

## The dark side of high performance human resource practices in the visitor economy

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### Abstract

Enhancing employee performance and improving staff retention are key objectives within the visitor economy, especially among the subset of tourism and hospitality businesses where there is a strong emphasis on 'people first' practices. A significant threat to achieving these sector goals is the presence of psychosocial risk factors associated with abuse and ill-treatment at work. This study examines the role of workplace bullying in the relationship between two organisational approaches to support workforce performance, high performance work systems and perceived organisational support, and employee engagement and retention. Our findings indicate that bullying weakens or even reverses the impact of these organisational initiatives, with HPWS found to increase perceived exposure to bullying. The paper discusses the implications for the visitor economy, particularly, the need to enhance the perception of concern for employee wellbeing and create healthy work environments in the sector if organisational efforts to enhance engagement and retention are to be effective.

## 1. Introduction

Human resource issues are among the most important and challenging concerns for hospitality and the visitor economy globally (Baum, Kralj, Robinson and Solnet 2016). Employment in the visitor economy is characterised by high levels of staff turnover, instability in contracts and working hours associated with seasonality (see McCole 2015), low rates of pay and unsociable working practices. It is not surprising, therefore, that this economic sector places a great deal of emphasis on 'people first' practices, with the goals of reducing employee turnover rates, increasing productivity (which is often very low per employee, see Joppe and Li 2016), and raising customer service quality and worker satisfaction with their work.

The visitor economy is characterised globally by a high prevalence of violence, bullying and harassment directed towards employees, evidenced in the International Labour Organisation report *Violence at Work in the Hotel, Catering and Tourism Sectors* (Hoel and Einarsen, 2003) and reaffirmed in the case of Canada by Roper and Menten (2017). However, this remains a somewhat hidden issue compared to government strategies in other service-oriented settings such as healthcare, designed to stamp out such problems. The endemic nature of these problems in the visitor economy means that there is a moral and growing legal case to analyse the extent and causes of such problems (see the excellent synthesis of the subject by Ram 2015) because it often has a power dimension, with low status employees disproportionately affected by these issues which directly contributes towards low productivity, staff turnover, and a poor image as a

employing sector of the economy. In Australia, Tourism Australia's Code of Conduct (Tourism Australia 2015) sought to take a leadership role illustrating the importance of addressing bullying and harassment as unacceptable practices in organisations.

This paper contributes to advancing knowledge around people-facing businesses in the sector through examining for the first time the potential for workplace bullying to impact organisational outcomes crucial to workforce retention in the sector, and the impact of bullying on organisational practices designed to enhance such outcomes. The paper adopts an interdisciplinary approach and seeks to extend and apply knowledge developed from human resource management, organisational behaviour and organisational psychology fields to understand what are globally significant employment issues.

The paper commences by establishing the theoretical framework that informs the study, drawing upon strategic human resource management, social exchange theory and the workplace bullying literature. This is followed by hypotheses development and presentation of our research model for the testing of these hypotheses. Next is a discussion of the methodology deployed and the results of the study along with a discussion of the results and the limitations of the study. The implications for professional practice are then examined together with the overall conclusions of the study.

## 2 Literature Review

### 2.1 *Theoretical perspectives on HRM: HPWS and POS to enhance worker satisfaction and reduce leave intentions*

Numerous studies have highlighted the effectiveness of human resource management (HRM) practices in achieving satisfaction and retention that are salient for the visitor economy (e.g. Delery 1998; Huselid 1995; Way 2002), although there are a wide range of issues which impact upon human resource (HR) practices and performance and productivity that remain germane areas for research (Guest 2011). One approach to people management, based on strategic HRM and the resource-based view, relates to the macro system of practices organisations use to manage human capital (Murphy, DiPietro and Murrmann 2007). These macro systems of practices are known as high performance work systems (HPWS). HPWS include a range of HRM practices that have been associated with positive organisational performance (Huselid 1995; Ramsay, Scholarios, and Harley 2000). Despite the growing literature on HPWS, there has not been any uniform definition of the specific composition of these high performance HR practices. A meta-analysis of the literature by Jiang et al (2012) identified a variety of HR practices that could be considered components of HPWS. These practices were categorised into three dimensions of HR systems: skills-enhancing, motivation-enhancing, and opportunity-enhancing. Jiang et al. observed that these practices include comprehensive recruitment, rigorous selection, and extensive training for skills-enhancing HR bundles. Developmental performance management, competitive compensation, incentives and rewards, extensive benefits, promotion and career development, and job security were examples of motivation-enhancing

practices. The last bundle, opportunity-enhancing HR practices, include HR practices such as flexible job design, work teams, employee involvement, and information sharing.

There is a limited application of HPWS to service businesses in the visitor economy (e.g. Dhar 2015; Karatepe 2013a, 2013b; Way 2002) and knowledge is limited on the relationship between strategic HR efforts and desirable organisational outcomes. Notable examples include Dhar's (2015) analysis of the impact of HPWS practices among a sample of Indian hotel workers, indicating that HPWS promoted commitment and service innovation behaviour. Karatepe's (2013a) analysis of full-time frontline hotel employees and their managers concluded that work engagement was a full mediator of the effects of HPWS on employee outcomes such as job performance and extra-role customer service. A further study by Karatepe (2013b) examined the effect of HPWS on Iranian frontline employees, where HPWS had a negative impact on these employees' intentions to leave. While these studies suggest the potential benefits of HPWS, the overall significance of such practices for achieving sector goals has not been matched by a body of knowledge to illustrate the wider significance of HPWS in the visitor economy.

