

-RESEARCH ARTICLE-

## THE ROLE OF BEHAVIOURAL INTEGRITY AND PSYCHOLOGICAL CLIMATE IN REDUCING SOCIAL UNDERMINING IN THE WORKPLACE: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF THE OPINIONS OF A SAMPLE OF WORKERS IN AL-NAJAF HOSPITALS

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### —Abstract—

This study seeks to examine the correlation between behavioural integrity and psychological climate, and their impact on mitigating social undermining in the workplace. The government-operated hospitals in Al-Najaf Al-Ashraf city were chosen as the data collection sites for this study. The study's sample includes 285 doctors and medical assistants (also referred to as 'clinical assistants') who were selected at random. An analysis using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) was conducted to investigate how behavioural integrity and psychological climate can help decrease instances of social undermining within the workplace. The findings indicate a clear negative relationship between behavioural integrity and social undermining in the workplace. Similarly, psychological climate also exhibits a negative association with social undermining in the workplace. Furthermore, workplace social undermining shows a negative correlation with both behavioural integrity and psychological climate. This study underscores the significance of behavioural integrity in the work environment.

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Reducing social undermining at work, including integrity behavior. Here is an impetus for hospital administrations to find effective strategies on fostering ethics at the workplace and maintaining a positive psychological climate: ensure that all employees receive proper guidance on how ethical conduct can be nurtured and what they can do to support such behavior among their colleagues in addition, create supportive environment for them by having policies that care for their welfare. More so, through training programs focusing on courtesy plus honesty, as this will help leaders understand the need of being good role models and promoting cultures where workers are appreciated due to their efforts and recognized for their contributions without discrimination. Taking into account these issues will help hospitals create more productive and harmonious working environments: this has implications not only towards reduced cases of social undermining but also heightened work output even more peacefully coexistent personnel.

This research contributes meaningfully to existing studies on social undermining at the workplace because it brings out new findings that other literature has not captured before concerning interplay between social undermining integrity behaviour and psychological climate owing.

**Keywords:** Behavioural Integrity, Psychological Climate, Social Undermining in the Workplace.

## INTRODUCTION

Negative social interactions have been extensively researched since the 1980s in terms of their effects on individuals— particularly with respect to psychological well-being. Studies conducted by [Rook \(1984\)](#) and [Abbey, Abramis, & Caplan \(1985\)](#) hint that negative interactions may substantially dent an individual's psyche. The early 1990s research by [Vinokur & van Ryn \(1993\)](#) and [Vinokur, Price, & Caplan \(1996\)](#) unearthed 'social undermining' as the act of thwarting others' goals through negative behavior— consequently [Duffy, Ganster, & Pagon \(2002\)](#) described this 'social undermining' as an umbrella that includes physical, cognitive and behavioral harm on the receiver. Stress causing among employees is widely accepted as an outcome due to 'social undermining,' which significantly affects relationships between co-workers plus supervisors' dynamics at the workplace according to [Gant et al., \(1993\)](#).

Reports that have been recently produced validate the results of previous investigations in the 1980s and 1990s about social undermining and its effect on employee wellness. [Gail Hepburn & Enns \(2013\)](#) had an interesting study that pointed out a negative impact in the work environment.

Social undermining has a negative impact on employee well-being. [Anwar & Sidin \(2016\)](#) found a consistent relationship between higher social undermining and lower employee well-being levels, as the effects of this behavior include increased stress levels and depression rates among employees identified by the work of Lian Anwar. Understanding the social context surrounding undermining is critical for organizations. This understanding empowers individuals to apply tactics that decrease negative behaviors and foster more positive work atmosphere. The responses can differ based on the specific circumstances and the individuals involved, meaning that people may respond to social undermining by avoiding the situation or feeling angry.

Social undermining has been studied by [Kautz \(2020\)](#) who presents it as a phenomenon that distorts workplace social dynamics and gives rise to the growth of hostile environments— with negative interactions thus threatening the very fabric of an organization's social structure ([Labianca & Brass, 2006](#)). Another research conducted by [Kammeyer-Mueller et al. \(2013\)](#) delved into the relationship between socialization and social undermining. They found out that new employees are more likely to be victims of social undermining from their peers which might involve information hoarding among other behaviors, as well as competition for resources within the organization that leads to even more instances of social undermining ([Crossley, 2009](#)). [Blau \(1986\)](#) through Social Exchange Theory suggests that when one person does a favor for another there is an expectation for something in return although not specifically predetermined — this reciprocal interaction creates a psychological agreement between individuals as also elaborated by [Rousseau \(1989\)](#) where any disruption or violation would be considered breaching the psychological contract.

According to [Duffy et al. \(2002\)](#) as well, social undermining towards employees is viewed as violating the psychological contract. Any breach of this contract disturbs the balance of interpersonal relationships and equity among employees in an organization. As a result, this study examines the fairness heuristic theory to analyse the connection between behavioural integrity, psychological climate, and social undermining in the workplace. Based on this theory, individuals assess others by comparing their perception of what should have happened to what took place ([Lind, 2001](#)).

In organisational contexts, the consistency between managers' statements and actions is of utmost importance, as it reflects behavioural integrity. Essentially, it analyses the consistency between the statements made by managers and their actual actions. Consequently, behavioural integrity plays a crucial role in fairness heuristic theory, indicating an imbalance in relationships between the organisation and its members, managers and employees, or employees and their supervisors when it is lacking. Throughout the years, multiple studies have delved into the concept of behavioural

integrity from different perspectives, building upon the foundational work by [Simons \(2002\)](#); [Simons et al. \(2007\)](#); [Simons \(1999\)](#). Several studies have explored various aspects related to workplace bullying, such as its correlation with workplace bullying ([Erkutlu & Chafra, 2016a](#)), its impact on individual leadership ([Duggar, 2009](#)), its association with counterproductive work behaviour ([Van Staden, 2018](#)), its link to employee attitudes, well-being, and absenteeism ([Prottas, 2008](#)), its influence on workers' performance ([Palanski & Yammarino, 2011](#)), and the interplay between behavioural integrity and employee engagement, organisational citizenship behaviour, and service quality that researchers have examined ([Prottas & Nummelin, 2018](#)).

