

Workplace Bullying: What It Is? What Are Its Consequences And How To Mitigate It? A Literature Review

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ABSTRACT

It is common to categorize workplace bullying as either personal or work-related. Bullying that has an impact on workload (e.g., lowering responsibilities) and work procedures (e.g., insulting a person's professional status) is classified as work process bullying; bullying that has an impact on both direct unpleasant behaviour and indirect behaviour (e.g., exclusion and isolation) is classified as workplace bullying.

Workplace bullying is a serious and destructive problem that affects employees and organizations worldwide. Research shows that bullying at work can have a significant impact on the mental and physical health of employees, as well as on their productivity and job satisfaction. Studies indicate that workplace bullying is prevalent across different industries and sectors, with estimates suggesting that anywhere from 10% to 50% of employees have dealt with some form of workplace bullying. However, despite its widespread occurrence, workplace bullying remains largely underreported and under-addressed.

Organizations have a responsibility to prevent and address workplace bullying by implementing policies and procedures that promote a positive and respectful workplace culture. Training programs can also be helpful in raising awareness of workplace bullying and providing employees with the skills and knowledge they need to identify and respond to bullying behavior. The current study will combine a well-detailed exposition of symptoms of bullying that includes a thorough analysis of the various regulatory processes at work. This study will be guided by three questions whose answers will tell us the personalities of bullies and victims, impact of bullying on the organization as well as on the individual. Also, the purpose of this project is to explain the development and evaluation of anti-bullying interventions aimed at minimizing the effects of bullying at workplace through a systematic review of existing literature....

1. INTRODUCTION:

Bullying is characterized as a recurring pattern of aggressive behavior, both verbal and physical, by an individual or group in a position of power who purposefully target a person with the intention of inflicting them emotional or bodily harm. An incident needs to meet three criteria in order to be classified as bullying: First and foremost, it needs to be aggressive and purposeful, with the aim of hurting the target. Second, the behavior must be directed towards the same individual or group and must happen frequently over time. Third, the bully and the victim must also have a power imbalance, with the bully having more social or physical influence over the victim.

The term "workplace bullying" refers to the persistently negative treatment of an individual by one or more coworkers, which is regarded as improper and unethical behavior in the workplace. It involves threatening, demeaning, or disparaging a client, customer, or coworker in front of other clients, customers, or coworkers. It can negatively impact a victim's life in a number of ways, many of which are related to how productive they are. Bullying negatively impacts the victims' physical, mental, and emotional well-being, making it difficult for them to prioritize and focus on their work. The types of workplace

bullying are entirely determined by the actions of bullies or coworkers.

Bullying can be physical which includes sexual harassment, beating, physical offence or abuse, hitting, pushing, spitting, and smashing someone's property, nasty hand gestures, and so on.

Screaming, calling names, mocking, threatening to harm others, intimidating, racist remarks, offensive sexual remarks, teasing, etc. is known as verbal bullying.

Isolation, manipulation, controlling, silent treatment, scapegoating and so on are tantamount to psychological bullying.

Excluding workers from decision-making processes, sending venomous emails, publicly expressing one's opinion at work, applying extreme pressure to work, reprimanding colleagues without cause, etc. would fall under the category of work-related bullying. (Djurkovic, McCormack and Casimir, 2005).

For anti-bullying initiatives in the workplace to be successful, must have a thorough, long-term strategy involving all organizational levels. This can involve creating guidelines, procedures, rules and protocols for documenting and looking into bullying incidents, offering supervisors and staff training on how to identify and deal with bullying behavior. It also involves establishing a welcoming environment at work that encourages candid

conversations, mutual respect, and teamwork. An organization can implement several measures to foster a positive workplace culture, such as team-building exercises, conflict resolution training, and leadership development courses (Ferris, Deakin & Mathieson, 2021).

In general, for anti-bullying initiatives to be effective, the business as a whole must be committed to fostering a positive and secure workplace. Through the implementation of these interventions, organizations can raise organizational performance, foster a culture of respect, professionalism, and teamwork, and improve the well-being of their employees.

