

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS OF WORKPLACE BULLYING AND BURNOUT AMONG EMPLOYEES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

A quantitative correlational design was used to determine the relationship between workplace bullying and burnout among employees in higher education. The Negative Acts Questionnaire-Revised (NAQ-R) was used to assess bullying and the Maslach Burnout Inventory Educational Survey (MBI-ES) measured burnout. Participants (N = 131) were employees who worked in academic positions including administration, faculty, and support services. The results indicated that the three factors of workplace bullying were significantly correlated with emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, and negatively correlated with personal accomplishment. Additional findings showed that employees had more frequency of top-down bullying than lateral and upwards bullying. These findings indicated that workplace bullying, and burnout could happen to anyone in academia, regardless of position or status.

Keywords: workplace bullying, burnout, higher education, toxicity

1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the present study was to determine whether there is a relationship between workplace bullying and burnout among employees in higher education. Leaders in academia face a growing concern over toxic work behavior which if left unanswered will result in employees leaving their careers in academia. Furthermore, bullying often flows from a downward perspective in which the person of authority bullies the subordinate (Rehan et al., 2021); therefore, it is imperative that leaders recognize this issue in the workplace. Research continues to show that workplace bullying is detrimental to the health, prosperity, and professional growth of employees in the workforce (Miller, 2019). Workplace bullying has also been shown to relate directly to faculty burnout among those working primarily in higher education. From an outside view, there is a tendency to believe that bullying does not happen in academia because prior research focuses mainly on public organizations outside of the school system (Misawa, 2015). However, behind the doors of institutions, faculty members are under increasing pressure and struggling to meet deadlines, including those who may become the targets of workplace bullying, such as verbal, physical, and mental abuse (Misawa, 2015).

The term *workplace bullying* was first coined by the British author and journalist Andrea Adams who later authored the book *Bullying at Work* in 1992 (as cited in Namie & Namie, 2009). Name and Namie (2009) explained that workplace bullying is psychological violence stemming from bullies who put their own needs before others to control and disrupt organizations. Bullying tactics have included public humiliation, harassment, and withholding resources to ensure the target cannot succeed and perform in their career (Namie & Namie, 2009). Additionally, Leymann and Gustafsson (1996) and Rockett et al. (2017), explained that workplace bullying (mobbing) was acknowledged in the early 1990s in Scandinavia as the continued abuse, intimidation, and abuse of power against employees. The earliest research on workplace bullying came from Leymann (1992), who first conducted studies on workplace bullying in Swedish organizations. These studies led to research by Björkqvist et al. (1994), who found that 11% of university teachers and staff in Finland were victims of bullying at work. The authors further explained that in women-dominated workplaces, the problems are more challenging to solve versus a male-dominated workplace due to the concern that women depend more on dynamic group support than men when engaged in work. In the mid-1990s, The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) joined the movement on workplace