Social exchanges between a worker and their organisation have been conceptualised as having a relationship with perceived organisational support (POS) (Wayne, Shore and Liden 1997). The generic management and HRM literature commonly links the construct of POS to organisational goals and outcomes. According to Eisenberger et al. (1986, p. 501), POS refers to employees' beliefs concerning the extent to

which the organisation values their contribution and cares about their wellbeing. While research on the impact of POS on desirable organisational outcomes is mixed, meta-analytical evidence suggests POS to have a strong positive effect on desirable organisational outcomes (Riggle, Edmondson and Hansen 2009). There is a limited literature on the role of POS in service-related businesses dealing with consumers in the sector.

This study examines the impact of HPWS and POS within a selection of employees in the visitor economy, drawn principally from Australian tourism and hospitality sector staff in relation to job satisfaction and employee leave intentions. This paper argues that the effectiveness of organisational efforts such as HPWS to enhance organisational goals of promoting staff satisfaction with their work and retaining staff will only be realised where workers feel supported by the organisation and perceive that their wellbeing is being supported through a positive work environment, free of negative behaviours and excessive pressures. Hence, the mediating role of a highly prevalent form of psychosocial hazard known to heavily impact worker wellbeing and retention, workplace bullying, in the relationship between organisational support and HPWS and hospitality employee outcomes is also considered in our analysis.

## **2.2. Workplace bullying as a product of the work environment**

Workplace bullying is one of a number of terms used to capture the *darker side* of organisational behaviour, and is a grave concern across many occupational sectors with an estimated global prevalence affecting between 11-20% of employees (Nielsen et al. 2010). Roper and Menten (2017) found that the hospitality sector was the sector according to Workplace BC in Canada data with the greatest number of accepted claims for bullying and harassment. Workplace bullying is defined by Lutgen-Sandvik, Tracy and Alberts (2007, p. 847) as ‘a situation where one or several individuals perceive themselves to be on the receiving end of negative actions from one or more persons persistently over a period of time, in a situation where the targets have difficulty defending themselves against these actions. We do not refer to a one-off incident as bullying’. Key to this definition is the repeated and persistent nature of bullying – that negative acts are not considered bullying unless the victim has been repeatedly targeted over a period of time. It is important to distinguish bullying from other forms of ill-treatment, notably harassment, which can be a single event. Related constructs include abusive supervision (Tepper 2000), emotional abuse (Keashly & Harvey, 2005), incivility (Pearson, & Porath 2005), mobbing (Leymann 1990) and organisationally-motivated aggression, (O’Leary-Kelly, Griffin and Glew 1996). These phenomena have in common unwelcome negative behaviours repeatedly targeted at one or more individuals.

Bullying is often associated with a structural imbalance of power (Ram 2015), and may have specific facets in customer interactions in tourism where a group of customers may ‘mob’ an employee with complaints (Hoel and Einarsen 2011). While workplace bullying research most commonly deals with bullying among organisational members, we note that it is generally recognised in the literature that bullying may occur

from multiple sources (Bentley et al., 2012; Einarsen et al., 2011), including managers, co-workers, clients, customers, students and patients. In the visitor economy context, we note that persistent negative acts from customers (such as hotel guests, casino guests, customers in bars and restaurants) may also be characterised and understood as bullying – even where those persistent acts come from different individuals towards the same worker or workers.

A large body of empirical evidence has associated workplace bullying with a range of negative outcomes for individuals and their organisations, including poor physical health, depression and various psychosomatic symptoms (Mikkelsen and Einarsen 2001), stress, anxiety and low levels of emotional well-being (Einarsen et al. 2011). Ram (2015) summarises the major studies of violence, bullying and sexual harassment in the tourism and hospitality sector and concludes that there are three principal causes: structural issues with the sector, managerial causes and belief and norms in the sectors (e.g. the customer is always right philosophy) that compound the issue. Organisational costs of bullying are also significant, with both targets and witnesses exhibiting a higher frequency of absenteeism, reduced organisational commitment, job satisfaction, performance, and work motivation (Jennifer, Cowie & Ananiadou 2003; Lutgen-Sandvik, Tracy, and Alberts 2007).

