pattern (Quinn et al., 2025;Yu & Chiou, 2025).

Ethical climate extends organizational climate by incorporating ethical values, reflecting members’ shared perceptions of “appropriate behavior” in the organization (Victor & Cullen, 1988). Studies commonly categorize ethical climate into caring, principled, and self-interest types, with the former two emphasizing concern for others and adherence to rules and the latter prioritizing personal gain (Cullen et al., 2003;Chen & Yu, 2015). A positive ethical climate strengthens organizational identification and job satisfaction and reduces turnover intention (Alam, 1999; DeConinck, 2015; Hsu, 1999; Huang & Chang, 2021), and provides fertile ground for preventing and suppressing bullying. The research found that ethical climate is positively associated with occupational well-being and negatively associated with bullying and further showed that bullying mediates the relationship between ethical climate and well-being, suggesting that weak ethical climates increase bullying, which in turn diminishes well-being (Freire & Pinto, 2022; Vilas-Boas, 2019).

Career resilience describes individuals’ ability to maintain career stability and development in adverse environments. London (1983) argued that individuals with high career resilience possess healthy self-esteem, strong adaptability, and self-efficacy, enabling sustained proactive behaviors in adversity. Subsequent research suggests that organizations can foster career resilience through opportunities for

self-directed career management, professional development resources, and supportive cultures (Brown, 1996; Collard et al., 1996; Lyons et al., 2015). Arora and Rangnekar (2014), along with Chen (2017) and Chung (2020), further argued that career resilience emerges from interactions between personal traits and environmental factors and is developed via proactive coping, seeking external resources, and reconstructing career direction. Higher career resilience enhances individuals' capacity to withstand negative events such as bullying and reduce their erosive effects on self-worth and career development.

Safety culture and safety performance constitute another crucial aspect of organizational environments. Patankar and Sabin (2010) proposed the "safety culture pyramid," comprising safety values, strategies, climate, and behaviors. They emphasized that without deeply embedded safety values and coherent strategies, safety climate and behaviors are difficult to sustain. Nursing and healthcare studies show that higher frequencies of bullying are associated with lower safety attitudes toward patient care and that these attitudes, in turn, affect safety performance, indicating that safety attitudes are a key mediator between bullying and safety performance (Lin, 2015;Lin et al., 2018). When organizational commitments to safety and respect remain rhetorical and are not translated into management practices and systems, bullying and violence become more likely, and employees are less willing to activate reporting mechanisms, perpetuating a vicious cycle.

In the dimension of working conditions and job demands, job control, workload, and demands are widely recognized as structural factors linked to bullying. Working conditions include not only task type and supervision intensity but also autonomy, remuneration, and job stability. Over time, these conditions shape individuals' self-guidance and values and, through parenting and interaction, influence the career choices and autonomy of the next generation (Cemalcilar et al., 2018). "Workload" typically refers to task quantity and time pressure, while "work demands" further encompass task difficulty, role responsibilities, and psycho-physiological burdens. Excessive work demands have been explicitly identified as high-risk factors for occupational diseases in safety and health regulations(Liu, 2024;Zeng, 2022). Related studies show that long hours, shift work, high-intensity demands, and ad hoc assignments not only escalate stress and burnout but also increase interpersonal conflict and inappropriate verbal behaviors, creating fertile ground for bullying(Chang et al., 2018；Cheng & Huang, 2024；Lee & Chen, 2023；Li, 2024；Su, 2023；Yang, 2022).

In increasingly digitalized work environments, workplace cyberbullying (WCB) has also drawn growing attention. Yan Jie et al. (2025) identified key drivers of WCB, including technological affordances (e.g., anonymity, broad reach), emotional factors (e.g., anger, fear, jealousy), and environmental conditions (e.g., organizational politics, toxic cultures, passive leadership). These factors generate stress, anxiety, and burnout at the individual level and threaten productivity and legal compliance at the organizational level. Their study also discussed the potential use of AI in detecting and intervening in WCB, while cautioning that technological tools alone cannot resolve bullying if organizational culture remains unchanged.

Taken together, empirical findings indicate that workplace bullying is closely linked to organizational support, social support, ethical and safety culture, and working conditions and demands. Tien (2009) found that social support among flight attendants is positively related to work vigor and negatively associated with bullying. Kuei (2012) reported that subordinates with lower competence and greater power distance from supervisors are more likely to become bullying targets, whereas deeper value congruence between supervisors and subordinates reduces this risk. Yao (2012) found a significant negative association between bullying and supervisory support and positive associations between bullying and turnover intention, burnout, and deviant behavior. Studies in educational and healthcare settings likewise show that bullying undermines perceived supervisory support, health, organizational justice, and safety attitudes, whereas ethical climate, career resilience, social support, and sense of mission can, to varying degrees, buffer its negative effects(Chen, 2014;Feng et al., 2020Iqbal Junaid et al., 2025Lin, 2015Lin et al., 2018Li et al., 2024Wu, 2017Wang & Cheng, 2023; Yan Jie et al., 2025). Overall, internal workplace violence and bullying pose greater threats to employees' physical and mental health than external events, and environments characterized by long working hours, low perceived job control, and low organizational justice substantially increase risks of violence and fatigue.

