Review

Prevalence, antecedents, and effects of workplace bullying: A review

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Workplace bullying represents persistent behaviors that are both overt and covert. There is an increasing need for understanding this construct for the reason that it is directly linked to bringing the victim to a state of long lasting emotional distress. Alarmingly, such aggression usually is invisible and difficult to identify. This provides a rationale for elucidating the concept of bullying in the workplace at length through an extensive review of the existing literature. Various facets of workplace bullying have been highlighted in this paper in order to show its detrimental effects on the health of targets working in any occupational or organizational setting. Drawing on well-established theories and findings of various researchers, the concept of workplace bullying is systematically linked with how it can evolve into mental health problems. In addition, few hypotheses are also presented for future research purpose.

Key words: Workplace bullying, aggression, interpersonal conflict, health issues, post traumatic stress disorder.

INTRODUCTION

Workplace bullying has become a widespread issue (Quine, 1999) and is believed to be three times more prevalent than sexual harassment (Namie, 2003). Bullying in the workplace is ranked on the top amongst all forms of stressors present at work (Wilson, 1991).

According to Leymann (1996) and Rayner and Hoel (1997), the term bullying refers to different negative actions in totality that are frequently carried out and which are hostile and aggressive. The impact of bullying on victims can range from (but are not limited to) social isolation, social maladjustment, psychosomatic illnesses, depressions, helplessness, anger, anxiety, despair (Leymann, 1990), melancholy, insomnia, psychological distress, etc. (Einarsen, 1999). Generally, man-induced aggression causes more severe trauma than is caused naturally (Dahl et al., 1994). Similarly, Mikkelsen and Einarsen (2002a, b) puts forth that victimization caused by fellow human beings tends to trigger emotional problems (depression, helplessness, anxiety, etc.) among

the victimized. For this reason, social researchers are deeply concerned to explore the causes and effects of bullying in a workplace. These efforts have highlighted the deleterious effects of exposure to such negative acts on the health and well being of victims (Einarsen, 1999; Einarsen et al., 2003; Hoel et al., 1999). It is believed that such emotional problems reach heightened levels when the targets feel unable to escape those situations or when the source of aggression is more powerful (Einarsen, 1999; Niedl, 1996). Therefore, the construct of workplace bullying is considered to be a source of social stress (Zapf et al., 1996; Einarsen et al., 2003) as well as an occupational stressor (Agervold, 2007; Einarsen et al., 2003). Whitney and Smith (1993) emphasize that bullying is a form of aggression which is perpetuated on the victim in a position of less authority and encompasses a problem that is social as well as interpersonal in nature.

One of the foremost responsibilities of employers is to provide a safe and healthy atmosphere for the people working for them. Health as defined by the World Health Organization (p. ix) refers to a 'state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity'. In the contemporary times, organizations are passing through an increasing number

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of paradigm shifts which requires more and more interaction on the part of employees working together. Hence, the chances for differences among employees have increased. Therefore, an understanding of the interpersonal conflicts at work has become importantly recognized due to the fact that such conflicts result in physical or psychological violence and further intensifies the health problems for the victims (Tehrani, 2004).

This paper reviews and synthesizes available literature in the domain of workplace bullying. It also explores the possible causes that trigger the onset of such behaviors along with the resultant negative consequences on the bullied victims in terms of health. Based on the work of different researchers and related models of stress, the paper will conclude how victimization due to bullying has devastating effects on the health and mental well-being of those exposed.

The possible role of personality characteristics in relation to bullying and health implications is also discussed and ultimately, few relevant hypotheses are presented before concluding the paper.

THE CRUX OF WORKPLACE BULLYING

Bullying has become a complex problem for managers nowadays to handle because its prevalence can affect an organization's productivity, financial bottom-line and employees morale. Yet, this phenomenon is often misunderstood or mismanaged. In organizations, it may take place between co-workers or subordinates and unlike the school bullying, in workplace, it is either consciously or unconsciously done by an adult. An interesting fact is that unlike some countries, for example Norway and Sweden, bullying is not illegal in the US and unfortunately, has not received the due importance (Vega and Comer, 2005).