### **2.3 *Research hypotheses and model development***

This study examines the relationship between organisational level variables and desirable individual and organisational outcomes, given that previous studies have observed a link between HRM practices and organisational performance (Huselid 1995) and the effectiveness of HRM practices in the hospitality sector (Chang, Gong and Shum 2011; Cho et al. 2006; Gannon, Roper and Doherty, 2015). One such desirable outcome is job satisfaction. Job satisfaction is a positive emotional state arising from an individual's subjective experience of their job (Locke 1976). It is understood that employee perceptions of the work environment are an important determinant of job satisfaction. Another dimension relating to retention of human capital is intention to leave employment. Currently there is a paucity of literature that links HPWS with such outcomes, with the exception of Murphy, DiPietro and Murrmann (2007), although evidence from other industry sectors suggests this strategic approach to HRM practice is effective in advancing performance and improving employee retention (see Huselid, 1995; Ramsay, Scholarios, and Harley 2000). Meta analytical reviews have shown that HPWS practices have a positive impact on a range of employee outcomes such as job satisfaction and negatively on turnover intentions (Jiang et al. 2012). This is because under the conditions of high performance created by these HPWS bundles, employees are more likely to be motivated intrinsically and extrinsically, which ultimately result in higher level of engagement, job satisfaction and lower level of turnover intention. García-Chas, Neira-Fontela and Varela-Neira (2016) provided empirical evidence to support the positive impact of organisational-level HPWS on job satisfaction, via the perceived level of POS experienced by employees, while another study on hospitality employees by Way (2002) concluded that firms using HPWS reported lower

voluntary turnover. We therefore posit that HPWS will be positively associated with job satisfaction and negatively associated with intention to leave. (H1)

**Hypothesis 1. HPWS will be positively associated with job satisfaction (H1a) and negatively associated with intention to quit (H1b).**

POS increases the perception that effort will be rewarded by the organisation – following the norm of reciprocity. There is strong evidence linking POS with desirable organisational outcomes in the general management and HRM literature (Riggle, Edmondson and Hansen 2009). For example, in a meta-analysis conducted on studies undertaken over 20 years of research on POS, Riggle, Edmondson and Hansen (2009) found POS to have a strong positive effect on job satisfaction. Within the sector, POS has been found to negatively influence intention to leave among employees, including workers in the US (Cho, Johanson and Guchait 2009) and India (Guchait, Cho and Meurs 2015). Moreover, POS positively influences intention to stay (Cho, Johanson and Guchait 2009; Djurkovic, McCormack and Casimir 2008), an important finding given the poor retention performance across the visitor economy. We therefore predict that POS will increase job satisfaction and reduce leave intentions among Australian workers in a selection of businesses in the visitor economy.

**Hypothesis 2. POS will be positively associated with job satisfaction (H2a) and negatively associated with intention to quit (H2b).**

The next aspect for consideration relates to how HPWS and POS may help reduce the risk of staff exposure to workplace bullying. Extant research has reported bullying to be a complex and challenging workplace issue for organisations to manage, and to be much more than a simple interpersonal phenomenon (Einarsen et al. 2011). Using the work-environment hypothesis (Fox and Cowan; 2015; Leymann 1996), which considers workplace bullying an outcome of the work environment, we argue that organisational level supportive factors are likely to influence the prevalence of workplace bullying amongst hospitality workers. Indeed, research within this sector has found evidence of industry and organisational work cultures to be key antecedents of bullying (Einarsen et al 1994). Moreover, we point to the many studies in other contexts that have recognised the role of organisational factors in workplace bullying (e.g. Notelaers et al. 2010; Skogstad et al. 2011; Zapf et al. 2003).

While bullying is known to be closely associated with other organisational practices, and in particular leadership and work organisation (Salin 2003), the bullying literature has developed independently of the HRM literature and there is a paucity of research looking at the impact of HRM on bullying. While there is some evidence of HRM practices targeting bullying have been effective (Einarsen, 2011), the relationship between HPWS, a macro-level strategic HRM approach, and workplace bullying has yet to be investigated, with no studies examining the relationship between these variables in the visitor economy. Given the evidence from extant research for the positive impact of HPWS on both work performance and the work environment, we posit that HPWS will be negatively related to exposure to workplace bullying.

### **Hypothesis 3. HPWS will be negatively related to workplace bullying**

As noted above, where employees perceive they are supported by the organisation and are treated fairly, they respond with commitment to the organisation (Rhoades and Eisenberger 2002), following the rule of reciprocity. Importantly, POS has been found to have a positive influence on reducing workplace stressors and to contribute to employee wellbeing (Leather et al. 1998). Indeed, there is some evidence that POS helps buffer the negative effects of bullying (Parzefall and Salin 2010), as employees have more resources to cope with negative aspects of the work environment.

### **Hypothesis 4. POS will be negatively related to workplace bullying**

But how does bullying influence the desirable outcomes of job satisfaction and retention in the visitor economy? From the general literature, we know that workplace bullying impacts organisational performance, increases labour turnover (Djurkovic, McCormack and Casimir 2008) and absenteeism, and reduces job satisfaction and work motivation {Einarsen, 2003}. Moreover, we note that exiting the organisation is a common coping measure of last resort for individuals targeted with bullying (D'Cruz and Noronha 2010; Djurkovic, McCormack and Casimir 2008), and we should therefore expect higher intention to leave among bullied individuals. While there is little evidence of the impact of bullying on these outcomes in hospitality, it follows from the general bullying literature that the perceived experience of bullying will result in

undesirable organisational outcomes for the sector. In-line with this view, Bentley et al. (2012) demonstrated that victims of workplace bullying tend to have greater absenteeism, together with a reduction of work attitudes such as job satisfaction. Adopting a SET perspective, Parzefall and Salin (2010) argued that when employees are exposed to bullying behaviours at work, this could result in a perception of a breach in psychological contract. It has also been found that turnover intention can result when employees feel such a breach of their psychological contract (Lu et al. 2016). Taking account of this body of evidence, we predict:

