



Workplace Aggression Profiles and Diverse Emotional Responses: Evidence from Pakistan

Sobia Nasir¹ · Ozge Can²

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Abstract

Because of the lack of direct measurements, our understanding of different forms of aggression in organizations is still very limited. As such, there has been increasing calls for going beyond the existing theoretical presumptions and indirect measurements which have been dominating the research. Based on the literature on workplace aggression as well as affective events theory and stressor-emotion model, we intend to identify the unique aggression profiles and to reveal what types of emotional responses they produce for the target employees. We collected data on 249 aggression incidents in Pakistan's higher education sector through survey. The results of the cluster analysis suggest five distinct types of workplace aggression, which are separated by the particular aggression behaviors involved (e.g. direct-indirect, verbal-physical aggression), perceived strength, blame attribution, third party presence, and identity of the offender. Further statistical analysis indicates that target employees give different emotional responses (anger, sadness, embarrassment, disappointment, feeling insulted) to these diverse mistreatments. As a key contribution, this study makes it clearer that the sources, organizational processes and underlying social dynamics might vary a lot across different aggression experiences depending on what the topic is, who are involved, and how the targets perceive the situation. Second, it presents an initial test regarding how instead of a standard emotional reaction, diverse negative emotional responses accompany different aggression profiles.

Keywords Workplace aggression · Emotions · Affective events theory · Cluster analysis · Higher education · Pakistan

Workplace aggression (WA) has become an essential phenomenon as evidenced in recent review articles (e.g. Bowling & Hershcovis, 2017; Mento et al., 2020). A common definition describes it as “any behavior initiated by employees that is intended to harm another

✉ Ozge Can
ozge.can@yasar.edu.tr

Sobia Nasir
sobianasir5@gmail.com

¹ Department of Business Administration, Superior University, Lahore, Pakistan

² Department of Business Administration, Yasar University, Universite Cad. No.37-39, Bornova, Izmir, Turkey

individual in their organization or the organization itself and that the target is motivated to avoid; differentiated from workplace violence in its emphasis on psychological aggression” (Schat & Kelloway, 2005, p.191). The inclination of researchers towards understanding aggression in workplace has increased, as enormous problems for both the employees and the organization have become widely recognized (Aquino & Thau, 2009). WA can damage employees’ morale, health, and productive behavior (Mento et al., 2020; Herschovis and Barling, 2010). Additionally, these acts reduce organizational investment and production, and increase employee turnover (Dunlop & Lee, 2004). Hence, to increase the value of workplace and the well-being of employees, it is important to recognize and control the growing level of aggression at workplace.

Different constructs have been created carrying different labels, definitions, and descriptions of WA including social undermining, interpersonal conflict, bullying, abusive supervision, and incivility (e.g. Tepper, 2000; Nielsen & Einarsen, 2012; Meier & Cho, 2019; Andersson & Pearson, 1999). Although important contributions were derived from these conceptualizations in the literature, there has also been an increasing concern about emergence of a high number of overlapping constructs examining the same or similar underlying relationships (Hershcovis, 2011).

Even though they are theoretically valuable, the disparities between these constructs largely remain in the assumptions of their definitions and conceptualizations, rather than manifestation in their measurement. In fact, it was empirically shown by Hershcovis (2011) that there is high overlap between these constructs but no strong difference with respect to predicting most of the key employee outcomes, which brings more confusion to the field instead of yielding new insights. In many occasions, similar items are included in different measures. While the definitions of constructs vary in some characteristics, they overlap on others.

Closely linked to the critique above, it is increasingly acknowledged that several directly observable dimensions of WA behavior have been ignored and not properly examined in the literature. These dimensions include victim’s perception of intent or blame attributions, perceived severity, frequency, duration, explicitness of the aggression behavior, existence of a witness and the identity of the perpetrator (Hershcovis, 2011; Hershcovis & Reich, 2013; Neuman & Baron, 2005). Although a number of models have been suggested to address such content elements (e.g. Bowling & Beehr, 2006; Hershcovis, 2011), until today no study has explored them in a comprehensive manner or empirically test their impact regarding how and when aggression leads to an array of diverse responses and outcomes. In other words, we have limited knowledge with respect to what particular types of aggression can emerge based the aforementioned dimensions, and how these diverse aggression experiences trigger different affective response mechanisms in employees.

Indeed, WA has an impact similar to organizational stressors, leading to different types of immediate reactions, a significant one being emotions (Dewall et al., 2011; Sakurai & Jex, 2012). Emotions simply refer to a “complex set of interrelated sub-events concerned with a specific object, such as a person, an event, or a thing, whether past, present, future, real, or imagined” (Russell & Barrett, 1999, p. 806). Emotions play an essential role to understand the aggression processes at workplace, as they have the potential to result in severe influences on both organization and employees.

Yet, an important but usually overlooked issue is, emotional responses to the received aggression depend on the conditions of the incident and the underlying relationships. For example, a supervisor can intentionally show aggression in order to attain goals, and subordinates can show sadness in response. Sometimes a colleague criticizes another and the focal employee might become angry with him/her. Until now, most researches investigating

the aggression-emotion connection have concentrated on the well documented role of anger and anxiety (Aquino et al., 2006; Weiss et al., 1999) whereas only a few studies have explored other affect-based responses (e.g., Izard et al., 2008). Despite recent efforts, there is still need for greater attention to distinct types of emotions such as hurt, shock, annoyance, frustration, disappointment, confusion, discouragement, and fear, which have not been properly discussed or examined in the WA literature. As an exception, Bowling & Hershcovis' in 2017 has investigated embarrassment as a self-conscious emotional response where the target evaluates the mistreatment through the lens of others and feels loss of "face". Even though diverse emotions establish separate critical paths linking the perception of the event to the negative behaviors, it is rather interesting how there has only been a few attempts to study alternative emotional responses and their links to different aggression situations.

To fill these gaps in the literature, this study lifts up two key research questions: 1) *How can workplace aggression be categorized based on the dimensions of perceived severity, perceived intention, perpetrator identity and witness presence in the aggression incident?* 2) *Do these aggression profiles significantly lead to different emotional responses?* Considering the above questions and drawing on recent theoretical discussions, we intend to identify the diverse WA profiles by conducting a cluster analysis and test whether these profiles lead to distinct emotional responses. In order to do that, we collected WA data from employees of 14 Pakistani universities. Our study will be the first to provide a comprehensive view of diverse WA profiles established on all aforementioned dimensions. Moreover, it will explain whether dissimilar emotional reactions are triggered by different aggression profiles.

