Management Bullies: The Effect on Employees

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Abstract
Workplace bullying is a problem and is an important organizational and social concern. This study examined workplace bullying and its effect on job satisfaction and productivity. The research showed how bullying behavior affects a target’s ability to perform their jobs, which can impact the morale of employees and the financial performances of an organization. Workplace bullying is difficult to identify and contain because the harassment usually takes place covertly, many times out of sight of supervisors and coworkers. The central findings of this study (a) showed the frequency of workplace bullying, (b) examined the specific types of mistreatment and negative acts experienced by targets, (c) determined physical and mental stress associated with bullying, and (d) revealed a relationship between workplace bullying and its effect on job satisfaction and productivity. The data in this study found that 75% of participants reported witnessing mistreatment of coworkers sometime throughout their careers, 47% have been bullied during their career, and 27% admitted to being a target of a bully in the last 12 months. This study also examined the most frequent negative acts by workplace bullies as reported by the participants. Although the sample is limited, findings suggest that employees perceive their organizational environment to be filled with abusive bosses, coworkers and negative acts that should be cause for concern. This study not only examined the effects of a toxic work environment; the study is also one of the first studies to research the positive effects of bullying and given the criteria for bullying (intentionally malicious, persistent and consistent, and meant to gain control), asked if a participant might recognize bullying traits in themselves.

Keywords: Workplace Bullying, Violence, Management, Leadership.

Management Bullies: The Effect on Employees

Despite more than a decade of research that has led to better intervention through risk assessment, prevention, and improved management, workplace bullying continues to be an occupational health and safety problem. Although a significant gap in the literature has been identified related to bullying, the research is unanimous in reporting the devastating health effects workplace bullying has on targets and bystanders and the negative financial implications for organizations. Research on workplace bullying to date has encompassed self-reports from...
victims and bystanders, and ignored the contributions of other stakeholders, such as the alleged perpetrator.

A number of studies have shown that workplace bullying has a detrimental effect on the target, and on witnesses and onlookers. Workplace bullying can have a harmful effect on a target’s physical and mental health along a continuum from increased risk of cardiovascular disease, anxiety and depression, to post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and in extreme cases, suicide. However, despite the literature consistently reporting the negative effects of bullying on the victim, there have been no studies to date that have examined the psychological effects of being accuse of bullying. Similarly, there is no literature that we are aware of that have examined the effects of being accused of sexual harassment, or the effects of being investigated for allegations of either bullying or harassment (Vartia, 2009). The current study aims to approach the contextual issues and provide broader explanations of the phenomena, and close the gap of relying on the victims’ accounts of bullying by interviewing a group of managers who have been accuse of workplace bullying (Zapf, 2007).

**Framework of Workplace Bullying**

While the term “workplace bullying” has become synonymous with inappropriate workplace behaviors, the literature presents a number of debates as how the phenomenon should be specifically defined and measured. The main concepts underlying the operational definition of bullying include repeated negative acts that recur over time, and where there is a power difference between the perpetrator and target. Bullying and harassment by a manager or supervisor most commonly occurred in the form of nit-picking, unjustified criticisms or inequitable treatment compared to other employees. In our experience, it is not always correct to describe such actions as ‘bullying’. These issues tend to be indicative of a lack of clarity around bullying and harassment definitions, performance expectations and agreement on required outcomes between managers and employees. Bullying and harassment by another employee most commonly occurred in the form of negative body language, nitpicking and unjustified criticism (Yamada, 2003).

**Factors Associated With Workplace Bullying**

The heightened awareness and specialist knowledge of bullying and harassment held by many employees has also resulted in significant organizational issues in relation to alleged bullying and harassment. This perception has arguably been further compounded by Work Cover’s emphasis on internal training and other awareness activities in the area of bullying and harassment, and union involvement in support of their members.

The overall findings from this review suggest that the majority of employees find Work Cover an enjoyable place to work, with a noble vision, positive role in the community and generous employee conditions and benefits. The exceptions to these otherwise generally favorable sentiments are the views expressed by interviewees that:

1. Many had suffered from behavior, which they described as bullying and harassment
2. The leadership team has historically not demonstrated leadership capability, action concerning bullying, and harassment
3. Specific cases of bullying and harassment had not been handled to the satisfaction of complainants or had not followed the correct process in all cases.