**Hypothesis 5. Workplace bullying will be negatively associated with job satisfaction (H5a) and positively associated with intention to quit (H5b).**

So what role does bullying take in mediating the relationship between supportive organisational efforts and the presence of favourable outcomes for the individual and organisation? In line with SET, we posit that organisational efforts to enhance worker satisfaction and retention will only be effective where employees perceive the organisation cares for their wellbeing (Eisenberger et al.1986; Wayne, Shore and Lyden 1997), and a supportive work environment, free from negative behaviours and unreasonable work pressures, is provided. Hence, we argue that a negative work environment, operationalised in the present study as workplace bullying, will influence the outcomes of job satisfaction and intention to leave. We have already hypothesised above that our two organisational-level antecedent variables will result in feelings of support and engagement with the organisation, reducing the perceived experience of exposure to workplace bullying.

Furthermore, we hypothesised that bullying would have a detrimental effect on our two organisational outcome variables, job satisfaction and intention to quit. Following from these predictions, we hypothesise that workplace bullying will mediate the relationship between the organisational antecedents and outcome variables. As prior empirical research has identified organisational antecedents of workplace bullying, and that bullying promotes reduced satisfaction and increased exit behaviour, we predict:

**Hypothesis 6. Workplace bullying will mediate the relationship between HPWS and job satisfaction**

**Hypothesis 7. Workplace bullying will mediate the relationship between POS and job satisfaction**

**Hypothesis 8. Workplace bullying will mediate the relationship between HPWS and intention to quit**

**Hypothesis 9. Workplace bullying will mediate the relationship between POS and intention to quit**

The extant literature has clearly evidenced the link between job satisfaction and intention to leave (e.g., Iverson and Deery, 1997; Bentley et al., 2012; Way, 2002), although no studies have considered this relationship in the visitor economy context.

**Hypothesis 10. Job satisfaction will be associated with reduced intention to leave**

To test and model these hypotheses, the proposed research model is shown in Figure 1. This model is best described as a mediation model which is determined by the desire to understand the influence of bullying in the relationship between organisational level practice to enhance

performance and support staff and the desirable organisational outcomes they hope for. Undertaking the path analysis allows us to assess mediation effects rather than look at simple correlations while employing Structural Equation Modelling allow us to identify the relationships in the model between different variables.

Figure 1 about here

## **2. Method**

### **3.1 *Participants and procedure***

The study was designed to elicit responses from employees in the visitor economy, largely from the tourism and hospitality sector in Australia to test the research hypotheses using a purposely designed survey instrument. An online survey method was selected for data collection, directed to known employees in this sector. The scale and extent of the sector in Australia, cost, and the need to access very specific group of employees, led us to select a market research company which specialized in profiling its client base. The company selected (anonymous) had a significant proportion of sector employees signed up to its Panel and they were able to send out the survey to 1407 potential respondents. The survey received a response rate of 23% which is relatively sound for such surveys on a sensitive issue because other studies in the business and management field (see Mellahi and Harris, 2016) report response rates in single digits due to the problems of over-surveying.

The survey was run for a two-week period in March 2014 with one reminder sent. Respondents were sent a link with the survey instrument completion details. The criteria for selection were that respondents were employed by organisations in the Australian visitor economy, though in practice this was dominated by tourism and hospitality employees. They were registered with the market research company to participate in market and/or academic research. The company emailed invitations to those members who met with the inclusion criteria, such as greater than 18 years old (due to institutional ethics constraint, worked in an organisation in Australia's visitor economy although we recognize that the sector employees staff under 18 years of age including family members) and were employed as frontline service employees. They were sent an invitation member which contained a link to the online questionnaire. Useable data were collected from 324 frontline employees.

In terms of the survey responses, just over half of the participants were female (180, 55.6%) and a majority of the respondents were between 26-40 years old (73.5%) which tends to fit the characteristic and stereotype as a younger person with low wages, often part-time or seasonal employer. Respondents were employed in organizations in the following size: 0-19 employees (29%) slightly lower than the national average for this size of business, 20-49 (31.8%), with a significant over-representation amongst larger employers (i.e. among employers with 50-99 employees (19.4%), and in the 100-250 employee category (10.5%). The largest group of participants worked in hotel/motel (106, 32.7%), followed by non-fast food establishment (67, 20.7%), and cafe/coffee shop (47, 14.5%). In terms of how representative the specific results are

in relation to the Tourism Research Australia (2015) study (Table 1). Café and restaurant workers represented 22% of the sector indicating a slightly lower representation in this study while the accommodation sector represents 4.9% of the total which is very over-represented in this study and may explain the larger businesses covered in this study. However, the Tourism Research Australia (2015) is very wide ranging with 48.5% of businesses in the other retail category and so one might expect a broad over-representation in this sector versus the wider visitor economy which is represented in the 2015 data.