A number of variables, including the target audience, and implementation context, affect how effective an anti-bullying intervention is. An evidence-based intervention is one that has undergone extensive testing and evaluation to make certain that it yields favorable outcomes.

One or more of the following traits of successful anti-bullying interventions are:

Holistic approach: These interventions should address the various individual, social, and environmental

factors that contribute to bullying behavior;

2. **Early intervention:** These interventions should be put into place as soon as possible, ideally before bullying behavior begins;

3. **Target-specific:** These interventions should be customized to the needs and characteristics of the target population, including age, gender, culture, and risk factors;

4. **Engage multiple stakeholders:** These interventions should involve parents, teachers, and community members in order to ensure that everyone is involved in establishing a safe and respectful environment.

5. **Sustainability:** In order to be successful and long-lasting, interventions must have defined objectives, well-thought-out plans, and rigorous methods for evaluation.

Overall, effective anti-bullying interventions are critical for creating a safe and inclusive environment for everyone. By implementing evidence-based programs and policies, organizations can prevent and reduce bullying behavior, promote positive behaviors, and support those affected by bullying.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The term "bullying" was originally used in 1990 by British freelance journalist Andrew Adams. With the exception of Japan, India, Singapore, and China, research on bullying has mostly been done in non-Asian nations. The term "workplace bullying" is defined as "a persistent pattern of mistreatment from others in the workplace that causes harm" and is frequently used in academic research. It may involve techniques including physical, psychological, nonverbal, verbal, and humiliating abuse". Bullying at work means harassing, offending, socially excluding someone or negatively affecting someone's work tasks. In order for the label bullying (or mobbing) to be applied to a particular activity, interaction or process it has to occur repeatedly and regularly (e.g., weekly) and

over a period of time (e.g., six months). Bullying is an escalating process in the course of which the person confronted ends up in an inferior position and becomes the target of systematic negative social acts. It is a revolving process in which the victim is demoted to a subordinate role and the target of repetitively offensive social behaviour" (Einarsen et al., 2019).

Workplace bullying, as defined by Gardner and Johnson (2001), is a type of severe, ongoing psychological harassment that includes humiliation and criticism. According to Einarsen, & Ågotnes, (2023), harassment and bullying in the workplace are serious problems. Namie and Namie (2003) defined workplace bullying as repeated and malicious maltreatment that endangers the health of the target employee. According to Crawford (2009), their position of power may provoke leaders to employ bullying tactics to further their personal agendas. Brodsky (1976) asserts that management is, at the very least, aware of workplace bullying. Bullying can take many different forms, such as allegation-making, intimidation, work sabotage, and overloading one's workload. When victims report bullying, senior management rarely provides them with assistance. According to Ferris (2004), there can be dangers involved with asking an organization representative for assistance. This may hamper the employee's mental and physical health.

Three primary characteristics of bullying are persistence, unequal power, and animosity. Initially, a prominent feature of bullying is its association with inappropriate behaviors that transpire on a regular basis (at least twice a week), last for an extended duration (at least six months), and encompass a variety of activities (Einarsen et al., 2003). Second, there needs to be a power disparity between the victim and the bully so that the victim finds it more challenging to protect herself. Thirdly, the bullying behavior needs to be intentional and methodical, demonstrating the bully's bad intentions. Bullying can take many different forms, from covert actions (such as excessive workloads, constant supervision of work, inside jokes, rumors, etc.) to overt and obvious actions (like physical harm, aggressive behavior, insults, threats, etc.).

Leymann (1990) was the first to identify four distinct phases of workplace bullying. These include the initial critical incident, which is usually a conflict, and can be difficult to detect and address. The second phase is characterized by bullying and stigmatization, which involves demeaning behavior towards both colleagues and management, such as constant criticism, humiliation, meaningless tasks, isolation, and threats of violence. During the third phase, personnel administration, management may intervene, but if they misread the situation, stigmatize the victim, or refuse to take responsibility for the abuse, the case becomes formal. Finally, in the expulsion phase, the target is usually driven out of the workplace either directly (through dismissal) or indirectly (by other means).