On the basis of the above theoretical and empirical context, it can be inferred that when organizations provide more supportive resources (e.g., supervisory support, coworker support, positive social support), cultivate caring and principled ethical climates, emphasize safety culture and the safety of patients or service recipients, and reduce excessive demands through reasonable staffing and work-hour design, employees' perceived levels of workplace bullying will be relatively lower. Conversely, when support systems are weak, corporate and ethical culture are self-serving and silent, job demands remain chronically imbalanced, and perceptions of safety and justice are low, workplace bullying and violence are more likely to occur and harder to contain. Therefore, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3

Workplace bullying is negatively associated with organizational environments and support systems.

Research Methods

Research Process and Procedures

Focusing on "workplace bullying" as the core topic, this study first delineated the thematic scope and conceptual boundaries based on the research purposes. The focus was placed on quantitative empirical studies related to workplace bullying, and studies with overly diffuse topics or excessive heterogeneity were excluded in order to enhance the accuracy and feasibility of the meta-analysis. The research scope was primarily confined to workplace bullying and its related psychological, behavioral, and organizational variables, which served as the basis for subsequent literature search and screening.

Data collection followed a systematic search strategy. Relevant studies were retrieved from databases such as the Taiwan Thesis and Dissertation Knowledge Value-Added System, Airiti Library, and the

Taiwan Periodical Literature System. The search encompassed journal articles, books, unpublished master's and doctoral theses, conference papers, and research reports. In addition, both ancestry and descendency approaches were adopted to trace the references of included studies and to identify subsequent related research, thereby improving the completeness of the data and reducing the likelihood of omitting important studies.

After the initial literature collection, clear inclusion and exclusion criteria were established in line with the research purposes. To be included, studies had to be quantitative and directly related to workplace bullying; qualitative research, case studies, and action research were excluded. Moreover, the studies were required to report statistical information that could be converted into effect sizes (e.g., sample size, means, standard deviations, correlation coefficients r, t values, F values). Full-text availability was also required to ensure research transparency and replicability. Because meta-analysis emphasizes the objective results of studies rather than researchers' subjective interpretations, studies that provided only narrative descriptions without sufficient statistical data were not included (Rosenthal, 1995).

Subsequently, a coding manual was developed to ensure consistency of data extracted across studies. The coding scheme included: (1) basic study information (e.g., research topic, authors, year of publication, journal, keywords); (2) sample characteristics (e.g., age, gender, educational level, occupation); (3) research methods (e.g., research design, sampling method, independent and dependent variables, mediators and moderators); and (4) descriptive and inferential statistics (e.g., means, standard deviations, r, t, F, p). A database was created using Microsoft Excel to facilitate standardized data processing prior to conducting the meta-analysis. Data were extracted by one reviewer using Microsoft Excel. A second reviewer independently verified the entire dataset to ensure accuracy. To assess the methodological quality of the included studies, the JBI Critical Appraisal Checklist was employed. Two reviewers independently assessed the risk of bias for each study, evaluating domains such as sample representativeness, measurement validity, and statistical methods.

Based on the literature framework, the variables included in this meta-analysis were categorized into three major groups:

Work-related psychological and behavioral outcomes, including well-being and psychological capital, work demands and stress, emotional exhaustion and emotional labor (burnout), work attitudes, workplace justice, and safety and mental health;

Individual characteristics and conditional factors, including optimism, physical health, conscientiousness, need for autonomy, and safety attitudes and values;

Organizational environments and support systems, including job tenure, job control, supervisory and social support, organizational type and culture, work performance, workload and job demands, and organizational systems.

This classification facilitated subsequent subgroup analyses and tests of heterogeneity.

Regarding effect size calculation, this study followed standard procedures for meta-analysis by converting the statistical indices reported in each study (e.g., χ^2, t, F, p) into standardized effect sizes (ES), such as Fisher's Zr, Cohen's d, Hedges' g, or odds ratios, to provide a common metric for cross-study comparison(Chang, 2014). Following Rosenthal's (1991) method, the effect size r representing the association between workplace bullying and each variable was computed for each study and then combined using weighted averages to obtain the overall effect size. The Comprehensive Meta-Analysis software (CMA 2.0) was used to perform the meta-analysis, including tests of heterogeneity (e.g., Q and I^2 statistics), comparisons of fixed- and random-effects models, and analyses of potential moderator variables. Forest plots were generated to display individual and overall effect sizes, and funnel plots were used to examine publication bias, thereby improving the credibility of the findings. The certainty of the evidence was evaluated by considering the risk of bias and the consistency of results across included studies.

