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Investigating Relationship between Workplace Bullying and Supervisor Support, Coworker Support, and Work Environment in Healthcare

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ABSTRACT:

The purpose of this research was to examine what influences bullying in the workplace. The methodology is supported by studies grounded on social exchange theory. An efficient sampling strategy was used to collect data from a representative sample of the government agency's population. A modified questionnaire was used to collect data from 297 workers at Basic Health Units in the Dera Ismail Khan area (BHUs). Dependability was analyzed with the use of reliability statistics. The 19-item scale was used to quantify the variable in this investigation, and its alpha value of.735 indicates its validity (WPB). Regression analysis in SPSS was used to examine the data. Positive and significant relationships were found between workplace bullying and factors such as the work environment, the support of coworkers, and the support of superiors. Results from a regression analysis of the factors influencing workplace bullying confirmed the importance of setting, management, and social support.

Keywords: Workplace Bullying, Supervisor Support, Coworker Support, Work Environment, Healthcare Workers.

Introduction

Workplace bullying is a hot concern all throughout the industrialized world. Many groups have adopted anti-bullying policies in an effort to put an end to this problem (Salin, 2008). In 2010, the Workplace Bullying Institute published a report. According to the research, this is not an unusual occurrence but rather a widespread one in corporate settings. Research estimates that one-third of workers experience workplace bullying either firsthand or as a bystander (Zogby, 2010). As much as 10%-15% of European workers are bullied on the job (Lin & Hsiao, 2014). Evidence suggests that half of Pakistani workers have been bullied in the job (Naseer et al., 2018). Its pervasive nature suggests it could have an international influence (Branch *et al*., 2013). Bullying in the workplace occurs when one person consistently uses harmful conduct towards another, creating an imbalance of power (Carter et al., 2013). Bullying at work occurs when an aggressor repeatedly targets a helpless victim with hostile behavior and then rewards them for it (Owolabi, 2013). Victims and witnesses of workplace bullying experience feelings of insecurity, and the organization as a whole suffers as a result (Hogh, Hoel, & Carneiro, 2011). In this context, the phrase refers to any form of inappropriate conduct in the workplace (Ullah, Khattak, & Naqvi, 2023). To academics, workplace bullying is distinct from workplace aggression, rudeness, harassment, social undermining, emotional abuse, etc., but any threat to one's reputation is included. Workplace bullying is defined as "persistent and habitual harassment, insult, social exclusion, or negatively influencing someone's work obligations" over an extended period (Arif, 2023). This is a slow process that, as it escalates, degrades the person being addressed, and makes them the subject of increasingly hostile social conduct (Einarsen *et al.,* 2011). Workplace bullying is dangerous for businesses because it can lead to issues with employees' health and safety and the loss of brilliant workers. This research examines the causes of bullying in the workplace and its effects on employees' well-being and productivity. The study found that high levels of stress among employees can lead to a variety of problems, such as alienation from their jobs, a loss of self-confidence, irritability, a foul temper, hypersensitivity to criticism, conflicts between work and family, forgetfulness, difficulty concentrating, a loss of humor, excessive aggression (Banu, Jehan, & Jehan, 2023), and withdrawal into certain survival techniques. It would be disastrous for an organization's operations if its employees consistently fell short of expectations and failed to fulfill the duties they were given. It is critical to learn what factors contribute to bullying in the workplace and how this adds stress to workers' lives (Siddique & Khan, 2023). It will be much easier for the workers there to grasp the seriousness of bullying in the workplace. The stress caused by workplace bullying is measured in this study. The results of this research will be used by healthcare organizations to curb the high turnover caused by bullying in the workplace.

Research Questions

1. Is there a connection between the work environment and bullying at workplace?
2. Is there a connection between workplace bullying and supervisor support?
3. Is there a connection between coworker support and bullying at the workplace?

Research Objectives

1. To determine the connection between the work environment and workplace bullying.
2. To determine whether workplace bullying, and supervisor support are related.
3. To determine the connection between co-workers' encouragement and workplace bullying.

Literature Review

Workplace bullying

Workplace bullying is a psychological and behavioral issue, thus there is still a lot of room for investigation (Morrison, See, & Pan, 2015). Bullying in the workplace occurs when one or more people repeatedly engage in hostile behavior toward an employee or group of employees with the purpose to cause fear or physical harm (Jha & Nair, 2008). WB is stated as a practice that is commonly viewed as an abuse or misuse of power (Lee, 2013). Bullying occurs when an employee is repeatedly subjected to hostile comments, insults, or physical contact from superiors (Jha & Nair, 2008).

