

GENDER DIFFERENCES IN WORKPLACE BULLYING EXPOSURE

Teodora Maidaniuc-Chirilă *

Alexandru Ioan Cuza University, Romania

Abstract

Workplace bullying is not a recently discovered phenomenon as studies existing in organizational psychology show that Brodsky in 1976 published a paper describing this phenomenon not only in a general area but also in the particular context of workplace settings. The present theoretical paper aims to introduce the bullying phenomenon manifested in workplace settings along with its causal determination and individual consequences emphasizing the role of gender differences in its exposure. Studies in the field interested in gender differences in workplace bullying exposure evidenced two main perspectives from which this topic can be approached namely that of over-represented gender and of different techniques used to exert workplace bullying behaviors. So far empirical studies have shown contradictory results referring to gender differences. Some studies have shown that there are gender differences in workplace bullying exposure in that women are more prone to experience this phenomenon than men while there are studies showing that there are no significant gender differences. Even though there still are contradictory results referring to gender differences in workplace bullying, there can be evidenced a tendency of women exposure as being more prevalent comparing to men (Salin, 2001; Smith, Singer, Hoel, & Cooper, 2003). This theoretical paper evidences not only the short-term, but also the long-term consequences of workplace bullying exposure among workplace bullying victims. These empirical evidences shows the important role of prevention programs and the need for training programs meant to build a more sustainable organizational ethical infrastructure.

Keywords: workplace bullying; exposure; gender differences; bullying techniques; practical implications

Correspondence concerning this paper should be addressed to:

* Ph.D., Associated Lecturer, Alexandru Ioan Cuza University, Faculty of Psychology and Social Sciences, Psychology Department. Address: Toma Cozma Street, no. 3, Iasi, Romania. Phone number: (004) 0743.377.684 E-mail: teodoramc09@gmail.com

Introduction

The phenomenon of bullying in the workplace has become a significant problem in Europe, and it is considered more prevalent than sexual harassment and discrimination (Rayner, 1997). Moreover, Namie (2000), in his campaign against workplace bullying, noted that one in five employees was verbally bullied in a persistent and intentional manner.

Despite the varying definitions of this phenomenon, all definitions aim to differentiate between bullying and other types of conflicts encountered in organizational contexts (Cramaruc & Maidaniuc-Chirilă, 2015). Most definitions state that workplace bullying is repeated, intentional exposure to negative behavior from coworkers or supervisors over an extended period of time (Chirilă & Constantin, 2013). Victims of bullying often are in inferior positions from which they cannot defend themselves, and they often resign to escape the bullying (Leymann, 1992; Salin, 2003; Vartia, 2003).

From the perspective of stress theory, workplace bullying is understood as a factor of social stress (Zapf, Knorz, & Kulla, 1996), and it is a major factor of occupational stress that can create legal and financial problems not only for organizations but also for employees experiencing physical and psychological effects and reduced performance (Rayner & Cooper, 1997). Furthermore, the organizational psychology perspective of workplace bullying indicates that it can be perceived as a complex interactive process that degenerates and that has multiple sources (Einarsen, 2000).

Numerous factors contribute to bullying in the workplace. These include individual factors such as the personality traits of bullies and victims, and organizational factors such as workplace characteristics and the nature of human interactions within organizations (Einarsen, 2000; Hoel, Rayner, & Cooper, 1999; Zapf, 1999). Leymann was the first researcher who showed that conditions already existing within an organization are the main causes of workplace bullying and that the psychological traits of victims are not as significant as previously believed. However, four years later, Coyne, Seigne, and Randall (2000) and other researchers found that several personal characteristics make people vulnerable to workplace bullying.

Einarsen (2000) proposed a classification system of forms of workplace bullying that depends on its cause, specifically workplace bullying because of an existing conflict (*i.e.*, dispute-related bullying) and because of invasive

workplace bullying (*i.e.*, predatory bullying). Dispute-related bullying occurs due to a conflict that persisted over time. In this situation, organizational factors and initial environmental conditions are work related. In the case of predatory bullying, bullying victims do not do anything in particular to elicit workplace-bullying behaviors. Targets may be bullied simply because they belong to a visible group or because they were accidentally in the place where aggressors manifest their power. Examples of predatory workplace-bullying acts include those acts targeted toward women who are working in masculine workplaces or toward new coworkers or coworkers from a previous workplace.

Terms used to define workplace bullying

In the scientific literature, more than 30 terms are used to describe workplace bullying. Leymann (1990) introduced the term *mobbing*, which “describes a communication situation which threatens individuals with physical and psychological harm” (Leymann, 1990). Mobbing consists of hostile actions that, when viewed separately, may seem harmless but in time, if persistent, may cause real harm to those exposed (Leymann, 1990; Yildirim, Yildirim, & Timucin, 2007). Mobbing occurs when people engage in acts that attack the honor, sincerity, credibility, and professional abilities of others, and victims face behaviors such as verbal threats, exclusion, social isolation, and injustice, with the latter involving the distribution of organizational resources and situations in which benefits and rights are offered with a delay or not at all.

