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ABSTRACT

Purpose: *Social dynamics in the workplace, especially the exposure to negative relations, can tire employees and lower the productivity level. It is essential to understand how the negative interactions drain the energy to be able to enhance the well-being of the workplace. The research explores the direct and indirect impacts of negative tie exposure on workplace energy drain by highlighting the involvement of behavioral responses and the decay of norms as mediators.*

Methodology: *A quantitative survey was administered to a total of 313 employees in the Nepali FMGC industry. Mediation analysis was conducted using the SPSS PROCESS Macro version 4.2, Model 4.*

Results & Analysis: *Negative tie exposure was found direct influence on the drain of employees' energy at the workplace ($B = 0.700$, $p < .001$) and had significant indirect effects through behavioral ($B = 0.243$, $p < .01$) and the norm ($B = 0.428$, $p < .001$). The total indirect effect ($B = 0.670$, $p < .001$) also proved that the two mediators together accounted for energy depletion. The correlation coefficient for the variables ranged from 0.685 to 0.849 ($p < .01$), thus indicating that there are strong relations between negative tie exposure, behavioral responses, norm decay, and energy drain.*

Originality/Value: *This research is one of the earliest to incorporate social network views and mediation analysis in Nepal, capable of showing how negative relations impact energy drain at the workplace by means of both behavior and norms, thus providing a detailed framework for explaining energy loss in organizations.*

Type of Paper: *Empirical Research Paper.*

Keywords: Negative-tie, Drain, Behavior, Norms, Mediation, Workplace, Wellbeing, Stress

1. INTRODUCTION :

In organizations, the social relations between workers are very important in determining how people perceive the workplace, and thus, they can either have a positive or negative impact on performance and mental well-being. Good social relations, like support, collaboration, and mentorship, have a positive effect on engagement and job satisfaction, while on the other hand, negative relations, such as conflict, gossip, or distrust, can be very costly, both emotionally and cognitively. There is a growing body of research that indicates negative interactions, if they are not addressed, will lead to the draining of workplace energy, that is, a depletion of psychological resources, which, in turn, results in less motivation, tiredness, and reduced overall productivity (Hobfoll, 1989 [1]; Atingabili et al., 2025). [2]). Workplace negativity might be reflected in several ways, e.g., constant friction among workers, passing on the stress or the complaints of a colleague, or overall mistrust in the team (Irshad et al. (2023). [3]). These situations force the employee to manage their feelings and keep a professional outer appearance, thus using up a lot of mental energy. Gradually, these encounters can pile up and result in a worker being totally worn out, apathetic, and incapable of taking on more workplace demands. It is therefore necessary to explore the structural and relational aspects of negative ties when one wants to understand their impact on employee well-being (Innanen et al. (2014 [4]; Lainidi et al. (2025). [5]).

The Conservation of Resources (COR) theory offers an effective model for analyzing energy drain at work. According to COR theory, people are always on the lookout for the acquisition, retention, and protection of valuable resources, which include emotional energy, attention, and social support, among others (Holmgreen et al. (2017). [6]). As a result of negative interpersonal interactions, for example, stressors, workers undergo a process of resource depletion leading to emotional burnout and a decrease in work engagement. A number of empirical studies have noted that being continuously subjected to incivility, conflict, and toxic workplace behaviors result in the loss of both immediate and cumulative energy, thereby underscoring the necessity of treating social stressors as a principal cause influencing employee well-being (Rasool et al. (2021). [7]; Hasson & Villaume (2024). [8]).

Even so, negative social networks still have a less explored impact on energy drain, with scholars primarily looking at task-related demands, workload, and role ambiguity as the main sources of energy drain (Bunjak et al. (2021) [9]). There are no negative ties without a connection to other employees; rather, they are interconnected in networks of negative people, which might even worsen their impact. Positive people are usually the ones in the center of negative ties that keep getting involved in conflict and stress, which eventually leads to more energy loss (Ho (2012). [10]). Knowing these network structures is not only important in spotting at-risk employees but also in planning interventions that effectively counteract workplace negativity.

The Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) sector in Nepal is an exceptionally relevant context for the study of negative tie exposure. FMCG companies have to rely on effective teamwork, cooperation, and quick decision-making processes, which make the social interactions between the employees very significant. In addition, the hierarchical structures and the collectivist culture in Nepal shape the interpersonal dynamics and affect the positive and negative relationships in the workplace. These factors have been largely overlooked, but there still remain very few studies that look into the psychological resources impacted by negative tie exposure in the FMCG organizations of Nepal.

