

IMPACT OF WORKPLACE BULLYING ON PHYSICAL WELLBEING, PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING AND WORK PERFORMANCE

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research work was to examine the impact of workplace bullying on the physical wellbeing, psychological wellbeing and work performance of employees. As a form of negative behaviour, bullying has got negative repercussions on employees and organizations. Hence this work has examined the impact of workplace bullying on employees. The study is a descriptive one and the sample size was 121 which was collected by convenience sampling technique. Multiple regression analysis using SPSS 23 was used for data analysis. Work related bullying was found to have a significant impact on the physical wellbeing of the employee and personal bullying was found to have a significant impact on the physical and psychological wellbeing of employees.

KEYWORDS: Workplace bullying, physical wellbeing, psychological wellbeing and work performance.

INTRODUCTION

Behaviours of employee within an organization have an influence on other employees and also on the organization. In an organizational context, employee behaviours are like two sides of the same coin – they can make or mar the organizational performance. Behaviours are categorised as – productive and counterproductive work behaviours. Productive behaviours are those facilitating organizational performance and counterproductive behaviours are proven to have a negative impact on organizational functioning. One such counterproductive work behaviour having a negative impact on employees and organization is workplace bullying. The aggressive nature of bullying and its negative impact on employees and organizations makes it to belong to counterproductive work behaviours is stated in the study of Bartlett & Bartlett (2011). Workplace bullying as a happening affecting the entire work environment is reported in the research work of Vartia (2001). The study by Bartlett & Bartlett (2011) has confirmed workplace bullying to affect the physical, emotional and work life of the victim. Based on the survey, Stagg et.al (2013) has reported 50% of the respondents to have been targets of bullying. The study by Sansone & Sansone (2015) has stated 11% of the employees to have experienced bullying at some phase of their work life. Given the negative consequences of workplace bullying on employees and organizations, this research work has examined the various forms of bullying within organizations and the impact it has on employees.

Workplace bullying is a continuous stream of unreasonable actions of an employee(s) that are directed towards other employee(s) with an intention to intimidate, humiliate and undermine the employee(s), which in turn affects the physical wellbeing, psychological wellbeing and performance of the employee(s). Bullying in workplace is an aggressive behaviour of an employee with debilitating consequences on other employees and organization. Workplace bullying is a counterproductive behaviour as the behaviour is a stimulus for negative responses and negative set of behaviours in the victimised employee. Due to the negative implications of bullying for both the employees and organizations, this research paper has examined the impact of the various dimensions of workplace bullying on the physical wellbeing, psychological wellbeing and performance of the employee(s).

This research work has analysed two different types of bullying – work related bullying (bullying behaviours that are associated with work) and personal bullying (behaviours that are targeted at the individual employee) and the impact the two forms of bullying has on the physical wellbeing, psychological wellbeing and performance of the employee.

The attributes that tapped work related bullying are – burdening employee with heavy workload, refusing leave when needed, removing from assigned responsibility, setting unrealistic targets, withholding information, excessive monitoring and unfair criticism.

The attributes that tapped personal bullying are - subjecting employees to isolation, subjecting employees to gossip, verbal abuse.

The attributes that tapped the physical wellbeing are – sickness, sleep deprivation.

The attributes that tapped the psychological wellbeing are – depression, stress and strained interpersonal relationship.

The attributes that tapped the work performance are – absenting to work, decreased performance, increase in errors

NEED FOR THE STUDY

Employees are assets for the organization and to optimize their performance, organizations must create a conducive work environment. The productivity of an employee depends upon their physical and psychological wellbeing. Certain organizational happening interferes with the physical and psychological wellbeing of employees and affects their performance. One such occurrence is bullying. Bullying within organizations creates an unfavourable work environment leading to unhealthy workforce and is a threat to both employees and organization. By exploring the nature and impact of bullying on the employee will help organizations to devise measures to stop bullying and take remedial measures to help the victims and ensure a safe working environment for employees to function effectively.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To elicit employee opinion on the different dimensions of workplace bullying.
- To examine the impact of workplace bullying on the physical wellbeing, psychological wellbeing and work performance of the employee.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In the survey conducted by Rayner (1997) at Staffordshire University to measure the respondent's experience of workplace bullying, it was found that

bullies were managers and employees who were elder than the targets. Rayner reported bullying as a factor forcing 27% of the employees to quit their jobs. Vartia (2001) explored the impact of workplace bullying had on the target and the observers. The researcher has explored how bullying becomes a cause for stress and psychological ill health. Based on the survey conducted among Municipal officials the researcher has concluded that employees who were targets of bullying experienced stress and psychological ill health and the degree of suffering the target experienced differed with the nature and type of bullying. According to Cowie et.al (2002), various forms of bullying are a cause for eroding the confidence and decreasing the efficiency of employees. Bullying is said to ruin the physiological and psychological wellbeing of employees. Heames & Harvey (2006) explored the impact of bullying at three different levels – individual, group and organization. At the individual level, bullying affected the physical and psychological wellbeing of the victim; at the group level bullying affects the interpersonal relation and at the organizational level bullying affects the reputation of the organization. The findings of the study by Lewis et.al (2008), has confirmed bullying within organizations and the bully can be at the individual level, group level, organization level and customer service level. The cross-cultural study undertaken by Escartin et.al (2010) in Central America and Southern Europe intended to explore the differences in employee perception in different regions with respect to bullying and the study found higher similarity with respect to conceptualization of workplace bullying. The conceptual study of Bartlett & Bartlett (2011) has found workplace bullying to affect the employees, to damage the reputation of the organization and threaten the culture of the organization. Based on the conducted among health care professionals by Stagg et.al (2013), it was reported that workplace bullying affects the organization economically as it leads to decreased productivity, increased absenteeism and decreased morale.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