Sources of Literature

For literature sources and sample criteria, the keyword "workplace bullying" were used as the main search terms. In accordance with the principle of "as complete a collection as possible" in meta-analysis, a systematic search was conducted in Airiti Library up to October 31, 2024, to identify Taiwan-based quantitative studies published between 2009 and 2024. A total of 35 studies related to workplace bullying were initially obtained, including journal articles, master's and doctoral theses, and research reports. These studies were then further screened according to the inclusion criteria: studies for which the full text could not be obtained, those that did not report the necessary statistics, those that did not provide correlation coefficients convertible to effect sizes, qualitative studies, and studies whose variables did not fit the analytical framework of the present meta-analysis were excluded. Figure 1 illustrates the study selection process according to the PRISMA guidelines.

Ultimately, 30 studies met the criteria and were included in the meta-analysis. These studies covered a wide range of workplace contexts, including healthcare institutions, educational settings, military organizations, technology industries, and administrative systems. The variables examined spanned multiple levels: individual-level traits and psychological responses, work-level stress and attitudes, and organizational-level support, culture, and systems. By integrating these studies, the present research was able to examine the associations between workplace bullying and work-related psychological and behavioral outcomes, individual characteristics and conditional factors, and organizational environments and support systems from a multilevel perspective, test the proposed hypotheses, and provide an important empirical basis for subsequent practical applications and policy recommendations. The risk of bias assessment indicated that most of the 30 included studies had adequate methodological quality, with clear descriptions of sampling and measurement tools.

Results

Workplace Bullying and Work-Related Psychological and Behavioral Outcomes

The meta-analysis examining the association between workplace bullying and work-related psychological and behavioral outcomes yielded an average effect size of r = .215, with a 95% confidence interval ranging from .164 to .265. The Z value was 8.100 ($p < .001$), indicating statistical significance. The I^2 statistic was 96.227, suggesting high heterogeneity, with approximately 96.227% of variance attributable to true differences across studies and only about 4% to random error. According to Cohen's (1992) effect size guidelines ($0.10 < r < 0.50$), this represents a medium effect, demonstrating that workplace bullying is moderately associated with work-related psychological and behavioral outcomes (Table 1 and Fig. 2).

In summary, workplace bullying shows a moderate positive correlation with work-related psychological and behavioral outcomes. This indicates a reciprocal relationship: higher levels of workplace bullying are associated with elevated levels of work-related psychological and behavioral problems, and conversely, higher levels of such problems are associated with more pronounced workplace bullying. Therefore, Hypothesis 1—stating that workplace bullying is positively associated with work-related psychological and behavioral outcomes—is supported.

Workplace Bullying and Individual Characteristics and Conditional Factors

The analysis of the relationship between workplace bullying and individual characteristics and conditional factors produced an average effect size of r = −.204, with a 95% confidence interval of −.273 to −.134. The Z value was − 5.593 ($p < .001$), reaching statistical significance. The I^2 value was 95.805, indicating high heterogeneity, with approximately 95.805% of variance attributable to actual differences across studies and only 4% to random error. This medium effect size (Cohen, 1992) suggests that workplace bullying is moderately associated with individual characteristics and conditional factors (Table 1 and Fig. 3).

Overall, the findings show a moderate negative correlation: higher workplace bullying corresponds to weaker individual characteristics and conditional resources, while stronger individual traits and conditions are associated with lower levels of workplace bullying. Thus, Hypothesis 2—stating that workplace bullying is negatively associated with individual characteristics and conditional factors—is supported.

Workplace Bullying and Organizational Environments and Support Systems

The meta-analysis of workplace bullying and organizational environments and support systems produced an average effect size of r = −.112, with a 95% confidence interval of −.189 to −.034. The Z value was − 2.797 ($p < .001$), indicating statistical significance. The I^2 statistic was 97.325, representing

high heterogeneity, with about 97.325% of variance due to real differences between studies and only 3% due to random error. According to Cohen's classification, this also constitutes a medium effect size, demonstrating a meaningful association between workplace bullying and organizational environments and support systems (Table 1 and Fig. 4).

In summary, workplace bullying shows a moderate negative correlation with organizational environments and support systems. Higher levels of workplace bullying correspond to reduced organizational support and environmental effectiveness, while stronger organizational support systems are associated with lower bullying levels. Therefore, Hypothesis 3—stating that workplace bullying is negatively associated with organizational environments and support systems—is supported.

Table 1
Comparison of Effect Sizes Between Workplace Bullying and Key Variables

Variable	Number of Studies	Effect Size	95%CI		Z	Q	I^2	5N + 10
			LL	UL				
Work-related psychological and behavioral outcomes	96	0.215	0.164	0.265	8.100***	2517.746***	96.227	490
Individual characteristics and conditional factors	45	-0.204	-0.273	-0.134	-5.593***	1048.915***	95.805	235
Organizational environments and support systems	61	-0.112	-0.189	-0.034	-2.797**	2242.966***	97.325	315
***p<.0001								

Note

CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit.