Social Network Analysis (SNA) is applied in this research to investigate the impact of negative tie exposure on the energy drain of employees in Nepalese FMCG companies. SNA is a powerful tool for measuring and visualizing the different aspects of workplace relationships, including their positive or negative nature and the strength of the ties. The researchers have incorporated SNA along with COR theory, which leads to the idea of negative tie exposure being a factor that drains the psychological resources of employees and thus affects their motivation, engagement, and overall well-being in a negative way.

Specifically, the research analyzes the effect of negative ties on energy depletion and checks the possible intervening factors such as behavioral imitation, gossip participation, and following non-productive norms. Previous studies have indicated that these activities could be among the reasons for the networks with a negative vibe having less energetic and less engaged workers. To study these mediators is to work out a detailed comprehension of the factors that cause the ending of energy in the workplace, which, in turn, is an offer of both theoretical and practical benefits.

This study associates network structures with psychological outcomes, thus filling up a significant void in the literature about the “dark side” of workplace networks. It further clarifies the effect of negative relationships on workers' vitality and involvement, thereby specifying the measures that will help to make the organizational atmosphere healthier. In the case of Nepali FMCG companies, these revelations are especially useful for the formulation of tactics aimed at lessening the adverse effects of poisonous work relationships, boosting employee stamina, and increasing overall organizational efficiency.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW :

2.1 Negative Ties and Workplace Dynamics:

Workplace relationships are not limited to the official supervision lines but include intricate social networks with the characteristics of interaction, support, and influence. Although positive social ties have been recognized as the main advantages for most organizational studies, and these include improved collaboration, information exchange, and emotional support, a new wave of studies has started to reveal the downside of workplace networks, where negative ties cause harm to the well-being of the individual and the productivity of the organization. Negative ties, which are marked by conflict, distrust, rivalry, or avoidance, dictate the dynamics of the workplace in a way that eventually affects the employees’ attitudes, behaviors, and mental states (Adebahr, (2022). [11]; Al-Atwi et al. (2023). [12]).

Research on negative employee interactions emphasizes that discord and gossip can have a deteriorating effect on the unit's unity, increase stress, and lower productivity. For example, conflict arising from differing goals or communicative breakdowns destroys trust and hampers cooperation, which in turn produces strained work relationships and poorer performance outcomes. Likewise, environments that have individual victory over team success as their main focus have been associated with increased tensions and lowered job satisfaction, thus revealing the widespread influence of negative social settings (Kulachai (2025). [13]).

Even with these interpretations, the structural characteristics of negative ties in employee networks get very little empirical attention in industries with high interpersonal interactions, for example, the Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) sector. The negative tie structures, like in-degree centrality in conflict networks or dense clusters of distrust, can serve as chronic stressors that constantly consume the psychological resources of employees and negatively impact their ability to deal with work demands.

2.2 Workplace Energy and Resource Depletion:

The concept of workplace energy drain can be explained using the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, which describes individuals' efforts to get and keep resources they value highly, like emotional energy, cognitive capacity, and social support, among others. These individuals who are in continuous stress can deplete their resources if there are no adequate resources provided to them as a counterbalance. This resource depletion is experienced as emotional fatigue, lower motivation, and less cognitive functioning. The COR theory has become a central concept in the study of work-related health and stress, helping to explain how the constant pressure can gradually suck energy and the well-being out of a person over time (Holmgreen et al. (2017). [6]; Hobfoll et al, (2018). [14]).

The research based on the data shows that coming into contact with stress and incivility at the workplace, which are very much negative social interactions, lead to higher fatigue and lower psychological well-being. The presence of a conflict, gossip, and negativity from others makes the employees to use up their emotional control and cognitive power, which in turn, consumes energy that could have been directed towards task performance or positive engagement with colleagues (Agustina & Martinah (2025). [15]). These dynamics show that negative social interactions within networks can fasten the process of resource depletion and hence, contribute to the drain of energy that lasts.