The objective of this study is to examine behaviours that can successfully reduce social undermining in the workplace and reshape the relationships between employees, supervisors, and coworkers. In addition, the research also seeks to identify tactics that can prevent the reoccurrence of social undermining in future, thereby fostering a stable psychological climate within organizations. The study is aiming at establishing a relationship between behavioral integrity and psychological climate that can lead to reduction of cases related to social undermining at work. The investigation of the possible influence of behavioral integrity and psychological climate towards reducing incidences of social undermining is what the study aims at.

The employees' working environment is largely determined by how the organization treats them— this in turn shapes individual perceptions of their workplace. The reciprocity principle underlies exchanges between organization and individual and mutual relationships based on compatibility have been revealed through research in psychological climate ([Aknijet, 2022](#)). Psychological climate has been found to influence stress levels among employees with role clarity ([Mozgovoy, 2022](#)) and employee engagement ([Kataria, Garg, & Rastogi, 2013](#); [Kavyashree & Kulenur, 2023](#)); similarly organizational commitment is related to employee well-being ([Nammi & Zarra Nezhad, 2009](#)) and can be addressed by relationship quality indicators. Such as social undermining — shown from the study results on how it can be reduced — other than job stressors. This study provides contributions in the following ways:

The investigation begins by identifying and scrutinizing various elements. These can potentially lower social undermining at the workplace; as an insidious negative behavior, it has individual repercussions and plays a major role in redefining work relationships among employees, their peers, and supervisors ([Gant et al., 1993](#)). On another note, these factors are later discussed within the specific context of governmental healthcare institutions. But let me tell you this: creating a positive work environment is not merely desirable but essential— if the industry wants to see itself grow with success.

In conclusion, this investigation offers a valuable trial in building good relationships within employee-supervisor and employee-co-worker spheres among others. This study is rooted in social exchange theory and fairness heuristic theory as a basis to establish positive relationships — aiming to prevent social undermining that may be rampant in a place of work.

Moreover, this particular research can play a pivotal role for top brass in healthcare institutions helping them reshape the social relationships at the workplace.

## LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

### Behavioural Integrity and Social Undermining in the Workplace

Behavioural integrity is closely tied to the alignment between managers' words and actions. This concept was emphasised in the writings of Simons, who described behavioural integrity as the level of congruence between managers' words and actions, or the level of consistency between the values they exhibit and those they implement in their work, as well as their commitment to perceived commitments (Simons, 2002; Simons, 1999). Managers' actions do not reflect the values that they frequently talk about. This contradiction is actually explained by Simons and colleagues (2007) as a result of managers striving to achieve their goals under conditions of limited resources. Behavioural integrity can occur at different levels: either individually, whereby it concerns the consistency between what managers say and what they do; or organizationally. According to Simons (1999), the attainment of behavioural integrity for an individual manager happens through one's words and deeds being in alignment with each other.

Dealing with Honesty: The findings reveal the impact of this factor on people. Effron et al. (2018) identified that failure to keep promises at individual, team, or organizational levels leads to negative responses from others— including distrust and ethical questioning— which can cripple performance-based organizations with challenges such as low productivity, high turnover rate, and deviant workplace behaviors. Nevertheless, some employees opt for unethical practices in response to their superiors' actions like taking extended leaves or reducing their commitment level towards the organization (Erkutlu & Chafra, 2017). Behavioral integrity stands as a major demand on organizations; it significantly molds trust and employee commitment (two key elements for change facilitation) that result from managerial role fulfilment towards stable organizational environment leading to attainment of organizational success (Baig et al., 2021). Dealing honestly can bring great results: learn more on what is at stake in your interactions with others.

**Employees' Trust:** In organisations, business operations are built on the idea of interdependent relationships, where individuals depend on one another to accomplish their personal and organisational objectives (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995).

Building trust is seen as a crucial aspect of managing individuals (Morgan & Zeffane, 2003) and is the initial stage in establishing any relationship (Rajeswari & Kumar, 2020). Trust is a key factor in shaping the quality of relationships between employees and managers (Ergeneli, Ari, & Metin, 2007). Employees highly appreciate integrity and commitment in their leader (McShane & Von Glinow, 2008). Numerous studies have been dedicated to examining trust in organisations. The trust employees have in their managers has been found to have a positive impact on financial performance and work productivity, according to a study conducted by Brown et al. (2015). Trust is widely recognised as a crucial element that impacts empowerment practices (Ergeneli et al., 2007). The perception of fairness in the exchange between employees and managers plays a crucial role in fostering trust between them (Schulz, Valizade, & Charlwood, 2022). Trust among coworkers can also impact their attitudes and actions towards each other and the organisation (Lin Dar, 2009). According to a study conducted by Tan & Lim (2009), individuals who are trusted are often seen as more honest compared to others. As the level of trust and strong relationships between subordinates and managers grows, subordinates become more confident in their ability to impact strategic and managerial outcomes within their work unit (Ergeneli et al., 2007). Lin Dar (2009) found that high levels of social undermining negatively impact trust levels among coworkers. Managers with high integrity can decrease negative workplace behaviours, including ostracism (Erkutlu & Chafra, 2016b). Based on the aforementioned information, there is a hypothesis that behavioural integrity has a reducing effect on levels of social undermining in the workplace. Therefore, it is also hypothesized that:

*H1: There is a significant negative effect relationship of behavioral integrity on social undermining in the workplace.*

## **Psychological Climate and Social Undermining in the Workplace**

According to James & Jones (1974), psychological climate refers to how perceptions affect an individual's well-being and the significance they attach to environmental factors (D'Amato & Zijlstra, 2008). The concept of job satisfaction includes the various perceptions individuals have about their job, colleagues, supervisors, compensation structures, performance standards, opportunities for advancement, and equitable treatment (James et al., 2008). The term "psychological climate" refers to the collective perceptions that individuals develop about an organisation over time (O'Neill & Arendt, 2008), encompassing all the events that occur within the organisation (Biswas, 2012).

Schyns, van Veldhoven, & Wood (2009) and Yee, Pink, & Sern (2014) suggest that individuals' perceptions vary. The psychological climate is the outcome of the interplay between individual characteristics and the organization (Martin, Jones, & Callan, 2005) — it's about how people see their workplace. Personal values play a big role in this: people tend to prioritize their well-being when they make sense of where

they work based on what they believe in. The psychological climate deals more with what goes on inside one's mind rather than what can be seen in an organization physically (Brown & Leigh, 1996). Values have a say on this atmosphere we work in: as such, individuals are tasked with creating mental frameworks that help others see both work attributes and personal importance differently (James et al., 2008).