The outline of the paper is as follows: The subsequent part will present the existing theoretical and empirical findings in the literature related to our research questions. Afterwards, we will lay out our hypotheses and will describe the methodological issues of empirical setting, sample, data collection and analysis procedure. While the following section will present the analysis results, the last part will provide a brief discussion of these findings.

Theoretical Background

Definition of Workplace Aggression

Workplace aggression refers to "any negative act, which may be committed towards an individual within the workplace, or the workplace itself, in ways the target is motivated to avoid" (Hershcovis et al., 2007, p. 271). Its early depiction originates from the typology proposed by Buss (1961), where he claims that WA can be understood through three basic dichotomies: physical versus verbal, passive versus active, and indirect versus direct. Physical aggression is easily recognized as in the examples of bodily harm and abuse, slamming doors, throwing objects, punching someone, and etc. (Aquino & Thau, 2009). Conversely, verbal aggression refers to lower level and covertly inflicted harm through words such as yelling, shouting, and negative gossips. While active aggression refers to actions that are observed to be proactive such as hostile and extreme levels of aggression, passive acts of aggression include actions that are instrumental (Neuman & Baron, 2005). Indirect aggression can be explained as a coworker's utilization of other people and social networks (indirect modes) in order to harm another employee, such as gossiping, making a prank, and spreading rumors (Warren et al., 2011). Finally, direct aggression describes a face-to-face

confrontation between the victim and perpetrator, delivering harm in a direct mode such as pushing, and hitting (Neuman & Baron, 1998).

These earlier depictions eventually opened the way for more advanced conceptualizations and systematic understandings of the phenomenon (e.g., Neuman & Baron, 1998; Baron et al., 1999). This interest is very much linked with the fact that aggression has become a part of organizational life, initiated not only by supervisors or managers who are positioned at the higher levels of hierarchy but all employees as well as customers (Stutzenberger & Fisher, 2014). An estimate indicates that about 50 to 75% of all employees involve in at least one form of aggression at workplace (Bennett & Robinson, 2000). A more recent research indicates that 90% of employees confess their confrontation with some type of aggression at work (Marasi et al., 2018). In short, aggression remains to be a chronic challenge for organizations, which can lead to higher employee turnover and withdrawal behavior and lower performance besides other essential consequences.

Conceptualization and Major Types of Workplace Aggression

Workplace aggression, as an inclusive term, represents multiple constructs from the perspective of target including social undermining, abusive supervision, bullying, mobbing, victimization, emotional abuse, interpersonal conflict, and workplace incivility (e.g. Duffy et al., 2002; Tepper, 2000; Nielsen & Einarsen, 2012; Andersson & Pearson, 1999). Even though these constructs are conceptually differentiated, scholars are increasingly pointing to an overlap among them (Fox et al., 2001).

Across all sorts of aggression, an important distinction should also be made: All violent actions are aggressive while not all types of aggression act are intensive or harmful as in violence (Schat & Kelloway, 2005). Barling et al. (2009) confirmed this claim and indicated that aggression and violence at workplace are distinct concepts. While workplace violence is associated with physical harm such as threat of physical activities, WA is strongly connected with psychological harm perpetrated on the person such as psychological and verbal mistreatment (Greenberg & Barling, 1999). As a summary, one can claim that WA entails all deliberate acts of harm towards an employee within an organization through both psychological and physical means.

As an alternative conceptualization, Robinson and Bennett (1995) presented a classification of WA on the root of dual appearances; *target* (organizational versus interpersonal) and *severity* (high versus low). Interpersonal aggression describes the aggressive acts towards a particular employee (gossip, or yelling), while organizational aggression refers to aggression with an aim of damaging the organization (i.e., taking long breaks, damaging official equipment). Some other scholars also make a distinction between high-intensity (e.g. violence), and low-intensity (e.g. psychological) forms of aggression. Still, others examine only psychological forms of it (e.g., Aquino et al., 2001).

As mentioned before, scholars have theorized and introduced numerous types of WA such as workplace harassment, mobbing, petty tyranny, emotional abuse, identity threat, and victimization (Aquino & Thau, 2009). Among all, the most established and frequently used constructs of WA are bullying, abusive supervision, incivility, social undermining, and interpersonal conflict (Bowling & Hershcovis, 2017), so they deserve special attention.

Bullying describes the situations where the victim repeatedly goes through a set of aggressive actions over a period, often including physical contact (Einarsen et al., 2011). According to the literature, bullying is a highly frequent behavior in organizations, which is reciprocal in nature (Cascardo, 2011). The noticeable reasons of bullying are given as

duplication, high intensity incidences, long-term conflicts, power disparity, and attributed intent (Einarsen et al., 2011).

On the other hand, abusive supervision refers to both direct and indirect aggressive acts from supervisor, excluding physical harm (Tepper, 2000). Abusive supervision is argued to be more prominent in cultures with high power distance where employees usually feel an unequal distribution of authority. Abusive supervision brings a significant price to an organization, including the costs of higher turnover, growing health issues, and less work efforts (ibid.). It is manifested in number of ways including teasing behavior, open and disproportionate criticism, hiding essential information, going back on promises, silent treatment and speaking harsh words by the supervisor (Zellars et al., 2002).

One of the most prominent forms of WA, drawing both scholars' and practitioners' interest, is incivility (i.e., Bowling & Beehr, 2006; Lim et al., 2008). Workplace incivility usually refers to less intense adverse behaviors including being rude, impolite, or speaking to a colleague in a condescending manner, discourteous, lack of regard, without any physical act (Lim et al., 2008). In simple words, incivility is a type of disruptive behavior though the involvement in impolite behavior, which may not necessarily be harmful. As a result, the nature of workplace incivility is not always easy to detect.

As another key WA form, social undermining usually refers to the actions intended to destroy an individual's interpersonal relationship, reputation and work associated achievements (Duffy et al., 2002). It is a broader construct that considers theoretically different yet operationally similar type of aggression (Hershcovis, 2011). It does not happen suddenly and even is not easily noticeable (Duffy et al., 2012).

Finally, interpersonal conflict displays the situations where a person or group interfere with other persons' effort to attain success. (Barki & Hartwick, 2004). The strength of aggression rises from low to high according to the conflict such as diffusion of rumors to physical assault. It is argued that three distinct activities can confirm the prevalence of interpersonal conflict: disagreement, negative feelings, and intervention (ibid.). Although a wide variety of interpersonal conflicts are noticeable across and within organizations, most of these conflicts include petty tyranny and gossip, but no physical attacks (Schat & Kelloway, 2005). Interpersonal conflict at work entails mostly covert behaviors that are indirect and less noticeable than direct confrontations (Spector & Fox, 2002).