Discussion

Positive Association Between Workplace Bullying and Work-Related Psychological and Behavioral Outcomes

This meta-analysis synthesized 24 empirical studies and found a significant positive association between workplace bullying and work-related psychological and behavioral outcomes, with an average effect size of ES = .215, representing a medium effect according to Cohen's (1992) guidelines. This indicates that greater exposure to workplace bullying is associated with more pronounced negative

psychological and behavioral reactions. Consistent evidence from Taiwan shows clear positive relationships between workplace bullying, turnover intention, job burnout, and deteriorating mental health(Chang, 2012;Ke, 2013；Pan, 2014；Tsai et al., 2014；Weng, 2013；Wu, 2017；Yao, 2012), particularly in healthcare settings, where nurses exposed to long-term bullying in high-pressure environments are especially prone to depression and reduced quality of care (Pan, 2014).

Sustained bullying elevates emotional exhaustion and psychological load, which in turn weaken employees' positive traits and job satisfaction (Chang et al., 2018;Tai, 2020). Although psychological capital—such as hope and resilience—can buffer some of the negative effects of bullying on well-being (Wu et al., 2017), its protective function is limited when adverse conditions persist. Importantly, even bystanders may experience reduced psychological safety and job satisfaction under a bullying climate, which contributes to higher turnover intention (Chang, 2021；Chang et al., 2024). Overall, workplace bullying exerts substantial harm on both victims and observers, and the effect size observed in this study underscores the need for organizations to implement proactive interventions to mitigate its psychological and behavioral consequences.

Negative Association Between Workplace Bullying and Individual Characteristics and Conditional Factors

The synthesis of 12 empirical studies revealed a significant negative association between workplace bullying and individual characteristics and conditional factors, with an average effect size of ES = −.204, also representing a medium effect (Cohen, 1992). This suggests that bullying erodes positive traits and psychological resources. Prior research indicates that traits such as neuroticism predict not only psychological and physical conditions but also greater susceptibility to bullying (Hsu, 2010). In high-bullying organizational climates, positive traits such as openness, conscientiousness, and responsibility may gradually diminish, lowering motivation to learn, reducing work engagement, and increasing psychological strain (Chang et al., 2024;Fu et al., 2016).

Newcomers, whose roles and identities are less established, are especially vulnerable to helplessness and insecurity when confronted with unmet expectations (Tai, 2020). In service and social welfare sectors, long-term exposure to incivility and verbal aggression from service recipients weakens employees' basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, thereby increasing emotional exhaustion and burnout (Su, 2023). Collectively, workplace bullying reduces self-efficacy, satisfaction of psychological needs, positive work attitudes, and adaptive capacity, while increasing turnover intention. The effect size observed in this study confirms that individual characteristics and conditional factors are indeed negatively affected in bullying contexts.

Negative Association Between Workplace Bullying and Organizational Environments and Support Systems

The synthesis of 13 studies showed a significant negative association between workplace bullying and organizational environments and support systems, with an average effect size of ES = −.112,

representing a medium effect (Cohen, 1992). This suggests that bullying undermines key organizational systems such as supervisory support, social support, organizational culture, and safety performance. Research indicates that organizational cultures characterized by openness and trust reduce employees' risk of experiencing bullying, and supervisory support is particularly crucial for preventing turnover and alleviating stress(Chang, 2012; Lee, 2012). Conversely, insufficient supervisory support or weak managerial culture can exacerbate bullying and violence in the workplace (Feng et al., 2020).

Workplace bullying has been shown not only to reduce employees' safety attitudes but also to undermine safety performance through these attitudes (Lin, 2015). Social support serves as a protective factor by lowering psychological stress and turnover intention (Wu, 2017), yet when organizational systems lack transparency, working hours are excessive, workloads are heavy, or job control is low, the risk of bullying and violence increases (Wang & Cheng, 2023). Demanding organizational cultures may also induce rumination, insomnia, and poorer mental health, although a strong sense of mission can buffer some negative impacts (Li et al., 2024). In sum, organizational culture, supervisory support, and overall work environment quality play crucial roles in shaping bullying risk and employees' psychological burden. The meta-analytic findings reinforce this negative association and highlight that organizational-level conditions substantially influence the prevalence and severity of workplace bullying.

Implications and Recommendations

Drawing upon the literature reviewed, this study identified key variables associated with workplace bullying—including well-being, turnover intention, work demands, job satisfaction, conscientiousness, openness, need for autonomy, optimism, supervisory support, social support, organizational culture, and workload—and organized them into three overarching dimensions: work-related psychological and behavioral outcomes, individual characteristics and conditional factors, and organizational environments and support systems. The meta-analytic findings demonstrate that workplace bullying exerts significant negative impacts at both individual and organizational levels. Accordingly, practical recommendations should simultaneously target psychological mechanisms, personality-related factors, and systemic conditions to reduce bullying and enhance employee well-being.