O'Neill & Arendt (2008) brought forth the significance of psychological climate in shaping individuals' attitudes and actions within an organizational setup. The model has the potential to predict various behaviors — job satisfaction, stress levels, organizational commitment, trust issues, intention to leave... This phenomenon wields considerable power over psychological wellness and motivation of the workforce (not forgetting performance); Tordera, González-Romá & Peiró (2008) embarked on a study that validated the impact of psychological climate on leader-member exchange (the relationship between individuals and their leaders). In their interesting perspective, Blumberga & Austruma (2015) suggest that by nurturing positive psychological climate, managers can develop trust and empathy... which further leads to effective exchange relationships with their subordinates. Motivating individuals while generating value via interpersonal exchanges: it is these proposed leadership strategies that are both stimulating and rewarding!. Based on the perspective of exchange relationships, we propose that a positive psychological climate in the workplace will reduce occurrences of social undermining. We aim to test the following hypothesis:

*H<sub>2</sub>: There is a significant negative effect relationship of psychological climate on social undermining in the workplace.*

**Psychological Climate Dimensions:** According to Brown & Leigh's (1996) study, the dimensions of psychological climate are:

**Supportive Management:** It entails providing employees with autonomy and trust to execute their tasks in a manner they consider appropriate (Brown & Leigh, 1996). Supervisors' provision of support, respect, and appreciation for employees' emotions, well-being, and contributions has a positive impact on their job satisfaction (Dupré & Day, 2007). Supportive managers positively impact employee engagement, satisfaction, and organisational commitment (Teoh et al., 2016), as well as reduce employee turnover (Dupré & Day, 2007). According to Williams et al. (2014), providing psychological support from management can alleviate employees' psychological pressures, increase their autonomy, and enhance their efficiency. Managers and supervisors play a vital role in improving employee performance (Mughal, 2019).

**Role Clarity:** it refers to employees' understanding of their job tasks (Lynn & Kalay, 2015; Punia, 2011). Employees with sufficient knowledge are better equipped to address environmental challenges and carry out their tasks efficiently.

Role ambiguity is associated with reduced performance levels as employees perceive a lack of support (Samie, Riahi, & Tabibi, 2015). Clarity in task information fosters a psychologically safe work environment, enhancing employees' sense of organisational connection (Brown & Leigh, 1996). Kundu, Kumar, & Lata (2021) found a positive correlation between high role clarity and increased employee efficiency.

**Contributions:** According to Brown & Leigh (1996), employees who perceive themselves as actively contributing to organisational goals are more engaged in their work performance. Based on Wardani & Noviyani (2020), there is a positive association between contribution and the psychological well-being of employees. Employees with a high level of contribution are more likely to actively contribute to the organisation. Empowering individuals fosters their sense of autonomy and accountability, thereby promoting their constructive engagement within the organisation (Subramanian, 2017).

**Value:** Brown & Leigh (1996) found that when the employees have a good opinion about their organization, they work with all their efforts; this tends to increase the level of commitment. Another study done by Mutisya, Were, & Wabala (2017) found that if employees feel valued in their organizations, it boosts performance positivity within the entire organization.

Self-expression is defined by Green (2011) as the ability to articulate one's own views, thoughts, and even personal theories. An individual's unique traits can be demonstrated through self-expression according to a study conducted by O'Neill & Arendt (2008). Self-expression, as indicated in a study by Nikita et al. (2023), can empower individuals with strength, energy, and motivation— helping them excel at work because those who are able to communicate what they think or feel easily tend towards feeling psychologically secure while being creative in such aspects tends to contribute positively towards their work environment; this also determines their commitment toward the organization (Brown & Leigh, 1996).

A difficulty presents itself as a challenge: employees who face difficult tasks — find that it triggers creativity which allows them to use skills including knowledge or emotions alongside these obstacles, fostering a sense of purpose at work (Brown & Leigh, 1996).

### **Social Undermining, Behavioural Integrity, and Psychological Climate**

Since the 1980s, numerous studies have been dedicated to investigating adverse social interactions and their effects on individuals' lives. Research conducted by Rook (1984) and Abbey et al. (1985) has found that negative interactions significantly impact individuals' psychological well-being. In the early 1990s, Vinokur & van Ryn

(1993) and Vinokur et al. (1996) coined the term “social undermining” to describe subtle negative behaviours that individuals may experience. These behaviours include anger, resentment, destructive criticism, or any actions that hinder others’ progress, impede their goals, undermine their abilities, and impact their social well-being. Some researchers have intensified their studies on social undermining in the workplace, as highlighted by Duffy et al. (2002), who describe social undermining as “a negative aggressive behaviour aimed at impeding the long-term ability of workers to establish or maintain positive relationships, form successful relationships, and gain a good reputation at work, especially associated with accomplishments.” Duffy et al. (2002) propose that social undermining in the workplace may not be a deliberate act, but rather something that happens over time. It can manifest in words — like ignoring the other person — or actions that seek to deprive the individual of their resources.

Moreover, Duffy et al.'s (2012) study situates envy as a key element contributing to social undermining at the workplace. According to Crossley (2009), there exist different motives behind social undermining among people. Karthikeyan (2017) underscores the adverse effects of social undermining at work which can trigger various responses such as reciprocating with undermining acts, unproductive behavior, loss of interest in one's job, feelings of being downhearted and powerless, physical symptoms— just to name a few. The findings of the studies conducted by Ng & Feldman (2013) and Khan, Malik, & Shahzad (2022) suggest that social undermining in the workplace has a negative impact on employees' creativity and their ability to generate innovative ideas. Accordingly, some researchers view social undermining as a "negative aggressive behavior that creates feelings of fear and lack of trust among co-workers and leaders, making individuals feel isolated, estranged, purposeless, and experiencing reduced self-motivation and work motivation". According to Duffy et al. (2002) and Duffy et al. (2006b) there are two sources of social undermining, are:

**Coworker Undermining:** It happens when individuals participate in harmful actions towards one another, such as disregarding ethical standards, keeping important information from the person being targeted, tarnishing their reputation, contributing to their downfall, or getting involved in personal rivalries and disputes (Duffy et al., 2006b).