Workplace Aggression Event Attributes

Taking the diversity of WA forms as depicted above, the number of studies discussing specific characteristics of WA incidents have greatly increased (i.e., Bowling & Hershcovis, 2017; Hershcovis & Reich, 2013). Perhaps as the most prominent attribute, studies show that several diverse acts can be involved in an aggression event, whether they are verbal or physical, direct or indirect, covert or overt (Glomb, 2002; Kaukiainen et al., 2001; Escartín et al., 2009). Indeed, an aggression event can include different behaviors "ranging from physical assault to threats of assault and psychological aggression", all of which are included in the realm of WA (Barling et al., 2009, p.673). In existing measurements, they are typically differentiated based on whether a given act includes physical aggression, verbal aggression, social exclusion, rudeness, undermining, or interpersonal conflict (Glomb, 2002; Nixon et al., 2021).

As another yet related attribute, perceived severity refers to the strength of harm the target person perceives in the aggression event (Hershcovis and Barling, 2010). Sometimes the intensity of the behavior is very high and the target immediately recognizes it

as harmful (Schat & Kelloway, 2005). It is expected that higher intensity of WA will bring about more damage and undesirable outcomes (Nixon & Spector, 2015). Measuring the perceived intensity of a WA event is especially important to understand the difference between the actual and perceived strength of aggression (Bowling et al., 2020).

Perceived intention describes the victim's perception about the actual purpose of initiating the aggression, that is, whether the perpetrator intended to cause harm (Neuman & Baron, 2005; Nixon & Spector, 2015). Usually, the target attributes the blame of the aggression event on the opposite side (Aquino et al., 2001). However, sometimes the aggressive behavior is not apparently visible by anyone; rather, it is implicit like in incivility (Sakurai & Jex, 2012), thus, it appears less intentional in the eyes of the target. If a victim feels a clear intention to harm on the part of the offender, then his/her chances of involving in some kind of retaliation is higher (Aquino et al., 2001).

Perceived visibility refers to the degree with which the target and others are aware of the aggression by the perpetrator (Baron et al., 1999; Nixon & Spector, 2015). In overt or openly observable behaviors, the aggressive behavior is easily noticeable by the victim and others. In contrast, the nature of the behavior can also be covert and might not be easily understandable for the victim (Verona et al., 2007). The confirmation of the perceived visibility experienced by a target also depends on the particular form of aggression and the distinct behaviors involved (Einarsen et al., 2011).

As another essential attribute, there is a growing interest on the nature of third-party involvement and their reactions to workplace offenses. Witnesses are individuals who directly observe the acts of aggression directed from one part to another in the workplace (Priesemuth et al., 2017). Along with possible organizational insiders, the witness can be an outsider (customers, delivery persons, friend and family members) as well. If the witness is from the organization, they usually know that perpetrator, have the ability to understand the situation in depth, and feel higher pressure to act. Typically, peers witness WA events more frequently than managers and they are more likely to report the incidence when it is a more severe type of WA (Bowling et al., 2020). Witnesses mostly perceive the incidence from the perspective of victim rather than perpetrator and develop positive feelings for the victim (Hershcovis et al., 2012). Despite this, it is argued that they usually do not have the ability to interfere or to help the victim (Latané & Darley, 1970). Yet in a recent study, Hershcovis and Bhatnagar (2017) found that witnesses of WA events engage in supportive behaviors towards victims. They are also found to initiate negative treatments and retaliation intentions toward the perpetrator.

Aggression events also differ immensely with respect to the perpetrator's identity. Up until today, a large number of studies have shown that the source of aggression (e.g. supervisor, coworkers, subordinates, customers) significantly influences its perception by the victim and the magnitude of its outcomes (Caillier, 2021; Chang & Lyons, 2012; Hershcovis et al., 2012; Hershcovis & Barling, 2010). The formal position power and referent power of the initiator, and the task interdependence relationship between the perpetrator and the target were found particularly meaningful (Chang & Lyons, 2012; Hershcovis et al., 2012). Howard et al. (2016) also found that perpetrator type determines how target employees address and react to incidents of aggression.

Based on the above conceptualizations and empirical evidence in the literature, it can be argued that any aggression incident at work should be assessed based on the key following attributes: particular behaviors involved, perceived severity, perceived intent (blame attribution), perceived visibility, identity of the perpetrator, and witness presence. These attributes as well as the conceptual and empirical literature behind them are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1 Selected literature on WA event attributes

Attribute	Studies
Types of aggression behaviours involved	Glomb (2002); Kaukiainen et al. (2001); Escartín et al. (2009); Hershcovis (2011); Nixon et al. (2021)
Identity of the perpetrator	Hershcovis and Barling (2010); Hershcovis et al. (2012); Chang and Lyons (2012); Nixon and Spector (2015); Howard et al. (2016); Caillier (2021)
Perceived severity	Robinson and Bennett (1995); Hershcovis (2011); Escartín et al. (2009); Nixon and Spector (2015); Bowling et al. (2020); Nixon et al. (2021)
Perceived intention (blame attribution)	Aquino et al. (2001); Hershcovis (2011); Nixon and Spector (2015); Nixon et al. (2021)
Perceived visibility	Baron et al. (1999); Verona et al. (2007); Nixon and Spector (2015)
Witness (bystander) presence	Hershcovis et al. (2012); Hershcovis and Bhatnagar (2017); Priesemuth et al. (2017); Bowling et al. (2020)

Discrete Emotions

Despite the growing scholarly interest in recent years, the extent of studies describing different employee emotions is still limited. In their very nature, emotions refer to intense, short-time feelings or influence conditions that are connected to a specific reason and tend to disturb normal functioning (Frijda, 1993). Emotions also play an essential role in an employee's work life and thus, they are considered to be critical determinants of several employee behaviors (Fisher & Ashkanasy, 2000; Kabat-Farr et al., 2018; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Emotions of an employee depends on various factors including job activities, social ties with other colleagues, work deadlines and influence of social environment of a firm (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). The manifestation of employees' emotions in different situations not only reflect their psychological situation and inner beliefs about a particular situation, but also reflect their intensities.

Sometimes emotions can be confused with some other phenomena, therefore theoretical distinctions have been made. One of the former definitions differentiate between mood and emotion (i.e., Frijda, 1993). Another concept separate from emotion is emotion-laden. Although the construct of emotion-laden includes justice, reliance, and loyalty connected to the emotion, they are not emotions themselves. Other constructs that are not emotions includes deviance, strain, satisfaction, and commitment. In short, several studies have focused on differentiating emotions from similar constructs in both theory and measurement.