First, regarding workplace bullying and work-related psychological and behavioral outcomes, prior studies show that experiences of verbal aggression, psychological violence, and bullying increase turnover intention, job burnout, and emotional exhaustion while reducing mental health and job satisfaction (Chang et al., 2018;Wu, 2017). Organizations should therefore implement psychological capital training—encompassing hope, optimism, resilience, self-efficacy, and competence—alongside stress management and emotion regulation programs to strengthen employees' coping capacities and psychological resilience. Given that well-being, job satisfaction, and life satisfaction decrease when personal attacks occur, concerns are ignored, or workloads are assigned unfairly (Wu et al., 2017), organizations should integrate considerations of psychological safety, organizational justice, teamwork, and interpersonal interaction into task assignment and resource allocation to prevent subtle violence and unfair treatment. Because workplace violence is strongly linked to psychological stress and employees with pre-existing vulnerabilities are more likely to experience anxiety, depression, and

emotional exhaustion (Feng et al., 2020), organizations should institutionalize health promotion strategies—such as exercise programs, sleep hygiene initiatives, nutrition education, and stress-relief activities—to enhance resilience and psychological adjustment.

Second, with respect to individual characteristics and conditional factors, research suggests that bullying—through belittlement, social exclusion, coercive control, and personal attacks—weakens positive traits such as optimism, need for autonomy, internal locus of control, and openness, thereby undermining internal stability and career adaptability over time (Fu et al., 2016;Su, 2023). Organizations should therefore strengthen psychological safety and value diversity through both cultural and structural interventions, including promoting respect for differences, fostering inclusion, adopting positive leadership styles, and building cross-departmental support networks. At the policy level, gender equality and diversity-friendly measures—such as family support programs, gender-inclusive facilities, and flexible work arrangements—can support employees at different life stages and enhance organizational identification. Because some bullying situations erode self-esteem, foster negative work-related cognitions, and may lead to withdrawal or long-term psychological trauma (Tai, 2020), interventions grounded in positive psychology—such as cultivating internal locus of control, goal-setting, and achievement motivation—combined with Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) and professional counseling are essential for rebuilding self-worth and psychological strength.

Finally, regarding organizational environments and support systems, existing research shows that bullying, verbal aggression, and emotional coercion often co-occur with insufficient supervisory support, strained hierarchical relationships, and weak ethical cultures, which impair communication quality and reduce trust in the organization(Chang, 2012;Feng et al., 2020). Organizations should reinforce supervisory support and ethical climate through leadership development, feedback skills training, cross-level communication mechanisms, employee care initiatives, and transparent grievance procedures, thereby fostering a respectful and open work environment where employees feel safe to express concerns. Mandatory organizational citizenship behaviors, psychological aggression, and unreasonable demands amplify workload and reduce perceived control, increasing emotional exhaustion (Wang & Cheng, 2023). Accordingly, organizations should review task design, adjust human resource allocation, and adopt job redesign and stress management systems to reduce high-pressure conditions. In terms of safety performance, bullying and exclusion weaken safety compliance, safety participation, and trust in organizational systems (Lin, 2015). Integrating workplace violence prevention with environmental safety and health (ESH) frameworks—such as ISO 45001 implementation, strengthened safety audits, safety climate assessments, and clear reporting and protection mechanisms—can enhance safety performance and help cultivate a respectful, secure workplace.

This meta-analysis synthesizes 30 domestic empirical studies and provides evidence-based insights into the relationships between workplace bullying and related variables. Nonetheless, several limitations and directions for future research remain. First, cross-cultural and international comparisons should be expanded to examine how societal norms and legal systems moderate bullying patterns and effects. Second, the high heterogeneity (I^2) across studies suggests unobserved moderators or mediators; future

work should more precisely test mediation and moderation models—for example, whether specific personality traits moderate the bullying–turnover relationship or whether supervisory support buffers the negative effects of bullying on mental health. Third, because cross-sectional designs cannot determine causal direction, longitudinal studies are needed to capture the dynamic processes and long-term impacts of bullying. Qualitative approaches, such as interviews and focus groups, can complement quantitative findings by revealing contextual nuances and uncovering the mechanisms underlying cultures of silence. In addition to the limitations of the primary studies, limitations concerning the review process should also be acknowledged. As this study focused primarily on Taiwan, the literature search was confined to local Chinese databases, which may have resulted in the omission of important research published in other languages.

Finally, future research should develop and rigorously evaluate anti-bullying interventions—such as training programs, organizational policy reforms, and psychological support initiatives—using experimental or quasi-experimental designs to assess their impact on employee well-being and work performance, thereby advancing both theory and practice.

Declarations

Ethics approval and consent to participate

Generally, meta-analyses of previously published data do not require ethical approval because they don't directly involve human subjects or their data.

Consent for publication

Since meta-analyses typically involve analyzing aggregated data and don't directly involve human subjects or their data, they often do not require ethical approval.

Competing interests

The researchers declare no competing interests.

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Author Contribution

Yin-Che Chen: Conceptualization, methodology, supervision, project administration, writing, review and editing.Ching-Ling Chang: Investigation, formal analysis, writing.Hui-Chuang Chu: Methodology, validation, review and editing.Ting-Fang Chien (Doctoral Student): Data curation, visualization.

