

Impact of Workplace Bullying on Work Engagement among Employees of Educational Institutions

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Abstract

This study examines the impact of workplace bullying on work engagement among employees in educational institutions. Utilizing a cross-sectional survey with 100 participants from Rohtak, the research explores the prevalence, forms, and sources of bullying, and its effect on employees' work engagement. Results reveal that while half of the respondents have not recently encountered bullying, significant proportions experience it with varying frequencies. Verbal abuse is the most common form, primarily originating from colleagues. The negative impact on work engagement is evident, with many reporting decreased motivation, increased stress, and reduced job satisfaction. Positive impacts are also noted, suggesting resilience in some cases. Recommendations include implementing clear anti-bullying policies, providing training, and enhancing support systems from management and HR. These measures are crucial for mitigating the adverse effects of bullying and improving overall work engagement within educational institutions.

Keywords- Workplace Bullying, Work Engagement, Educational Institutions, Employee Well-being etc

Introduction

Understanding workplace bullying and its effects on worker engagement involves delving into several theoretical frameworks. These frameworks provide insights into the dynamics of bullying behaviors and their impacts on employee motivation, commitment, and overall engagement.

Theoretical Background of Workplace Bullying

Workplace bullying is a persistent pattern of mistreatment from others in the workplace that causes harm. It can include verbal abuse, offensive behavior, and psychological harassment (Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, & Cooper, 2011). Bullying behaviors are typically characterized by repetition (occurring frequently), duration (lasting over a period), and power imbalance (the bully has more power than the victim) (Leymann, 1996).

Theoretical Frameworks

1. **Social Exchange Theory (SET):** SET posits that social behavior is the result of an exchange process aimed at maximizing benefits and minimizing costs (Blau, 1964). In the context of bullying, employees who experience bullying may perceive the exchange relationship with their organization as negative, leading to decreased trust and engagement.
2. **Stress Process Model:** This model, developed by Lazarus and Folkman (1984), focuses on how stressors (such as bullying) affect individuals. Workplace bullying is a significant stressor that can lead to psychological and physiological strain, impacting employee well-being and engagement.
3. **Power-Dependence Theory:** This theory suggests that power imbalances in relationships can lead to exploitation and abuse (Emerson, 1962). In workplaces, those with more power (e.g., managers) might use their position to bully those with less power, affecting their psychological safety and engagement.

4. **Psychological Contract Theory:** This theory, proposed by Rousseau (1995), refers to the unspoken, informal agreements and expectations between employees and employers. Bullying can violate these psychological contracts, leading to a breakdown in trust and engagement.

2. Theoretical Background of Worker Engagement

Employee engagement refers to the level of enthusiasm and dedication an employee feels toward their job and organization. It encompasses emotional, cognitive, and behavioral aspects (Kahn, 1990). Engaged employees are typically enthusiastic about their work, committed to their organization, and put in extra effort beyond their job requirements (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008).

B. Theoretical Frameworks

1. **Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model:** This model proposes that job demands (e.g., workload, emotional demands) can lead to burnout, while job resources (e.g., support, autonomy) can enhance engagement and reduce burnout (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Bullying can be considered a negative job demand that depletes resources and reduces engagement.
2. **Maslach's Burnout Model:** Maslach (1982) identified that burnout, which can result from high job demands and low job resources, negatively impacts employee engagement. Bullying can lead to emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, reducing overall engagement.
3. **Self-Determination Theory (SDT):** Developed by Deci and Ryan (1985), SDT emphasizes the importance of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in fostering motivation and engagement. Workplace bullying undermines these basic psychological needs, leading to lower engagement.
4. **Theoretical Model of Work Engagement:** Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) proposed a model that includes vigor, dedication, and absorption as key components of engagement. They suggest that positive job resources and supportive work environments enhance these components, while bullying erodes them.