The sensitive confrontations during aggressive situations at workplace lead the way to negative emotions as response to that situation (Gendron & Barrett, 2009). Negative emotions can be defined as a set of disconnected and complex feelings of an employee including anger, anxiety, fear, disgust, hostility and sadness. These emotions imitate an employee's tendency to confront the undesirable psychological experiences (Barling et al., 2009). Negative emotions can also be very different from one another. For instance, both being negative types of emotions, anxiety and fear workout in very diverse ways. While anger may make employees behave more recklessly, fear may initiative them to show withdrawal from job related tasks.

Workplace aggression literature reflects on only a few negative emotions (usually anger and anxiety) as key mediating factors (Sakurai & Jex, 2012). Yet, there has been a current change in attention toward diverse emotions and their unique role in social relations (Walle & Campos, 2012), especially those other than anger (Matta et al., 2014). However, empirical tests towards understanding how unique types of emotions are associated with WA are still quite rare (Fisher & Ashkanasy, 2000; Weiss et al., 1999).

There are two important theoretical views that can direct WA research in that manner. The first one is *affective event theory (AET)* which seeks to explain the causes, structure and results of sentimental incidences at work (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). According to this framework, particular events, especially negative interpersonal experiences in the workplace lead to an emergence of affective reactions of employees, which in turn, directly stimulates certain attitudes and behaviors. Theory also adds time as an important parameter in examining affect. Research on emotions indicate that emotions change by time and these patterns can be predictable to a great extent (Kempen et al., 2019). But most importantly, AET suggests that, as a psychological experience, affect has a structure in itself which is often multidimensional (Kabat-Farr et al., 2018). That is, people can feel distressed, angry, happy or comfortable and these reactions to workplace events have different behavioral implications (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996).

The second essential theoretical approach is the *stressor-emotion model* (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Spector & Fox, 2002). Emotional appraisals are regarded as key to understand the consequences of stressful events as “how a person construes an event, shapes the emotion and behavioral response” (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, p. 24). Accordingly, Spector and Fox (2002) developed a model in which they claim that people observe and assess events in the surrounding; when incidences are perceived as threats to well-being, they induce undesirable emotional responses. The emergent negative affect position (such as anger and anxiety) stimulate individuals towards certain behaviors to be able to cope with or decrease the impact of the experienced threats and challenges. Emotions are especially important as they usually constitute the first reaction to stressful situations (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). They trigger and lead to certain attitudes and behaviors or change existing ones (Fox et al., 2001). Research strongly implies the importance of studying emotions as a key mechanism of aggression at workplace.

Research Hypotheses

Distinct WA Profiles Based on Event Attributes

Supporting the theoretical position of conceptualizing WA as a complex experience involving multiple behaviors and specific contextual characteristics, it is acknowledged that these observable attributes of workplace aggression behavior have often been ignored and not properly examined (Hershcovis, 2011; Brees et al., 2013). A number of frameworks have been suggested to address such aggression elements (e.g. Schat & Kelloway, 2005; Douglas et al., 2008), yet no research has empirically investigated them in a comprehensive manner theoretically or empirically. Even though studies have identified aggression event characteristics (Hershcovis, 2011; Hershcovis & Reich, 2013; Neuman & Baron, 2005), they have not provided any discussion or empirical explanation about how these attributes exist in different combinations, letting into diverse WA profiles. Considering that a profile is a certain type or category of a phenomenon which is composed of a number of essential underlying factors, we argue that particular aggressive behaviors involved in the

situation, degrees of perceived severity and intent, witness presence and the identity of the perpetrator will lead to different aggression profiles. In the light of these recent calls, we argue that it is essential to pay careful and systematic attention to determine the influence of WA regarding how and when aggression attributes lead to an array of diverse responses and outcomes. Thus, we propose to directly identify and measure aforementioned attributes to discover the essence of WA. Since each attribute can get different degrees and values, a number of distinct aggression profiles will emerge rather than a single identical one. Hence, we argue that:

Hypothesis 1: Specific combinations of key event attributes (aggressive behaviors involved, perceived severity, perceived intent, identity of the perpetrator, witness presence) will create different WA profiles.

The Relationship between WA Profile & Emotional Responses

Up until today, prior studies have mostly reflected on anger and anxiety as key emotional reactions to workplace mistreatment (Aquino et al., 2006; Weiss et al., 1999). While few studies discuss fear and hurt (i.e., Glomb, 2002), only one study examined embarrassment (i.e., Bowling & Hershcovis, 2017) as a different mechanism alternative to typical negative emotions described in the literature. Hence, there is a need for investigating a wider range of emotions (e.g., embarrassment, feeling of hurt, fear), especially those other than anger (Matta et al., 2014). It should also be clarified how these alternative emotions are linked with particular WA profiles.

Based on these arguments, we suggest that emotional responses will differ, based on key characteristics of the WA incident. Such as, if a supervisor is getting aggressive with an employee in order to make him/her meet a deadline, perhaps the employee will feel sad and disappointment rather than anger, as the respect and trust between them is damaged. In another scenario, if an employee is insulted by the boss in the presence of respected coworkers, then he or she will probably feel more embarrassed rather than angry. Yet again, a hurtful email, the loss of a huge sale and so on, may make the employee sad and anxious. On the other hand, if an employee is receiving intentional and strong aggression from colleagues, he or she might become shocked, agitated or angry rather than being sad.

All in all, we propose that different WA profiles, as illustrated above, are likely to result in diverse emotional reactions from the target. Thus:

Hypothesis 2: Diverse WA profiles will lead to different emotional responses (sadness, anger, disappointment, embarrassment, feeling insulted) from the target of the aggression.

Methods

Empirical Setting

The hypotheses of our study are tested in higher education sector in Pakistan. Education sector is not only accountable for educating and training the future employees, but also, it is responsible to contribute to economic and social development through scientific research. As other fields, education sector also involves WA incidents. The presence of

WA in education sector can create negative impact not only on academicians, but students as well. Organizational climate of universities is often associated with great stress levels (Giorgi, 2012). Previous studies on higher education have linked WA with various health problems, including trauma, exhaustion, and attentiveness difficulties (e.g. Nielsen & Einarsen, 2012; Vartia, 2001). These studies claim that aggression has a strong potential to make academics disconnected from work, decrease intellectual effort and output, to hinder teaching capabilities, and to reduce students' learning quality. These findings highlight the need for assessing prominent types of aggression in higher education field.

Previous researches on WA have been accompanied mostly in Western cultural contexts such as the U.S., European countries, Canada, China, and Australia. However, only a rare number of researches have been conducted in other parts of the world especially in the context of developing countries (Ahmed & Waqas, 2017). As an effort to fill this missing link, the current study is conducted in Pakistan to understand the role of WA in educational institutions in a developing country. The findings can be beneficial for managers and decision makers in higher educational and can provide the necessary institutional changes to address aggression.