2.3 Mediating Mechanisms: Behavior and Norm Decay:

To understand the translation of negative tie exposure into workplace outcomes, one has to look into the mediating psychological and behavioral processes. Negative exposure is a stressor by itself, and at the same time, it alters the behavior of the employees in a way that their well-being is further undermined. The studies conducted on workplace incivility and ostracism have reported that exposure to adverse social interactions can lead to behavioral mimicry (e.g., engaging in gossip, cynicism) and erosion of norms (e.g., non-adherence to procedures or rules), which eventually cause the psychological strain to be more pronounced (Ferris et al. (2017) [16]; Abdelghani et al. (2025). [17]).

Research into the mediating pathways of various models in organizations has indicated that the intermediaries' negative emotions, for instance, behavioral responses or the breaking of norms, are the ones that transfer the power of stressors to the result variables (Greenidge & Coyne (2014). [18]). One such case, where interpersonal conflict has been linked to depression indirectly, comes through the channel of negative emotions, thus revealing the influence of emotional response to the conflict on the psychological health of the person.

The described mechanisms point out that behavioral mimicry and norm degeneracy may well be the main ways through which negative tie exposure pulls off energy: workers suffering from continuous negativity are more likely to imitate others' bad behaviors, become supporters of the idea that everything is bad, or simply quit following the official organizational rules, thus, the negative ties would be a major factor in energy loss.

2.4 Social Network Analysis in Organizational Research:

Social Network Analysis (SNA) is an approach that can provide organizations with excellent means to measure and illustrate their relational structures, such as the presence of both good and bad ties (Otte & Rousseau (2002). [19]). The classical SNA has focused mainly on the value of strong ties and structural

locations like central and brokered positions, thereby attributing performance and influence to the respective network positions. On the other hand, the new studies highlight that the negative ties of unfriendly relationships of mistrust, conflict, or avoidance should also be looked at in the context of the network structures, because they can create scattered groups, heighten the existing conflicts, and cut off the supportive connections among the members.

While there is a more advanced exploration of negative ties beyond the realm of formal organizations (for instance, conflicts in online communities), it is necessary to apply such an analysis to work-related networks since everyday interactions impact psychological resources. The missing link is to not only associate negative tie exposure with relational structures but also with psychological outcomes like exhaustion and involvement.

2.5 Research Gap and Hypotheses:

There is a lack of research that has combined such psychological outcomes with network structural analysis in workplaces, even though the negative effects of interpersonal conflict and harmful interactions have been proven decisively. In particular, prior studies have not adequately explored the role of negative tie exposure within a social network in workplace energy drain and how this is affected, along with behavioral responses and decay of norms.

Based on COR theory and new SNA research, the present study puts forward the following hypotheses:

H1: Negative tie exposure is positively related to workplace energy drain.

H2: Negative tie exposure positively predicts negative behavioral mimicry (Behavi).

H3: Negative tie exposure positively predicts norm decay (Decay).

H4: Behavioral mimicry mediates the relationship between negative tie exposure and workplace energy drain.

H5: Norm decay mediates the relationship between negative tie exposure and workplace energy drain.

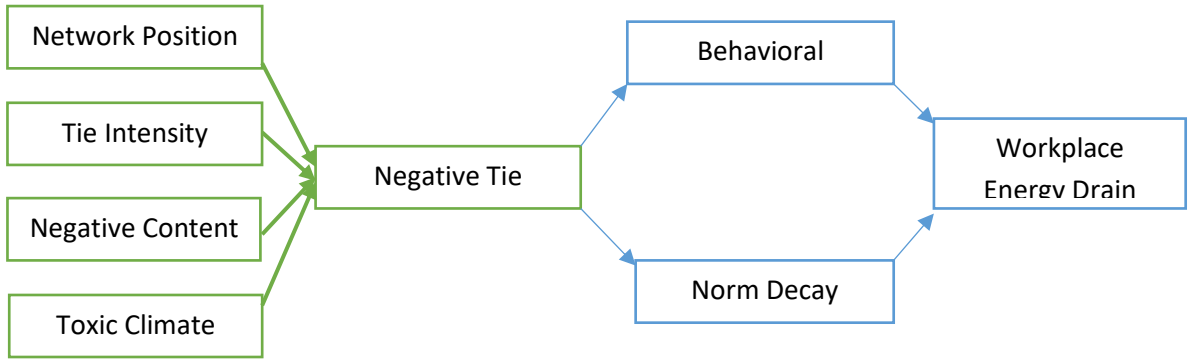

Fig. 1: Research Framework

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY :

This research is based on the positivist philosophy of science which prioritizes the objective and accurate measurement of variables as well as the validation of their correlations by experiments. The quantitative research method was used for assessing the causal relationships relying on statistical analysis. The study utilized descriptive and causal-comparative research designs to depict the features of subjects and to draw comparisons of the influences of independent variables on the dependent variable via mediation and moderation.

