Neglect: The Response to Workplace Bullying by Junior Faculty in Higher Educational Institutions

Levia Levia[*], Rishita Goyal

School of Humanities and Social Sciences,
Thapar Institute of Engineering and Technology,
Bhadson Road, Patiala, Punjab, India.

Email: llevia_phd20@thapar.edu

Abstract: This study aims to study faculty as target to workplace bullying(WB) and its response to the same. On surveying 520 junior faculty from various HEIs of Punjab, 228 were found under the threat of WB. Further when these 228 targets were contacted to understand their response to the situation, 211 responses were received. WB depicted significant relation with the neglect as the coping response. Neglect as response involved: loss of motivation to do job, calling sick, showing up late, putting less efforts and taking a lot of breaks. During the analysis of field notes, it was further found that junior faculty found themselves with no solution but to tolerate WB in order to progress in career. They also mentioned that the institutions did not involve any effective conflict management solutions, hence they chose neglect as an option. It can thus, be understood that in order to progress in achieving desired goal, first it is important to get the mentors feel safe and focused at their work, for them to deliver the best. Hence, focus on building stronger and institutions is recommended.

Keywords: Workplace Bullying, Neglect, Higher Educational Institutions, Coping Response

1. Introduction

Leon-Perez et al., (2021) carried out a systematic literature review to unfold that in India 44% of the working population has faced workplace bullying. This rate of occurrence of workplace bullying in India, is comparatively much higher than the other countries around the globe, varying between 11% and 18% (Nielsen et al. 2010).

Leymann (1990), the psychiatrist, is considered to be the first person to study the aggressive behavior in the school going children in Scandinavia (Rai & Agarwal,2016) and termed this hostile treatment towards some individuals as mobbing (Einarsen et al., 2011), which later expanded into the workplace bullying domain. Later the focus was shifted from school arena to the workplaces concerning adult bullying (Rai &

---

[*] Corresponding author.

1539

Eur. Chem. Bull. 2023, 12(Special Issue 6), 1539-1547

Agarwal,2016). The topic received interest from various researchers, particularly from European Nations, where projects to examine the phenomenon and its prevalence gained pace. In 1992, the term 'bullying' was coined by Adams, a freelance journalist, to describe this kind of harassment regardless of subject's demographics (Adams and Crawford, 2014).

As defined by European Researchers: "Bullying at work means harassing, offending, socially excluding someone or negatively affecting someone's work tasks. In order for the label bullying to be applied to a particular activity, interaction or process, it has to occur repeatedly and regularly (e.g., weekly) and over a period of time (e.g., about six months). Bullying is an escalating process in the course of which the person confronted ends up in an inferior position and becomes the target of systematic negative social acts. A conflict cannot be called bullying if the incident is an isolated event or if two parties of approximately equal 'strength' are in conflict" (Einarsen et al., 2011).

Bullying in academia is wide-spreading with the universities being amongst worse workplaces (Keashly 2021, Twale and De Luca 2008, Hollis 2012). Further, examining the impact of bullying in academia, it is found that the loss occurs at numerous levels: Loss for the one who is victim to bullying (in terms of health and wellbeing); the cost to department (example: loss of an employee, upset schedules); damage for students (in terms of teaching quality and unsatisfying mentoring); loss to institutions (such as: time, money and resources); and for the society (indicating undermined intellect and freedom) (Keashly 2021, Daniela et al., 2018, Anjum et al., 2019).

Over past few decades the research has progressed to study antecedents and outcomes of bullying, however research relating to coping has noticeably emerged only in recent years (Nielsen et al., 2020). Coping has been defined as the efforts made to tolerate, master or reduce the effects of conflicts (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). Raising voice, complaining, support seeking, patience, aggression, problem avoidance, withdrawal from work, intent to leave, quitting the organization, social isolation etc. are various coping strategies used by the targets to workplace bullying (Nielsen et al., 2020). These strategies have been classified into active, passive, constructive, destructive; based on the response chosen (Withey and Cooper, 1989).