Data Collection

Data is collected from both administrative and academic staff, working in different universities which are located in three big provinces of Pakistan. Out of the fourteen universities, eight of them are private and six of them are public. These universities show considerable variance on age, number of students, field specialization, and size, and thus, high representativeness of the whole higher education system. We collected the data electronically as well as self-administered surveys. A questionnaire form was sent to the participants, asking about the details of a recent WA experience as well as about their emotional reactions to that event. A total of 330 surveys were sent and 249 received (75.5% response rate).

Measures

We adopted 21 items from Glomb's (2002) study to measure WA. Respondents rated whether they faced with any of the behaviors listed in the given aggression incident. They indicate the presence of each behavior by choosing "Yes" or "No". The example items include "making angry facial expressions or gestures", "yelling or rising voice", "physically assaulting", "insulting or making offensive remarks", "making threats", and "damaging one's property".

The questions assessing perceived intention, perceived severity and witness presence were developed based on the studies of Beattie and Griffin (2014), and Hershcovis (2011). Each of these attributes were measured as dichotomous variables. The respondents rated the severity of the aggression as "High" and "Low". Perceived intentionality of the behavior and witness presence were measured with the two options of "Yes" and "No". Supervisor, member of the top management and coworkers were given as the three potential initiators and the participants were asked to identify whether any of these were involved as perpetrators in the incident ("Yes" or "No"). As it is hard to explicitly address perceived visibility and this attribute (being a covert or overt act) is inherently embedded in the types of behaviors involved (Nixon & Spector, 2015), no separate question was asked to measure it.

To measure emotional responses of the target employees, 13 items were adopted from Job-Related Affective Well-Being Scale (JAWS) developed by Van Katwyk et al. (2000). Items include being upset, insulted, angry, depressed, disgusted, shocked, disappointed and embarrassed. Each of these emotional were measured as binary variables (1 = Yes, 0 = No). The respondents were simply asked to identify whether they felt any of the listed emotions because of the aggressive behaviors towards them in the particular incident.

Sample Characteristics

Descriptive statistics of the sample (see Table 2) show that most of the participants are male (63%). While almost one-third (31%) of the participants are below the age of 30, most respondents are in their thirties (51%). Larger portion of the sample is composed of academics (78%) while administrative workers roles make only 22% of the participants. In terms of education level, most of the participants have master's (56%) or doctoral (31%) degree, indicating a highly educated group in total. Regarding organizational tenure, the majority of the sample have an experience between 2 and 10 years (67%), while only 16% of them have less than 2-years' experience. Most participants are full-time members (76%), whereas only 24% of them work as part-time staff. Finally,

Table 2 Demographic profiles of respondents

Gender	Male	63%
	Female	37%
Age	Below 30	31%
	30–39	51%
	40–49	16%
	50- above	2%
Marital Status	Single	33%
	Married	67%
Education	University/college	6%
	Master	56%
	M.Phil.	7%
	Doctorate	31%
Organizational Tenure	Less than 2 years	16%
	2–5 years	34%
	6–10 years	33%
	11–15 years	12%
	16 or more years	5%
Institutional Position	Academic staff	78%
	Administrative staff	22%
Employment Status	Full-time	76%
	Part-time	24%
Institution Type	Public HEI	43%
	Private HEI	57%

N = 249

more than half of the respondents (57%) work in a private university as opposed to a public one.

Analysis Strategy

We utilized cluster analysis to establish the WA profiles and test our first hypothesis. Referring to “a group of multivariate technique whose primary purpose is to group the objects based on characteristics they possess” (Hair et al., 2014, p. 418), cluster analysis plays a vital role in two different ways: 1) reducing the data, and 2) testing hypothesis. The decisions that have to be made in a cluster analysis relates to the following key questions: 1) how to measure similarity, 2) how to form the clusters, and 3) how many clusters should be formed. The details of the clustering procedure and analysis results are given below.

Results

Clustering Procedure

The main objective of the empirical investigation in this study is to develop a classification that segments the aggression events into groups with similar attributes. By doing so, we will also be able to identify the underlying relationships between the key aggression attributes. As per the theoretical discussion in the literature, we identified a number of aggression event attributes as our clustering variables. Taking theoretical suggestions (e.g. Baron et al., 1999; Hershcovis, 2011) as well as the frequencies and correlations with respect to potential variables in the data, we included ten variables into the analysis, all of which come from the direct responses of the participants to our survey. To avoid a possible multicollinearity, only the variables which are assumed to be the most relevant and independent from each other were selected. They include; four specific aggression behaviors (avoiding or ignoring the person, making angry facial expressions or gestures, insulting or making offensive remarks, spreading rumors/ talking behind one’s back), how the target perceived the severity of the aggressive behaviors in the event, whether the target believes that the aggressive behavior was intentional or not, who the perpetrator to the aggression is (supervisor, member of top management, or coworkers), and whether there were any witnesses to the incident. All ten attributes were measured as dichotomous variables, where value (1) indicates the existence of the attribute and value (0) implies non-existence.

Following the suggestions in the WA literature (e.g. Baron et al., 1999; Glomb, 2002; Hershcovis, 2011; Hershcovis & Reich, 2013; Neuman & Baron, 2005), this study conceptualizes aggression as a broad construct to cover the whole construct space by considering various behaviors together. According to this approach, along with physical and more severe ones, aggression behaviors also include verbal and less intense ones such as yelling, spreading rumors, and withholding information from others. Providing the most comprehensive measurement of WA so far, Glomb (2002) found that spreading rumors/ talking behind one’s back is a WA behavior frequently reported by employees. Indeed, while some verbal aggression behaviors include a direct exploitation, annoyance and patronizing treatment, some are indirect in nature such as under the breath comments, intentionally misinterpreting instructions, spreading rumors, gossip, and talking behind

someone's back (Hills, 2018). Hence, based on both established conceptualizations of WA and empirical evidence, spreading rumors was included in the study as a separate and significant aggression behavior.

As the next step, outliers in the data were detected. Since cluster analysis is rather sensitive to outliers, it is important to identify those observations that are potentially different from the rest of the data. One way to do that is to compute pairwise proximities between observations. By using Euclidian distance, we developed a matrix of pairwise proximities and compared their distance to the typical response. Cases with large differences (dissimilarities) were considered as outliers and were removed from the dataset. As all of our variables were binary (0 to 1) and measured in the same way, we did not use any type of standardization.