According to Leymann (1996) and Rayner and Hoel (1997), the term bullying refers to different negative actions in totality that are frequently carried out and which are hostile and aggressive. However, bullying is different from everyday conflicts at work (Rayner and Hoel, 1997) and constitutes behaviors that are often unseen and cruel, and are carried out persistently to degrade the person it is targeted at (Adams, 1997). The interpretation of any negative action as an act of bullying would vary according to personal levels of acceptance for such behavior (Rayner and Hoel, 1997). Though studies have made distinction between the constructs of bullying, harassment, conflict and violence (Rayner and Hoel, 1997), Nazarko (2001) is of the opinion that bullying and harassment can be viewed as co-existing terms. On the contrary, some researchers (Adams, 1992) argue that bullying should not be merged into the concept of sexual and racial harassment and that bullying differs from harassment. The difference arises primarily because in instances of racial or sexual advances, the act may result

from a single incident. Nevertheless, Thomas (2005) believes that the demarcation between bullying, harassment, workplace conflict, and violence varies from writer to writer and culture to culture. Despite the debate over the nomenclature of this term, bullying in the workplace has become an important issue (Hoel et al., 1999). It happens to be a universal phenomenon, occurring worldwide in different organizations and occupations (Cusack, 2000). Despite this, the fact remains that bullying has no generally accepted definition (Smith et al., 2003). But it has been generally agreed upon that bullying comes under the umbrella of aggressive behavior and comes to surface when people interact interpersonally in work settings (Zapf and Einarsen, 2001). Also, there seems to be a mutual consent on the facts that bullying can be described in terms of: the intentionality of the behavior; the frequency (for example, weekly) and the duration (for example, about six months) of such behaviors; the targets' reaction(s) to that situation; a perceived imbalance and misuse of power between perpetrator and target; inadequate support; and inability of the target to defend him or herself in that situation (Einarsen, 1999, 1996; Einarsen et al., 2003, 2011), where they have to face constant negative social interactions (Einarsen et al., 2011), badgering, insulting remarks (Einarsen et al., 2003), and intense pressure (Sandmark, 2009). This strengthens the aspect of power imbalance between the perpetrator and the targets as the perpetrator is believed to be in a position of strength as compared to the victim (Einarsen, 1996).

Quite interestingly, this construct has been studied under different terms (Tehrani, 2004) such as emotional abuse at work (Keashly, 1998), harassment at work (Brodsky, 1976; Einarsen and Raknes, 1997), bullying at work (Einarsen et al., 2003), mistreatment (Spratlen, 1995), mobbing (Leymann, 1996; Zapf et al., 1996), workplace aggression (Baron and Neuman, 1996) workplace incivility (Andersson and Pearson, 1999), or victimization (Aquino and Thau, 2009).

Bullying can be manifested in different ways, such as negatively gesturing or glancing towards the target, ignoring the target, refusing to listen or talk to the target, slander, laughter, scorn or belittling of the target (Vartia, 2001). In a study of 137 Norwegians, victims reported that the most common negative acts used by the perpetrators were social isolation and exclusion, unfair criticism of their work, insulting remarks, etc. (Einarsen et al., 1994). Verbal and passive forms of bullying were reported as common methods used by perpetrators in an American survey on 178 employees (Baron and Neuman, 1996). In another instance, bullying took place through rumor spreading and repeated insults, done in order to change the image of the victim, which resulted in a low self-esteem, feelings of guilt and shame among the victims (Hallberg and Strandmark, 2006). In a study by Thomas (2005), conducted on 100 support staff in higher education institutions, it was reported that undue

pressure to produce work, undermining of one's work ability, shouting abuse and withholding of necessary information were perceived as the top four bullying tactics.

However, downward bullying by managers (Pietersen, 2007) with the perpetrator preferring the indirect method for aggression against a victim are more common as such acts are not easily identifiable (Pietersen, 2007; Bjorkqvist et al., 1994). Pietersen (2007) used the phenomenological method to gather the experiences of seven informants regarding interpersonal bullying in South Africa. The findings concluded that most bullying experiences were downwardly conducted and verbal tactics were used. The targets were subjected to bullying through discrimination, obstructionism, isolation and lack of recognition.