A decade later, most researchers within the field began using the term “bullying” to describe the same phenomenon (Yildirim et al., 2007). According to Salin (2003), “bullying” and “mobbing” can be used interchangeably, and usage is regional. For example, while researchers from the United Kingdom and Ireland (Hoel & Cooper, 2000; O’Moore, 2000; Rayner, 1997), Australia (McCarthy, 1996), and Northern Europe (Einarsen, 1996; Salin, 2001; Vartia, 1996) used “bullying”, German researcher Zapf (1999) used “mobbing” to describe the same phenomenon. In contrast, researchers from North America used a larger number of terms to describe the same phenomenon. These include “employee abuse” (Keashly, 1998), “workplace aggression” (Neuman & Baron, 1998; O’Leary-Kelly, Griffin, & Glew, 1996), “victimization” (Aquino et al., 1999), “interpersonal deviance” (Bennett & Robinson, 2003), “workplace mobbing” (Duffy & Sperry, 2007), and “workplace incivility” (Anderson & Pearson, 1999). These terms were used to describe different forms of

interpersonal aggression and hostile behaviors manifested in the professional context, forms that overlap with “bullying” but were nuanced concepts.

In organizational psychology, in the last 10 to 15 years, bullying was addressed from a social psychology perspective, with two points of focus among researchers. The first is on the concepts used to describe bullying, while the second is on finding practical methods of implementing workplace-bullying policies (anti-bullying policies, professional organizations and specialized authorities interested in promoting a healthy workplace). Types of workplace bullying acts include negative acts such as social isolation, organizational silence, rumors, attacking the target’s personal life and attitudes, excessive criticism, excessive monitoring, hiding of important information, withdrawal of responsibility, and verbal aggression (Einarsen, 1996; Keashly, 1998; O’Moore, 2000; Zapf et al., 1996). From this perspective, the concept of bullying can be defined in terms of negative acts displayed in a persistent and repetitive manner toward one individual or more individuals. The relationship between bully and victim is one of a power imbalance and of creating a hostile environment (Einarsen, 1996; Hoel & Cooper, 2000; Zapf et al., 1996).

Salin (2003) defined bullying as a form of interpersonal aggression, of interpersonal hostility, and of antisocial behavior, whereas Leymann (1996) addressed the same phenomenon using the concept of mobbing, describing it as a style of aggressive behavior that provokes psychological harm through acts of social manipulation. In this form of aggression, the bully does not engage in direct conflict. Because of this distinction, Leymann (1996) differentiated between conflict and mobbing. According to Leymann (1996), the difference between conflict and mobbing lies not in what was done or not done but in the frequency and duration of what was done. This definition is reflected in subsequent definitions, which increasingly emphasized the importance of the time and frequency of engaging in negative acts when it comes to differentiating between conflict and bullying. Consequently, later definitions of bullying based on that of Leymann’s (1996) state that for behavior to be considered bullying, it should take place for a minimum of six months (duration), and it should occur once a week (frequency).

Overall, the definitions offered in the scientific literature are characterized by several similarities at the level of content: all these definitions describe workplace bullying through a number of negative behaviors - behaviors toward one or more persons’ people with the intentional aim of

producing physical, mental, psychological, and moral harm. Another common characteristic of most definitions is that those suffering bullying usually end up in an inferior position from which they cannot help themselves, thus becoming victims.

Characteristics of workplace bullying

Contemporary studies in the field of workplace bullying have highlighted three to five dimensions of workplace bullying: person-related bullying, work-related bullying, and intimidating behaviors (Einarsen, Hoel, & Notelaers, 2009). Furthermore, five factors characterize workplace bullying: a series of negative acts, a power imbalance between the actors, a variety of aggressors and victims, intentional acts of bullying, and social manipulation.

Firstly, workplace bullying involves numerous negative or hostile behaviors that occur in a regular and repetitive manner over an extended period of time. Accordingly, an isolated incident cannot be considered workplace bullying. Ordinary behaviors comprise workplace bullying, and these behaviors are commonly encountered in daily life within workplace settings. However, these behaviors become workplace bullying if they are producing harm to the target and if they are systematically displayed in a repetitive manner over a longer period of time.

Secondly, workplace bullying occurs when an imbalanced power exists that prevents victims from defending themselves. Niedl (1996) further noted that is essential that those affected by bullying perceive this imbalance between themselves and the aggressors and that it induces feelings of powerlessness. Specifically, for people to label themselves as victims of workplace bullying, they need to perceive themselves as trapped in a situation from which they cannot escape. Feelings of helplessness often appear in situations where there is a difference between the hierarchical positions of the bully and the victim. Einarsen (2000) pointed out that a feeling of helplessness may be an indirect consequence of an unresolved conflict.