**Supervisor Undermining by:** It pertains to behaviours that hinder employees from building a positive reputation, fostering strong relationships, or achieving success in their job performance (Duffy et al., 2002). The behaviours displayed by supervisors towards employees are seen as unjust actions, with supervisors expecting fairness from employees while acting in an opposite manner. These behaviours can be seen as a form of workplace hypocrisy (Greenbaum, Mawritz, & Piccolo, 2015). Supervisors who undermine their employees contribute to a culture of silence among the workforces. This, unfortunately, results in an uptick in deviant behaviours that have negative consequences for the organisation (Jung & Yoon, 2019). In addition, social

undermining in the workplace can have a negative impact on trust levels among employees, both among peers and between employees and supervisors. Thus, when supervisors exhibit strong behavioural integrity, where their actions align with their words, the occurrence of social undermining in the workplace will diminish. In a similar vein, the existence of psychological climate requirements can decrease the occurrence of social undermining in the workplace. As per the study conducted by [Park et al. \(2021\)](#), supervisors can indirectly impact employee behaviours by fostering emotional commitment, including job involvement and extra-role behaviours. Due to that, the following hypothesis will be tested:

*H3: There is a significant negative influence relationship between behavioural integrity and psychological climate on social undermining in the workplace.*

## METHOD

The healthcare sector in Al-Najaf city was chosen as the sample for this study. Al-Sadr Teaching Hospital and Al-Hakeem General Hospital were chosen as the designated hospitals. The research sample included 1300 participants. The researchers distributed 297 questionnaires to doctors and medical assistants employed in the selected hospitals through a manual process. 285 valid responses were received and included in the statistical analysis from the distributed questionnaires. 12 questionnaires were excluded from the analysis because they were deemed invalid.

## Measures

This study has depended on different variables from previous studies, these variables are:

**Behavioural Integrity (BI):** Behavioural integrity was assessed using the scale created by [Simons et al. \(2007\)](#). This scale includes two dimensions: Honesty in dealing (HD) with 7 items and Employee' trust (ET) with 3 items. A scale ranging from 1 (Never) to 5 (Always) was utilised to measure responses.

**Psychological Climate (SC):** The dimensions of psychological climate were derived from the framework proposed by [Brown & Leigh \(1996\)](#). The dimensions consist of supportive management (SM) with 5 items, role clarity (CR) with 3 items, contribution (CO) with 4 items, esteem (ES) with 3 items, self-expression (EM) with 3 items, and challenge (CH) with 2 items. All items were measured using a Likert-type scale with participants indicating their responses on a scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

Regarding Social Undermining in the Workplace (SU), the evaluation for this was done using the scale developed by [Duffy et al. \(2002\)](#). This particular scale consists of two primary dimensions: supervisor undermining (SUP), which includes 13 items, and coworker.

Undermining (WR) in 13 items. Response measurements were carried out using a scale from 1 (Never) to 5 (Always).

## RESULTS

### Descriptive Analysis: Presenting and Analysing the Results in the Light of Sample Respondents' Answers

This passage describes the actuality of behavioral integrity and the psychological climate of healthcare settings and their impact on social degradation, the results of the study are discussed in this regard. The analysis employs various statistical measures, including the mean, standard deviation, coefficient of variation, and ranking of dimensions and items for the independent variable.

Here are the findings related to the first independent variable, behavioural integrity, as shown in Table 1. According to the findings, trust was found to have the highest value, with a mean of 3.361 and a standard deviation of 1.335. The difference coefficient for this dimension was the highest at 36.237. In contrast, the dimension of Honesty in dealing received the lowest value, with a mean of 2.234, indicating a satisfactory level, and a standard deviation of 1.106. The coefficient for this dimension was calculated to be 29.840. In general, the behavioural integrity variable had an average of 2.797, suggesting a satisfactory level, with a standard deviation of 1.220.

**Table 1: The Mean, Standard Deviation, and Difference Coefficient for the Dimensions of the Behavioural Integrity Variable.**

No.	The Dimensions of the Ethical Behavior Variable	M	SD.	Cv	Answers Level
1	Honesty in dealing	2.234	1.106	29.840	2
2	Employee' trust	3.361	1.335	36.237	1
Overall Mean			2.797	1.220	

- Prepared by the researchers depending on SPSS V.23.

The researchers used the difference coefficient, which relied on the mean and standard deviation, to give priority to the dimensions of the psychological climate variable. Table 2 reveals that the psychological climate dimensions ranked the dimension of "supportive management" as the highest. Most participants expressed a stronger preference for this aspect compared to the others. The average score for supportive management was 3.705, with a standard deviation of 0.760 and a coefficient of variation of 20.521. In contrast, the dimension "esteem" had the lowest value, with a mean of 3.314, indicating a satisfactory level. It also had a standard deviation of 0.973 and a difference coefficient of 29.479. In general, the psychological climate variable

achieved an average of 3.585, which suggests a satisfactory level, along with a standard deviation of 0.912. It appears that managers in healthcare institutions, such as Al-Sadr Teaching Hospital and Al- Hakeem Hospital, are actively working towards creating a stable work environment. They do this by clearly defining roles, responsibilities, and authorities within their organisations. The emphasis on supportive management helps to boost employees' self- esteem. The findings suggest that the psychological climate within the studied organisations is influenced by their organisational culture, which shapes the prevailing values and attitudes. This climate plays a role in fostering interaction among individuals within the organisations.

**Table 2: The Dimensions of the Psychological Climate Variable were Prioritized Based on the Difference Coefficient.**

No.	The Dimensions of the Psychological Climate Variable	M.	SD.	Cv.	Ranking the Variables
1	Supportive management	3.705	0.760	20.521	1
2	Role Clarity	3.598	0.922	25.634	3
3	Contribution	3.458	0.996	28.808	5
4	Esteem	3.314	0.973	29.479	6
5	Self-expression	3.654	0.837	22.913	2
6	Challenge	3.514	0.983	27.979	4
	Overall mean	3.585	0.912		

- Prepared by the researchers depending on SPSS V.23.