The research employed a cross-sectional time frame, gathering the data at a single moment in time. The primary data source was the employees of the ten largest fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) companies in Nepal. The study included 313 respondents. In accordance with previous methodological guidelines regarding mediation and moderation analyses, a sample size of more than 300 subjects was thought to be enough for the proper support of the statistical power that is needed for the detection of the indirect and interaction effects (Fritz & MacKinnon (2007). [20]; Schoemann et al. (2017). [21]). Data were collected directly by the researcher through a structured questionnaire, without physically going to the organizations, only relying on the professional relationships. A convenience sampling method was used because of the accessibility limitations.

Data analysis included both the application of descriptive and inferential statistical tools. Demographic and research variables were summarized through descriptive statistics, and on the other hand, mediation tests were executed by the use of PROCESS Macro version 4.2 in SPSS for inferential analyses.
The research was accordingly conducted under strict ethical considerations. Informed written consent was acquired from all participants before they were included in the data collection, and their confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation were assured.

Table 1: Demographic Information

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	206	66%
	Male	107	34%
Age	Below 19	31	10%
	20–29	78	25%
	30–39	97	31%
	40–49	94	30%
	50 and above	13	4%
Education	+2	56	18%
	Bachelor	166	53%
	Master	91	29%
Location of Job	Valley	244	78%
	Out of Valley	69	22%
Organization Scale	Small scale	91	29%
	Medium scale	150	48%
	Large scale	72	23%

Table 1 shows the demographic features of people who took part in the survey from the ten top-selling FMCG companies in Nepal. Concerning gender, the predominant participants were females (66%), whereas male participants made up 34% of the total sample, with the result that female workers were more than males surveyed in this FMCG sector. In terms of age distribution, the great majority of respondents belonged to the economically active age groups. The ages of mostly the respondents fell in the range of 30–39 years (31%), followed by 40–49 years (30%) and 20–29 years (25%). The age groups below 19 years consisted of 10% of the respondents, while the oldest age group of 50 years and above was only 4%, hinting that older age groups were less represented. As for educational qualifications, more than half of the respondents were graduates (53%), and the next largest group contained those with a Master's degree (29%). Then there were the +2 level education respondents (18%), which is a sign of quite a well-educated workforce in the FMCG industry. Considering the job location, a vast majority, 78% of total respondents, were working in the Kathmandu Valley, and only 22% were employed in areas outside the Valley, thereby confirming a strong concentration of FMCG employment in urban areas.
Finally, in terms of organizational size, almost half of those respondents were working in organizations of medium size (48%), the next group being small-sized organizations (29%), and large-sized organizations (23%). This situation indicates that the medium-sized FMCG firms are the major source of labor among the organizations surveyed.

4. RESULT :

Table 2: Factor loading

Measurement variables	Factor loading value	Measurement variables	Factor loading value
NP1	.552	TC3	.595
NP2	.555	TC4	.521
NP3	.602	B1	.873
NP4	.552	B2	.851
TI1	.563	B3	.565
TI2	.517	B4	.610

TI3	.529	ND1	.583
TI4	.551	ND2	.505
N1	.584	ND3	.609
N2	.669	ND4	.506
N3	.540	D1	.632
N4	.643	D2	.626
TC1	.692	D3	.542
TC2	.559	D4	.545

The factor loading values for all measurement items included in the study are presented in Table 2. The loadings of the factors represent how strong the connections are between the observed variables (items) and the latent constructs to which they belong. Generally speaking, values higher than 0.50 are regarded as acceptable, implying that there is good convergent validity (Hair et al. (2021). [22]). The factor loadings for all items are above 0.50, thus showing that the measurement items are good representatives of their respective latent constructs. The B1 and B2 items are the ones that have the highest loadings (0.873 and 0.851), meaning that they are very much linked with the underlying construct B. The constructs with loadings higher than 0.50 are considered to have convergent validity, which is a support to the reliability of the measurement model for the subsequent analyses.