Thirdly, workplace bullying is characterized by numerous aggressors and victims participating in the bullying process. Most researchers view workplace bullying as an interpersonal phenomenon that may occur between two individuals, between one or more individuals and a group, or as an intergroup phenomenon. In contrast, researchers such as Ashforth (1994) and Wilson (1991) viewed workplace bullying as conflict between an employee and

supervisor, with conflict appearing because of differences in the actors' personality traits or due to specific motivation on the part of the supervisor. Furthermore, in some studies actors noted that workplace bullying is conflict between the employees and clients of a certain organization, with clients often seen as the aggressors (Hoel & Cooper, 2000; Hogh & Doffradottir, 2001).

Fourthly, the intentional character of workplace-bullying acts represents another characteristic of this phenomenon. Bjorkqvist et al. (1994) were among the first researchers who emphasized the importance of intentional behavior in workplace bullying, a characteristic considered the most challenging to identify by Rayner and Cooper (2006) due to the difficulty of objectively assessing this criterion through questionnaires. Most psychological research involves gathering data through self-report questionnaires, which implies that responses are subjective, and most motivations may remain hidden. Furthermore, initial studies on workplace bullying assessed exposure to this phenomenon by directly asking respondents whether they had been exposed to such behaviors. This type of assessment would yield a high level of subjective responses, and those who engaged in bullying would offer unrealistic responses regarding the intentional nature of their behavior. O'Moore (1998) investigated the pleasure bullies drew from workplace bullying, which is equally difficult to accurately assess. Bjorkqvist, Osterman, and Lagerspetz (1994) examined the motivation for engaging in workplace bullying and found that in most cases, the bully assesses the relationship between the effects of the bullying and other potential risks. If the risks are perceived as low, the person is more likely to engage in bullying.

The fifth characteristics of workplace bullying is that acts of workplace bullying are seen as manipulation of the victim's reputation, workplace performance, social life, and quality of workplace communication, and threat of physical violence (Leymann, 1990), although Keashly (1994) concluded that workplace bullying seldom implies physical violence. Sexual harassment could be seen as workplace bullying, but in most cases, this is a completely separate phenomenon. Generally, workplace bullying does not have a sexual component, but if these types of behaviors occur repeatedly and systematically, they can become bullying. When attempting to label a behavior as workplace bullying, it is essential to assess three aspects of a negative behavior: the repetitiveness of the behavior, the persistence of the behavior, and the period over which the behavior occurs, which should be at least six months.

The most common definition of workplace bullying is that it involves one or more individuals being persistently exposed to negative behaviors displayed by one or more coworkers, by supervisors, or by subordinates to produce psychological, mental, and moral harm to the target, who finally finds him or herself in an inferior position from which self-defense is impossible (Einarsen, 2000). The most recent definitions emphasize the negative effects on not only the targeted employees but also on the entire organization in terms of financial costs, public image, and public credibility.

Factors that cause workplace bullying

Two main factors cause workplace bullying: psychological and social factors. Zapf (1999) found that negative workplace conditions can facilitate workplace bullying, and Salin (2003) demonstrated that factors such as perceived power imbalance, internal competition and organizational change could contribute to workplace bullying. Managers should understand that the interactions between such types of factors could create an environment that facilitates bullying and should consider these aspects when developing anti-bullying programs and interventions within their organizations.

Conditions facilitating workplace bullying within organizations

Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, and Cooper (2003) showed that workplace bullying experienced during adulthood is influenced mainly by environmental rather than individual factors or experiences of childhood bullying. From this point of view, workplace bullying should be seen as a dynamic and complex process in which action and reaction should be understood within their social contexts. Therefore, situational factors could increase peoples' vulnerability to experiencing workplace bullying and contribute to the way people respond to workplace-bullying behaviors. Consequently, building a healthy psychosocial climate could diminish the negative feelings experienced by the targeted person.

Usually, within an unstructured social environment, workplace conflicts transform into workplace bullying. Brodsky (1976) noted that although bullies can suffer from personality disorders, they engage in workplace bullying only if they perceive the social and workplace climate as facilitating or even rewarding these types of behaviors. In a study conducted in Finland, Vartia (1996) found that environmental factors explain 24% of variance related to workplace

bullying within the workplace. Despite the high remaining unknown variance, researchers should not deny the role of environmental factors in causing workplace bullying.