These views are at least partially supported by results from the survey participants, 40% of whom indicated that they had been bullied and/or harassed in the workplace, and 60% reported they had not. Of the 40% who had indicated that they had been bullied and/or harassed in the workplace, 52% reported that the source was a manager or supervisor, 29% reported that the source was another employee, and 18% reported the source was both a manager or supervisor and another employee.

While many employees acknowledge that Work Cover management has recently taken action to establish a new direction and plan, survey respondents and interviewees stated that they feel that further progress needs to be made. A number of examples of alleged bullying and harassment in particular locations or groups appear to have been poorly handled, which may have exacerbated the issues. This may be a reflection of poor process management and inconsistent adherence to policy, or because the complexity of the alleged bullying and harassment complaints makes it difficult to effectively identify and appropriately deal with every situation.

The survey results indicate both positive and negative variances against Government and Industry benchmarks. Our work suggests that Work Cover has some of the fundamentals in place for an effective organisation, most importantly a vision centered on supporting the community and good work conditions. However, it will take a spirit of cooperation between unions, management and employees to address effectively the current and ongoing issues relating to alleged bullying and harassment (Withy, 2008).

We also reviewed five specific matters relating to workplace grievances of bullying and harassment, with a view to assessing the processes undertaken to initiate, investigate and finalize them. We did not reinvestigate any of the five matters. To date, three of the five matters have been investigated and finalized by Work Cover. In our review, specific consideration was given to adherence to relevant policy and procedural fairness. Our review identified recurring issues in the investigation processes, as follows:

1. Failure to investigate matters within relevant policy timeframes
2. Failure to clarify the aggrieved person’s complaint at the time of reporting
3. Failure of management to communicate in an effective and timely manner with the parties involved.
4. Lack of grievance training for managers responsible for investigating matters

There were a number of discrepancies in some processes in these matters; however, we note that the ultimate outcomes of the five matters were not adversely affected. Our report contains a number of recommendations that are intended to assist Work Cover to comply more fully with relevant policy and procedural fairness when dealing with future reports of workplace grievances or complaints of alleged bullying and harassment (Tehrani, 2009).
Risk Factors Associated with Bullying and Harassment

Research suggested that workplace bullying and harassment is a significant and widespread concern in Australia; however, the factors that contribute to this situation are not well understood. The costs relating to bullying and harassment include the harm to the health of the targeted individual, distraction from workplace goals, adverse effects on employee productivity, morale, workplace absenteeism, high employee turnover and decreased levels of commitment. These outcomes are estimated by Work Cover Victoria (2003) to cost Australian organizations approximately 3 billion dollars a year. Workplace bullying is also becoming a legitimate liability concern for organizations, with related case law increasing.

The literature on workplace bullying and harassment has demonstrated consistently a variety of approaches to exploring and explaining workplace bullying and harassment. Different methodological underpinnings and the different interests and skills of the researchers and practitioners publishing in the field drive those approaches. Table 1 presents risk factors that contribute to workplace bullying and harassment, which are categorized under organization, processes, and people. Interviewees and survey respondents identified a number of these risk factors, which they believe have contributed to the current environment within Work Cover.

Within a contemporary understanding of the uncertainties and ambiguities faced by many organizations and their stakeholders, it may be argued that the pressures inherent in the need for organizations to adapt and flex to ever-changing market, economic, technological and socio-political demands may result in stakeholders, including employees, being mistreated as their psychological contract with the organization is misinterpreted. Such mistreatment may include workplace bullying, harassment, and a subsequent impact on employee health and health management issues. This special issue of the International Journal of Workplace Health Management contextualized within such understanding. The readers of this special issue may wish to pursue the aforementioned issues from the different viewpoints herein offered so that they may become more aware of the problem for workplace health management.