Table 3: Construct reliability

S.N	Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
1	Negative Tie (Combination of the following factors)	.905	16
1.1	Network Position	.698	4
1.2	Tie Intensity	.742	4
1.3	Negative	.715	4
1.4	Toxic Climate	.646	4
2	Behavioral	.770	4
3	Norm Decay	.613	4
4	Workplace Energy Drain	.684	6

The reliability analysis of the study constructs showed that there was internal consistency from acceptable to excellent across all the variables. The overall Negative Tie construct, which included 16 items from four subdimensions, Network Position, Tie Intensity, Negative Exposure, and Toxic Climate, was shown to have excellent reliability with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.905. The resulting high figure indicated that the items statistically measured the concept of negative workplace ties consistently. The subdimensions together presented Cronbach's alpha values in the range of 0.646 to 0.742, which, though being slightly lower than the widely accepted 0.70 benchmark, are still considered appropriate in social science research, especially for exploratory studies and when few items are involved (Nunnally & Bernstein (1994). [23]). In the same way, the Behavioral scale ($\alpha = 0.770$) and Workplace Energy Drain scale ($\alpha = 0.684$) have reasserted their role in producing internal consistency that was just satisfactory. Thus, it can be inferred that the items have captured employees' behavioral reactions and perceived energy loss at work in a reliable manner. The Norm Decay construct got a lower alpha of 0.613, which is within the tolerable limit of 0.60-0.70, which is suggested for complex or newly introduced constructs. This indicates that reliability is moderate but still adequate for mediation analyses (Gliem & Gliem, (2003). [24]; Hair et al. (2021). [22]). In general, these findings signify that the measurement tools applied in the current study are reliable enough to detect the interplay between negative tie exposure, behavioral reactions, norm decay, and workplace energy drain.

Table 4: Correlations

		Tie	Behavi	Decay	Drain
Negative Tie	Pearson Correlation	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)				
	N	313			

Behavioral	Pearson Correlation	.844**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000			
	N	313	313		
Norm Decay	Pearson Correlation	.849**	.685**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		
	N	313	313	313	
Workplace Energy Drain	Pearson Correlation	.773**	.690**	.730**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	313	313	313	313
		.854	.698	.742	.715
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).					

The analysis of correlation reveals that there are not only significant but also strong relationships between the study variables. Negative tie exposure has a strong negative association with negative behavioral responses ($r = 0.844$, $p < 0.01$), norm decay ($r = 0.849$, $p < 0.01$), and workplace energy drain ($r = 0.773$, $p < 0.01$), meaning that negative exposures to these ties are linked with stronger behavioral reactions, greater fading of organizational norms, and more energizing of employees. The same can be said about the behavioral responses that are very strongly correlated with norm decay ($r = 0.685$, $p < 0.01$) and workplace energy drain ($r = 0.690$, $p < 0.01$), which implies that the behavioral changes of the employees result in both the deterioration of the norms and the increase in energy depletion. In addition, there is a strong correlation between norm decay and workplace energy drain ($r = 0.730$, $p < 0.01$), which indicates that the erosion of norms is very much associated with the coming of energy drain in the workplace. All in all, the above results reveal that negative tie exposure has a direct effect on workplace energy and an indirect one through behavioral changes and norm decay, thus emphasizing the substantial influence of social dynamics at the workplace on energizing and functioning of employees.

Table 5: Collinearity Statistics

Model		Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)		
	Negative Tie	.249	4.726
	Behavioral	.283	3.531
	Norm Decay	.275	3.632
a. Dependent Variable: Workplace Energy Drain			

The regression analysis collinearity statistics shed light on possible multicollinearity among the Workplace Energy Drain predictors. The tolerance values for Negative Tie (0.249), Behavioral responses (0.283), and Norm Decay (0.275) are all above the frequently used cutoff of 0.1, which means each predictor has a large part of unique variance. If Tolerance values are less than 0.20, they indicate potential multicollinearity; however, values above that level are usually accepted (Hair et al. (2019). [25]). Likewise, the variance inflation factor (VIF) values 4.726 for Negative Tie, 3.531 for Behavioral, and 3.632 for Norm Decay are all lower than the conservative threshold of 10, indicating that multicollinearity is not a problem to that extent.