Workplace bullying as a cause for affecting the physical wellbeing, psychological wellbeing and work performance of employees is based on the theoretical support rendered by the Affective Events Theory. The theory postulates that events/ happenings in the workplace offer a stimulus for shaping employee attitudes and behaviours. Hence workplace bullying as a workplace happening becomes a trigger for causing certain behavioural changes in the employees concerned with their physical wellbeing, psychological wellbeing and work performance.

THEORETICAL MODEL OF THE STUDY

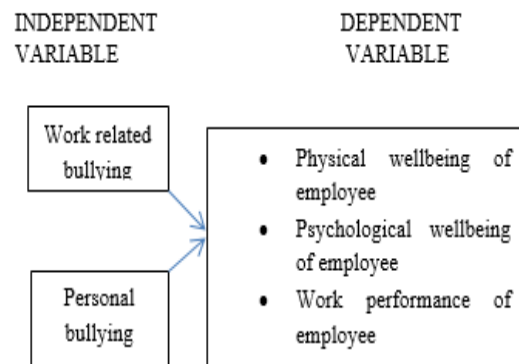


Fig1

HYPOTHESIS

- H₁: Work related bullying significantly affects the physical wellbeing of the employee.
- H₂: Work related bullying significantly affects the psychological wellbeing of the employee.
- H₃: Work related bullying significantly affects the work performance of the employee.
- H₄: Personal bullying significantly affects the physical wellbeing of the employee.
- H₅: Personal bullying significantly affects the psychological wellbeing of the employee.
- H₆: Personal bullying significantly affects the work performance of the employee.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research study is descriptive as it describes the features and the impact of workplace bullying as experienced by the respondents. The sample size for this study is 121 comprising academicians employed in private colleges which were collected by convenience sampling. A questionnaire with a three-point likert scale was constructed which tapped the respondent opinion towards various forms of bullying and their experiences of bullying. The questionnaire was electronically administered to the respondents and the survey was a self-administered one. The collected data was analysed by multiple regression analysis using SPSS 23.

DATA ANALYSIS

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.955 ^a	.911	.906	.24487

Table 1: Test of Hypothesis H₁

a. Predictors: (Constant), unfair criticism, refusal of leave, removing from assigned responsibility, heavy workload, withholding information, setting unrealistic targets, excessive monitoring

The R Square value (.911) from Table 1 indicates that the work related bullying variables - unfair criticism, refusal of leave, removing from assigned responsibility, heavy workload, withholding information, setting unrealistic targets, excessive monitoring together account for 91.1% variance on the physical wellbeing of employees

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	-.461	.092		-4.993	.000
heavy workload	.004	.066	.004	.064	.949
refusal of leave	.478	.071	.365	6.700	.000
removing from assigned responsibility	-.143	.079	-.112	-1.796	.075

setting unrealistic targets	.722	.098	.684	7.392	.000
withholding information	.442	.077	.371	5.739	.000
excessive monitoring	-.457	.129	-.384	-3.533	.001
unfair criticism	.097	.120	.080	.807	.421

Table 2: Coefficients --Dependent Variable: Physical Wellbeing

From Table 2, it is evident that the overall model is statistically significant ($p < .05$), leading to the acceptance of Hypothesis H₁. Among the work-related factors of bullying, refusal of leave ($p < .05$), setting unrealistic targets ($p < .05$), withholding information ($p < .05$) and excessive monitoring have a significant impact on the physical wellbeing of employees.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.954 ^a	.909	.904	.28197

Table 3: Test of Hypothesis H₂

a. Predictors: (Constant), unfair criticism, refusal of leave, removing from assigned responsibility, heavy workload, withholding information, setting unrealistic targets, excessive monitoring

The R Square value (.909) from Table 3 indicates that the work-related bullying variables - unfair criticism, refusal of leave, removing from assigned responsibility, heavy workload, withholding information, setting unrealistic targets, excessive monitoring together account for 90.9% variance on the psychological wellbeing of employees

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
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	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	-.313	.106		-.2946	-.313
heavy workload	.005	.076	.004	.068	.005
refusal of leave	.234	.082	.157	2.843	.234
removing from assigned responsibility	.027	.092	.019	.297	.027
setting unrealistic targets	.018	.112	.015	.163	.018
withholding information	1.050	.089	.774	11.852	1.050
excessive monitoring	.186	.149	.137	1.245	.186
unfair criticism	-.138	.138	-.100	-.998	-.138