Table 1 about here

To test the specific hypotheses set out above, a questionnaire survey was developed using a number of standardized measures to examine the structural relationships between the study variables (Figure 1).

*Perceived organisational support* was measured using the seven item Positive Organisational Support scale from Eisenberger et al. (1990).

Scale items included: 'Help is available from my organisation when I have a problem' and 'My organisation really cares about my wellbeing'.

This scale had good internal reliability ( $\alpha = 0.92$ ).

*High performance work systems* was measured using the 27-item scale developed by Sun et al. (2007). After removing four cross-loading items, exploratory factor analysis resulted in two factors ( $KMO = .942$ , 74.3 percent with eigenvalues greater than 1.0). We subsequently undertook a

confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and only one factor comprising 20 items, was retained (CMIN/DF=1.652, CFI=.99, TLI=.98, RMSEA=.045).

Sample items include 'The job description for a position accurately describes all of the duties performed by individual employees' and 'There are formal training programs to teach new hires the skills they need to perform their job'. This scale has an internal reliability coefficient of .97.

*Workplace bullying* was assessed using the 22-item revised version of the Negative Acts Questionnaire (NAQ-R) constructed by Einarsen and his associates (see Hauge et al. 2007). EFA resulted in a uni-dimensional factor (KMO=.970, 73.7 percent with eigenvalues greater than 1.0,), which was contradictory to findings in the existing literature. Sample items included "Being humiliated or ridiculed in connection with your work"; "being shouted at or being the target of spontaneous anger". The scale met the minimum cut-offs for CFA (CMIN/df=1.727, CFI=.99, TLI=.99, RMSEA=.047, SRMR=.014; alpha = .98).

*Job satisfaction* was measured using three items from Warr et al. (1979). Two items were retained for further analysis after the CFA (alpha = .90). This scale has a good internal reliability (alpha = .90). The items were 'How do you feel about your job as a whole' and 'How would you rank your experiences at work'.

Intention to leave employment was measured with three items from Meyer et al. (1993) and the scale met the minimum cut-off for goodness of fit (alpha = .91). Sample item includes 'I frequently think about leaving my current employer'.

### 3. Results

In order to test our hypothetical model, we conducted descriptive statistics using IBM SPSS v. 22. The path model was tested utilising IBM AMOS v. 22. Mediation analyses were conducted with 10,000 bootstrap samples using the PROCESS macro by Hayes (2013). Prior to conducting the path analysis, we analysed the measurement model to determine the goodness of fit. We subsequently computed a second order latent construct in order to test the hypothesised paths in the structural model. Descriptive statistics and intercorrelations were reported in Table 2. Some 20.6% of respondents reported experiencing bullying behaviours at least weekly, in line with other studies (see Einarsen et al., 2011), with 'being given tasks with unreasonable deadlines', 'repeated reminders of errors and mistakes' and 'pressure not to claim something you are entitled to' being the mostly commonly acts experienced at least weekly. Age was found to have a positive correlation with tenure and shift work. Age was also found to be negatively correlated with workplace bullying. Firm size was found to be positively associated with workplace bullying and intention to quit, reflecting previous findings from other sectors (e.g. Einarsen et al. 2011), with more bullying and greater employee turnover generally reported in larger organisations. Tenure did not have any association with the variables in the model. Interestingly, shift workers reported a higher level of organisational support, lower level of workplace bullying and a lower level of intention to quit. HPWS was found to be positively associated with Job satisfaction and workplace bullying, but was not significantly associated with intention to quit. POS was related to greater job satisfaction, while workplace bullying reduced satisfaction and increased intention to quit, in-line with previous studies.

Table 2 about here

Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) analysis of the five factor measurement model showed that the data had a good fit (CMIN/DF 1.624, CFI .965, TLI .960, RMSEA .044, SRMR .051). We then followed Anderson and Gerbing (1988) to create a second order latent model for each of the constructs in order to test the structural model.

The result of the path analysis showed that the data fitted the model well (CMIN/DF 1.215, CFI .999, TLI .996, RMSEA .026, SRMR .013). Table 3 shows the results of the direct paths. Four hypotheses (namely, 1a, 1b, 2b, and 3) were not supported, with hypothesis 3 being significant in the opposite direction to that predicted. The remaining direct paths were supported. Mediation analyses showed that two of the four mediation hypotheses were supported. Hypothesis 6 was supported as we found workplace bullying to have a negative and full mediation of the relationship from HPWS to job satisfaction ( $b = -.10$ ,  $se = .03$ , 95% CI [LL  $-.16$ , UL  $-.05$ ]). Hypothesis 8 was supported as workplace bullying provided a positive and full mediation of the relationship from HPWS to intention to quit ( $b = .10$ ,  $se = .03$ , 95% CI [LL  $.05$ , UL  $.17$ ]).