The researchers utilised the difference coefficient, which is calculated using the mean and standard deviation, to determine the ranking of the dimensions of the dependent variable, social undermining in the workplace. According to [Table 3](#), the dimension of "coworker undermining" was found to be the highest among the different dimensions of the social undermining variable. Based on the data collected from the sample respondents, the majority agreed on this dimension. This is supported by the mean value of 3.534, a standard deviation of 0.799, and a difference coefficient of 22.602. In contrast, the dimension of "supervisor undermining" received the lowest score. The average value for this dimension was 3.518, which suggests a favourable level. The standard deviation was 0.981, indicating the amount of variation in the data, and the coefficient of variation was 27.881. In the workplace, the variable of social undermining achieved a mean of 3.526, which suggests a good level. The standard deviation was 0.890. The findings indicate that managers in healthcare institutions, such as Al-Sadr Teaching Hospital and Al-Hakeem Hospital, are focused on minimising social undermining in the workplace. They aim to achieve this by fostering a conducive work climate and an environment that promotes behavioural integrity.

**Table 3: Ranking the Dimensions of the Social Undermining Variable in the Workplace Based on the Difference Coefficient.**

No.	The Dimensions of the Social Undermining Variable in the Workplace	M	SD.	Cv.	Ranking Variables
1	supervisors undermining	3.518	0.981	27.881	2
2	co-workers undermining	3.534	0.799	22.602	1
5	Overall mean	3.526	0.890		

- Prepared by the researchers depending on SPSS V.23.

### Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)

#### Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) of Variables Using AMOS

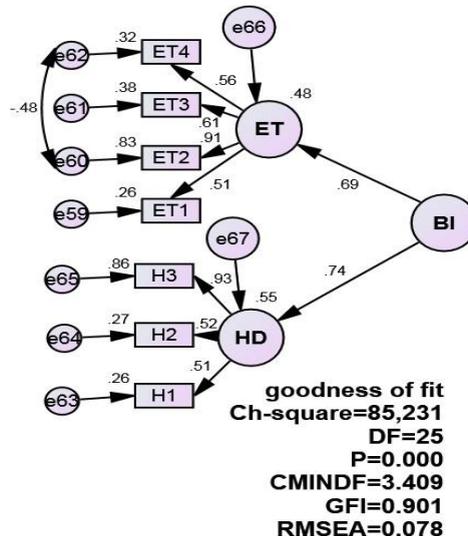
Studies conducted by Kline (2011) and Byrne (2001) have outlined specific criteria that fit indices in structural equation modelling (SEM) should meet to indicate a good fit. To meet the criteria, you'll want a Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) of at least 0.90, a Ratio value below either 5 or 3, and a Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) that's less than 0.08. The evaluation was carried out by employing Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to check if the items fit well into their respective dimensions. In this case, the indices given in Table 4 are like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle that will be fit together to see how appropriate the entire picture is. These fit indices don't simply tell us if we have chosen good variables but also shed light on how supportive our data is regarding the proposed model and relationships between these variables. So when looking at GFI, Ratio, and RMSEA values in totality— researchers should aim to unveil whether there is any pattern in their conformity quality; not meeting recommended criteria does not necessarily mean failure but rather points out areas warranting more attention.

**Table 4: Goodness of Fit Index for Structural Equation Modelling.**

Index	General Rule
<b>1. Goodness-of-Fit</b>	
A	$X^2$
B	DF
C	Percentage between $X^2$ and DF
D	CFI
E	TLI
F	RMSEA
<b>2.</b>	<b>Standardized Regression Weights</b>
	Regression Weights of Items $\leq 0.4$

**Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) of the behavioral integrity variable was conducted.**

Figure 1 shows the results of the Goodness of Fit Indices for the independent variable, which is composed of two main components that include 10 items. By adjusting the Measurement Model and removing items with high residual variances, we were able to enhance the fit of the structural equation model. As a result, we obtained statistically acceptable estimates for the fit indices: The chi-square value is 85.231, with 25 degrees of freedom. The ratio is 3.409, the GFI is 0.901, and the RMSEA is 0.078. In addition, the factor loadings were found to be statistically significant, surpassing the threshold of 0.50. The findings suggest that the statistical results, as depicted in the figure below, provide support for conducting the final model test to investigate the hypotheses and accomplish its objectives.



**Figure 1:** Confirmatory Factorial Analysis (CFA) for the Independent Variable of Behavioural Integrity.

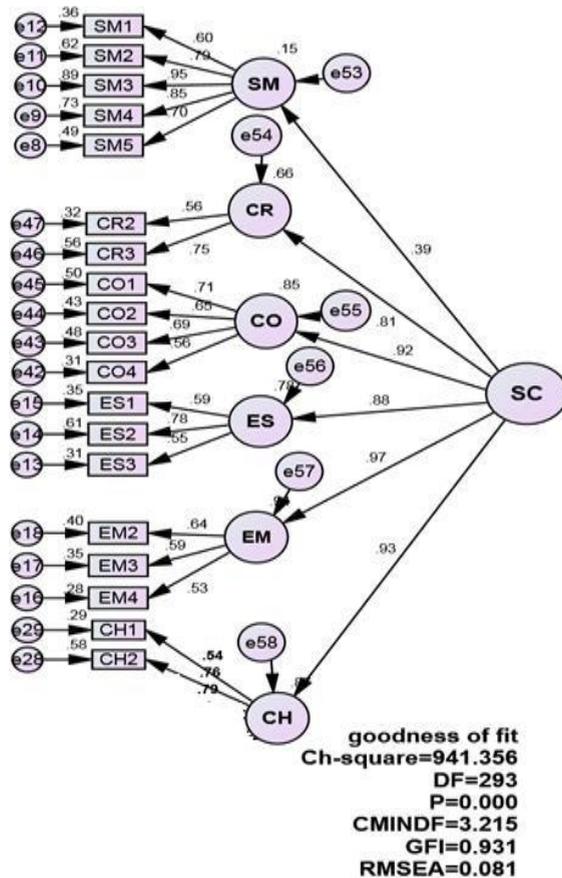
- Prepared by the researchers depending on AMOS V.23.

After making the necessary adjustments, the results in Figure 1 show that the fit indices successfully met the model's requirements. Based on standard Goodness of Fit measures, the fit indices for the derived structural equation model are considered acceptable, indicating support for construct validity.

**Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted for the independent variable of Psychological Climate**

Figure 2 presents the test results of the fit estimates for the Psychological Climate variable. This variable comprises six primary dimensions, each consisting of 20 items.

By adjusting the Measurement Model using Modification Indices to remove items with high residual variances within the structural equation modelling (SEM), we were able to improve the fit. This resulted in obtaining statistically acceptable estimates for the fit indices as follows: Chi-square = 941.356, df = 293, Ratio = 3.215, P-value = 0.000, GFI = 0.931, and RMSEA = 0.081. In addition, the factor loadings were found to be statistically significant, surpassing 0.50. It is evident that all the fit indices possess the capability to perform the final model test (SEM) to analyse the hypotheses of the study.



**Figure 2:** Confirmatory Factorial Analysis (CFA) of the independent variable of Psychological Climate.

- Prepared by the researchers depending on AMOS V.23.

The results shown in [Figure 2](#) demonstrate that the fit indices satisfied the necessary criteria for the Structural Equation Model (SEM). It appears that the construct validity is supported, and the fit indices for the derived structural equation model of the Psychological Climate variable are considered acceptable according to standard Goodness of Fit measures.

### Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was Conducted for the Dependent Variable of Workplace Social Undermining:

Figure 3 presents the test results of the fit estimates for the dependent variable (Workplace Social Undermining) after adjusting the model using Modification Indices to eliminate measurement errors. This was done to achieve fit indices for the SEM model. The obtained fit indices are as follows: Chi-square = 374.530, df = 132, Ratio = 2.837, P-value = 0.000, GFI = 0.926, and RMSEA = 0.062. These results demonstrate the model's accuracy and suitability. In addition, the factor loadings obtained from the Confirmatory Factor Analysis were found to be statistically significant, surpassing the threshold of 0.50. It appears that all the fit indices have the potential to conduct the final model test (SEM) to analyse the relationship and test the hypotheses.

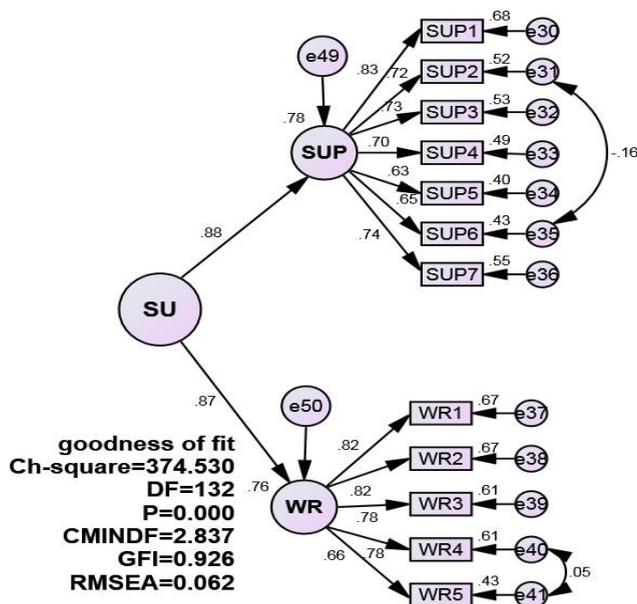


Figure 3: Confirmatory Factorial Analysis (CFA) of the Dependent Variable of Psychological Climate.

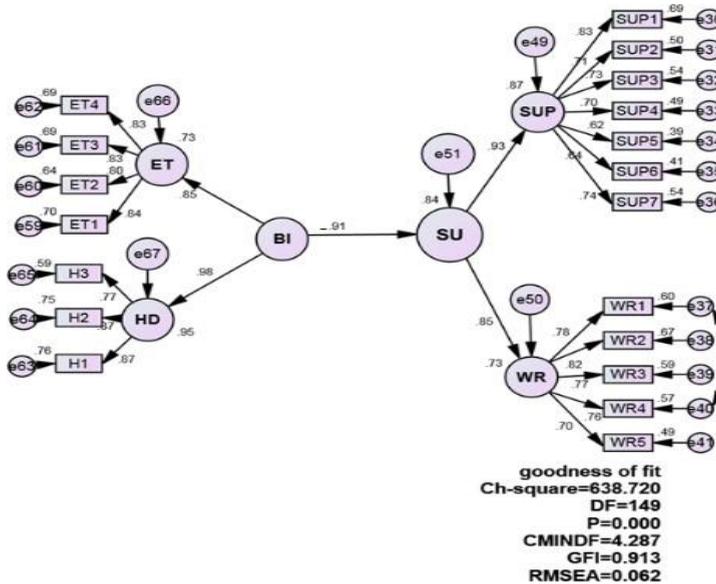
- Prepared by the researchers depending on AMOS V.23.

### The Impact Hypotheses Testing through SEM

#### The Main Hypothesis Testing: There is a Significant Negative Effect Relationship of Behavioural Integrity on Social Undermining in the Workplace.

To examine this hypothesis, we utilised Structural Equation Modelling (SEM). This was conducted to obtain fit indices for the final SEM model and to determine the statistically acceptable indicators that can be used to assess the nature and magnitude of the relationship for testing the hypotheses of the study. An approach of

modification was utilised. Figure 4 and Table 5 display the estimates or indicators for testing the final model of the first main hypothesis of the study at a significance level of 0.05 ( $P \leq 0.05$ ). In addition, they calculate the overall effect size between the study variables.



**Figure 4:** The Impact of Behavioural Integrity on Social Undermining in the Workplace.

- Prepared by the researchers depending on AMOS V.25.