Therefore, this study focuses to understand the neglect as coping response of the faculty, target to workplace bullying.

2. Literature Survey

Conceptually, the cognitive and behavioral efforts made in order to master, endure, or reduce the conflict between internal and external demand has been defined as coping (Folkman and Lazarus, 1980). Carver and Connor-Smith (2010), described coping as peoples' response to handle the demanding experiences of conflict, loss, threat and harm. Further in the literature, attempts have been made to categorize the coping responses as active and passive (Bandler and Shipley, 1994); adaptive and maladaptive (Zeidner and Saklofske, 1996); problem focused and emotion focused (Nielsen et al., 2020);

1540

engagement and disengagement coping (Carver and Connor-Smith, 2010); and approach and avoidance coping (Nes and Segerstrom, 2006). Specifically, in context to workplace bullying, the research indicated that avoidance and inactive coping behaviors are highly common; however, at one point or the other, the targets try to make an effort to use problem focused strategies (D'Cruz and Noronha, 2010; Nielsen et al., 2020).

Originally, Hirschmann (1970) gave the exit-voice-loyalty model of dissatisfaction. The author proposed that dissatisfied employees either exit or raise voice against the wrong. However, in some cases when exit and voice, none is practiced, it is probably because of the moderating factor of loyalty of employees to the firm. Over the years of research, further researchers found that it was incomplete in itself, and thus was later expanded by Rusbult and Farrell (1983) introducing neglect as the fourth kind of response.

Hirschman (1970) did not address the fourth response in his model. This term of neglect was added by Rusbult et al., (1982) describing the carefree and indifferent behavior at work. This kind of behavior was associated with absenteeism, high error rates, lateness, etc. (Farell 1983). The people who responded in neglect were described as passive in approach who thought acting upon was useless and things were better at other places, at the same time the cost of exiting and rising voice was considered high by them (Withey and Cooper 1989).

2.1. Workplace Bullying and Neglect

Neglect can be considered as the negative behaviour presented when difficult situations causing stress are perceived (Spector and Jex, 1998). It has been described as passive behaviour that permits the conditions to get worse by reducing the interest, effort and increasing error rate, absences, lateness, sickness, withdrawal behavior, disengagement etc. (Rusbult et al., 1988). According to D'Cruz and Noronha (2010) targets' continuous feeling of powerlessness and helplessness creates a negative state. This state of negativity may tend to cause disruption in emotions and therefore employees engage in neglect behavior perceiving that the situation is uncontrollable by them.
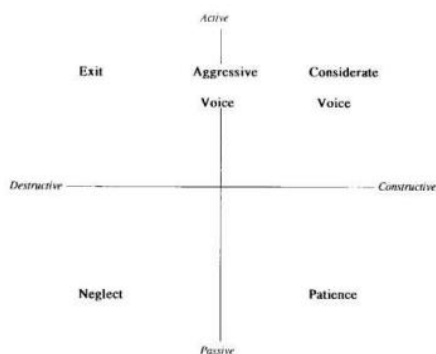

Source: Hagedoorn et al., (1999)

1541

Eur. Chem. Bull. 2023, 12(Special Issue 6), 1539-1547

Also, Neglect is also the outcome as to when a person tries to protect the personal resources and makes efforts to reduce the psychological strain (Krischer et al., 2010). Dolev et al., (2021) found two reactions of neglect that were prominent. One being the reduction in effectiveness of work and the other as revenge intentions. The author also witnessed that the former reaction was more frequent. Also, when Akhmad et al., (2020) employed clustering technique on the employee's reactions to negative situation, neglect came out as dominant and most prominent cluster indicating employees who would keep on staying in the organization but at the same time show withdrawal behaviors of being sick, coming late or employing least effort in work. Workplace bullying further also depicted a positive relation with neglect among Indian managers (Rai and Agarwal, 2019). Therefore, it has been hypothesized as:

H_1: Experience of Workplace Bullying is positively associated with Neglect.