Insert Table 3 about here

#### 4. Discussion

This study contributes to the limited literature concerned with the role of high performance HR practices in the visitor economy (Dhar 2015), as well as bringing interdisciplinary knowledge of these constructs from the organisational behaviour literature. Turning to our key findings, our hypotheses that the impacts of HPWS and POS on sector staff satisfaction and leave intentions would be influenced by perceptions of exposure to workplace bullying were partially supported. Workplace bullying was found to fully and negatively mediate the relationship between HPWS and our two outcome variables. This further supports the view that workers must perceive that the organisation is concerned for their wellbeing through the management of psychosocial risks if desirable organisational outcomes are going to be realised through the application of organisational-level efforts to drive performance.

POS appears to have a beneficial impact on the desirable organisational outcome of job satisfaction. This finding is in line with previous studies that link POS with desirable organisational outcomes in the general HRM literature (Riggle, Edmondson and Hansen 2009) and within the visitor economy (Cho, Johanson and Guchait 2009; Guchait, Cho and Meurs 2015). However, while previous studies have shown POS to positively influence intention to stay in the visitor economy (Cho, Johanson and Guchait 2009; Djurkovic, McCormack and Casimir 2008), our study found a negative but non-significant association between POS and intention to quit the organisation.

In our model, POS reduced the perceived experience of workplace bullying, consistent with previous research undertaken in other industry sectors. Conversely, our second organisational-level variable, HPWS, representing the strategic HRM approach, was found to be related to an increased level of exposure to bullying – a reverse of the relationship we predicted. While, HPWS are usually examined as a positive aspect of organisational effectiveness, especially in relation to their impact on employee and organisational performance outcomes (e.g. Jiang et al. 2012; Huselid 1995; Ramsay, Scholarios, and Harley 2000; Dhar 2015), our study suggests they can also have a dark side – having a negative consequence on employee attitudes. In support of this contention, we note that our study found that HPWS were not only associated with increased bullying, but also to have a non-significant relationship with both job satisfaction and intention to leave, rather than enhancing these outcomes as expected. One approach to interpreting these unexpected findings is through the lens of Labour Process Theory (LPT). Adopting a LPT perspective, bullying is often perceived as a form of managerial control of labour (Beale and Hoel 2011; Hoel and Beale 2006), and an efficient way to get work done or to manage performance (Salin, 2003). HPWS may lead to work intensification as it is a managerial strategy to gain increased work effort (e.g., Harley 2002; Ramsey et al. 2002). While such approaches may drive greater performance, they may not positively enhance the working environment and may in fact result in negative outcomes for employees (Macky & Boxall 2008). Further support for this view, is that work intensification associated with HPWS practices can lead to stress, burnout (Macky & Boxall 2008), known to be associated with workplace bullying (Einarsen et al., 2011). Our hypotheses that workplace bullying leads to negative outcomes for the organisation in terms of employee satisfaction and retention were supported; bullying increased turnover intention and reduced job

satisfaction. The finding that bullying increases employee turnover intentions is in-line with much extant research in the bullying field, although such studies are rare in the visitor economy sectors where frontline staff are experience-makers (Bentley et al. 2012), despite the importance of retention to the sector.

#### ***4.1 Implications for management***

The study demonstrated that bullying is associated with unwanted outcomes for organisations, as well as individuals, and appears to weaken or even reverse the impact of organisational efforts to enhance worker satisfaction and employees' leave intentions, indicating a clear need for managers to manage the risk of exposure to psychosocial risks such as bullying for employees in the visitor economy. It is interesting to note Roper and Menten's (2017) finding that in British Columbia, their study found that bullying and harassment were being treated as a workplace hazard making its management a more focused legal obligation.

Supporting this contention, there is evidence from other sectors that exiting the organisation is the most common strategy for escaping the damaging impacts of bullying (D'Cruz and Noronha 2010; Djurkovic, McCormack and Casimir 2008). These findings have clear implications for the management of workers in the visitor economy in a sector that already has high levels of staff turnover. Where the retention of staff is a human resource priority, workplace bullying must be managed and controlled. Much of the management is associated with establishing what

is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour as explained by Roper and Menten (2017). Their study also posits that there are specific risk factors that make this a 'unique' work environment (e.g. it is a sexualised sector, often where alcohol is involved, there are a large proportion of female employees and minority groups as well its perception as a subservient form of work). These risk factors are compounded as Roper and Menten (2017) rightly identify – that the 'customer is always right' and so pleasing the guest remains the primary driver rather than staff wellbeing. The consequence is that claims for bullying and harassment that are permitted can lead to direct litigation costs as well indirect costs of increased staff turnover, absenteeism, low morale and reputational damage (Roper and Menten 2017). In line with its origins in psychological research, behavioural interventions aimed at the characteristics of individual targets or perpetrators of bullying and their relationship are often employed. What is clear from this study and the extant research, however, is that bullying is much more than a simple interpersonal phenomenon (Einarsen et al. 2011). In line with the work-environment hypothesis (Fox and Cowan 2015; Leymann 1996), this paper argues that attempts to understand and address workplace bullying as a purely interpersonal problem are unlikely to be effective, as organisational and work environment factors are the most important influences on such behaviours (Notelaers et al. 2010; Skogstad et al. 2011; Zapf et al. 2003). Genuine organisational commitment from management to the creation of a healthy work environment and positive organisational support is essential to manage bullying in the visitor economy, especially where visitor facing staff are employed. Furthermore, effective education and policies, and attentiveness to people and behaviour are crucial towards creating a positive, bullying-free culture

(Bentley et al., 2012; Yamada, 2008). Alongside this, a clear policy on workplace bullying is also required and must be communicated effectively as a demonstration of organisational commitment (Djurkovic, McCormack, and Casimir 2006; Rayner and Lewis 2011).