To describe workplace bullying as a type of escalating conflict, Zapf and Gross (2001) utilized Glas's (1982) conflict escalation model, which includes three main phases (rationality and control, cutting the relationship, and

violence and destruction), and nine stages of conflict escalation. Lutgen-Sandvik (2003) extended Leymann's (1996) model, calling it the employee emotional abuse model, and identified six stages of bullying: cycle generation (initial incident), progressive discipline, turning point, organizational ambivalence, isolation and silencing, and cycle regeneration (expulsion). D'Cruz and Noronha (2010) identified four stages in the process of workplace bullying among Indian ITES- BPO personnel: experiencing perplexity, engaging organizational alternatives, moving inward, and departing the organization. Karatuna (2015) recently separated the bullying process into five stages: underestimating the problem and avoiding it, becoming impatient and engaging in conflict, recognizing threats to one's health and seeking support, feeling hopeless and using harmful coping methods, and finally giving up and quitting.

According to Einarsen, Raknes, and Matthiesen (1994), bullying occurs when a person feels repeatedly exposed to unfavorable workplace behaviours, behaviours that they may believe are challenging to avoid. The typical behavior of a victim of harassment and bullying is to be mocked, bothered, and insulted while feeling helpless to respond in kind. Bullying at work is a serious problem that has a negative impact on organizational effectiveness. Harassment in the workplace has an impact on both an individual's performance and the effectiveness of the company as a whole. Bullying victims at work have reported a decline in commitment to their organizations and employment, as well as a decline in job satisfaction, low morale, decreased productivity, an increase in mistakes, poor attention, and a rise in absenteeism.

Bedarkar and Pandita (2014) contend that organisations must give workers the freedom to make work exciting and to foster an environment that promotes an engaged work life because workers are the most important resources for any business. If they aren't given enough time and space to strike the right balance between work and play at the office, a sense of separation will develop among the workers.

So, in order to achieve its aims and objectives, a business and its people are both dependent on one

another. Employee involvement should involve ongoing learning, development, and activity. In order to influence employee performance, which directly impacts the success of the organization, enterprises should effectively anticipate and satisfy worker needs.

3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

- To investigate workplace anti-bullying initiatives and legal frameworks.
- To comprehend the victim's conduct and the bullies' mindset.
- To determine the effects that workplace bullying in the organization has on people and organizational variables.
- The benefits of anti-bullying initiatives on the productivity, well-being, and work satisfaction of staff members as well as the organization's overall long-term effects.

- To raise awareness on workplace bullying behaviors.
- To determine the root cause of bullying and investigate the various forms of workplace bullying.

Research Methodology

- Data on workplace bullying and interventions have been collected from online journals and library databases such as EBSCO (Management Research Database), SAGE Publications, and Google Scholar in order to conduct a thorough analysis of this study.

Among the key terms used in this study include workplace bullying, anti-bullying interventions, bullying impacts, bullies' personalities, etc. Using the reference lists from the publications that were located, a comprehensive list of the literature to be studied was created. After being thoroughly evaluated up to this point, all pertinent papers and publications that matched the definition of workplace bullying used in this study were gathered for the overall research.

The following research questions will serve as a guide for the study:

First question: How does workplace bullying affect organizations?

Second question: How can bullying at work affect a person (at individual level)?

Third Question: How do bullies and those who are bullied differ from one another?

Question 4: What kinds of interventions should an organization set in place to combat bullying?

Findings

How does workplace bullying affect organizations?

Researchers have identified various effects of workplace bullying on organizations, including decreased productivity, increased human capital costs, increased legal costs, higher health care expenses, greater need for training, and increased turnover, which can result in additional recruitment, interviewing, and retraining expenses. (Von Bergen et al., 2006; Ayoko, Callan, & Hartel, 2003). Culture is also an important factor affecting bullying in the workplace.