Figure 1: Research Model
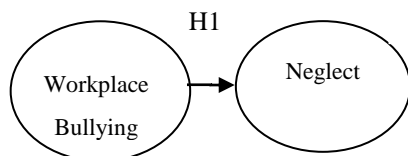
3. The Research Methodology

The study employs cross-sectional research design. The sample of the study includes assistant professors working in the higher educational institutions of Punjab. This research focuses on targets to workplace bullying and therefore faculty disqualified through the cut off score (discussed ahead) was eliminated from the study.

In order to measure the two variables of workplace bullying and neglect, the study used 22-item scale NAQ-R (Einarsen et al., 2009) and 4-item Neglect of Rusbult Typology (Rusbult et al., 1988) respectively. Demographic variables of Gender, Age and Experience were also measured and taken as control variables for the study.

Data collection was carried out in two phases. In the first phase the questionnaire included demographics and items relating to workplace bullying and second phase involved items relating to neglect as coping response. First phase involved the faculty of 700, of which 520 responses were received. Based on cut-off score of NAQ-R with 33 or more (Gupta et al., 2017; Rosander and Bloomberg, 2019) the respondents were classified as targets to workplace bullying. 228 such targets were found and questionnaires relating to neglect were asked. 211 responses received and were considered for the study.

1542

The data was analyzed using SPSS and Process Macro.

4. Empirical Results

The demographic statistics of the sample has been depicted in the Table 1.

Table 1: Demographics of the Respondents

Demography	Absolute Number	Percentage
Gender		
Male	70	33.2
Female	141	66.8
Age		
20-35	146	69.2
35-50	55	26.1
50-65	10	4.7
Experience		
6 months to 1 year	61	28.9
1 year to 5 years	91	43.1
More than 5 years	59	28.0

The Workplace Bullying can be seen rising in the education sector (Keashly 2021). In the current study, the targets with score from 33 to 40 were classified at the risk of being bullied, 40 to 56 were occasionally bullied and more than 56 depicted severely bullied (Gupta et al., 2017; Rosander and Bloomberg, 2019). Of the total sample 43.8% of the faculty was found to be targets of workplace bullying of which 43.4% at the risk of being bullied, 40.3% occasionally bullied and 16.3% severely bullied.

 The relationship between workplace bullying and neglect as coping response was studied using SPSS and Process Macro. A significant correlation between the two variables was found, with r as 0.179 significant at $p < 0.05$. Further a highly significant positive relation was found between workplace bullying and neglect at 0.0206 significant at $p < 0.01$. The results depicted that targets being bullied chose neglect as option to cope with it.

From the results it can depicted that, junior faculty finds no solution as to how to deal with (Karatuna, 2015) or worries about the job insecurity (Burk and Eby, 2010) and their reputation at stake (Seibert et al., 2001), inclines towards using neglect as the response. The faculty withdraws itself from working efficiently and indulges in excusing behavior of absenteeism, sickness etc. The already accepted notion of nothing can be done and the current ongoing status cannot be changed passes on the newer joinees and thus raising voice gets discouraged. According to the field notes, the faculty finds no alternative and believes that organizations are tolerant to such behavior and therefore prefer neglect as an option.

1543

Eur. Chem. Bull. 2023, 12(Special Issue 6), 1539-1547

Another factor that contributes to the choice of neglect is the supervisor bullying, as most faculty face bullying from superiors, it becomes difficult to tackle the situation and therefore majority if the targets chose to suffer in silence.

Organizations can make advancement in terms of establishing proper conflict resolution mechanism and ensuring its effective implementation. Also examples can be set to encourage raising voice against the wrong doers and help the organization become a better place to work for.