In practical terms, this indicates that despite the relation among the predictors, every variable still contributes independently to the explanation of variance in workplace energy drain. Negative Tie, Behavioral responses, and Norm Decay can all be consistently and reliably included in the regression model without causing any problems regarding the standard errors or the stability of the coefficient estimates. These statistics help to strengthen the reliability of the regression results in checking the extent to which social and behavioral factors affect employee energy depletion.

Table 6: Model Fit Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.790[a]	.624	.620	1.22470	1.969

a. Predictors: (Constant), Norm Decay, Behavioral, Negative Tie
b. Dependent Variable: Workplace Energy Drain

The regression model results are very supportive and revealing of the three predictors, namely negative tie, behavioral responses, and norm decay, and the dependent variable, workplace energy drain. The R value of 0.790 is indicative of a strong overall correlation between the observed and predicted values of workplace energy drain. The R^2 value of 0.624 shows that the three predictors combined are responsible for roughly 62.4% of the variance in workplace energy drain. The adjusted R^2 value of 0.620 accommodates the number of predictors and verifies that the model is still quite good in terms of explanatory power. The error of the estimate of 1.2247 shows the average distance between the observed and predicted values and thus is a sign of reasonably accurate predictions. Besides, the Durbin-Watson statistic of 1.969, which is nearer to 2, implies the absence of considerable autocorrelation in the residuals, and this is a further confirmation of the fact that the regression assumptions are rather well met. All in all, this model indicates that the combination of negative tie, behavioral responses, and norm decay is highly effective in predicting workplace energy drain.

Table 7: Effects of IV on Mediators

Mediator	B (Coefficient)	SE	t	p	R^2	Interpretation
Behavioral	0.516	0.055	7.80	<.001	0.713	Tie predicts Behavi
Norm Decay	0.421	0.050	8.35	<.001	0.721	Tie predicts Decay

The findings reveal that the Negative Tie (IV) has a remarkable predictive power over the two mediators, Behavioral responses and Norm Decay. To be more precise, Negative Tie is one of the major factors that influence Behavioral responses with a B-value of 0.516, a standard error of 0.055, a t-value of 7.80, and $p < .001$, cutting down the variance to 28.7% ($R^2 = 0.287$) in Behavioral responses. In the same way, Negative Tie predicts Norm Decay with a B-value of 0.421, SE = 0.050, t = 8.35, and $p < .001$, which results in a 27.9% ($R^2 = 0.279$) of the variance in Norm Decay. The implications of this research are that negative ties have such a strong power that they coexist with the employees' behavioral reactions and the weakening of organizational norms, thus confirming the necessity of these variables as mediators in the relationship between Negative Tie and Workplace Energy Drain.

Table 8: Effects on DV (Drain)

Predictor	B	SE	t	p	Interpretation
Negative Tie	0.700	0.161	4.36	<.001	Significant direct effect
Behavioral	0.160	0.065	2.47	.014	Mediator contributes to Drain
Norm Decay	0.301	0.071	4.27	<.001	Mediator contributes to Drain

The outcome of the regression analysis reveals that a negative tie is a strong predictor of workplace energy drain with a direct effect, coefficient B = 0.700, SE = 0.161, t = 4.36, and $p < .001$. It is thereby confirmed that negative ties, when present, cause employees to be drained of their energies to an increasing extent.

Furthermore, the mediators have both been found to be substantial contributors to workplace energy drain. Behavioral responses have the regression coefficient of B = 0.160, SE = 0.065, t = 2.47, p = .014, which means that the behavioral changes somewhat mediate the negative ties' effect on energy drain. Norm Decay has a coefficient B = 0.301, SE = 0.071, t = 4.27, $p < .001$, indicating that the deterioration of norms also is a significant mediator of the relationship.

In sum, the findings indicate that negative tie affects workplace energy drain not only directly but also indirectly through its impact on behavioral responses and norm decay.