Figure 4 illustrates the opposite relationship of the first main hypothesis: “There is a significant negative effect relationship of behavioural integrity on social undermining in the workplace”:

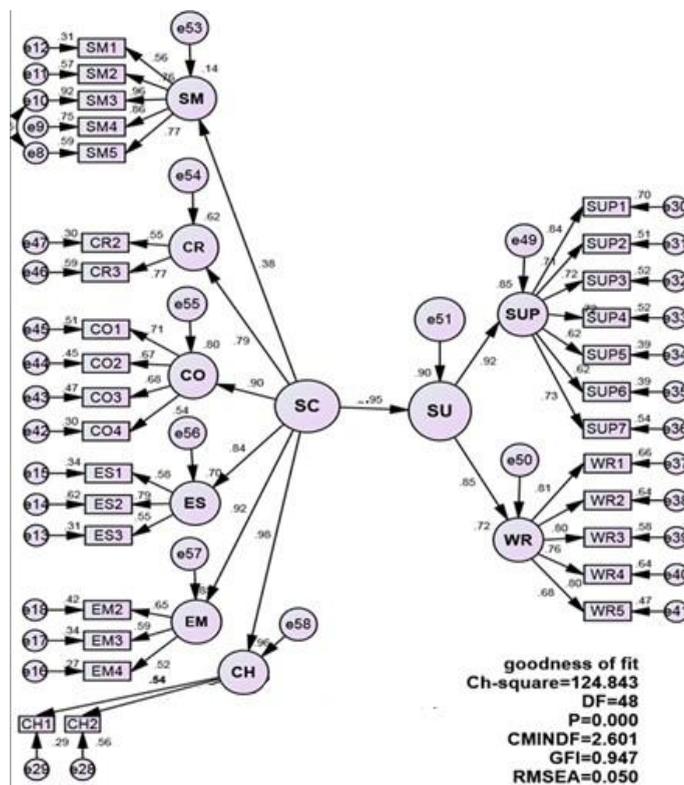
The results presented in Figure 4 and Table 5 indicate that the CR value (14.927) for the connection between behavioural integrity and workplace social undermining exceeds the critical standard value (1.96). The estimated path coefficient for this relationship is (-0.91), suggesting that as behavioural integrity increases, workplace social undermining tends to decrease. As a result, there is a strong and important connection between behavioural integrity and workplace social undermining. The results obtained from Figure 4 and Table 5 strongly support the hypothesis that there is a notable inverse correlation between behavioural integrity and workplace social undermining. The estimated path coefficient for this relationship is (-0.91), which exceeds the critical value of CR (14.927), which surpasses the accepted statistical threshold of 1.96. Furthermore, the estimated determination coefficient (R) stands at 0.84, indicating a robust correlation between the variables. These findings validate the main hypothesis based on the available results. Table 5 presents the reliability of these hypotheses.

**Table 5: The Inverse Relationship of Behavioural Integrity with Workplace Social Undermining.**

Types of Mediation	The Significance of Direct Impact	P. of Indirect Impact	P. of Direct Impact	C.R.	S.E.	Direct Impact	Indirect Impact	Variables
-----	Sig.	***	14.921	0.861	-0.91	----	Behavioural Integrity	---> Social Undermining

- Prepared by the researchers depending on AMOS V.23.

**Testing the Two Main Hypothesis of this Study, which states that:** “There is a significant negative effect relationship of psychological climate on social undermining in the workplace. Through Structural Equation Modelling (SEM)”:



**Figure 5: The Impact of Psychological Climate on Social Undermining in the Workplace.**

- Prepared by the researchers depending on AMOS V.25.

To assess the model fit for the final SEM model and obtain reliable indicators of statistical acceptability, the modification method was utilised. This allows for testing the research hypotheses and answering the research questions by determining the type of relationship and effect. Figure 5 and Table 6 display the estimates or indicators from testing the final model for the second main hypothesis. This hypothesis explores the significant inverse relationship between psychological climate and workplace social undermining, with a significance level of 0.05 ( $P \leq$ ). In addition, it calculates the overall effect size between the study variables.

Figure 5 explains the inverse relationship of the second main hypothesis, which states " There is a significant negative effect relationship of psychological climate on social undermining in the workplace":

From the findings presented in Figure 5 and Table 6, the critical value C.R for the second main hypothesis (psychological climate in workplace social undermining) is 15.814, surpassing the critical standard value of 1.96. The path coefficient for the effect is -0.95, suggesting that there is a negative relationship between psychological climate and workplace social undermining. Thus, a notable and substantial correlation exists between psychological climate and workplace social undermining. The results presented in Figure 5 and Table 6 indicate that there is indeed a notable inverse correlation between psychological climate and workplace social undermining. The estimated path coefficient for the inverse effect is -0.95, indicating a strong statistical significance. The critical value of 15.814 surpasses the accepted threshold of 1.96. In addition, the determination coefficient (R) is calculated to be 0.90, which suggests a robust correlation between the variables. Hence, based on these findings, the second main hypothesis is validated. The following table illustrates that:

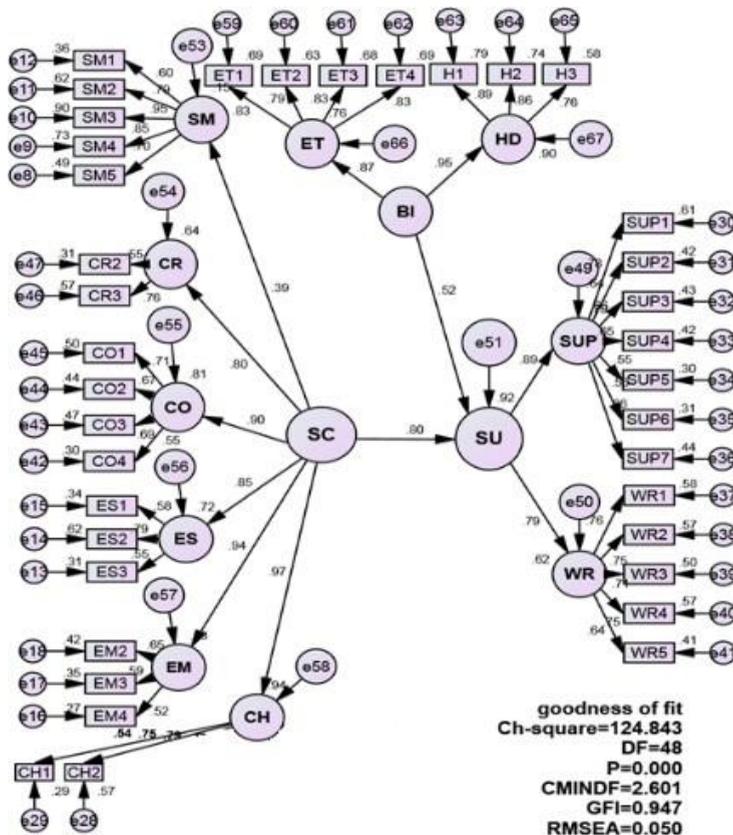
**Table 6: The Relationship between Psychological Climate and Social Undermining in the Workplace.**

Types of Mediation	The Significance of Direct Impact	P. of Indirect Impact	P. of Direct Impact	C.R.	S.E.	Direct Impact	Indirect Impact	Variables	
								Psychological Climate	Social Undermining
-----	Sig.		***	15.814	0.961	-0.95	----	--->	

- Prepared by the researchers depending on AMOS V.25.