As mentioned, bullying not only takes different forms but it can occur horizontally and /or vertically between co-workers, and can be carried out on both male and female workers (Branch et al., 2004). Similarly, the bully can be of either gender. The bullying acts do not differentiate between gender, race, religion or age. However, the most vulnerable among these categories would be those whom the bully wants to specifically target (Vega and Comer, 2005). It is believed to evolve gradually (Einarsen, 1999; Bjorqkvist et al., 1992; Einarsen et al., 1994) and systematically (Einarsen, 1999) as initially, the victims may be subjected to indirect, subtle and indecent acts which may not even be visible to pin point (Einarsen, 1999; Bjorqkvist et al., 1992; Einarsen et al., 1994; Leymann, 1996). Slowly with time, the behaviors become more direct and aggressive (Einarsen, 1999; Leymann, 1996) and the perpetrator may even use both physical and psychological methods of violence (Bjorqkvist et al., 1992; Einarsen et al., 1994). It can be conducted through overt acts that are physical in nature (though it is less common) or covert and non-physical and verbal acts (Keashly, 1998; Quine, 1999; Leymann, 1996; Einarsen, 1996).

Although the actual reported figures for such (bullying) behaviors may have discrepancies, either due to the definition presented or due to the selection of the samples (Hallberg and Strandmark, 2006), nonetheless, Bjorkqvist et al. (1994) are of the view that this behavior is probably more common in the western society. This fact has been supported by statistics gathered from the work of different people in the west. For example, Leymann (1996) in his study found out that 3.5% of his sample comprising of Swedish working population were the victims of bullying. Similarly, Hoel et al. (2001) in their work on 70 organizations (private, public and voluntary) in Great Britain also revealed that 10.6% of the sample reported being bullied.

ANTECEDENTS OF BULLYING

Bullying in an organization can be caused by many factors. According to Rayner and Hoel (1997), lack of proper work control and increased levels of role conflicts are some of the causes that may trigger employees engaging in such behaviors. Vartia (1996) also believes that problems in communication and cooperation, low morale and unhealthy social climate are also some probable causes for bullying to occur in a workplace. Cultural differences and the fact that 'who' is involved in bullying at workplace also determine the environment as conducive for this act or otherwise. Cultural differences can be measured on five dimensions, namely: power distance, collectivism versus individualism, femineity versus masculinity, uncertainty avoidance and long or short term orientation (indentified by Geert Hofstede in his studies on cultural norms internationally since 1970s). Out of these dimensions, power distance describes the possibility of bullying in any particular work environment. Power distance determines how people with varying degrees of power relate to each other (Vega and Comer, 2005).

Jex (2002) and Bowling and Beehr (2006) have separately examined two models of stress to explain the phenomenon of an occupational stressor. Basically, an occupational stressor is defined as an antecedent condition which requires adjustment to that situation (Jex and Beehr, 1991). Failure on the part of an individual to do so would result in strain for him or her. Moreover, if the individual lacks the resources required to meet the expected demand, it would also result in strain (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). Jex (2002) refers to the stressor-strain model to explain the occurrence of bullying in a workplace. If stressors in a workplace exceed the resources to cope with them, the resulting stress leads to negative physical, psychological and/ or behavioral changes.

On the other hand, Bowling and Beehr (2006) review the strain-stressor relationship in light of the bullying incidence. According to them, specific personal characteristics such as impaired health, etc., may pose as vulnerability factor. This predisposes the individual to be more prone to be bullied at work (Coyne et al., 2000). Lange et al. (2005) further explained the strain-stressor model in light of gloomy perception mechanism which more or less states the same principle, that is, unhealthy or depressed employees may perceive the work environment as hostile and report higher levels of bullying episodes. It is worth mentioning that both these models have been used in studies done on workplace bullying (Einarsen et al., 2011).