Table 1. Risk Factors Associated with Workplace Bullying

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Process</th>
<th>People and other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Historical management style</td>
<td>Recruitment</td>
<td>Temporary employees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor management/leadership</td>
<td>Promotion</td>
<td>General employee concerns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>style</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-regulation/internal</td>
<td>Limited performance-based</td>
<td>External influences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>investigations</td>
<td>culture</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High level of internal</td>
<td>Internal processes to manage</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>awareness of ‘bullying and</td>
<td>grievances and bullying and</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>harassment’</td>
<td>harassment</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Well Being of Employees Associated with Workplace Bullying

In principle, work is good for us; good work provides people with a focus, an income, a degree of personal satisfaction and the opportunity to socialize and interact with other human beings. Yet work can have a negative impact on people’s lives – both in and outside work, an
impact that often not given the weight it deserves. Some employers are attempting to address this oversight. Faced with a challenging economic environment, the global marketplace and the need to have more efficient and productive workers, an increasing number of employers are seeking to create working environments in which protecting and promoting the health and wellbeing of their staff is seen as a corporate priority. In Europe, much of the impetus for this approach stems from the Luxembourg Declaration for Workplace Health promotion first published in 1997 and updated in 2005. This declaration states “Workplace Health Promotion (WHP) is the combined efforts of employers, employees and society to improve the health and well-being of people at work. This can be achieved through a combination of: improving the work organization and the working environment; promoting active participation; and encouraging personal development”... Within this and other definitions of workplace health and wellbeing, the implicit essential is that the workplace is safe – for an unhealthy workplace cannot by definition be “healthy”. Taken together, a “safe” and “healthy” workplace will be one in which every employee’s physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing is valued, protected and promoted. A core process to achieve the aforementioned goal is proactive workplace health management.

Such management can take a number of forms ranging from a focus on lifestyle topics such as healthy eating, physical activity, smoking, and stress awareness in which employee awareness is raised and opportunities might created for staff to engage in healthier eating, exercise, and smoking cessation to an approach in which wellbeing is deeply embedded in the corporate culture of the organization. Here the wellbeing of staff is at the centre of corporate decisions and practices; human resource management and occupational health are finely tune in, and are supportive of, this culture. Health is considered in its broadest possible context.

Effects of Workplace Bullying on Society

The effects of workplace bullying on society ought not to be underestimated in terms of health management requirements. Those effects may include the loss of sections of an active labor force through resignation, early retirement or voluntary redundancy; and the cost of medical interventions for the public health system. The goal of this special issue is to expand the boundaries of our understanding of workplace bullying as it pertains to workplace health management and to effective programs that will help to address the problem. To that end, we encouraged authors to submit papers addressing:

1. The impact of workplace bullying on individual health – to include primary prevention, behaviour modification, attitudes and lifestyle choice, health education, health promotion, and how to motivate people
2. Workplace culture – to include management policies and procedures, communication systems, training and learning opportunities, and work-life balance, and the effect this has on morale and well being.
3. Physical work issues – to include musculoskeletal health/ergonomics
4. Legislative and policy outcomes – to include the impact of health and safety legislation and occupational health; the effectiveness or otherwise of organizational policies; and the level of compliance within the organization (Van, 2008)
Preventive Measures

Many companies have developed a framework of corporate values, respectful behaviors, and codes of conduct in its 'Charter of Management Commitment'. Many employees, however, have shared that the workplace behavior strategies have yet to be effective in approaching employee concerns. To help organizations mitigate these costs and better understand the risk factors associated with bullying and harassment, research is available containing recommendations for change and advice on minimizing the incidence of bullying and harassment. There are two main schools of thought concerning preventative measures. One is that certain characteristics of perpetrators and targets predispose them to bullying; the other focuses on the organizational factors that are commonly correlated with bullying and harassment.

Procedural justice refers to the way in which the decision was made in terms of whether the parties were able to express their views and tell their side of the story, the consistency of procedures, the lack of a bias in the investigation process, and the ability of both parties to have equal representation. Procedural justice is concerned therefore with the perceived fairness of a process. (Vartia, 2006).