This study has added to the body of work that has found HRM practices designed to enhance work performance, including HPWS, to result in increased exposure to bullying behaviours. HPWS may act to drive higher levels of work intensification and pressure, leading to stress, burnout and other negative psychosocial consequences (Macky and Boxall 2008). As these pressures are known to be associated with workplace bullying and other negative outcomes for employees, care must be taken to ensure such systems are effectively implemented and their impacts beyond performance measured to ensure stress and other psychosocial concerns do not eventuate. From a SET view, the provision of organisational support is a critical first step in achieving such goals.

## **5. Conclusions**

This study examined the role of workplace bullying in the relationship between two organisational approaches to support employee performance, HPWS and perceived organisational support, and employee intention to quit. The unexpected finding that HPWS were positively related to bullying and employee intention to leave their employment is the study's primary contribution, and more research is needed to see if these relationships are observed in other settings within the visitor economy and under what conditions. In this paper we have sought to

explain these relationships through application of labour process theory, and this warrants further exploration, while other theoretical explanations should also be explored.

Future research might usefully examine these issues through the application of qualitative methods, such as interviews and focus groups with sector workers and management, in order to gain a deeper understanding and build theory around the reasons why HPWS might have a negative influence on bullying and worker satisfaction and employee leave intentions. This research should explore the mechanisms by which strategic HR approaches create conditions that promote bullying, or at least the perception of exposure to bullying behaviours and ill-treatment. This is particularly important as such strategic approaches to HRM are increasingly applied in order to achieve sector performance. Further, the role factors such as gender, job security, part-time and seasonal work, and shift work systems play in determining the effectiveness of HPWS approaches needs research attention. Quantitative research, for example, might usefully consider whether aspects of the employment relationship or shift work moderate the relationship between HPWS and workplace bullying. Indeed, high performance HR practices may be less effective, act in different ways, or have unintended outcomes in an industry characterised by job insecurity, seasonal and shift work, compared to other sectors with more standard employment arrangements. Moreover, efforts to provide organisational support to workers, that could reduce the impact of negative work behaviours such as bullying, may also be more difficult to effectively apply to seasonal, part-time and shift workers. This too should be explored.

A limitation of this study is that it was cross-sectional in nature. The data were collected from one point in time, which might be influenced by common method bias. We have, however, undertaken a number of procedural and post-hoc statistical checks to ensure common method variance was not of major concern. Moreover, the response rate of 23%, while reflecting the difficulties in recruiting participants for research that deals with sensitive issues such as bullying, should be noted as a study limitation and future research with larger samples and higher response rates should be undertaken to test the relationships found in the present study. Future research would also benefit from longitudinal studies that map changes in organisational and leader support, HPWS practices, bullying and desirable individual and organisational outcomes over the longer term. While the present study was restricted to a cross-sectional study design through financial and practical considerations, it does provide a useful first examination of the conditions under which worker satisfaction and leave intentions might be positively influenced within the visitor economy, while highlighting the potential for these efforts to be undermined where a poor sector work environment is present.

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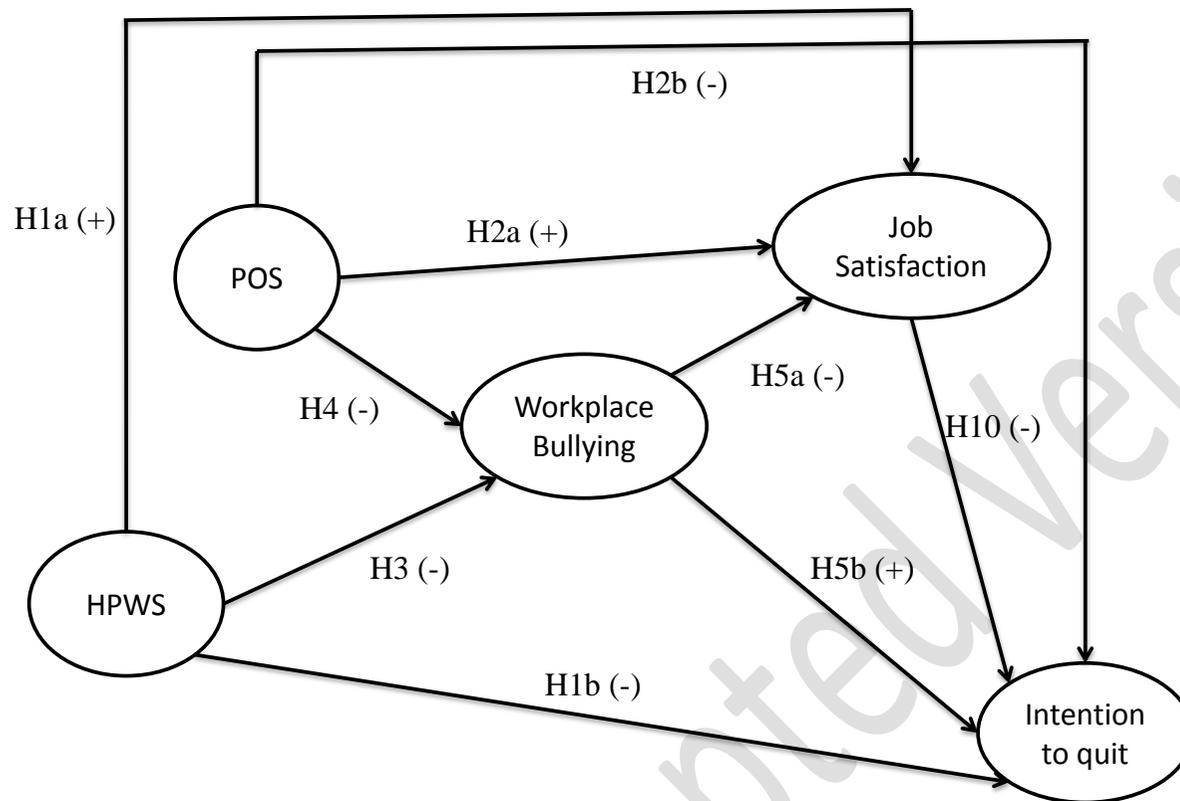
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**Figure 1. Proposed research model**