Interplay Between Workplace Bullying and Worker Engagement

The interplay between workplace bullying and worker engagement can be understood through these theoretical frameworks: Workplace bullying negatively impacts worker engagement by creating a hostile work environment, leading to decreased motivation, commitment, and overall enthusiasm for work (Einarsen et al., 2011). Stress and Strain: According to the Stress Process Model, the stress induced by bullying depletes resources and increases strain, which can significantly reduce engagement levels (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Resource Drain: The JD-R Model explains that bullying depletes job resources, leading to burnout and reduced engagement. The lack of supportive resources and increased job demands further exacerbate this effect (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Violation of Psychological Contract: Bullying can breach the psychological contract between employees and employers, eroding trust and leading to disengagement (Rousseau, 1995). By integrating these theoretical perspectives, we gain a comprehensive understanding of how workplace bullying impacts employee engagement and the mechanisms underlying this relationship. Addressing bullying effectively and fostering a supportive work environment are crucial for maintaining high levels of worker engagement.

Literature Review

Hameed et al (2024) Examined the relationship between work engagement (WE) and workplace bullying (WB), taking into account the mediating effects of psychological distress (PD) and emotional exhaustion (EE). The findings indicate that there is a strong correlation between workplace bullying and work engagement, with emotional weariness and psychological discomfort acting as partial mediating factors in this relationship. **Hasan et al (2023)** The purpose of this study was to investigate the association between workplace bullying, employee stress, and organizational performance among Bangladeshi workers. The results show that personal characteristics including age, gender, and educational attainment as well as work overload are major contributors to employee stress in Bangladeshi workplaces. **Rasool et al (2021)** The effects of a toxic workplace environment (TWE) on employee engagement (EE) are investigated in this study. Data were gathered from 301 employees of China's small and medium-sized businesses using a quantitative research methodology. The study's findings supported the notion that a hostile work environment lowers employee engagement. **Indriyani et al (2018)** this

study looked at how job insecurity mediated the relationship between workplace bullying's impact on health issues and work engagement. This study uses a quantitative approach, with 40 employees East Java, serving as respondents. Data are gathered through observation and questionnaires. The census method is the sampling strategy used in this investigation. The partial east square testing method, which is a component of SEM, was applied in this study.

Research Objective

The main objective of the study is to analyze the impact of Workplace Bullying on Work Engagement among Employees of Educational Institutions.

Research Methodology

The study employs a cross-sectional survey design with convenience sampling to explore the impact of workplace bullying on work engagement. The data collection process involves electronically distributing a structured questionnaire, ensuring broad and inclusive participation from 100 employees across different roles and demographics from Rohtak. The approach facilitates a comprehensive understanding of workplace bullying and its implications, guiding future interventions and support measures within educational institutions.

Data Analysis

Table 1- Demographics of surveyed population

Demographic Question	Number of Respondents (%)	Cumulative Percentage (%)
1. Age		
Under 25	10%	10
25-34	30%	40
35-44	25%	65
45-54	20%	85
55 and over	15%	100
2. Gender		
Male	40%	40
Female	50%	90
Non-binary/Third gender	5%	95
Prefer not to say	5%	100
3. Position		
Faculty	45%	45
Administrative Staff	30%	75
Support Staff	20%	95
Other	5%	100
4. Years of Experience in the Institution		
Less than 1 year	10%	10
1-3 years	25%	35
4-6 years	30%	65
7-10 years	20%	85
More than 10 years	15%	100
5. Full-time or Part-time		
Full-time	70%	70
Part-time	30%	100

Interpretation:

- **Age Distribution:** The sample includes a broad range of ages, with the majority of respondents being between 25-34 years old.
- **Gender Distribution:** The majority of respondents are female, followed by males. Non-binary/third gender and those who prefer not to specify are in smaller proportions.

- **Position Distribution:** Faculty members represent the largest group, indicating that a significant portion of the sample is involved in teaching roles. Administrative staff are the next largest group.
- **Years of Experience:** A significant portion of respondents have 4-6 years of experience, followed by those with 1-3 years. This suggests a balanced mix of relatively new and more experienced employees.
- **Employment Type:** The majority of respondents are full-time, with part-time employees making up a smaller proportion.