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Data Availability

The datasets analysed for the current study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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Figures

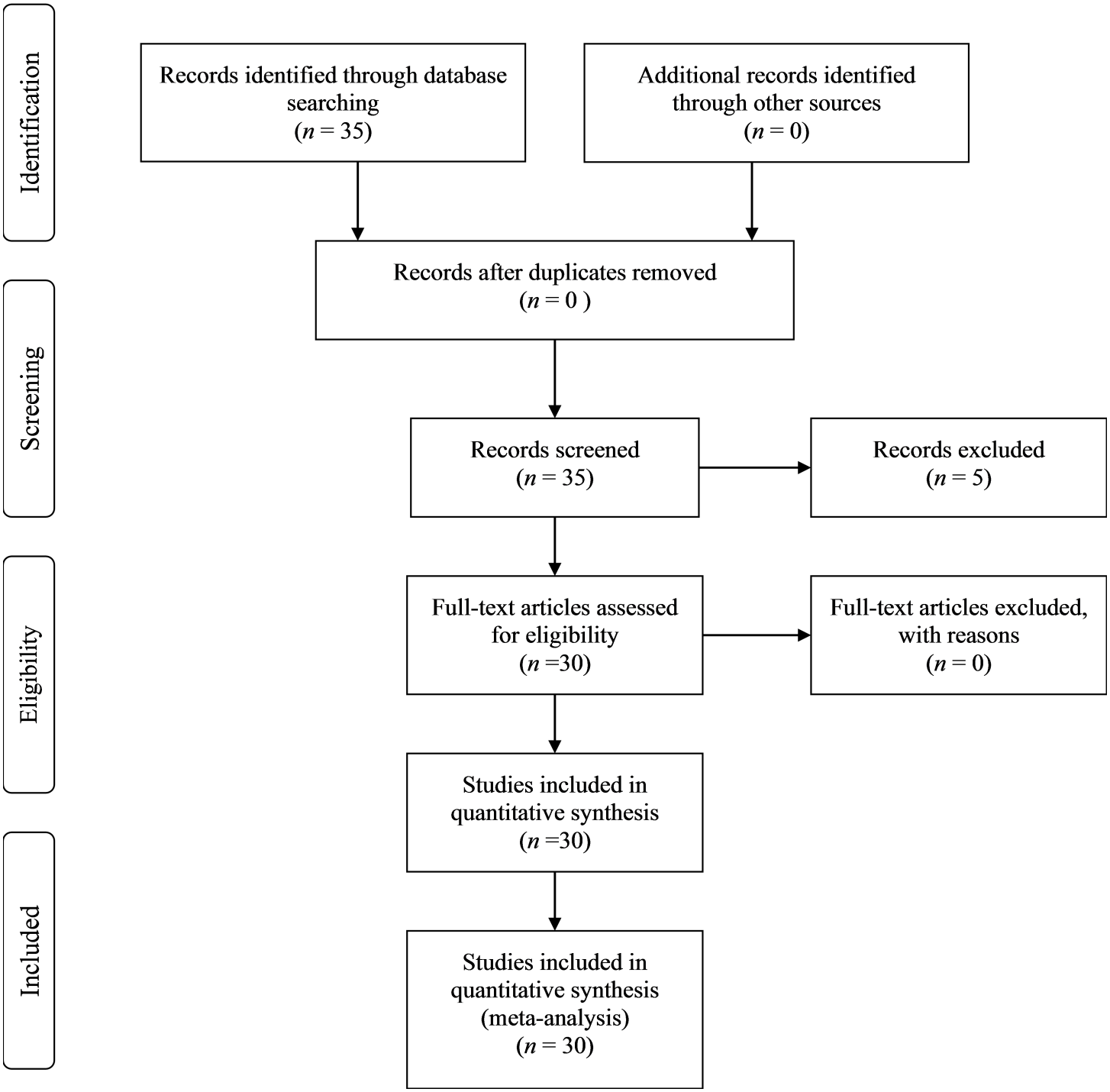

Figure 1