As bullying and harassment is the product of workplace culture, working with individuals may not be enough to prevent further incidents, and therefore a comprehensive, systemic approach to introduce preventative measures and coordinated management at an organizational level is required. The current CEO, with a new Corporate Plan 2010-2015 introduced in October 2010. This should provide a greater sense of direction for Work Cover, with key result areas and performance targets detailed for employees. We further understand that Work Cover’s realignment, announced in December 2010, is designed to position the organisation to deliver against the corporate plan, and is being implemented with a stronger focus on communication and engagement over the next few months. We have been advised by management that the realignment include:

1. Reviewing the Human Resources structure and leadership; the division has been renamed ‘People and Culture’ to reflect a more strategic partnering role with the business
2. Conducting regular employee road shows to inform employees of the key challenges the organisation faces, business performance updates, and improvements being introduced to the business
3. Developing a framework for an external expert panel to investigate serious allegations of bullying and harassment
4. Introducing new employee awards in November 2010 to acknowledge the contribution of employees in the categories of innovation, excellence, living the values, and work health and safety
5. Providing training and development for managers, including business case development to help them make more effective decisions
6. Developing a new learning and development program in 2011 to embed leadership behaviors
7. Developing a new Culture program covering constructive behaviors, building personal resilience and developing a capability for self-awareness and self-actualization
8. Focusing on succession planning, as many Work Cover employees will reach retirement age over the next five years.
We understand that it will be some time before these new strategies have a genuine impact on the cultural deficiencies that have existed in parts of Work Cover for some years (Tehrani, 2006).

**Methodology**

To achieve the aims of this study, participants were recruited following a media release and subsequent radio and newspaper interviews. Participants were self selected and contacted the researcher if they wanted to participate. They were eligible to participate in the study if they were working in a managerial or supervisory capacity and had been accused of workplace bullying in the previous two years. A total of 24 participants were interviewed as part of this study. Participants were aged between 29 and 63, with a median age of 49 years. Approximately 37% were employed in the public service including hospitals, schools, and government departments, 33% employed in the private sector, 8% employed in local government and 20% employed by non-government agencies, such as community operated child-care and charity organizations (Farfel, 2005).

The agreed approach to collating employee views to inform this inquiry was ‘invitational’. This approach raises the question as to whether the employee engagement survey respondents and interview participants are representative of the broader population. However, the employee engagement survey, response rate was strong, at approximately 60% of total Work Cover employees, with 779 out of 1312 employees completing the survey. This response rate exceeds the sample size necessary to represent confidently the wider population of Work Cover, supported by data from the interviews.

**Employee Engagement Survey**

The employee engagement survey was designed to assess multiple indicators of Work Cover’s performance across a broad range of HR and general management practices and outcomes. Participants were invited by email to participate in the online survey open from Monday, 1 November to Friday, 12 November 2010. The survey was positioned as an opportunity for employees to have their say on a number of important issues, including workplace bullying and harassment, and to help identify strengths and areas for development. Employees were assured that their individual responses would not be sent to Work Cover. Instead, it was made clear that all responses would be sent directly to the Voice Project, an external research and consulting organisation associated with Macquarie University, and results would only be reported for groups with 10 or more respondents.

Once all responses had been analyzed, they were used by our team in conjunction with the Voice Project to prepare an independent report for the DPC. It was highlighted to employees that the Voice Project and Macquarie University might also use the raw data in research and benchmarking, but at no time would any individual or Work Cover be directly or indirectly identified in the public research. The survey was based on a core set of questions drawn from the Voice Climate Survey and a number of tailored questions specific to Work Cover. It consisted of 129 agree/disagree-type questions, 3 open-ended questions, 9 demographic questions, and additional items specifically addressing the alleged bullying and harassment concerns (Sutton, 2010). The survey was split into three parts:
1. Part 1: A series of multiple choice questions relating to the respondent’s experiences working for Work Cover
2. Part 2: Specific multiple choice questions relating to workplace bullying and harassment
3. Part 3: Open questions where respondents could provide more information about their previous answers and highlight information not previously covered.