How can bullying at work affect a person (at individual level)?

In their study on the psychological repercussions of workplace bullying, Boudrias, Trépanier, & Salin (2021) observed that, among other things, bullying can have an impact on worker safety, job satisfaction. They have a feeling of indignity and helplessness, anxiety, fear, diminished group cohesiveness, which can affect performance.

Bullying at work is known to have detrimental effects on a person's health. Repercussions could include sleep disorders, suicidal thoughts, PTSD, severe depression, cardiovascular diseases and mental health problems (Ayoko et al., 2003).

The impact of bullying on a person's work-related outcomes would be reduced levels of commitment, performance, productivity, job satisfaction, and morale; absenteeism; burnout; and thoughts of quitting or leaving

a job. Furthermore, victims of bullying often report worsening their performance, including additional errors made on the job, difficulty focusing, and lost time worrying about the bullying situation.

How do bullies and those who are bullied differ from one another?

According to Hoertel et al. (2012), male bullies were more likely than female bullies to have antisocial personalities, such as major depressive disorder, bipolar illness, and panic disorders.

This finding may indicate that guys are more likely to bully and to suffer from psychiatric illnesses, both of which might affect behaviour. Men are said to bully more frequently in environments with power structures, more education, and the ability to exert influence over events depending on their immediate surroundings. More evidence supports that men are more likely than women to commit crimes comes from Vaughn et al. (2010).

There is compelling evidence that indicates individuals who engage in workplace bullying typically possess negative personality traits, such as narcissism (Penney & Spector, 2002), trait anger (Hershcovis et al., 2007), vengefulness (Douglas & Martinko, 2001), and trait anxiety (Fox & Spector, 1999). Furthermore, bullies are more likely to have a history of being victimized by bullying themselves (e.g., Hauge, Skogstad, & Einarsen, 2009). Research has shown that individuals who engage in negative workplace behaviors often have lower core self-evaluations (Ferris, Rosen, Johnson, Brown, Risavy, & Heller, 2011) and lower organization-based self-esteem, supporting the notion that bullies pick on others due to their own low self-esteem. According to Piotrowski (2015) (p. 2), adult bullies often display a range of psychosocial personality issues, such as being "controlling, cruel, manipulative, self-centered, Machiavellian, coercive, merciless, and domineering."

Research into workplace bullying and aggressiveness has not only focused on the characteristics of the perpetrators, but also on those of the targets. According to the concept of victim precipitation proposed by Olweus (1978), certain employees may be more susceptible to workplace bullying due to their individual traits and features. Interestingly, a significant body of research has revealed that targets often share similar traits with perpetrators (Hershcovis & Reich, 2013). Targeted employees are often more disagreeable (Milam, Spitzmueller, & Penney, 2009), have higher levels of negative affectivity (Tepper, Duffy, Henle, & Lambert), and possess greater levels of trait anger and anxiety compared to non-targets. Additionally, some evidence suggests that individuals who are bullied at work tend to exhibit higher levels of cognition (Kim & Glomb, 2010) and conscientiousness (Lind, Glas, Pallesen, & Einarsen, 2009). These unexpected findings suggest that high-performing workers may be penalized in an effort to lower their standards.

It might be considered victim blaming to consider how victim traits and actions lead to aggressiveness. But as Hershcovis and Rafferty (2012) pointed out, aggressive

actions at work take place in the context of a social connection, and both participants in that interaction affect its dynamics. Bullying prevention relies on an understanding of the elements that might make workers more vulnerable to mistreatment. For instance, if we are aware that performance is a risk factor, then ensuring adequate supervisory training to nudge managers away from abusive conduct and towards more positive performance management strategies is likely to both lessen abusive supervision and, in the end, boost employee performance.

What kinds of interventions should an organization set in place to combat bullying?

Bullying can have a serious impact on the workplace environment, employee morale, and productivity. To address this issue, some anti-bullying interventions that organizations can implement: primary, secondary, and tertiary.