As the number of clusters are not known, a hierarchical procedure was employed instead of a non-hierarchical (k-means) one. As hierarchical procedures cannot be properly applied to large sample sizes, we first took a random sample (30%) out of our total dataset. Hence, the final sample size used in the analysis became 249. Since all 249 observations were obtained through a completely random process and almost one-third of all observations were included in the analysis, representativeness of the entire data was largely ensured. After running a preliminary set of cluster solutions, we were able to determine the appropriate number of clusters that should be produced.

Although various similarity measures could be used in cluster analysis for binary variables, one of the most prominent measures is the squared Euclidean distance and we also used it in our similarity computations. As of the clustering algorithm, we used between-groups linkage, both as an appropriate and widely-adopted method for binary data. Once the analysis was run, the resulting agglomeration schedule is used to interpret the clustering process and to determine how many clusters should be generated. Agglomeration schedule output was also used to identify further outliers in the data, those joining to a cluster much later than the other observations. In order to avoid generating very small or insignificant clusters, we also applied a general rule of retaining only those clusters which represent at least 10% of the observations in the sample (minimum cluster size criteria). After the deletion of outliers and omitting small groups of cases behaving very differently from the rest of the data, the cluster analysis was re-performed on the remaining observations.

As of a stopping rule, percentage change in the agglomeration coefficient was used as the key measure of heterogeneity (reduction of similarity) across different cluster solutions whenever two clusters are combined. We also observed the dendrogram and icicle plot as graphical representations to identify the ultimate number clusters that should be produced from the analysis. In comparison to three-, four- and six-cluster solutions, five-cluster solution was found to be representing the data in a much better way.

Cluster Solutions

In the next step, we profiled the five-cluster explanation to settle that the variances between these clusters are indeed different and noteworthy. This determines whether our research hypothesis claiming that there are distinct WA profiles characterized by specific combinations of aggression attributes receives empirical support or not. In order to make this confirmation and define the unique characteristics of each of the five clusters, we first run descriptive statistics comprising the frequencies and means of the present study variables for each cluster. Then, we run one-way ANOVAs to inspect whether the five clusters are

Table 3 Number of observations in each cluster

	N
Cluster 1	66
Cluster 2	35
Cluster 3	50
Cluster 4	63
Cluster 5	35
Total	249

statistically different from one another across the ten clustering variables. Number of cases in each cluster are given in Table 3, and the descriptive statistics and ANOVA outcomes are shown in Table 4.

As it can be observed from the F-statistics and significance levels in Table 4, the outcomes depict that there are indeed substantial differences among the five clusters. The significant F-statistics offer a preliminary proof that the identified clusters are distinctive from one another. Descriptive statistics belonging to these clusters also let us observe how each of them are composed across variables, representing different WA profiles.

Profiling Workplace Aggression

According to the above findings, the five distinct WA profiles based on the chosen five-cluster solution can be described as follows:

Cluster 1 Most of the respondents in this first cluster receive insulting or offensive remarks from a member of the top management in the organization. While they largely perceive this behavior as intentional (80%), their perception of the severity (strength) of such behavior is not high (below average). Sometimes, other aggressive behaviors might accompany offensive remarks. Almost two third of such aggressive incidents include witnesses from the surrounding.

Cluster 2 Mostly angry expressions and gestures are included in the aggression incidents within this cluster. Sometimes avoiding (ignoring) the person and offensive remarks could also be observed. In these events, the perpetrator is almost always the immediate supervisor. It is also notable that in these aggression situations, both perceived strength of the action as well as the perceived intention of harm are quite low. Finally, only one third of the events in this cluster include witnesses.

Cluster 3 This WA category almost always include the behaviors of spreading rumors and talking behind someone's back from the perpetrator. When compared to spreading rumors, the other aggression behaviors are almost non-existent. Perceived severity of the behavior is not high (below average). Yet, most of the time, such behaviors are considered as intentional (88%), initiated with the deliberate purpose of harming the person. It is interesting that such behaviors in this cluster almost always come from the coworkers instead of supervisor or top managers. As another important factor, almost all these incidents include other members of the organization as witnesses.

Table 4 Descriptive statistics and ANOVA results

		Mean	Std. Deviation	<i>F</i> Statistics	Sig.
1. Making angry facial expressions or gestures	Cluster 1	.06	.240	5633	.000
	Cluster 2	.14	.355		
	Cluster 3	.00	.000		
	Cluster 4	.21	.408		
	Cluster 5	.00	.000		
2. Avoiding or ignoring (silent treatment)	Cluster 1	.05	.210	2590	.037
	Cluster 2	.03	.169		
	Cluster 3	.00	.000		
	Cluster 4	.13	.336		
	Cluster 5	.11	.323		
3. Insulting or making offensive remarks	Cluster 1	.15	.361	1007	.040
	Cluster 2	.06	.236		
	Cluster 3	.06	.240		
	Cluster 4	.14	.353		
	Cluster 5	.11	.323		
4. Spreading rumors/ talking behind your back	Cluster 1	.08	.267	9159	.000
	Cluster 2	.00	.000		
	Cluster 3	.32	.471		
	Cluster 4	.10	.296		
	Cluster 5	.00	.000		
5. Perceived severity of the aggressive behavior	Cluster 1	.32	.469	7733	.000
	Cluster 2	.09	.284		
	Cluster 3	.36	.485		
	Cluster 4	.56	.501		
	Cluster 5	.17	.383		
6. Perceived intention	Cluster 1	.80	.401	16,225	.000
	Cluster 2	.34	.482		
	Cluster 3	.88	.328		
	Cluster 4	.92	.273		
	Cluster 5	.57	.502		
7. Witness presence	Cluster 1	.68	.469	69,986	.000
	Cluster 2	.29	.458		
	Cluster 3	.94	.240		
	Cluster 4	.97	.177		
	Cluster 5	.00	.000		
8. Supervisor as perpetrator	Cluster 1	.00	.00	3657,22	.000
	Cluster 2	.97	.17		
	Cluster 3	.00	.00		
	Cluster 4	1.00	.00		
	Cluster 5	.00	.00		

Table 4 (continued)

		Mean	Std. Deviation	F Statistics	Sig.
9. Top management as perpetrator	Cluster 1	.99	.123	2914,04	.000
	Cluster 2	.00	.00		
	Cluster 3	.00	.00		
	Cluster 4	.00	.00		
	Cluster 5	.00	.00		
10. Coworker as perpetrator	Cluster 1	.00	.00	562,12	.000
	Cluster 2	.00	.00		
	Cluster 3	.88	.328		
	Cluster 4	.00	.00		
	Cluster 5	1.00	.00		

Cluster 4 Perhaps, the most intensive WA situation is identified by this cluster. It is different from the other four WA profiles in different ways: Primary, the aggression experiences under this category typically include almost all diverse types of aggressive behaviors measured in the study including angry expressions and gestures, insulting remarks, ignoring the person and spreading rumors. There are almost always initiated by the supervisor and in most of the occasions at least one witness is present. In parallel to the multiplicity of different aggression acts involved, both severity and intentionality perceived by the victim are the highest among all aggression event profiles.