5. Summary and Conclusions

Workplace bullying in India has been seen at the higher verge in comparison to other western nations. Pertaining to higher education, 43.8% rate of bullying has been witnessed, addressing which has become a major challenge. The junior faculty joining and working as assistant professors face major problem as a result of superior to subordinate bullying and chose neglect as a coping response in order to cope with the situation. Depicting withdrawal behaviors from work has become common. Therefore, for the educational institutions to progress and for building the stronger foundation of the students it is important that the mentors feel safe to work without worrying about being bullied. Necessary support from organizations can help curb the issue and make institutions workable spaces.

References

1. Adams, A. & Crawford, N. (2014). Bullying at work: How to confront and overcome it.London, UK: Virago.
2. Akhmad, B. A., Suryadi, B., & Rajiani, I. (2020). Communicating the dissatisfaction in workplace among public sector employees: loyalty and neglect as an alternative model of responses. Polish Journal of Management Studies, 21
3. Anjum, A., Muazzam, A., Manzoor, F., Visvizi, A., & Nawaz, R. (2019). Mediating bullying and strain in higher education institutions: The case of Pakistan. Sustainability, 11(8), 2244.
4. Bandler, R. and Shipley, M. T. (1994) Columnar organization in the midbrain periaqueductal gray: Modules for emotional expression? Trends in Neurosciences, 17(9), 379–389.
5. Burk, H. G., & Eby, L. T. (2010). What keeps people in mentoring relationships when bad things happen? A field study from the protégé's perspective. Journal of Vocational Behavior, 77(3), 437-446
6. Carver, C. S. and Connor-Smith, J. (2010) Personality and coping. Annual Review of Psychology, 61, 679–704

1544

Eur. Chem. Bull. 2023, 12(Special Issue 6), 1539-1547

7. Daniela, L., Visvizi, A., Gutiérrez-Braojos, C., & Lytras, M. D. (2018). Sustainable higher education and technology-enhanced learning (TEL). Sustainability, 10(11), 3883.

8. D'Cruz, P., & Noronha, E. (2010). Protecting My Interests: HRM and Targets' Coping with Workplace Bullying. Qualitative report, 15(3), 507-534.

9. D'Cruz, P., & Noronha, E. (2010). The exit coping response to workplace bullying: The contribution of inclusivist and exclusivist HRM strategies. Employee Relations, 32(2), 102-120.

10. Dolev, N., Itzkovich, Y., & Fisher-Shalem, O. (2021). A call for transformation: Exit, Voice, Loyalty and Neglect (EVLN) in response to workplace incivility. Work, (Preprint), 1- 12

11. Einarsen, S., Hoel, H., Zapf, D., & Cooper, C. L. (2011). The concept of bullying and harassment at work: The European tradition. In S. Einarsen, H. Hoel, D. Zapf & C. L. Cooper (Eds.), Bullying and Harassment in the Workplace: Developments in Theory, Research, and Practice (2nd ed.), (pp. 3-39). Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press

12. Einarsen, S., Hoel, H., & Notelaers, G. (2009). Measuring exposure to bullying and harassment at work: Validity, factor structure and psychometric properties of the Negative Acts Questionnaire-Revised. Work & stress, 23(1), 24-44.

13. Folkman, S. and Lazarus, R. S. (1980) An analysis of coping in a middle-aged community sample. Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 21(3), 219–239

14. Gupta, R., Bakhshi, A., & Einarsen, S. (2017). Investigating workplace bullying in India: Psychometric properties, validity, and cutoff scores of negative acts questionnaire–revised. Sage Open, 7(2), 2158244017715674.

15. Hagedoorn, M., Van Yperen, N. W., Van de Vliert, E., & Buunk, B. P. (1999). Employees' reactions to problematic events: A circumplex structure of five categories of responses, and the role of job satisfaction. Journal of Organizational Behavior: The International Journal of Industrial, Occupational and Organizational Psychology and Behavior, 20(3), 309-321.

16. Hirschmann, A.O. (1970), "Exit, Voice and Loyalty", Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States, Harvard University Press, Cambridge

17. Hollis, L. P. (2012). Bully in the ivory tower: How aggression & incivility erode American higher education. LP Hollis.