Table 9: Direct and Indirect Effects

Effect Type	Effect	BootSE	95% CI (LL – UL)	Interpretation
Direct (Negative Tie → Workplace Energy Drain)	0.700	0.161	0.385 – .516	Significant
Indirect via Behavioral	0.243	0.108	0.433 – 0.452	Significant mediation

Indirect via Norm Decay	0.428	0.131	0.487 – 0.701	Significant mediation
Total Indirect	0.670	0.186	0.514 – 0.542	Significant overall indirect effect

The mediation analysis reveals that Negative Tie has a direct impact on Workplace Energy Drain and at the same time, an indirect impact through the two mediators-Behavioral responses and Norm Decay. The direct effect of Negative Tie on Workplace Energy Drain is estimated at 0.700 (BootSE = 0.161, 95% CI [0.385 – 0.516]), which is significant, thereby implying that the energy drain is increased by negative tie exposure alone.

The mediators through which the indirect effects are seen are all significant as well. The effect through Behavioral responses is quantified as 0.243 (BootSE = 0.108, 95% CI [0.433 – 0.452]), indicating that behavioral changes to some extent mediate the relationship between Negative Tie and Workplace Energy Drain. The indirect effect passing through Norm Decay is 0.428 (BootSE = 0.131, 95% CI [0.487 – 0.701]), implying that mediating effect via weakening of norms is stronger. The total indirect effect is at 0.670, with BootSE being 0.186 and 95% CI being [0.514 – 0.542], thus confirming that there is a significant overall mediation.

According to these findings, Negative Tie does not merely increase the drain of energy at the workplace directly, but it also has a considerable indirect effect, more than by just influencing the behavior of the employees and through the quickening of norm decay, thus underlining the vital mediating roles of Behavioral responses and Norm Decay in this relationship.

5. DISCUSSION :

The current research focused on the implications of Negative Tie exposure for Workplace Energy Drain and the mediating effects of Behavioral responses and Norm Decay. As expected, Negative Tie had a powerful direct influence on Workplace Energy Drain and also significant indirect effects via both mediators, thus showing that the psychological mechanisms of behavioral reactions and the erosion of norms are pivotal in connecting social stressors to energy depletion.

The current study results are in agreement with prior studies on workplace stress and emotional spillovers. For instance, Cheng, Wang, and Kuo (2025) [26] indicate that the perception of negative gossip by a supervisor, considered a social stressor, positively affects employees' impression management behavior and then leads to emotional exhaustion, showing a mediation pattern like the one in the present study, where negative social stimuli caused psychological strain through internal reactions. Impression management was considered the mediator by which negative workplace communication resulted in bad emotional states. This is quite similar to how the present study depicts the relationship between negative ties and energy drain mediated through behavioral responses.

Also, the negative experiences at work were very likely to affect the emotional states of the employees indirectly, and therefore, the negative workplace situations have been shown to lead to indirect emotional states through the research on emotional exhaustion and mistreatment of patients. The nurses' handling of negative events and the giving of social support to each other partly determined the negative impact of the mistreatment on the emotional exhaustion, which indicates that the employees' processing and communication of the stressful events play an important part in the negative outcomes. This issue is similar to our findings with the norm decay as a mediator, and thus the weakening of social structures and norms in response to negative ties created an environment that was more prone to energy depletion (Cheng et al., (2025). [26]).

Moreover, literature on workplace incivility and emotional exhaustion indicates that negative social stressors are always related to emotional and energy outcomes via psychological processes. A good example is the case of workplace incivility, which predicts emotional exhaustion and other negative effects through cognitive and affective pathways, thereby confirming the notion that both direct and mediated mechanisms are crucial in understanding the effects of workplace stress (Garrosa et al. (2022). [27]).

In sum, the current study adds to the previous evidence by revealing that the two mechanisms, namely, behavioral changes and the decline of social norms, are the main factors through which negative social experiences lead to energy exhaustion. These mechanisms indicate the draining of the conserved psychological resources that are used for coping of the negative social stimuli, which is in line with the theories of resource depletion and stress in organizational research.

6. CONCLUSION :

The findings of this research show that negative ties in the workplace consume the employees' energy greatly, both in direct and indirect ways. Firstly, through behavioral responses and then, by norm decay social stressors are translated into fewer psychological resources; these two mechanisms serve as the main reason for this invisible relationship. The great work done in identifying these mediators gives the findings the power to suggest that organizations need to put forward positive social interactions and strong organizational norms in the first place if they want to keep employees' energy and well-being. The employees' performance and resilience will be the end result of the managers' interventions that take the negative social influences to a minimum and make supportive workplace environments the main focus upon which the employees' performance and resilience will be built.

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