Developing and implementing a comprehensive anti-bullying policy that outlines what constitutes bullying behavior and how it will be addressed within the organization.

Providing training to all employees on what bullying is, how to recognize it, and how to report it.

Creating a positive work environment through team building activities, employee recognition programs, and open communication channels.

Offering mediation services to help resolve conflicts between employees.

Investigating reports of bullying and taking appropriate disciplinary action against the perpetrator(s).

Providing support and counselling services to employees who have experienced bullying.

Adjusting work schedules or duties to accommodate the needs of employees who have experienced bullying.

Implementing policies that protect employees from retaliation if they report bullying or harassment.

Overall, it's important for organizations to take a proactive approach to preventing and addressing bullying behaviour in the workplace. By implementing these interventions, organizations can create a workplace culture that promotes respect, professionalism, and inclusivity.

Laws in India to address bullying.

India does not have specific anti-bullying laws, but there are laws and regulations in place that can be used to address workplace bullying. Here are some of the laws and regulations that can be applicable in cases of workplace bullying:

The Indian Penal Code: Sections 499 and 500 of the Indian Penal Code deal with defamation, which can cover instances of bullying that involve spreading false and damaging rumours or statements about an individual.

Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013: This law provides a definition of sexual harassment at the workplace and requires organizations to set up an internal

complaints committee to handle such complaints. This law can be used to address cases of bullying that involve sexual harassment.

Effects of Anti-bullying interventions on individual and organization

Anti-bullying initiatives can have a major influence on the productivity, well-being, and job satisfaction of staff members as well as long-term repercussions on the business as a whole. The following are some effects that anti-bullying initiatives may have at work:

Well-being: Anti-bullying initiatives can lessen workplace bullying's frequency and intensity, which can enhance workers' wellbeing. Bullying victims may have a variety of detrimental effects, such as stress, anxiety, sadness, and issues with their physical health. Employees are likely to feel safer, and supported at work if bullying is lessened.

Greater job satisfaction: Workers are more likely to be content with their work when they feel safe and supported in their positions. Interventions against bullying have the potential to boost job satisfaction by fostering a respectful and valued work environment for staff members.

Increased productivity: Bullying may be a significant distraction at work, making people feel uneasy, uninspired, and disengaged. Anti-bullying initiatives can increase productivity by lessening bullying because they enable workers to concentrate more intently on their tasks and work more productively with their peers.

Long-term advantages: Interventions against bullying may pay off in the long run for the organization. Positive work environments increase an organization's ability to attract potential candidates.

4. CONCLUSION

Workplace bullying is a serious issue that can have significant negative impacts on employees and the organization. However, there are effective anti-bullying interventions that can be implemented to prevent and address bullying in the workplace. This can be done by:

Creating a positive work environment that promotes inclusivity, organizations can help prevent bullying from occurring in the first place. Effective interventions may include training and education for employees and managers, clear policies and procedures for reporting and addressing bullying, and support for victims and bystanders.

Implementing these interventions can have a significant impact on employee well-being, job satisfaction, and productivity, as well as the long-term success of the organization. Organizations that take a proactive approach to bullying prevention and create a culture of respect and collaboration are more likely to attract and retain talented employees, reduce absenteeism and turnover, and improve overall morale.

In conclusion, workplace bullying is a grave issue that should be taken seriously by organizations. By implementing effective anti-bullying interventions, organizations can create a positive work environment that promotes respect, collaboration, and productivity for all employees.

5. LIMITATIONS

- Because of the topic's subjectivity and the likelihood of numerous connotations and ideologies, concluding could be difficult.
- The background of the employment environments where the anti-bullying treatments were used is not provided by this research. Because this study was conducted via secondary research, it relies on existing literature, which may be biased or out of date. This can restrict the understanding of how these interventions may be applicable in different employment settings. This may reduce the validity and dependability of the research findings, particularly if the literature contains errors or gaps.

An important group of stakeholders, including managers and employees, whose opinions may contain important information about the efficacy of various anti-bullying initiatives, are not included in this study.

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