When compared to normal workplace pressure, bullying violates the victim's right to be treated with respect and makes them feel helpless (Jugdev & Mller, 2005). Rudeness, social isolation, verbal abuse, and physical violence are all forms of workplace bullying, but they only affect those who are specifically targeted (Kuhnen & Tymula, 2012). Bullying in the workplace is defined as repetitive, helpless abuse if the victim has no means of self-defense (Einarsen et al., 2011). The power imbalance that fuels bullying distinguishes it from rudeness, tough supervision, and social undermining (Hershcovis, 2011). When employees are bullied, it hurts the business and their productivity. It weakens efforts and initiates a resource loss process that contributes to issues with mental health, PTSD, emotional exhaustion, increased leaving, decreased job satisfaction, and decreased organizational commitment (Naseer & Raja, 2021; Tuckey & Neall, 2014). According to Boudrias *et a*l (2021; Nielsen & Einarsen, 2012). Suicide ideation (Leach *et al*., 2017), sleep disturbances (Kivimäki *et al*., 2003), and poor cardiovascular health (Xu *et al*., 2019) have all been linked to bullying in the workplace (Nielsen et al., 2020). Workplace bullying is extremely challenging to manage (Kwan *et al*., 2016; Törnroos, 2020). Stopping undesirable interactions between people requires prevention and intervention based on scientific evidence (Liefooghe & Davey, 2001).

The Work Environment

This research suggested that managers place a strong emphasis on work-related matters. Workplace pressures (1a), an unproductive work environment (1b), disagreement among employees (1c), the tolerance of inappropriate behavior (1d), and a feeling of helplessness (1e) were all voiced as issues (1d) (1e) we are going to hone down on each of these subtopics in greater detail. The findings suggest that supervisors may be subject to upward bullying due to a variety of factors in the workplace. Some researchers, like Davenport et al. (1999), have hypothesized that employees may resort to threats or physical violence to express their anger with a manager they hold responsible for their stress at work. It has been argued by Salin (2003b) that workplace bullying may be exacerbated by negative emotions such as despair, uncertainty, or powerlessness. According to Einarsen, workers may be using the term "bullying" as a weapon against management to vent their frustrations about the company and its policies and practices (1999).

Supervisor support

Supervisor support can be defined as "the extent to which supervisors appreciate their [=employees'] contributions and care for their well-being," as stated by Rhoades & Eisenberger (2002). Despite having many responsibilities, supervisors are expected to help their employees (Collins, 2017). It is intriguing to notice that Tehrani (2003) claims even minor setbacks, like refusing to comply with a request, may be interpreted as aggressive behavior at times of high stress and in relationships that are perceived as being unfavorable. He came to the idea that there is a "bully/victim [target] relationship" after counseling both targets and bullies in the workplace (Tehrani, 2003). The process of upwardly bullying may very well be described by He's claim that a bullying accusation is often "initiated by the individual's reactions to a series of encounters that are built up over some time" (Tehrani, 2003: 280). Actually, some employees may view the supervisor's efforts, such as implementing change, as bullying. Studies have shown that having a supportive boss is a good predictor of positive outcomes on the job (Caesens *et al*., 2014). Yet, new evidence supports a more nuanced view, in which too much encouragement from superiors can be counterproductive (Caesens *et al*., 2020; Gillet *et al*., 2017). Prior research shows a non-linear relationship between social support and employee outcomes (such affective organizational engagement, trust, and in-role performance), supporting the "too much of a good thing" perspective ((Kundi, 2023; Harris & Kacmar, 2018). Several research have found that results are most predictable among people with moderate to high levels of social support.

Coworker Support

According to Liyanto (2018), a coworker can be either an individual or a group of people who share the same employer. Blanchard and Thacker argue that having a supportive workplace is important because coworkers provide participants with positive reinforcement and practical help (2007: 196). Encouragement from coworkers is often cited

as a factor in people's propensity to put their training to use. According to Chen (2003), indicators of teammates include: recognizing and seizing opportunities to apply training and education; encouraging or anticipating the use of new abilities; demonstrating patience while applying new skills; and demonstrating rewards for doing so. The topic of colleagues has been explored in various previous research, such as: (Marasabessy & Santoso, 2014). Those who work for the same company or organization are considered to be coworkers. Coworkers will talk to and respond to each other in ways that are natural and comfortable for them. The individuals we deal with are both a resource and a means of collaboration inside an organization or business. Teammates who can accept the results of our labor and stand by our decisions are invaluable. Nonetheless, there are always people working for a company or organization who would find any excuse to detest a coworker's presence or great performance. There will be repercussions for bullying at work as a result of this (Haitao, 2022).