There was a 5-level response scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Mixed Feelings/Neutral, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree) with an additional option for Not Applicable/Don’t Know. Respondents were instructed how to complete the survey, asked to click the button corresponding to whether they agreed or disagreed with a statement, and when they did not think a question was appropriate for them, did not have an opinion, or did not know the answer, they could select ‘Not Applicable/Don’t Know’. They were also directed to the open questions at the end of the survey where they could provide more information or raise matters that had not been covered in the survey. Respondents were asked to reply to the questions based on what they had personally experienced within the last 12 months, not to anticipate how other people might answer the questions, and not to consider what might be happening in other parts of Work Cover. If employees had any questions in relation to the survey, they were given the contact details of a Senior Consultant at the Voice Project.

Table 2

Employee Engagement Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Those who had formally reported their concern</th>
<th>Yes, verbally</th>
<th>Yes, in writing</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% of participants in this section of the survey</td>
<td>45.5%</td>
<td>18.7%</td>
<td>35.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Those who were satisfied with how this matter was dealt with</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Not given</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% of participants in this section of the survey</td>
<td>14.5%</td>
<td>75.8%</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interviews

Telephone interviews were conducted with 19 of the participants who lived outside the metropolitan area. Five participants from the metropolitan area were interviewed face to face. These interviews were carried out either at the University, or on request, at the participants’ place of work, and took approximately one hour.

The interview was guided loosely by a series of open-ended questions aimed at assessing the background of the allegations and the impact of the bullying allegation on the participants. Rather than a structured set of questions, the guide provided a list of areas that the researcher
wanted to cover. It was important to the researcher that the interviews took on the quality of an “informal conversation with a purpose” as suggested by previous research, in order that participants were able to discuss sensitive issues relating to the allegations made against them.

The interviewer aimed to elicit the participants’ perspective about the allegation of bullying, and questions were designed to engage the participant in talking about various aspects of their complaint experience. The first question asked in all the interviews was “Can you tell me how you came to be accused of workplace bullying?” The informal nature of the interviews allowed the interviewer to deviate from the guide if a participant raised an important issue, or provided an unusual answer to a question. The interviewer asked follow-up questions with probes such as “Can you tell me more about that?” or, “There seems to be a discrepancy between what you said . . . and . . . can you tell me about that”? “What do you mean by . . . ?” All of the interviews were audio taped and later transcribed. Field notes or memoranda were also made by the researcher in relation to the coded data, in order to describe interesting or common issues that were uncovered through the coding process. The thematic analyses undertaken in this thesis is grounded in “phenomenological epistemology”, which seeks to understand the everyday experiences of research participants, in order to gain a better understanding of workplace bullying from their perspective and reality. Therefore, the analysis of the interview data focuses on the “individual lived experience” of accused bullies, which is important in applied research that is carried out from within this approach (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Survey Measures

All participants completed a short survey, which asked about demographic variables (age, sex, occupation), as well as measures of psychological health and perceptions of justice. They were also asked whether the complaint against them was substantiated.

The Depression Anxiety Stress Scales (DASS) (Lovibond and Lovibond, 1995) were chosen to measure respondents’ levels of anxiety, depression and stress. The DASS-21 is a 21-item self-report inventory that describes a number of symptoms assessing depression, anxiety and general non-specific arousal (stress). For example, Stress “I was intolerant of anything that kept me from getting on with what I was doing; Anxiety: I was worried about situations in which I might panic and make a fool of myself or Depression: I found it difficult to work up the initiative to do things.” Respondents were asked to report the degree to which each symptom was experienced over the past week, on a four point scale ranging from 0 ¼ Did not apply to me at all, to 3 ¼ Applied to me very much. Interpretation of the DASS is based on percentile scores with scores of 0-78 classified as “normal”, 78-87 as “mild”, 87-95 as “moderate”, 95-98 as severe and 98-100 as “extremely severe”. In the current study, the Cranach’s alpha coefficients were satisfactory for all subscales and were 0.86 for the Stress subscale, 0.77 for the Anxiety subscale, and 0.89 for the Depression subscale.