Cluster 5 This last profile is mostly composed of avoiding/ ignoring (silent treatment) situations where the aggressive behavior is less visible and direct. That's why, it is also perceived by the target person as mild and tolerable instead of a severe act. Perceived intention of the behavior is medium, implying that the person may not be sure about the exact intentions of the perpetrator. In this cluster, aggression is almost always received from coworkers and usually there is no witness, supporting the indirectness of such aggression.

Relationship between Workplace Aggression Profiles and Emotions

Even though there can be several other emotions to consider, in this study we focus on five basic negative emotions employees may feel when they experience aggression in the workplace. These are: being *upset*, *angry*, *insulted*, *disappointed* and *embarrassed*. Thus, following relevant recent calls, we include not only the typical negative emotions that have been largely discussed and studied in research (e.g. anger), but also other possible negative emotions the person can experience once he or she is exposed to aggression in the workplace. Each of the five emotional responses were measured as binary variables (1 = yes, 0 = no).

In order to test our second hypothesis which puts forward that different WA profiles will also be associated with different emotional responses, we generated a series of cross-tabulations using Phi and Cramer's V as the tests of statistically significant associations between each cluster profile and emotion as all of our variables are nominal (dichotomous). Besides, we not only took positive associations into consideration but also investigated possible negative relationships.

This preliminary investigation of aggression-emotion association revealed that, indeed, each of the five clusters were differently related to distinct emotions. The results show that, for Cluster 1, people are feeling significantly upset because of the aggression incident and there are no other emotions accompanying this feeling. For Cluster 2, being upset, insulted and embarrassed were all found to be negatively related to the particular aggression incident which means that compared to other WA clusters, victims in this cluster feel these emotions relatively less. This is probably related to the targets' perceptions of low levels of intentionality and strength in the aggression behaviors towards themselves. For Cluster 3, the feeling of embarrassment is strongly connected with the WA profile described by this cluster. None of the other emotions have a significant association with this cluster. This implies that when employees face with rumors spread about them, they usually "lose face" and become uncomfortable and ashamed instead of being angry or sad.

For Cluster 4, rather than all other emotions, the target employees were specifically feeling insulted by the person who initiates the aggression toward themselves. Since most intensive WA situation is identified by this cluster and usually the mistreatment comes from the immediate authority figure (the supervisor) in the presence of others, the victim probably feels much more disrespected and offended compared to other aggression types. Interestingly, none of the identified negative emotions were significant for Cluster 5. Yet, being insulted has a statistically significant negative association to the type of aggression profiled in the cluster. Finally, anger seems to be a typical response by the target person in most of the WA scenarios. That is, the analysis reveals that anger is not linked to one particular type of aggression, instead, it is observed in most of the occasions in moderate to high levels.

Discussion

In this study, we intended to discover whether the aggression incidents experienced in the workplace can be classified into certain profiles and whether these profiles can be distinguished from one another in significant ways. Moreover, we sought to understand how these aggression types can play out differently with respect to target employees' emotional responses. In line with these objectives, we developed two hypotheses and tested them by analyzing survey data covering respondents' aggression incident details through a clustering procedure. The sample was composed of participants in Pakistan's higher education field including both academic and administrative members.

Findings of our study make a noteworthy support to the existing body of knowledge on WA profiles and emotional responses. This study shows that WA events can take significantly different forms based on a number of key behavioral and relational dimensions. We found that five statistically distinct types of aggression can be experienced in the workplace which are largely separated from one another regarding what particular actions (e.g. direct-indirect, verbal-physical aggression) are involved, how intense the behavior is perceived by the target employee, where the blame for the incident is put, whether there are any witnesses to the incident and who the perpetrator is (Chang et al., 2019). Moreover, in line with our propositions we found that employees who are the target of aggression give different emotional responses to such mistreatment based on the type of aggression they experience (Fida et al., 2018). The results show that while employees give diverse emotional reactions (feeling upset, embarrassed, insulted) to different types of aggression events, anger accompany almost all experiences. Hence, study hypotheses are largely supported.

Findings reveal that the specific aggressive behaviors in a particular event, identity of the aggressor, perceived strength, intensity of the behavior and witness existence do all matter in determining the emotional reaction of the employee who is involved in that event as a victim. It should also be noted that even though the perpetrator is the same, different emotional responses can be given based on other event attributes. For instance, supervisor's angry gestures and expressions –which are not perceived as intentional or severe- also trigger anger in the target employee if there is no witness around. However, if the supervisor engages in multiple aggressive behaviors which are evaluated as both intentional and strong, and if there are witnesses to these situations, the employee feels both insulted and angry. In a similar vein, if the situation involves coworkers' avoidance of the focal employee, no significant emotion arouses. On the other hand, if a coworker (the same perpetrator) starts spreading rumors about the focal employee in the presence of others, the employee feels both humiliated and angry. Thus, this study shows that to fully understand how employees are affected from WA incidents, it is not enough to examine one or two factors (e.g. a single aggression behavior or offender identity). That is, aggression events in the workplace might have very different meanings for an employee and those meanings can only be discovered by taking multiple indicators into account.

Without doubt, the study findings should be interpreted based on the characteristics of the participants and the chosen organizational context. Even though extensive research exists on the demographic profiles of WA initiators (e.g. gender, age, occupation, experience, social status, personality traits), knowledge on target's individual characteristics are rather scarce. While some studies did not find significant differences in being a victim of WA depending on factors such as gender, tenure, age and occupation (Baron et al., 1999), or they explain only little variance in victimization (Bowling & Beehr, 2006), other studies suggested that WA experiences of male and female employees are different (Dionisi et al., 2012). Likewise, in Anjum et al. (2019)'s study, female, younger, junior-position employees were found to be victims of bullying more than their counterparts. Since almost two-third of the sample in this study includes male participants, caution is required for not making aggregate interpretations across genders.