Jehn (1995) highlighted two major types of conflict events in any organization: relationship and task conflict. The former signifies disagreements due to frustration and personal clashes which limit group cohesion and efficiency while the latter type of conflict signifies conflict in the actual task that is being performed. Besides, some conflicts are of short duration and can be easily resolved and vice versa. The concept of conflict intensity was also

highlighted by Jehn (1995). Conflict intensity refers to the number of people involved in any conflict. The larger the number of people involved, and the more the number of events, the more serious the conflict is. Bullying behaviors arise from long duration conflicts. Such a scenario is also expected to produce emotional responses as well as counterproductive behaviors in the group. Though counterproductive behaviors can be of different forms (Fox and Spector, 1999), for example, when people face hindrance in the achievement of their set tasks or goals, frustration may result and this can prove to be an antecedent for organizational aggression. Thus, employees react to situations by engaging in different counterproductive behaviors, including hostility, interpersonal aggression, etc. (Fox and Spector, 1999). On the other hand, when the employees are subjected to organizational aggression, they respond to them through different means which includes stress, anxiety, anger, etc. They may even respond with aggressive actions that are aimed at the organization (Spector, 1978). As already discussed, a victim of bullying undergoes distress and frustration (Einarsen, 2000), therefore, he or she may choose to engage in counterproductive behaviors. Ayoko et al. (2003) proposed that intra-group conflicts intensify bullying behaviors which in turn result in counterproductive behaviors in the workplace.

In another study conducted in the public service sector by Strandmark and Hallberg (2006), it was reported that lack of proper leadership, in addition to the aforementioned reasons was a possible antecedent instigating such behaviors. Consequently, bullying can be promoted by work related factors which include role conflicts, work control, poor flow of information, and haste at work (Vartia, 2001).

Katrinli et al. (2010) elucidated another interesting facet of engaging in bullying behaviors. According to them, bullying is believed to be a form of organizational politics with the aim of achieving or influencing some important organizational decisions, not to mention the bully's own vested interest. This is especially true in cases where organizations do not have clear promotion policies and instead, the employees are pressurized for more work (Vartia, 2001).

On the other hand, Harvey et al. (2009) presented the possibilities of bullying to occur in the context of global organizations. According to them, rapid changes in the structure of the organization and its environment are possible antecedents of this negative act. They classified this possibility in three broad classes: first, it can be because of an increase in the employee diversity in the organization. It is believed that the larger the number of foreign workers with differences in the cultural backgrounds working together, the greater the changes of creation of in-groups and out-groups. Employees may group up against those who do not belong to the home country. The second issue that can increase bullying in the organization is the remote activities of any global

organizations, which make it difficult for the managers to have a direct control over the activities of the workers. Thirdly, the phenomenon of bullying is still in the emerging phases in many countries (Yamada, 2003). Due to this fact, there is a possibility that the workers are not protected from abuse in the workplace which further results in discrimination (Harvey et al., 2009). Thus, in light of this detailed discussion, the following hypotheses can be presented:

H_1: Bullies tend to be people in positions of power and can be of any gender.
H_2: Victims of bullying can be of either gender.
H_3: Bullying is more likely to happen in organizations where role conflicts or poor flow of information exists.
H_4: Vague promotion policies are expected to increase the likelihood of bullying.
H_5: Workplace bullying is expected to be more prevalent in global organizations due to cultural differences or due to lack of managerial control over the workers activities.
H_6: Physical attributes such as impaired health can increase vulnerability to workplace bullying.

Bullying and negative repercussions on the well-being

The stressor-strain model discussed earlier can be linked to the cognitive activation theory of stress which, in simple words, refers to how an increase in the duration of physiological functioning of a person (due to stress and worry) leads to health complaints (Ursin and Eriksen, 2004). Cooper et al. (2001) explain that although job related strain arises due to many sources present within the workplace, for example, workload or role demands, nevertheless, the most important source could also be due to individual or interpersonal interactions at work. According to Einarsen et al. (2003), negative behaviors such as bullying are often encountered by organizational members but when they become persistent, they are likely to affect the targets' health negatively. Individuals exposed to bullying behaviors tend to lose control at work and are usually unable to cope with the stressors (Leymann, 1990; Zapf and Einarsen, 2005). The more the individuals are exposed to long lasting and frequent aggression, the more they are likely to feel stressed out (Brodsky, 1976). According to Hackman and Oldham (1980) and Spector (1986), it has been established that job control is linked with an increase in job satisfaction and a decrease in job stress. It may be said that individuals exposed to such frequent negative acts and aggression are more likely to feel dissatisfied with their work. Thus, high levels of stressful environment are likely to persist in the organization where bullying prevails (Agervold and Mikkelsen, 2004; Einarsen et al., 1994). The basic psychological and relation needs such as trust, etc., of individuals, mostly remain unfulfilled in

organizations where bullying occurs (Aquino and Thau, 2009). This leads to anxiety and depression which gets severe with time (Williams, 2007). Studies on school bullying have also revealed that children who are victims of bullying also undergo emotional problems such as depression and low self-esteem, etc., (Austin and Joseph, 1996) and even suicidal tendencies (Roland, 2002).