Table 4: Coefficients--Dependent Variable: Psychological wellbeing

From Table 4, it is evident that the overall model is statistically not significant ($p > .05$), leading to the rejection of Hypothesis H₂.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
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1	.988 _a	.977	.975	.00961
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Table 5: Test of Hypothesis H₃

a. Predictors: (Constant), unfair criticism, refusal of leave, removing from assigned responsibility, heavy workload, withholding information, setting unrealistic targets, excessive monitoring

The R Square value (.977) from Table 5 indicates that the work-related bullying variables - unfair criticism, refusal of leave, removing from assigned responsibility, heavy workload, withholding information, setting unrealistic targets, excessive monitoring together account for 97.7% variance on the work performance of employees

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	.001	.004		.189	.851
heavy workload	.001	.003	.017	.536	.593
refusal of leave	-.001	.003	-.007	-.245	.807
removing from assigned responsibility	.013	.003	.137	4.281	.000
setting unrealistic targets	.043	.004	.532	11.186	.000
withholding information	.003	.003	.036	1.071	.286

excessive monitoring	-.011	.005	-.121	-2.165	.033
unfair criticism	.041	.005	.444	8.681	.000

Table 6: Coefficients --Dependent Variable: work performance

From Table 6, it is evident that the overall model is statistically not significant ($p > .05$), leading to the rejection of Hypothesis H_3 .

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.930 ^a	.865	.862	.29666

Table 7: Test of Hypothesis H_4

a. Predictors: (Constant), verbal abuse, isolation at workplace, victim of gossip

The R Square value (.865) from Table 7 indicates that the personal bullying variables - verbal abuse, isolation at workplace, victim of gossip together account for 86.5% variance on the physical wellbeing of employees

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	-.415	.088		-4.735	.000
isolation at workplace	.152	.115	.113	1.326	.188

victim of gossip	.510	.104	.430	4.927	.000
verbal abuse	.515	.058	.457	8.804	.000

Table 8: Coefficients --Dependent Variable: Physical wellbeing

From Table 8, it is evident that the overall model is statistically significant ($p < .05$), leading to the acceptance of Hypothesis H_4 . Among the personal factors of bullying, gossiping ($p < .05$) and verbal abuse ($p < .05$) have a significant impact on the physical wellbeing of employees.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.984 ^a	.968	.967	.16421

Table 9: Test of Hypothesis H_5

a. Predictors: (Constant), verbal abuse, isolation at workplace, victim of gossip

The R Square value (.968) from Table 9 indicates that the personal bullying variables - verbal abuse, isolation at workplace, victim of gossip together account for 96.8% variance on the psychological wellbeing of employees

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	-.101	.049		-2.091	.039
isolation at workplace	-.007	.064	-.004	-.106	.916

victim of gossip	1.236	.057	.914	21.552	.000
verbal abuse	.123	.032	.096	3.794	.000

Table 10: Coefficients--Dependent Variable: Psychological wellbeing

From Table 10, it is evident that the overall model is statistically significant ($p < .05$), leading to the acceptance of Hypothesis H₅. Among the personal factors of bullying, gossiping ($p < .05$) and verbal abuse ($p < .05$) have a significant impact on the psychological wellbeing of employees.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.894 ^a	.800	.795	.02758

Table 11: Test of Hypothesis H₆

a. Predictors: (Constant), verbal abuse, isolation at workplace, victim of gossip

The R Square value (.800) from Table 11 indicates that the personal bullying variables - verbal abuse, isolation at workplace, victim of gossip together account for 80% variance in the work performance of employees.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	.008	.008		.932	.353
isolation at workplace	.019	.011	.183	1.761	.081

victim of gossip	.033	.010	.369	3.466	.001
verbal abuse	.035	.005	.412	6.505	.000

Table 12: Coefficients--Dependent Variable: work performance

From Table 8, it is evident that the overall model is statistically non-significant ($p < .05$), leading to the rejection of Hypothesis H₆.

FINDINGS

Based on the multiple regression analysis values from Table 2, 4 and 6, it is concluded that work related bullying has a significant impact on personal wellbeing of employees and is not significant with respect to psychological wellbeing and work performance of employees, leading to the acceptance of hypothesis H₁ and rejection of hypothesis H₂ and H₃. Based on the multiple regression analysis values from Table 8, 10 and 12, it is concluded that personal bullying is significantly related with physical and psychological wellbeing of employees and non-significant with respect to work performance, leading to the acceptance of hypothesis H₄ and H₅ and rejection of hypothesis H₆.

CONCLUSION

The various forms of bullying in the workplace were proven to affect the physical and psychological wellbeing of employees. An employee, whose wellbeing is at stake, will not be at his productive best leading to his/her inefficiency. Employee wellbeing is a concern of organization. Organizations must ensure a safe environment which is free of bullying and will help in achieving organizational goals. Organizations must adopt a two pronged approach to manage bullying in the workplace – preventive measures and remedial measures. As preventive measures organizations must design appropriate policies and regulations, conduct training programs, establish proper reporting channels and fair investigation procedures to tackle the menace. As remedial measures, the victims of bullying must be offered counselling, stress relief exercises and emotional support.

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