Furthermore, Lewis (2006b) argued that workplace bullying should be understood as an organizational issue rather than one related to individual traits of bullies and victims. Likewise, Leymann (1996) accepted and promoted the paradigm explaining workplace bullying as being the main cause of its appearance. This researcher entirely denied the paradigm explaining the role of individual characteristics in causing workplace bullying. Hauge, Skogstad, and Einarsen (2007) provided empirical evidence that sustains the hypothesis and emphasizes the facilitating role of environmental factors as causes of workplace bullying. The researchers showed that not only victims but also observers tend to perceive their workplace climate as being more stressful than aggressors or other coworkers who are not the part of the bullying process.

Similarly, several researchers (Agervold & Mikkelsen, 2004; Jennifer, Cowie & Anandiadou, 2003) found differences between the perception of the targets of workplace bullying and the perceptions of employees who are not affected by bullying in that affected employees perceive workplace climates as being more stressful than their unaffected counterparts. Moreover, studies have shown a strong correlation between workplace characteristics and exposure to workplace bullying (Hansen et al., 2006; Salin, 2003). Additionally, studies have highlighted complex hierarchical regression models showing the influence of environmental factors in explaining workplace-bullying behaviors (Einarsen, Raknes, & Matthiesen, 1994; Vartia, 1996; Vartia & Hyyti, 2002).

These environmental factors can be classified as social factors (Neuman & Baron, 2003) and organizational factors (Hoel & Salin, 2003). Social factors refer to the importance of interpersonal workplace relations in the emergence of workplace-bullying behaviours, while organizational factors emphasize the causal role of workplace characteristics in the manifestation of bullying.

Social factors are associated with interpersonal relationships in the workplace and employees' feelings of social injustice displayed within workplace settings. Neuman and Baron (2003) described social factors as causes of workplace bullying if they occur in a repeated manner, and if these behaviors give rise to effects such as reciprocity norms and perceived injustice, they can cause workplace bullying. Reciprocity norms refer to rewarding behaviors (e.g., altruistic or aggressive behaviors) so that if a person falls victim

to workplace bullying, he or she will feel the urge to engage in similar behavior to respond favorable to the norm. In other words, victims of bullying will respond in a similar manner by bullying the bully. If within this process one the person has an inferior position, that person will become the victim of workplace bullying (Einarsen, 2000).

Perceived injustice was found to be an important cause of problems in interpersonal relationships in the workplace, as it increases the level of aggressive feelings experienced by those perceiving acts as unjust (Hoel & Beale, 2006). Neuman and Baron (2003) highlighted four significant instances of injustice that have been associated with workplace bullying, such as that a lack of respect for the norms imposed by society produced frustrations and generated stress, which in turn induced negative feelings and eroded the person's dignity and self-respect.

In Weide and Abbott's (1994) study, more than 80% of bullies explained their aggressive behavior as a response to being treated unjustly within their organizations. Similarly, Neuman and Baron (2003) showed that aggressors justified their behavior by blaming supervisors and coworkers for their unfair treatment. In addition, Baron, Neuman, and Geddes (1999) discovered that perceived organizational injustice significantly correlated with aggressive behaviors from the victim. The more the situation was assessed as being unfair, the greater the likelihood of engaging in workplace bullying.

Organizational factors relate to organizational characteristics such as workplace features and the general workplace climate. Organizational factors usually overlap with several social factors that are directly influenced by peoples' feelings and perceptions. Bowling and Beehr (2006) suggested that these workplace features could influence workplace bullying directly and indirectly. The direct relationships between workplace characteristics and workplace bullying can be explained by the lack of punishment for bullying, while the indirect relationship can be better understood through an existing stressful workplace climate that may facilitate workplace-bullying behaviors. In these cases, not only victims but also bullies feel overworked, perceive the workplace climate as negative and subject to constant change, and see their interpersonal relationships in the workplace as more negative compared to employees not involved in the bullying process (Hoel & Cooper, 2000).

Hoel and Salin (2003) identified four categories of organizational factors: organizational culture and climate, leadership style, changing nature of

workplace tasks, and organization of workplace tasks. Additional factors such as work environment and organizational structure and size were found to affect the prevalence of workplace bullying.

Organizational culture and climate

Organizational culture has an important influence on the development of workplace bullying. Einarsen et al. (1994) reported that workplace bullying was present within several Norwegian workplaces that did not sustain professional and personal development and within which uninteresting and routine workplace tasks were performed. Moreover, Salin (2003), Vartia and Hyyti (2002), and Vartia (1996) found significant correlations between workplace bullying and a highly political and competitive workplace climate. Furthermore, researchers have revealed important correlations between workplace bullying and overwork, and they have shown that internal norms referring to workplace bullying differ from those referring to general aggressive acts.