General psychological and physical disorders

Cox (1991) and Einarsen (1996) put forth that bullying in the workplace has the capacity to impair the health and well-being of the employees. Hauge et al. (2010) established that bullying is a source of anxiety and depression in the workplace as compared to other stressors. The victims exposed to such behaviors usually undergo negative repercussions in the form of psychological (anxiety, etc.), physical (somatic problems, etc.) or behavioral complaints (aggression) (Niedl, 1996; Einarsen et al., 1996; Einarsen and Rakness, 1997; Mikkelsen and Einarsen, 2001, Einarsen, 1999; Bowling and Beehr, 2006; Zapf et al., 1996; Leymann, 1990). Similarly, Mikkelsen and Einarsen (2001) and Vie et al. (2011) have established through their cross-sectional work that bullying does have an effect on the mental health leading to anxiety and depression as well as produce other psychosomatic complaints and musculo-skeletal issues for the targets. In a study conducted by Niedl (1996) on 368 Austrian hospital employees, the targets of bullying, exhibited increased levels of psychological health complaints(anxiety, irritation, etc.) than the rest of the employees. In another study by Einarsen et al. (1998), conducted on Norwegian assistant nurses, 3% reported that they were bullied at work. Some 8.4% recalled their past experiences when they were victimized. These bullied assistant nurses showed increased levels of burnout as compared to those who were not. They also experienced psychological problems such as anxiety, depression, and irritability. A large majority of these victims were bullied through slanders.

Einarsen (1996) and Bjorkqvist et al. (1994) also believe that victimization due to bullying in the workplace can cause high level of anxiety, depression, psychoso-matic complaints, and musculoskeletal problems. Bowling and Beehr (2006) reported that bullying increases the level of burnout and physical health complaints. In a study conducted on 99 Norwegian nurses by Matthiesen et al. (1989), 10% of the respondents reported being victims of bullying and showed signs of burnout, psychological and somatic health issues. A significant relationship was also found between exposure to harassment in workplace and burnout level in Norwegian assistant nurses (Einarsen and Hellesoy, 1998). Referring back to a study conducted by Einarsen et al. (1994) on Norwegian blue collar and white collar

employees, it was shown that 13% of psychological complaints, 6% of psychosomatic health problems and 6% of musculoskeletal problems were because of bullying behaviors. The results of the study on American victims by Brodsky (1976) also revealed similar patterns though it was mixed. Some victims reported physical health problems (weakness, chronic/persistent fatigue, etc.) while some showed depression and still another group revealed psychological illnesses including memory problems, nervousness, avoiding social contact, etc. Similarly, Niedl (1996) conducted a study on Austrian hospital employees and found out that 26% of the population was victims of bullying. These victims also reported high levels of depression, anxiety and other psychosomatic health complaints. Similarly, Zapf et al. (1996) established that mental health and frequent harassment, done through personal attacks, are strongly associated. In their study on 30 Irish bullied victims by O'Moore et al. (1998), major symptoms reported by them included depression, paranoia, lowering of self esteem, and physical problems.

According to Janoff-Bulman (1992), when individuals are exposed to too much bullying, they may begin to take life and the surrounding environment as more of an insecure place where dangers and threats prevail. Such thoughts in turn lead to emotional, psychosomatic and psychiatric ailments (Leymann, 1990a). Speaking on the same lines, Lakey et al. (1994) mention the likelihood of a rise in negative affectivity of those exposed to negativity in their social life. They also tend to exhibit more dysfunctional attitudes. Negative affectivity refers to the tendency of an individual to experience negative emotional states.