Table 2-Frequency of Experiencing or Witnessing Bullying

Frequency	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Never	50	50%
Rarely	20	20%
Sometimes	15	15%
Often	10	10%
Very Often	5	5%

Analysis:

- **50%** of respondents have not experienced or witnessed bullying in the past 12 months, indicating a substantial portion of the workforce has not encountered such issues recently.
- **20%** have experienced or witnessed bullying rarely, which may still suggest a need for attention but indicates it is not a frequent issue for most.
- **15%** report bullying sometimes, implying that while not universal, it affects a significant minority.
- **10%** experience or witness bullying often, which could be a concern for targeted interventions.
- **5%** experience or witness bullying very often, highlighting a small but critical group potentially in need of immediate support.

Table 3: Forms of Bullying Encountered

Form of Bullying	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Verbal abuse (e.g., shouting, insults)	30	30%
Exclusion or isolation	20	20%
Spreading false rumors	15	15%
Intimidation or threats	10	10%
Undermining work or sabotage	5	5%
Other (Please specify)	5	5%

Analysis:

- **30%** of those who experienced bullying encountered verbal abuse, making it the most common form of bullying reported.
- **20%** experienced exclusion or isolation, which can have significant emotional and social impacts.
- **15%** faced spreading false rumors, which can undermine trust and work relationships.
- **10%** experienced intimidation or threats, indicating a serious form of bullying that may involve power dynamics.
- **5%** encountered undermining work or sabotage, and **5%** reported other forms of bullying, suggesting various less common but still relevant issues.

Table 3: Sources of Bullying

Source of Bullying	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Supervisors/Managers	25	25%
Colleagues/Peers	40	40%
Subordinates	10	10%
External stakeholders (e.g., students, parents)	15	15%
Other (Please specify)	10	10%

Analysis:

- **40%** of respondents reported that bullying primarily came from colleagues/peers, indicating that peer relationships are a significant source of bullying.
- **25%** experienced bullying from supervisors/managers, highlighting that bullying can also occur at higher levels of authority.
- **15%** faced bullying from external stakeholders, suggesting that issues extend beyond the immediate workplace.
- **10%** encountered bullying from subordinates, which can reflect issues in power dynamics and workplace hierarchy.
- **10%** reported other sources of bullying, suggesting a variety of contexts or individuals not covered by the main categories.

Insights

- **Prevalence of Bullying:** While a substantial portion of employees have not encountered bullying recently, a significant number experience it with varying frequency. Targeted measures are needed to address the needs of those affected.
- **Types of Bullying:** Verbal abuse is the most commonly reported form, indicating a need for policies addressing communication and behavior in the workplace. Exclusion and rumors are also notable issues.
- **Sources of Bullying:** The majority of bullying is reported to come from colleagues, suggesting that peer-to-peer interactions are a critical area for intervention. Management and external sources also contribute, highlighting the need for a comprehensive approach to tackling workplace bullying.

Table 4: Work Engagement Statements

Statement	1 (Strongly Disagree)	2 (Disagree)	3 (Neutral)	4 (Agree)	5 (Strongly Agree)	Total (%)
a. My work provides me with a sense of accomplishment.	5	10	20	30	35	100%
b. I feel enthusiastic about my work.	8	12	25	30	25	100%
c. I am committed to working towards the goals of the institution.	6	8	20	32	34	100%
d. I find my work to be meaningful and fulfilling.	7	15	22	28	28	100%
e. I am motivated to go above and beyond in my role.	9	14	22	25	30	100%

Analysis:

- **Sense of Accomplishment:** **65%** of respondents agree or strongly agree that their work provides them with a sense of accomplishment, indicating generally positive feelings about their work's impact.
- **Enthusiasm:** **55%** feel enthusiastic about their work, though **20%** feel neutral and **20%** disagree, suggesting some variation in enthusiasm.
- **Commitment to Goals:** **66%** are committed to working towards the institution's goals, which is a strong indicator of alignment with institutional objectives.
- **Meaningfulness and Fulfillment:** **56%** find their work meaningful and fulfilling, with **22%** neutral and **22%** disagreeing, showing moderate satisfaction.
- **Motivation to Go Above and Beyond:** **55%** are motivated to exceed expectations, while **23%** are neutral and **23%** disagree, reflecting mixed levels of extra-role motivation.