Psychological aggression within organizations has received less attention than aggression manifested under other conditions and in other situations. The values and norms promoted within workplace organizations strongly influence the perception and treatment of workplace bullying, and employees' perceptions of bullying can have considerable negative consequences not only for the employees involved but also for the entire organization (Cowie et al., 2002). O'Leary-Kelly et al. (1996) explained the important role of organizational culture through the model of social learning. In terms of this model, organizational cultures that permit workplace bullying are defined as being "organizations triggering workplace-bullying behaviors". These organizations allow workplace-bullying behaviors because they do not have internal anti-bullying procedures or because their internal procedures are not known to and/or clearly understood by the management staff (Liefoghe & Davey, 2001).

Furthermore, organizations that promote an autocratic leadership style might view workplace-bullying behaviors as part of the management style, and not displaying such behaviors would equate to being disloyal to the organization. In addition, where internal anti-bullying procedures are lacking, it could be seen and understood that the organization accepts these types of behaviors (Hoel & Cooper, 2000). Einarsen's (1999) findings support this

view, as they revealed that workplace bullying is prevalent in organizations in which employees and managers feel they have the implicit support of top management to continue displaying workplace-bullying behaviors. This further aligns with Brodsky's (1976) conclusion that "for workplace bullying to appear within an organization it is necessary that its culture allows and rewards these types of behaviors".

UNISON (1997) further verified this statement through a study in which 80% of respondents agreed that the ability to confront a workplace bully equals the playing field, and Rutter and Hine (2005) concluded that workplace-bullying behaviors are more prevalent within organizations in which victims respond to workplace bullying acts in an aggressive manner. Rutter and Hine's (2005) conclusion was previously demonstrated by Einarsen and Skogstad (1996), who showed that in large, bureaucratic organizations, the costs and risks of engaging in workplace-bullying behaviors were perceived as being less important and visible. Moreover, Einarsen and Skogstad (1996) noted that the processes through which decisions are made within organizations identify peoples' places within the workplace bullying process. In these cases, the victim's role and place is insignificant and thus can motivate the bully to display more workplace-bullying behaviors.

Especially in large organizations, employees become insignificant, and this position reinforces the perception that bullies have the protection needed to engage in bullying behaviours without risk of being punished for the consequences of these behaviors. Therefore, knowing which social, contextual, organizational, and personal factors facilitate and contribute to the development of workplace bullying is essential, as this could lead to the creation and implementation of effective anti-bullying programs by promoting clearer procedures and norms all employees should respect to prevent the emergence of workplace bullying.

In the health sector, the presence and persistence of workplace-bullying behaviors was ascribed to the notion that medical assistants should accept workplace-bullying behaviors as normal behaviors because they need to be strong in the face of aggressive behaviors displayed by patients and by their supervisors (Stevens, 2002). Moreover, that medical staff learned to accept these types of behaviors as a normal aspect of surviving in hospitals contributes to the continuation of workplace bullying. Young students in the medical professions are informally taught how to survive in their professions, and they

are taught that these behaviors are the normal price they need to pay to become excellent medical staff. With this perception, students not only accept workplace bullying as normal but also promote it in future to the next generations.

Lewis (2006a) explained workplace bullying in the health sector as the result of a learned behavior. Even those who are not predisposed to engage in workplace bullying through their personality traits manifest such behaviors simply because they have been socialized to accept them and because they learned that these behaviors not only went unpunished but also brought benefits. Additionally, Tubbs (1994) stated that not engaging in workplace bullying transformed people into victims. In this sector, it seems that the only way to survive is by bullying others.

Finally, organizations characterized by a high level of conformism and a high level of group pressure were more prone to displaying workplace-bullying behaviors. Tubbs (1994), in his study on the causes of workplace bullying prevalence in Japan, showed that those who do not conform to internal norms are bullied.

Gender differences in exposure to workplace bullying

To date, gender differences in exposure to workplace bullying have not been clearly established through empirical studies conducted on workplace bullying. Empirical studies have yielded conflicting results, with some studies indicating significant gender differences in that, overall, female employees are more frequently exposed to such behaviors and others finding no significant differences. Furthermore, studies showing gender differences revealed that no matter the field of employment, a larger number of female than male employees are bullied in the workplace and that women are more vulnerable to becoming targets of workplace bullying than men, especially when they work in lower hierarchical positions within organizations. In addition, more women than men are bullied no matter the position they hold within their organizations. More women in leading positions are exposed to workplace bullying than men holding the same positions, and more women than men are exposed workplace bullying from male and female aggressors.

Although studies conducted in the context of social and organizational psychology used samples with an overrepresentation of females, thus biasing empirical results, several studies used samples balanced along gender lines and

also identified gender differences in that more women than men were exposed more frequently to workplace-bullying behaviors. Psychological studies on gender differences can be analyzed from two perspectives: analyzing the overrepresented gender not only for the bully position but also for the victim position, and analyzing the differences in techniques used to bully victims depending on their gender.