Hypotheses of study

- Bullying at work and the workplace environment have a strong connection.
- A strong correlation exists between bullying at work and supervisor support.
- There is a strong connection between workplace bullying and workplace bullying.

Method

Employees of Dera Ismail Khan's Health Department are taking part in the study. All in all, the study will include 1,300 people from the Basic Health Facilities in District Dera Ismail Khan. The method of sampling used in the inquiry was Simple Random Sampling technique. When conducting research, samples should be ten times larger than the total number of variables in the study (Sekaran, 2013). Several authorities claim that a sample size of between 30 and 500 is sufficient (Field, 2013). With these parameters, the study advises selecting 297 employees at random to participate in the survey questionnaire. Adapted Questionnaire was used for data collection method.

Findings and Analysis

Table 1

Table Correlation Matrix

		WPB	WE	SS	CS
WPB	r	1			
	p	.000			
WE	r	.737**	1		
	p	.000	.000		
SS	r	.162**	.435**	1	
	p	.000	.000	.000	
CS	r	.544**	.867**	.485**	1
	p	.000	.000	.000	.000

**Correlation is significant at .01 level (2-tailed)

The accompanying table serves as a correlation matrix illustrating the interplay between the two categories of data. Workplace bullying (WPB) is the dependent variable, and the three independent variables are workplace environment, social support system, and climate for safety and inclusion. As can be seen from the above, there is a positive relationship between WPB and the aforementioned independent variables (W.E, S.S., and C.S.) with a confidence level of 95%.

Table 2

Regression Analysis- Model Summary

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.737[a]	.574	.572	.15281

a. Predictors: (Constant), AVGWE

According to the model summary, the independent or predictor variable W.E will cause a positive variance of 57.2% in the dependent variable WPB.

Table 3

Model Summary

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.162[a]	.037	.034	.22963

a. Predictors: (Constant), AVGSP

As can be seen from the model summary, the independent or predictor variable S.S will lead to 37% positive variation in the dependent variable WPB.

Table 4

Model Summary

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.544[a]	.294	.292	.19662

 a. Predictors: (Constant), AVGCS

According to the model summary, the independent or predictor variable C.S will lead to a positive variation of 29.4 percent in the dependent variable WPB, as indicated by the R square value of .294.

Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to examine the connection between WE, SS, and CS qualities and workplace bullying. The data was collected using a questionnaire based on a five-point Likert scale, which has been utilized in previous research but was modified for this study. Research on DIKhan' Basic Health Units suggests that bullying is commonplace. Because of inherent differences in race, language, and other characteristics, bullying is inevitable whenever people from diverse origins come together. The ethnic diversity of the workforce makes it all too easy for anyone to become a victim of bullying. As far as this specific case is concerned. Managers can reduce bullying in the workplace by fostering an atmosphere of open communication and positive reinforcement. Moreover, they should treat all employees fairly to prevent developing a superiority complex that can lead to discrimination and bullying. Results from regression and correlation show a positive and significant relationship between the variables. Factors affecting bullying at work (WE, SS, and CS). The study's findings suggest that management should take steps to address bullying in the workplace if they want to prevent talented employees from leaving the company.

Significance

This research will investigate whether factors may play a role in workplace bullying, a topic that has not been thoroughly explored before. Factors associated with the initial meeting were accounted for, and it was found that managers endured bullying from on high. Harassment in the workplace might be understood as a "dependence process" (Keashly & Jagatic 2003). The means by which a workforce could have influence over its leadership will become clearer to us. As a result, it appears that bullying at higher levels of an organization or even inside an individual has not been taken seriously. Considering the common perception that workers lower in the organizational hierarchy are more vulnerable to bullying in the workplace, this may be the truth (Keashly & Jagatic 2003; Rayner et al. 2002). People aren't aware that bullying occurs at all levels of a business, therefore management has few ideas about how to prevent and address the problem. While analyzing the importance of managers in businesses, it is crucial to have a firm grasp on the phenomenon of upward bullying (Bartol, Tein, Matthews & Martin 2005).

Recommendations

Workplace bullying can be avoided if there is an open and accepting culture at the company. Because of this, confusion can be resolved. The company should take steps to eliminate any factors that contribute to bullying in the workplace and offer financial and social incentives to attract and retain talented personnel. Managers and executives need to urge their staff to curb poor behavior to protect the company's image. Coworkers should work together, share what they've learned, and encourage one another to do their best, as mutual support in the workplace is crucial and can be used to counteract negative practices. It is important to design a just reward and promotion structure free of favoritism.

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