18. Karatuna, I. (2015). Targets' coping with workplace bullying: A qualitative study. Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management: An International Journal

19. Keashly, L. (2021). Workplace bullying, mobbing and harassment in academe: Faculty experience. Special topics and particular occupations, professions and sectors, 221-297

1545

Eur. Chem. Bull. 2023, 12(Special Issue 6), 1539-1547

20. Krischer, M. M., Penney, L. M., & Hunter, E. M. (2010). Can counterproductive work behaviors be productive? CWB as emotion focused coping. Journal of occupational health psychology, 15(2), 154.

21. Lazarus, R. S., & Folkman, S. (1984). Stress, appraisal, and coping. Springer publishing company.

22. León-Pérez, J. M., Escartín, J., & Giorgi, G. (2021). The presence of workplace bullying and harassment worldwide. Concepts, Approaches and Methods, 55-86.

23. Leymann, H. (1990). Mobbing and psychological terror at workplaces. Violence and Victims, 5(2), 119-126.

24. Nes, L. S. and Segerstrom, S. C. (2006) Dispositional optimism and coping: A meta-analytic review. Personality and Social Psychology Review, 10(3), 235–251.

25. Nielsen, M. B., Mikkelsen, E. G., Persson, R., & Einarsen, S. V. (2020). Coping with bullying at work: how do targets, bullies and bystanders deal with bullying? Bullying and Harassment in the Workplace, 563-591. 23.

26. Nielsen, M. B., Matthiesen, S. B., & Einarsen, S. (2010). The impact of methodological moderators on prevalence rates of workplace bullying: A meta-analysis. Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology, 83(4), 955–979.

27. Rai, A., & Agarwal, U. A. (2016). Workplace bullying: A review and future research directions. South Asian Journal of Management, 23(3), 27.

28. Rai, A., & Agarwal, U. A. (2019). Linking workplace bullying and EVLN outcomes: Role of psychological contract violation and workplace friendship. International Journal of Manpower

29. Rosander, M., & Blomberg, S. (2019). Levels of workplace bullying and escalation–a new conceptual model based on cut-off scores, frequency and self-labelled victimization. European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology, 28(6), 769- 783.

30. Rusbult, C. E., Farrell, D., Rogers, G., & Mainous III, A. G. (1988). Impact of exchange variables on exit, voice, loyalty, and neglect: An integrative model of responses to declining job satisfaction. Academy of Management journal, 31(3), 599-627.

31. Rusbult, C. E., & Farrell, D. (1983). A longitudinal test of the investment model: The impact on job satisfaction, job commitment, and turnover of variations in rewards, costs, alternatives, and investments. Journal of Applied Psychology, 68, 429-438

32. Seibert, S. E., Kraimer, M. L., & Crant, J. M. (2001). What do proactive people do? A longitudinal model linking proactive personality and career success. Personnel psychology, 54(4), 845-874

33. Spector, P. E., & Jex, S. M. (1998). Development of four self-report measures of job stressors and strain: interpersonal conflict at work scale, organizational

1546

Eur. Chem. Bull. 2023, 12(Special Issue 6), 1539-1547

constraints scale, quantitative workload inventory, and physical symptoms inventory. Journal of occupational health psychology, 3(4), 356

34. Twale, D. J., & De Luca, B. M. (2008). Faculty incivility: The rise of the academic bully culture and what to do about it (Vol. 128). John Wiley & Sons.

35. Withey, M. J., & Cooper, W. H. (1989). Predicting exit, voice, loyalty, and neglect. Administrative science quarterly, 521-539.

36. Zeidner, M. and Saklofske, D. (1996) Adaptive and maladaptive coping. In M. Zeidner and N. S. Endler (eds.), Handbook of coping: Theory, research, applications (pp. 505– 531). Oxford: John Wiley & Sons

1547

Eur. Chem. Bull. 2023, 12(Special Issue 6), 1539-1547