Studies that focused on the role of the bully (Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996) have shown that more males than females adopted the role of bully compared to the female group. Einarsen and Skogstad (1996) reported that 49% of victims were bullied by male aggressors; 30% reported being bullied by female aggressors, and 21% reported being bullied not only by male aggressors but also by female aggressors. Mackensen von Asfeld (*cited in Zapf et al., 2003*) found that 30% of victims were bullied by male employees, 27% by female employees, and 37% by both male and female employees. Zapf et al. (2003) reported that 27% of male employees were victims of workplace bullying, 11% of female employees were bullied, and 65% of male and female employees were bullied within their workplace contexts.

Although percentages vary across psychological studies, most indicate that male employees are overrepresented in the bully position. This can be ascribed to the overrepresentation of men in leadership positions within organizations (Li & Wearing, 2004). Men in leadership positions can adopt behaviors that may easily take the form of workplace-bullying behaviors when aimed toward their supervised employees. Bettencourt and Miller (1996) offered an alternative explanation for the overrepresentation of men in the bully position, noting that it may derive directly from people's cognitive representation of the most competent gender for leading positions. According to this perspective, it is probable that more men than women in leadership positions justify their bullying behaviors in terms of instrumental techniques to exert and maintain control (Archer & Haigh, 1997; Campbell & Muncer, 1994). Moreover, men tend to justify their bullying behaviors as having clearer aims than women have in similar positions. Rutter and Hine (2005) observed that men expect fewer sanctions for and more future benefits of engaging in workplace bullying. In these cases, the expected benefit refers to the possibility of manifesting power and to achieve the desired aim - revenge for their own satisfaction.

In terms of manifestation, workplace bullying consists of direct and

indirect acts of aggression. Direct bullying behaviors include humiliation and verbal aggression, and male employees are more likely to engage in this type of aggression. Bjorkvist et al. (1994b) commented that women generally engage in indirect bullying behaviors such as social isolation and spreading rumors. Similarly, Leymann and Tellgren (*cited in* Einarsen et al., 1998) showed that workplace bullying within the female group manifested through defamation and manipulation of victims' professional competence, while within the male group, there was a tendency to use social isolation techniques. Similarly, Mackensen von Asfeld (*cited in* Zapf et al., 2003) revealed that women more frequently use strategies affecting communication, social relationships, and social reputation, whereas men prefer strategies affecting victims' work.

Direct aggression is significantly easier to detect than indirect aggression. Because men tend to use techniques involving direct aggression, they may be overrepresented in bully positions. In reality, men and women may be equally represented in the bully role, but because of the different techniques they use to bully others, men are more easily identified as bullies. Rutter and Hine (2005) examined gender differences by referring to a specific preference for a workplace bullying strategy using a scale in three different dimensions (*i.e.*, manifestation of hostility, blocking access to resources, and direct aggression). Their results showed that men engage more often in these three types of workplace bullying than women do.

For victims, gender differences are not so clear. Several researchers examined gender difference in victims (DiMartino, Hoel, & Cooper, 2003; Hoel & Cooper, 2001; Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996; Hoel & Cooper, 2000; Leymann, 1996; Quine, 1999). Some studies showed that women are at greater risk of falling victim to workplace bullying (Salin, 2001; Smith, Singer, Hoel, & Cooper, 2003). Likewise, Quine (2003), in a study involving a sample of young doctors, found that women are more prone to being bullied than men (43% of women were likely to become victims compared to 32% of men). In the university workplace, women are more likely to be exposed to workplace harassment than men and more likely to experience more severe acts of workplace bullying than men (Bjorkvist, Osterman, & Hjelt-Back, 1994a; Vaez, Ekberg, & Laflamme, 2004). Zapf et al. (2003) ascribed these results to bias caused by the overrepresentation of women in samples and the consequent unequal gender distribution. Chirilă (2012) did not obtain gender differences in victimization percentages despite women being overrepresented in the sample,

so Zapf et al.'s (2003) statement can be considered partially valid.

Furthermore, Salin (2005), in a similar study using a sample with equally distributed male and female participants, obtained significant gender differences in workplace-bullying behavior in that more females than males were victims of workplace bullying. Andre-Petersson, Engstrom, Hedblad, Janzen, and Roswall, (2007) and Denton, Prus, and Walters (2004) offered another possible explanation for gender differences in that women are more sensitive than men to psychosocial factors present within the workplace context. Women are more accurate in detecting workplace-bullying behaviors than men (Ostrov, Crick, & Keating, 2005) and more sensitive to behaviors aimed at diminishing power within organizations (Vance, Ensher, Hendricks, & Harris, 2004). Thus, women are more sensitive to the social aspects of the work environment, more competent in detecting workplace bullying, and better able to accurately report the reasons they were bullied.