On the whole, employees perceive aggression in the form of bullying as unfair (Mikkelsen and Einarsen, 2002) and unwanted (Einarsen and Raknes, 1997) and may inculcate a negative and cynical picture of their workplace atmosphere (Maslach et al., 2001). In addition to this, bullied victims lose their sense of being a worthy and competent person (Leymann, 1990). And increased levels of tolerance for aggression in the form of bullying would mean more demoralization for the victim and a decreasing capacity to defend him/herself in that situation, thus, giving more room for the bully to continue doing so (Vega and Comer, 2005).

Post traumatic stress disorders (PTSDs)

Clinical examination of those exposed to long-term bullying acts has shown the victims to suffer from post traumatic stress disorders (PTSD) (Leymann, 1992; Wilson, 1991). PTSD is a mental disorder experienced by those exposed to traumatic events (American Psychiatric Association, 2000); although it has been pointed out by Ravin and Boal (1989) that the criterion used in determining PTSD does not include bullying behaviors.

Even the American Psychiatric Association (2000) does not formally recognize such behaviors as a cause of PTSD. They exclude victims of domestic violence, bullying and terminal illness. This is because by definition, for PTSD to develop, it is required that victims be exposed to a situation which involves a threat to their life or a threat of any serious physical injury either to their own-selves or to those of others. However, the severity, duration and proximity of an individual's exposure to the traumatic event are the most important factors affecting the likelihood of developing this disorder. For these reasons, it has been debated upon that bullying should not be included as a cause of such disorder. Nevertheless, Leymann (1990, 1996), Bjorkqvist et al. (1994), Einarsen and Hellesoy (1998), Leymann and Gustafsson (1996), Einarsen et al. (1994), Tehrani (2004), and Mikkelsen and Einarsen (2002) still argue that victims of persistent bullying behaviors have exhibited symptoms similar to that of PTSD and general anxiety disorders (Bjorkqvist et al., 1994; Leymann and Gustafsson, 1996). Leymann and Gustafsson (1996) have also shown that victims of bullying show similar signs as found in victims of rape. PTSD can manifest itself within the victim through re-experiencing, avoidance and hyperarousal. Victims struggle with intense psychological distress, feelings of detachment from others, difficulty falling or staying asleep, etc. They may also face recurrent and disturbing thoughts or may have continuous dreams of the situations when they were bullied. Altogether, a victim with PTSD exhibits non adaptive behaviors and becomes dysfunctional (American Psychiatric Association, 2000).It is also believed that signs of PTSD, due to bullying, can be produced even at later stages of life (Matthiesen and Einarsen, 2004). In a study by Leymann (1992) conducted on 350 bullied victims, 95% of the sample showed signs of PTSD. In addition, 64 Swedish victims of bullying showing PTSD declared having intrusive/ disturbing thoughts and would try to avoid the situation (Leymann and Gustafsson, 1996). In a similar manner, 76% Danish bullied victims showed signs of PTSD (Mikkelsen and Einarsen, 2002).

Generally, the longer the exposure to bullying episodes, the greater the chance to develop PTSD (Dahl et al., 1994). Therefore, Nielsen et al. (2008) declare bullying in the workplace not as a mere stressor rather than a form of extreme trauma.

The negative health effects, due to being exposed to bullying, can also be seen among those who are a witness to bullying situations. Studies by Einarsenv and Raknes (1997) and Vartia (2001) have shown that observers of bullying report more general and mental stress than the non-witnessed group. However, the level of general and mental stress experienced by the observers was weaker as compared to the victims (Vartia, 2001). Here, it may be hypothesized that:

H7: The mental health of victims and observers both are

negatively affected by bullying at workplace.

H8: The negative health effects of bullying at workplace are more severe in the victims as compared to observers of bullying behaviors.

H9: There exists a strong association between workplace bullying and mental disorders which intensifies the physical and behavioral problems.

Bullying and personality characteristics

Despite all the arguments presented, a person may feel victimized only when an individual's psychological and physiological needs are threatened due to being a target of negative behaviors (Aquino and Thau, 2009). A new stand has recently evolved (Coyne et al., 2000), which focuses on the personality characteristics of the victims. The role of personality cannot be ignored in postulating the relationship between workplace bullying and the resultant health implications. The personality traits also determine 'who' in the organization is more likely to be bullied. However, the existing body of literature lacks empirical research to strengthen the role of personality a victim may carry, which predisposes him or her for being an easy target (Coyne et al., 2000).