The Organizational Justice Scales were utilized to measure the three dimensions of organizational justice. The first seven questions provide a measurement of “Procedural Justice” (e.g.; to what extent do you think that the procedures and processes used to address your complaint were free from bias?); four questions measure “Distributive Justice” (e.g. the outcome of my complaint is appropriate forgiven the extent to which I was bullied or harassed); four items measure “Interpersonal Justice”. All items use a five-point scale to measure the extent to which each item reflects the way the respondents complaint was managed from 1 ¼ never to 5 ¼ always. In
the current study, the Cronbach’s alpha coefficients were satisfactory for all subscales with an alpha coefficient of 0.91 for the Procedural Justice scale, 0.92 for the Interactional Justice scale and 0.96 for the Distributive Justice scale (Rousseau, 2003).

Results

The results derived from the common themes demonstrating reliability that emerged from the coding of the interview data (Long & Johnson, 2000), which were compared with and discussed in light of the relevant theories. In July 2009, Work Cover engaged an external consultant to conduct a ‘Respectful Behavior Survey’. The survey results and recommendations were considered at a workshop of the Work Cover/PSA joint Working Party where a Respectful Behaviors Action Plan was developed as of 30 June 2010. The guidelines suggested were followed in the current study and provided a methodology that determined analytical rigor in qualitative data analysis (Einarsen, 2009). Classifying the data can help the researcher reach important conclusions and uncover the results that led to such conclusions. (Tan, 2008).

Table 3
Respectful Behavior Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response rate</th>
<th>58.4%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Summary conclusions:</td>
<td>‘Clear and consistent indicators of negative behaviours across all demographics and groups within WorkCover’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Key recommendations | • Ensure employees at all levels attend workshops – Particularly senior employees, to actively demonstrate respectful behaviours  
• Review current training content  
• Review reporting and action process with a view to increasing transparency and confidence in reporting. |

Health Consequences

Results indicated that there were significant health consequences through being accused of workplace bullying. The high levels of anxiety, depression and stress as reported on the DASS were reflected in the interview data. Over half the participants in this study took sick leave as a result of the negative health effects that they were experiencing, and at the time of the interviews three participants were either on, or were in the process of applying for, workers compensation as a result of obtaining a workplace (psychological) injury. One had been on workers’ compensation for ten months because of a psychological injury sustained through the bullying accusation. The economic cost of psychological injury claims is significantly higher than physical injury claims, and it takes more than double the time to return the worker to the workplace if they have sustained a psychological injury (Australian Occupational Health and Safety Compensation Council, 2007). Therefore, from an economic perspective it is important to pay attention to the health of both the victim and the alleged perpetrator during a bullying investigation.

Perceptions of Organizational Justice

Results indicated no difference in the perceptions of procedural justice and interactional justice between those participants who were found guilty of bullying and those found not guilty
of bullying. These results need to be interpreted with caution given the small sample size and the sample. However, when examined in relation to the qualitative data, most participants, whether they were found guilty or not, reported concerns with the way the investigation was managed. As a result, several participants, had taken or were in the process of taking legal action against their employer because of a perception of unfair termination, or because they believed, they sustained a workplace psychological injury and were seeking compensation. This qualitative finding supports research that suggests that anger and poor perceptions of justice contribute to legal claiming by employees following employment termination, and supports Australian studies that suggest that perceptions of unfairness at work can contribute to workers making compensation injury claims against their employer. It follows that it is particularly important for organizations to treat all respondents in a fair and just manner, and provide appropriate support and counseling during investigations, even if they are accused of heinous behaviors (Richards, 2003).

**Career Consequences**

Results indicated that 25% of participants left their organization, even if they were found not guilty of bullying. This finding supports other studies where exit from the organization is the final stage in workplace bullying. However, whereas other studies focus on the victim leaving the organization, the current study draws attention to the perpetrator at times being forced to leave, whether they are found guilty or not. Those that stayed with the organization reported loss of confidence in their abilities as managers. Given the mental health symptoms they were describing, this loss of confidence is not surprising. Many reported not getting the support they required at work. However, given that a number of participants masked their distress and regulated their emotions and behaviour, it is not surprising that the need for support, coaching and perhaps mentoring during and following a bullying investigation may not have been recognize.