Vaez and colleagues (2004) offered a better explanation for gender differences and for the overrepresentation of men within victims group. Through their empirical study, the researchers showed that men are more prone than women to overrepresentation in less active fields. In addition, women victims are members of more mature working groups and were working in better conditions (*e.g.*, with permanent contracts, in full-time employment, in positions requiring high levels of theoretical knowledge). Hence, inconsistencies in gender differences may have occurred because samples used in the study came from different job fields.

Moreover, the scientific literature contains suggestions that victims are bullied by persons of the same gender. According to Leymann (1996), women were more frequently bullied by women, while men were more frequently bullied by men. The results were explained in terms of segregation within the labor market: in industries such as information technology men tend to dominate the workplace, while in sectors such as health and social services women dominate the field. These results are similar to those of previous studies (Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996; Hoel, Cooper, & Faragher, 2001; Zapf et al., 2003).

Despite the contradictory empirical results, for example, women are equally bullied by men and women, while men are more frequently bullied by men and in isolated cases by women (Zapf et al., 2003; Hoel et al., 2001; Rayner & Hoel, 1997), these results can be explained by differences existing in

the power positions held by men and women within organizations. Generally, men tend to occupy more leadership positions than women do, and they have more opportunities to bully not only male employees but also female employees.

Conclusions

Workplace bullying is not a new problem in the workplace setting; however, the understanding and perspective of bullying is new, as revealed by psychological field research conducted over the last 20 years. Within these two decades, this phenomenon was studied using diverse terms and expressions. This changed in the last five years, when most researchers agreed to use the term “workplace bullying” to define, describe, and explore this organizational stress factor.

For a situation to become workplace bullying, it must involve negative acts targeted at one or more persons who are usually in an inferior position within the organization. These acts must occur frequently (*i.e.*, usually once a week), must last for a minimum period of six months, and must produce, in the long term, various types of damage to the targeted person. In such situations, victims usually find themselves in an inferior position from which they cannot defend themselves, and they begin to show various symptoms such as confusion, fear, anxiety, anger, and depression. From a social point of view, victims usually resign, thus negatively affecting their family outcomes. From an organizational point of view, public institutions and private companies are affected too, becoming less trustworthy for future employees.

Despite numerous countries having implemented anti-bullying laws at least ten years ago, some countries are still struggling to implement policies and laws to legally address bullying. Romania is one of these countries, and it is in the process of creating and approving anti-bullying legislation. However, the main problem with adopting such laws is the lack of consistent empirical research showing the negative effects of bullying for not only employees but also for organizations. So far, in the Romanian context, between

20 and 50 empirical studies have confirmed the negative influence of bullying on individuals and organizational, highlighting the need for significant efforts to explore its causes and consequences. International literature has shown that organizational factors such as management style, financial problems, and leadership styles can contribute to the development of workplace

bullying. In addition, the literature emphasized the role of individual factors when studying the causes of bullying.

The present theoretical study focused on gender differences in exposure to bullying in the workplace and revealed that, generally, more female than male employees may experience this negative phenomenon. Moreover, studies focused on gender revealed that there are also differences in types of bullying behaviors encountered by female and male employees in that more women than men are exposed to gossip, rumors, social isolation, public humiliation, underpaid work, and lack of professional recognition. Furthermore, workplace-bullying behaviors depend on the bully's gender. From this perspective, male bullies attack victims by using not only direct aggressive behaviors but also indirect ones such as sabotage, hiding important professional information, verbal aggression, and public humiliation, while female employees are more likely to use manipulation to affect the quality of victims' social lives and communication.

In the Romanian context, there is a considerable lack of empirical research not only on gender differences but also on addressing aspects such as culturally specific bullying behaviors. Similarly, research is lacking on cultural, regional, organizational, and individual factors that may trigger bullying behavior and on, most importantly, the devastating effects of bullying on the targeted employees.

References

- Agervold, M., & Mikkelsen, E. G. (2004). Relationships between bullying, psychosocial work environment and individual stress reactions. *Work & Stress, 18*(4), 336-351.
- Andersson, L., & Pearson, C. (1999). Tit for Tat? The spiralling effect of incivility in the workplace. *The Academy of Management Review, 24*, 452-471.
- Andre-Petersson, L., Engstrom, G., Hedblad, B., Janzon, L., & Roswall, M. (2007). Social support at work and the risk of myocardial infection and stroke in women and men. *Social Science & Medicine, 64*(4), 830-841.
- Aquino, K., Grover, S. L., Bradfield, M., & Allen, D. G. (1999). The effects of negative affectivity, hierarchical status, and self-determination on workplace victimization. *Academy of Management Journal, 42*(3), 260-

272.