The relationship between bullying and mental health is moderated by personality traits of the victims because it is believed that personality differences determine how victims react to different stress situations (Bolger and Schilling, 1991). These personality differences tend to explain why all victims do not react in the same manner to bullying (Glaso et al., 2009). Sense of coherence, self efficacy, positive affectivity, negative affectivity, and self labeling oneself as a victim are some of the personality characteristics that help in explaining the reason not all victims of bullying behaviors react to the same extent (Vie et al., 2011).

Matthiesen and Einarsen (2001) studied the relationship between the personality characteristics of individuals exposed to bullying and the level of psychological distress experienced by them. The results showed that, on the basis of personality features of each victim, the level of distress experienced by each were different. They divided the victims into three subgroups on the basis of their personality differences, which were: the seriously affected, the disappointed and the depressed and lastly, the common group (with no particular personality profile).

Mikkelsen and Einarsen (2004) in their study on Danish manufacturing company with a sample size of 433 employees quantitatively proved that generalized self efficacy acts as a moderator in determining the impact of bullying on health complaints. Self efficacy is described as the level of capability that an individual may have to deal with a particular situation (Schunk and Carboni, 1984). In another study by Matthiesen and Einarsen (2004), it was shown that negative affectivity and positive affectivity determine the variation in PTSD symptoms.

This further affects the way people with high negative affectivity tend to view their surroundings with hostility and fear (Watson and Clarke, 1984). On the other hand, people with high positive affectivity envision the world as a pleasurable place. Such people tend to be enthusiastic and energetic (Watson and Tellegen, 1985).

Sense of coherence refers to the extent to which an individual views the world as meaningful, logical, and graspable (Vie et al., 2011). Nielsen et al. (2008) worked on sense of coherence to explain how this construct proved to be a shield between bullied victim and such negative actions.

Out (2005) explored the construct of self labeling among 385 Canadian nurses whereby it was discovered that when targets self labeled themselves as victims, they reported a decrease in job satisfaction, increased levels of burnout and more psychological distress as compared to those who were exposed to bullying but did not self label themselves as victims. Here, it is important to mention that self-labeling refers to the mental awareness of being a victim of bullying (Vie et al., 2011).

Einarsen (1999) also believes that different personality traits of an individual can predispose them to be bullied. On the other hand, being a victim of bulling can also alter the personality of the victimized in such a way that he/she proves to be vulnerable for further victimization. As a result, bullying can be termed as a vicious cycle whereby, one factor leads to another and that in turn becomes a cause for further aggression (Glaso et al., 2007). On the basis of the aforementioned discussion on personality, it can be concluded that:

H_{10}: Personality characteristics moderate the relationship between bullying and mental disorders.

CONCLUSION

Bullying is a chronic problem and has a negative implication for the well-being of employees. Therefore, individuals subjected to such behaviors are likely to show increased levels of anxiety, depression and a negative overall mental health. It can be concluded in light of the literature reviewed that bullying does not refer to a single negative behavior, but occurs frequently with increasing severity over time. The persistence of such negative behavior builds a constant distress within the individual leaving that person helpless and unable to cope with it. Probably, the bully's intention is to suppress the target to such an extent that he or she is under constant mental pressure and ultimately becomes dysfunctional in the workplace. The negative flashbacks of these events make it more difficult for the victims to concentrate or even find suitable words to express their feelings for that situation. However, it has also been established that the relationship between the bully and the target is influenced by personality characteristics an individual carries. The combined effect of all these facts are a vicious cycle in

which, the more a victim is bullied, the more are his or her chances of being bullied again and again.

DIRECTION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Although the role of personality in the relationship between the well-being of those exposed to bullying has been highlighted, a comprehensive model and empirical tests of the extent to which personality traits influence the victims' response to bullying have to be explored. The types of personalities that pose as a vulnerability factor to be the targets of bullying also need to be highlighted. To add to this, the kind of personality characteristics that a bully may have is also an important area to work on.

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