To examine the third main hypothesis of the study, which suggests a significant negative relationship between behavioural integrity and psychological climate on social undermining in the workplace, the researchers utilised structural equation modelling (SEM).

This was done to assess the model fit for the final SEM model and obtain reliable indicators that can be used to determine the type of relationship and effect for testing the study hypotheses. Figure 6 and Table 7 present the estimates or indicators obtained from testing the final model for the third main hypothesis. The significance level for this test was set at 0.05 ( $P \leq$ ). In addition, the study examined the overall effect size between the variables.



**Figure 6:** The Impact of Behavioural Integrity and Psychological Climate on Social Undermining in the Workplace.

- Prepared by the researchers depending on AMOS V.25.

Figure 6 provides a visual representation of the inverse relationship described in the third main hypothesis, which posits that “there is a significant negative influence relationship between behavioural integrity and psychological climate on social undermining in the workplace”. The figure displays the following key information:

The analysis of Figure 6 and Table 7 shows that the critical value C.R for the relationship between behavioural integrity and workplace social undermining is 5.227, exceeding the critical standard value of 1.96. The path coefficient for the effect is -0.80, suggesting that higher levels of behavioural integrity and psychological climate are associated with lower levels of workplace social undermining. There is a notable inverse relationship between behavioural integrity and workplace social undermining. The findings from Figure 6 and Table 7 support the hypothesis that there is a significant and meaningful inverse relationship between behavioural integrity and psychological climate with workplace social undermining. This inference is supported by the following key findings:

1. The estimated path coefficient for the inverse effect is -0.80, indicating a significant and strong inverse relationship between behavioural integrity, psychological climate, and workplace social undermining.
2. The calculated critical value (C.R.) for this relationship is 5.227, which exceeds the accepted critical standard value of 1.96, indicating statistical significance.
3. The determination coefficient (R) is estimated to be 0.92, suggesting a high degree of relationship strength between the variables.

Based on the provided evidence, we can conclude that the main hypothesis is validated. The table below presents the estimated reliability values for the study hypothesis.

**Table 7: The Relationship between Behavioural Integrity and Psychological Climate in Social Undermining in the Workplace.**

Types of Mediation	The Significance of Direct Impact	P. of Indirect Impact	P. of Direct Impact	C.R.	S.E.	Direct Impact	Indirect Impact	Variables
-----	Sig.	***	5.227	.353	-0.80	----	Behavioural Integrity and Psychological Climate	---> Social Undermining

- Prepared by the researchers depending on AMOS V.25.

## Discussion

The present study examines the impact of behavioural integrity and psychological climate on reducing workplace social undermining. The study variables are

connected through the theory of fairness heuristic, which proposes that fairness in transactions influences individuals' behaviour and decision-making in different situations (Lind, 2001). Based on social exchange theory (Blau, 1986), individuals who offer support to others anticipate receiving something in return in the future (Cook et al., 2013). Thus, colleagues have an impact on one another's social exchange quality and their responses to it (Takeuchi, Yun, & Wong, 2011). The study findings confirmed these relationships by establishing a connection between behavioural integrity and workplace social undermining, as well as psychological climate and workplace social undermining. In simple terms, placing a greater importance on behavioural integrity, which involves being honest with employees and keeping promises, is associated with reduced instances of workplace social undermining.

Figure 1 shows the results of the Goodness of Fit Indices for the independent variable, which is composed of two main components that include 10 items. A strong psychological climate cultivates empathy and trust among employees within the organisation, leading to productive and mutually beneficial relationships.

### Managerial Implications

The study found that employees in government hospitals exhibit a satisfactory level of behavioural integrity, along with the existence of psychological climate factors that can mitigate workplace social undermining. When managers' statements are consistent with their beliefs and offer support to employees, it presents an opportunity to reduce social undermining in the workplace from both coworkers and managers. Thus, we advise hospital administrations to uphold behavioural integrity and enhance the psychological climate to address negative interactions that may jeopardise social relationships within these healthcare facilities. The potential benefits of this can positively influence their future performance. Mulaphong (2023) found that workplace social undermining significantly impacts and damages employees. These factors result in employees leaving the organisation, experiencing feelings of mistrust and injustice, and increased absenteeism.

Hospital administrations should prioritise behavioural integrity. Gibney, Zagenczyk, & Masters (2009) found that employees are more likely to disregard organisations that mistreat them and impede their goals. Employees may respond to a perceived misalignment between their personal values and the organization's values by protecting their self-esteem. Hence, it is imperative to prioritise the enhancement of the psychological climate to mitigate workplace social undermining. It is important for researchers and administrators to focus on studying factors that contribute to reducing workplace social undermining, as it negatively affects organisational relationships.

## Limitations

This study, like many others, has several limitations. The limitations of this study include: The study aims to broaden its scope by including a wide range of health service workers and comparing them to those employed in the private health sector. Secondly, a longitudinal study will be conducted to investigate social undermining in the workplace, specifically in the Iraqi Health Sector. The researchers encountered challenges in distributing the questionnaire and obtaining necessary permissions from governmental authorities. These obstacles limited the number of questionnaires distributed and interviews conducted to explore the relationship between leaders and workers.

## Suggestions for Further Research

This study aims to examine the association between behavioural integrity, psychological climate, and social undermining in the workplace. The study found that behavioural integrity and psychological climate contribute to reducing social undermining. Future studies should investigate additional factors that may contribute to reducing social undermining in the workplace. Conducting prospective studies on personal characteristics, trust, and their relationship with social undermining, using social exchange theory and psychological contract violation as frameworks, would be valuable. These investigations would enhance our comprehension of the intricate dynamics involved in reducing social undermining and provide insights for interventions to promote a more positive work environment.

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