There are also mixed findings and ambiguity regarding how sector and occupation type might influence WA experiences (Aquino & Thau, 2009). Despite the lack of clear conclusions, the type of work was found important in a number of studies. For example, in Mikkelsen and Einarsen's study (2001), employees in manufacturing firms reported significantly more exposure to bullying than did employees in hospitals. Recently, it is also evidenced that in the higher education context, instead of intensive, well-defined and visible types of aggression (such as bullying), the accumulated impact of less-severe, indirect, invisible types of aggression (incivility, negative comments, spreading rumors) becomes more influential and difficult to deal with (Heffernan & Bosetti, 2021). Taking into consideration that this study investigated universities as the organizational context and the high-skilled, highly-educated staff in these institutions, the findings regarding the prominence of less intensive WA profiles and diverse emotional reactions should be interpreted accordingly. As our sample largely consists of academic employees having full-time employment, one should consider that a sample including administrative staff and part-time employees at a larger extent might reveal different outcomes. Finally, although in this study we analyzed a balanced number of private and public higher education institutions altogether, future studies can compare them and seek to identify the differences in WA profiles and consequences across them.

Theoretical Implications

The present study not only enriches the literature on WA, but also provides expansions for affective events theory and stressor-emotion model. First, our study extends the theory as it is one of the rare scholarly effort where almost all essential aggression event attributes as recently suggested in the literature are engaged into deliberation in a comprehensive way. Prior studies have discussed the influence of different aggression event characteristics unconnectedly, and only in a limited extent (Barling et al., 2009; Mireille LeBlanc & Barling, 2004) whereas our study measures all important aggression incidence attributes (e.g. source of aggression, severity, perceived intention, witness presence) together. Distinct WA categories as directly measured and determined in this study point out that our understanding of aggression in organization may be still very limited and thus, we should go beyond the existing theoretical presumptions and indirect measurements which have been dominating the research for some time (Hershcovis, 2011). Hence, through the study findings it becomes clearer that the sources, organizational processes and underlying social dynamics might vary a lot across different aggression experiences depending on what the topic is, who are involved and how the targets perceive it.

Second, it presents the initial test of the viability of these WA profiles through their linkage to emotional responses of the target employees. It is unique in empirically showing how instead of a single typical emotional reaction, multiple negative emotional responses accompany different aggression profiles. Until today, research investigating the aggression-emotion connection have mostly concentrated on the role of anger and anxiety (Sguera et al., 2016), whereas very limited research has explored alternative emotional responses (Cyr et al., 2018; Fox et al., 2001; Hershcovis et al., 2007). Hence, by considering a large set of emotions (sadness, anger, feeling insulted, disappointment and embarrassment), this study offers a proper answer to the recent inquiries regarding the need for investigating complex emotional reactions (Holm et al., 2015). Third, this is one of the rare studies which have analyzed data from Pakistan, a highly collectivist, honor culture context, which provides an essential opportunity to assess the unique manifestations and/or possible boundary conditions of the available theoretical arguments on WA and its affect-based consequences.

Practical Implications

A number of practical implications also emerge based on the study findings. As per our results, when employees face with rumors spread about them, they usually become uncomfortable and ashamed instead of being angry or sad. Especially when the national culture is honor-based and highly collectivist with a tight value system (Bowman, 2007) as in Pakistan, individuals are eager to maintain self-worth not only in their own eyes, but also in front of the society (Severance et al., 2013). Hence, when employees are confronted with aggression at workplace, they might develop even stronger negative emotions with the fear of losing their honor and self-image. In order to help them reduce such fears and anxieties, interventions to increase social support, trainings or psychological assistance systems can be introduced by the organization (Schat & Kelloway, 2005). Additionally, organizations can start stress reduction programs. Through such programs, employees can become better equipped with the necessary informational, cognitive and emotional resources to manage conflict situations. These trainings might also enhance their personal capability, resilience,

and well-being, and in turn, will contribute to organizational productivity (Alola & Alola, 2018).

Yet, perhaps more importantly, managers should engage in systematic efforts to create an organizational environment where such misconduct are discouraged. Certain policies as well as cultural dimensions should be integrated to build a more trust-based, aggression-free workplace. Relatedly, managers may conduct systematic surveys that may help the institutes to know the existence and sources of aggression and what possible actions can be taken to eliminate these behaviors. Last but not least, managers and supervisors themselves should be trained regarding ethical behavior and organization etiquette toward their employees. Such practices would help create the better workplace associations.

Limitations & Future Research Directions

In this research, we only theorized and measured the association between WA profiles and emotional responses. Future research might study how specific emotions (e.g. guilt, fear, embarrassment, despair, disappointment) mediate between different WA profiles and particular personal, work-related and organizational consequences such as employee well-being, work engagement, organization citizenship behavior, intention to quit, and employee silence, and work and life domain conflicts (Jahanzeb & Fatima, 2017; Hershcovis et al., 2017; Kabat-Farr et al., 2018; Kempen et al., 2019). Alternative affect-based and cognition-based mediation mechanisms can also be tested. For instance, along with distinct emotions, emotional dissonance may also play a mediation role between job stressors and burnout or other employee outcomes (Andela et al., 2016). Similarly, possible moderation effects of individual (i.e., personality, psychological state, prior emotional state) and organization-level (e.g. organizational support, justice/ ethical climate) factors can be examined. Moreover, aggression event attributes might be further refined and possible interactions among them could be analyzed. For instance, underlying categories of WA can be clarified through an examination of their links with the available measurements of specific aggression behaviors (e.g. incivility, bullying, abusive supervision) in the literature.

As of methodological limitations, due to collecting data from participants in a single organizational context (higher-education), the opportunity to generalize from the reported findings might be limited. Hence, in future research, data can be collected from different industries and cultural settings as well as via conducting cross-cultural comparative studies (Bilal et al., 2021). Furthermore, current study focuses on two sources of aggression; supervisor or co-workers. Other possible perpetrators such as customers and students, and the identities of witnesses or any third parties involved may produce different consequences for the target employees' (Chen & Wang, 2019). Even though we adopted a lagged design and collected aggression experience and emotional responses data in separate time-points, stronger longitudinal designs are needed to make sure of the causal relationships among all suggested variables.

On the whole, we believe our study can encourage additional research and more advanced empirical tests on the topic. Although the descriptive nature of this research may put some limits to its theoretical and practical contributions, it can motivate researchers to run additional studies by considering other relevant factors and examine richer theoretical connections to better understand the essence of aggression and its specific manifestations in the workplace.

Availability of Data and Material The data is not available in an open-access repository, yet can be provided upon request.

Code Availability Not applicable.

Authors' Contributions The two authors made substantial contributions to the conception and design of the paper in an equal manner, and they both approved the final version.

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Declarations

Conflict of Interest Both authors certify that they have no affiliations with or involvement in any organization or entity with any financial interest or non-financial interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

Ethics Approval Formal written approval from Yasar University Ethics Committee was taken for conducting the study.

Consent to Participate All participants were informed and their written consent was taken for participating into the study.

Consent for Publication All participants were also informed regarding the aim of publishing the data in aggregate form for scientific purposes.

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