The Flow Diagram of PRISMA

Note. PRISMA = Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses

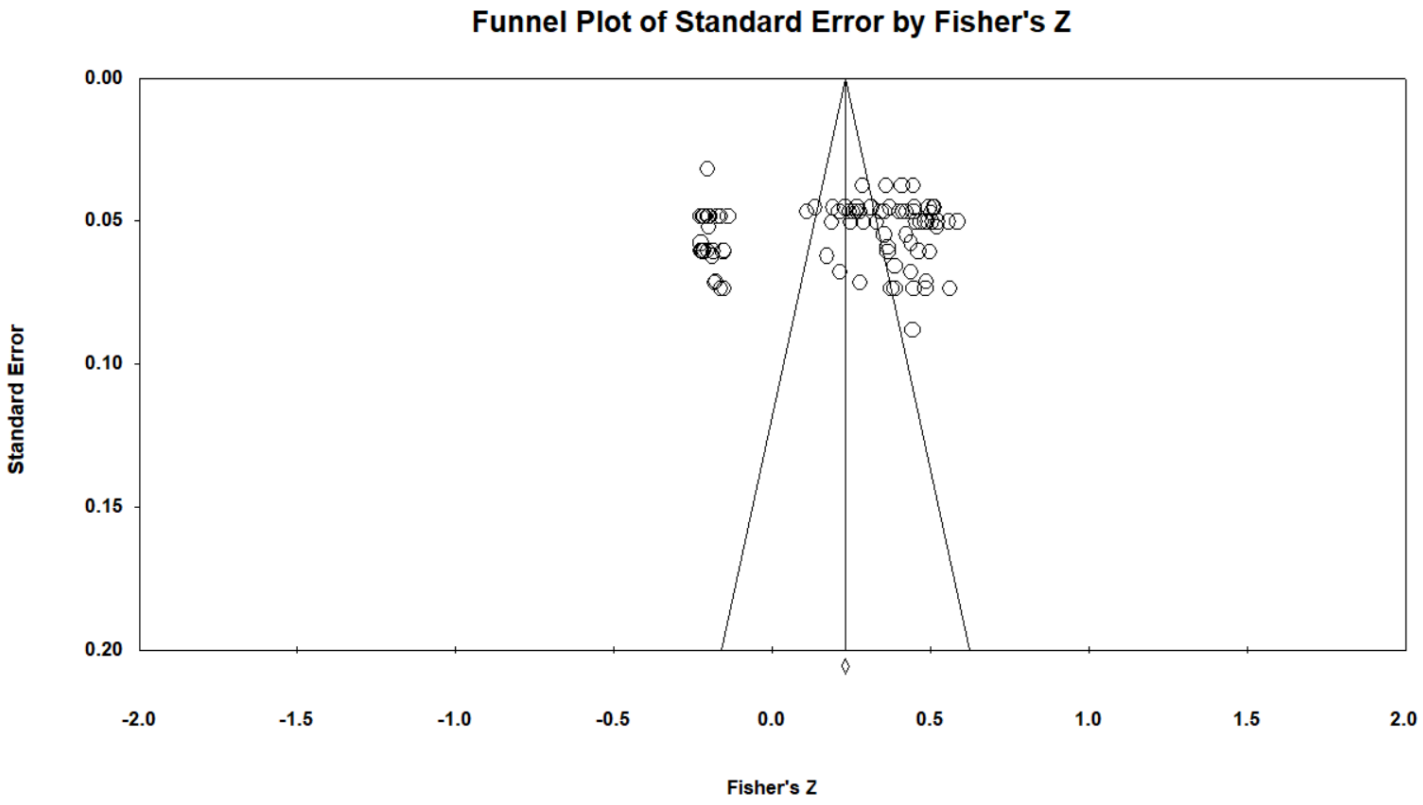

Figure 2

Funnel plot of the meta-analysis examining the association between workplace bullying and work-related psychological and behavioral outcomes.