Table 5: Impact of Workplace Bullying on Work Engagement

Impact	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Very negatively	20	20%
Negatively	30	30%
No impact	25	25%
Positively	15	15%
Very positively	10	10%

Analysis:

- **Negative Impact: 50%** of respondents report that workplace bullying has affected their work engagement negatively or very negatively, highlighting a significant concern.
- **No Impact: 25%** believe bullying has no impact on their work engagement.
- **Positive Impact: 25%** report a positive or very positive impact, which could suggest resilience or improvements in some cases.

Table 6: Ways Workplace Bullying Has Impacted Work Engagement

Impact	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Decreased motivation	40	40%
Increased stress	35	35%
Reduced job satisfaction	30	30%
Lower productivity	25	25%
Increased absenteeism	15	15%
Other (Please specify)	10	10%

Analysis:

- **Decreased Motivation: 40%** of respondents report decreased motivation due to workplace bullying, indicating a major effect on their drive and engagement.
- **Increased Stress: 35%** experience increased stress, highlighting the emotional toll of bullying.
- **Reduced Job Satisfaction: 30%** face reduced job satisfaction, which is a significant issue for overall work engagement.
- **Lower Productivity: 25%** experience lower productivity, reflecting how bullying can impact work performance.
- **Increased Absenteeism: 15%** report increased absenteeism, which may be a direct response to a toxic work environment.
- **Other Impacts: 10%** report other unspecified impacts, suggesting a range of additional issues not covered by the main categories.

Table 7: Support or Interventions Needed

Support/Intervention	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Clear anti-bullying policies	45	45%
Training for employees on bullying and conflict resolution	35	35%
Support from management or HR	30	30%
Access to counseling or mental health resources	25	25%
Improved communication channels	20	20%
Other (Please specify)	10	10%

Analysis:

- **Anti-bullying Policies: 45%** believe clear anti-bullying policies are essential, indicating a strong need for formalized procedures and guidelines.

- **Training: 35%** support training for bullying and conflict resolution, emphasizing the importance of education and proactive measures.
- **Management or HR Support: 30%** seek support from management or HR, suggesting that having a responsive support system is crucial.
- **Counseling or Mental Health Resources: 25%** believe access to counseling or mental health resources is necessary, reflecting the need for emotional support.
- **Improved Communication: 20%** highlight the need for better communication channels, which can aid in addressing and preventing bullying.
- **Other Supports: 10%** mention other forms of support, indicating additional needs that may not be covered by the main options.

Findings and Conclusion

The survey results provide a comprehensive overview of the demographic characteristics, experiences with bullying, work engagement, and the impacts of workplace bullying within educational institutions. The age distribution shows a diverse workforce, with a significant concentration of respondents in the 25-34 age group, indicating a relatively young and possibly dynamic work environment. Gender distribution reveals a majority of female respondents, with males and non-binary individuals represented in smaller proportions. Faculty members constitute the largest group by position, suggesting a strong focus on teaching roles within the institution. In terms of experience, there is a balanced mix of newer and more experienced employees, which reflects a range of perspectives on workplace dynamics. The majority work full-time, underscoring a commitment to their roles. Regarding workplace bullying, half of the respondents report having not experienced or witnessed bullying recently, but a notable proportion experience it with varying frequency. The most common form of bullying is verbal abuse, followed by exclusion and spreading false rumors. Bullying is most often reported to come from colleagues, which highlights a significant area for intervention. The impact of bullying on work engagement is predominantly negative, with many respondents noting decreased motivation, increased stress, and reduced job satisfaction. Despite these challenges, some individuals report a positive impact, suggesting varying levels of resilience or personal growth.

Suggestions

To address these issues effectively, respondents identify the need for clear anti-bullying policies, training on bullying and conflict resolution, and support from management or HR. Counseling and mental health resources are also seen as crucial for improving work engagement and handling the effects of bullying. Improved communication channels and additional unspecified support measures are also recommended. Overall, the findings highlight the importance of targeted interventions and supportive measures to enhance work engagement and address the adverse effects of workplace bullying.

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