**Conclusions and Recommendations**

To achieve cultural change, long-term commitment and a concerted focus on culture is required. Building on Work Cover’s current and planned actions to address the culture; we have identified a number of desired outcomes and recommendations which we believe will help. We recommend that Work Cover take action on all of the following recommendations. We also recommend that Work Cover establish review periods to assess the progress and effectiveness of these actions over the next 12 to 24 months.

Although results cannot be generalized to the wider population, this study is the first to have examined the perceptions of accused bullies. These results challenge the populist view of all bullies as being unfeeling and insensitive, and psychopathic in character. Results suggest that many respondents to bullying complaints may hide or regulate severe emotional distress, and managers who have been accused of workplace bullying require support, education about their behaviors, and mentoring, whether they have been found guilty of bullying or not. If managers are not functioning effectively because of the negative impact of a workplace bullying complaint, it is reasonable to expect that this impact will not be confined to them alone, but will also affect the workgroup itself and ultimately the organization. Because a person’s perception of fairness has a significant impact on the decision whether to submit a workplace injury compensation claim, or take legal action against an employer (Rayner, 2008), ensuring that the accused bully is accorded a just and fair investigation is paramount. There are some inherent methodological
limitations to an exploratory study of this nature. As all data were obtained through interviews with managers accused of workplace bullying, a socially desirable response bias is expected. It is reasonable to presume that these participants will have expressed themselves in a positive light and will have viewed themselves as victims as opposed to perpetrators. However, because generalisability is not the main objective of this study, the convenience sampling and the small number of participants is legitimate in addressing the main aims of this study. Despite the methodological limitations of an exploratory study such as this, it is one of the first studies of bullying that has been undertaken through the perspective of the accused bullies. Furthermore, the results are not necessarily at odds with the findings of dominant paradigm in bullying research, and research into consequences of perceptions of injustice at work. Further research examining bullying from the perspective of the accused is recommended in order to broaden the scope of workplace bullying research, to take into account the voice of all the participants involved in workplace bullying (Rayner, 2007). Thus, the result suggested that our hypothesis is proved as there is a significant impact on employee when their managers worked as bullies. And perhaps the null hypothesis is rejected.

**Future Research**

While bullying and harassment are generally considered unacceptable, it may be argued that given the geographical and organizational extent of the articles presented in this special edition, and recent and continuing research being presented elsewhere, they nonetheless appear to be a continuing part of working life for many employees. It may also be argued that workplace health management is becoming more prominent in some organizations, although our contention is that it may not be high enough on the corporate agenda, as it ought to be, given the positive effects that may be seen to emanate from a successfully implemented strategy. We further contend that workplace health management, and a corporate culture based on partnership, trust and respect, offers considerable potential to move the agenda forward.

There appears to be a paucity of knowledge available as to how workplace health management strategies and programmes affect an organizational culture where bullying and harassment may be seen to exist. Similarly, there seems to be a paucity of knowledge available from evaluations of strategies that might be in place. It seems to us that assembling and sharing such a knowledge base could be a useful first step (Long, 2000).

We therefore posit two suggestions for future research. First, we suggest that studies could explore the extent to which the potential of workplace health management programs to impact positively on corporate approaches to bullying and harassment has been realized. Second, we propose studies exploring the degree to which simply having a comprehensive workplace health management approach in place, by itself, makes bullying and harassment less likely. That is, how is the program influencing corporate culture in terms of bullying and harassment?

Finally, we consider that a partnership approach to knowledge creation and sharing has the most potential for successful outcomes and accords closely with the inferred ideals of the Luxembourg Declaration for Workplace Health promotion (ENWHP, 2005). Researchers and practitioners ought to engage with companies who already are signatories to the agreement or with other relevant agencies, to develop and evaluate workplace health management strategies and their impact on corporate culture generally and workplace bullying and harassment specifically.
References


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