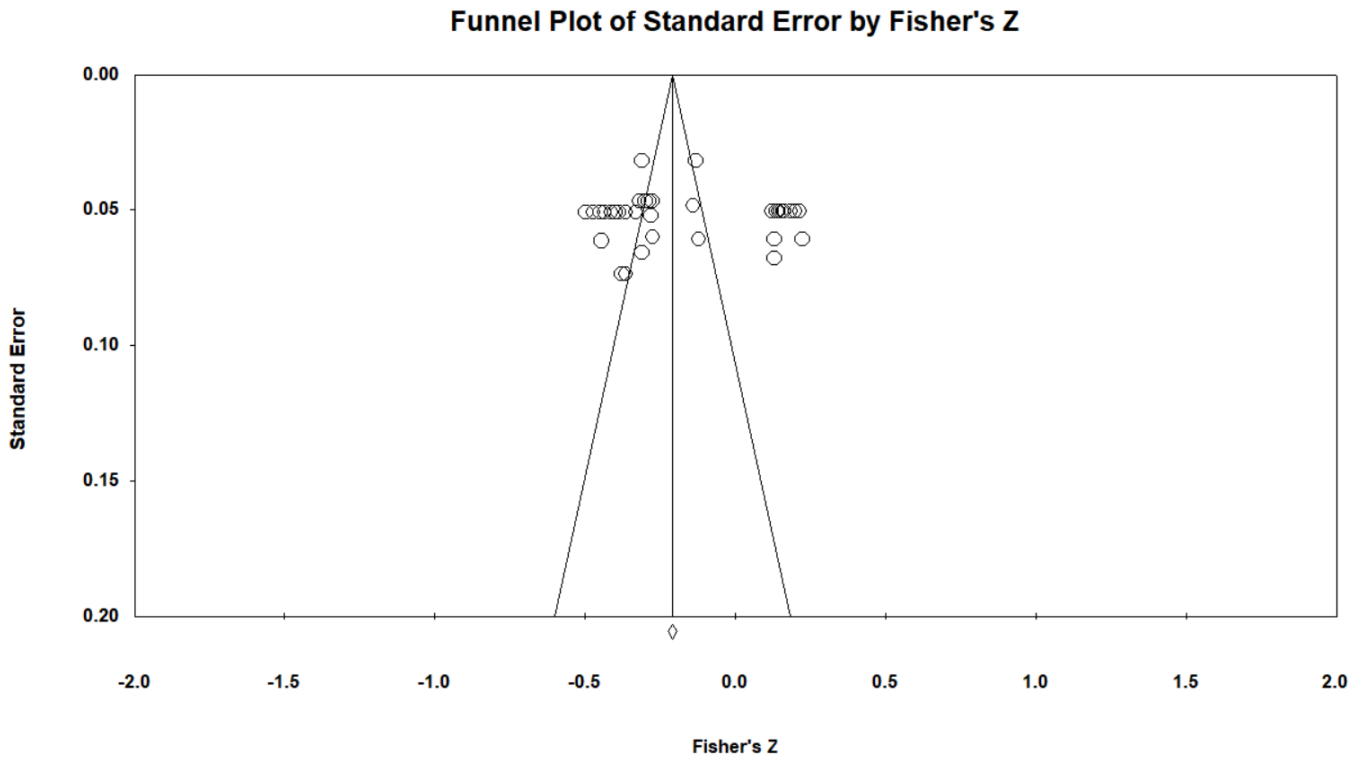

Figure 3

Funnel plot of the meta-analysis examining the association between workplace bullying and individual characteristics and conditional factors.

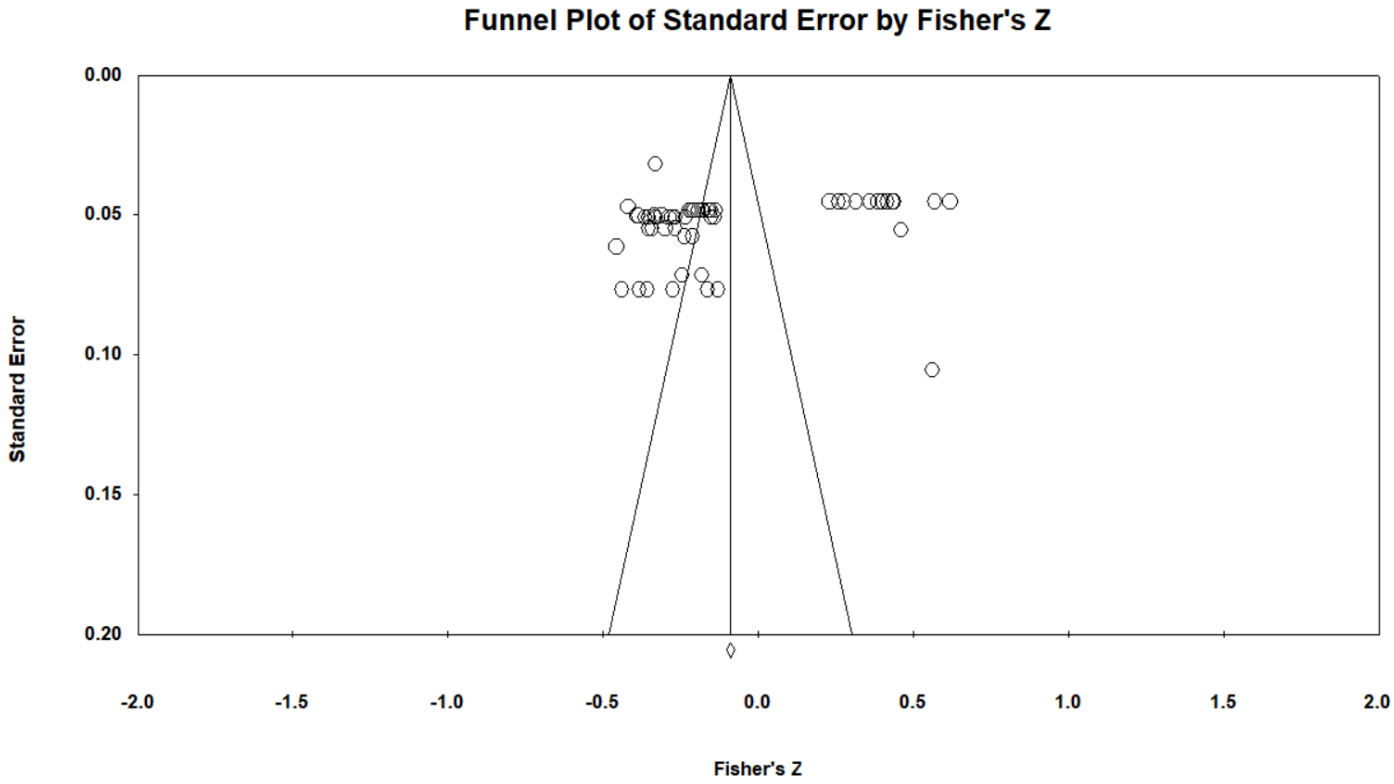

Figure 4

Funnel plot of the meta-analysis examining the association between workplace bullying and organizational environments and support systems.

Supplementary Files

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- PRISMAv1.docx