Accepted Version



H6 to H9 Mediation hypotheses

**Table 1: Dimensions of workplace-related bullying**

---

Changing the victim's work tasks in a negative way or making their tasks hard to perform

---

Socially isolating an individual or boycotting them

---

Insulting remarks and personal attacks (including the individual's private life)

---

Verbal threats where the individual is humiliated in public

---

Spreading rumours regarding the victim

---

Cyber-bullying

---

Source: Developed from Ram (2015)

**Table 2: Characteristics of the Australian tourism and hospitality sector**

- According to Tourism Research Australia (2015) the sector comprises 267,000 businesses comprising 13% of the total 2.1. million businesses in Australia in 2013
- 80% of the total sector-related businesses are in New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland reflecting the concentration of the sector within these regional economies
- 95% of the businesses are micro/small businesses accounting for 32% of turnover
- 5% of businesses contribute 68% of turnover

For the purposes of the survey, the employment structure of the sector comprises:

114,812 businesses (43%) do not employ any staff or are self-employed

86,146 businesses (32%) employ 1-4 employees

51,640 businesses (14%) employ 5-19 employees

13,376 businesses (5%) employ 20-199 employees

675 businesses (0.3%) employ 200 or more employees

- Tourism spending in Australia in tourism businesses is worth AU\$110 billion (2013)

Source: Tourism Research Australia (2015)

Accepted Version

**Table 3. Descriptive statistics and Intercorrelations**

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Type of establishment	2.89	1.91	1.00					
2. Gender	1.56	0.50	-.03	1.00				
3. Age	2.88	1.29	.07	-.11	1.00			
4. Firm size	2.39	1.26	-.11*	-.13*	.01	1.00		
5. Tenure	2.48	1.05	-.06	.04	.28***	.23***	1.00	
6. Work in shift	1.47	0.50	.05	.08	.20***	-.05	.04	1.00
7. POS	4.34	1.36	-.09	-.08	.04	-.08	-.02	.11*
8. HPWS	4.13	1.19	.01	-.15**	-.05	.09	.02	-.01
9. Workplace bullying	2.15	1.07	.05	-.14*	-.12*	.16**	.01	-.22***
10. Job satisfaction	4.75	1.44	-.04	.05	.09	-.03	.05	.14*
11. Intention to quit	3.17	1.11	-.03	-.03	-.18**	.11*	-.02	-.24***

Note: \*p<. 05; \*\*p<.01; \*\*\*p<.001

Accepted Version

**Table 3. Descriptive statistics and Intercorrelations (continued)**

	7	8	9	10	11
1. Type of establishment					
2. Gender					
3. Age					
4. Firm size					
5. Tenure					
6. Work in shift					
7. POS	1.00				
8. HPWS	.68***	1.00			
9. Workplace bullying	.02	.29***	1.00		
10. Job satisfaction	.71***	.50***	-.11*	1.00	
11. Intention to quit	-.10	.02	.35***	-.19**	1.00

Note: \*p<. 05; \*\*p<.01; \*\*\*p<.001

Accepted Version

**Table 4. Results of Path Analysis**

Hypotheses	Coefficients	p-value
H1a. HPWS → Job satisfaction		n.s.
H1b. HPWS → Intention to quit		n.s.
H2a. POS → Job satisfaction	.71	***
H2b. POS → Intention to quit		n.s.
H3. HPWS → Workplace bullying	.51	***
H4. POS → Workplace bullying	-.33	***
H5a. Workplace bullying → Job satisfaction	-.13	**
H5b. Workplace bullying → Intention to quit	.33	***
H10. Job satisfaction → Intention to quit	-.15	**

Note:

\*\* p<.01

\*\*\*p<.001

Accepted Version