- Archer, J., & Haigh, A. M. (1997). Do beliefs about aggressive feelings and actions predict reported levels of aggression? *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 36(1), 83-105.
- Ashforth, B. E. (1994). Petty tyranny in organizations. *Human Relations*, 47(7), 755-778.
- Baron, R. A., Neuman, J. H., & Geddes, D. (1999). Social and personal determinants of workplace aggression: Evidence for the impact of perceived injustice and the Type A Behavior Pattern. *Aggressive Behavior*, 25(4), 281-296.
- Bennett, R. J., & Robinson, S. L. (2003). The past, present and future of workplace deviance research. In J. Greenberg (Ed.), *Organizational behavior: The state of the science* (2nd). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Bettencourt, B. A., & Miller, N. (1996). Gender differences in aggression as a function of provocation: A meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin*, 119(3), 224-227.
- Bjorkqvist, K., Osterman, K., & Hjelt-Back, M. (1994). Aggression among university employees. *Aggressive Behavior*, 20(3), 173-184.
- Bjorkqvist, K., Osterman, K., & Lagerspetz, K. M. J. (1994). 'Sex Differences in Covert Aggression among Adults'. *Aggressive Behavior*, 20, 27-33.
- Bowling, N. A., & Beehr, T. A. (2006). Workplace harassment from the victim's perspective: A theoretical model and meta-analysis. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 91(5), 998-1012.
- Brodsky, C. M. (1976). *The Harassed Worker*. Lexington: D.C. Health and Company.
- Campbell, A., & Muncer, S. (1994). Sex differences in aggression: Social representations and social roles. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 33(2), 233-240.
- Chirilă, T. (2012). Perceived victimization as a consequence of bullying among Romanian employees: gender differences. *Annals of the Al. I. Cuza University, Psychology Series*, 21(2), 85-98.
- Chirilă, T., & Constantin, T. (2013). Understanding workplace bullying phenomenon through its concepts: A literature Review. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences Journal*, 84, 1175-1179.
- Cowie, H., Naylor, P., Rivers, I., Smith, P. K., & Pereira, B. (2002). 'Measuring workplace bullying'. *Aggression and Violent Behavior: A*

- Review Journal*, 7, 33-51.
- Coyne, I., Seigne, E., & Randall, P. (2000). Predicting workplace victim status from personality. *European Journal of Work & Organizational Psychology*, 9(3), 335-349.
- Cramaruc, N. M., & Maidaniuc-Chirila, T. (2015). *O nouă formă de violență la locul de muncă: Abuzul psihologic [A new form of workplace violence: Workplace bullying]*. Iași, Romania: Lumen.
- Denton, M., Prus, S., & Walters, V. (2004). Gender differences in health: A Canadian study of the psychosocial, structural and behavioural determinants of health. *Social Science & Medicine*, 58(12), 2585-2600.
- Di Martino, V., Hoel, H., & Cooper, C. L. (2003). Preventing violence and harassment in the workplace. Dublin: European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions.
- Duffy, M., & Sperry, L. (2007). Workplace mobbing: Individual and Family Health Consequences. *The Family Journal*, 15, 398.
- Einarsen, S. (1996). Bullying and harassment at work: Epidemiological and psychosocial aspects. *Doctoral dissertation*. Department of Psychosocial Science, University of Bergen.
- Einarsen, S. (1999). The nature and causes of bullying at work. *International Journal of Manpower*, 20(1/2), 1.
- Einarsen, S. (2000). Harassment and bullying at work; A review of the Scandinavian approach. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 5(4), 379-401.
- Einarsen, S., & Skogstad, A. (1996). Bullying at work: Epidemiological findings in public and private organizations. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 5(2), 185-201.
- 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. *Journal of Work and Stress*, 23(1), 24-44.
- Einarsen, S., Hoel, H., Zapf, D., & Cooper, C. (2003). The concept of bullying at work. In S. Einarsen, H. Hoel, D. Zapf, & C. Cooper (Eds.), *Bullying and emotional abuse in the workplace: International perspectives in research and practice* (pp. 3-30). London: Taylor & Francis.
- Einarsen, S., Matthiesen, S., & Skogstad, A. (1998). Bullying, burnout and well-being among assistant nurses. *Journal of Occupational Health & Safety*, 14(6), 563-568.

- Einarsen, S., Raknes, B. I., & Matthiesen, S. B. (1994). Bullying and harassment at work and their relationships to work environment quality: An exploratory study. *European Work and Organizational Psychologist*, 4(4), 381-401.
- Hansen, Å. M., Høgh, A., Persson, R., Karlson, B., Garde, A. H., & Ørbæk, P. (2006). Bullying at work, health outcomes, and physiological stress response. *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*, 60(1), 63-72.
- Hauge, L. J., Skogstad, A., & Einarsen, S. (2007). Relationship between stressful work environments and bullying: Results of a large representative study. *Work & Stress*, 21(3), 220-242.
- Hoel, H., & Beale, D. (2006). Workplace bullying, psychological perspectives, and industrial relations: Towards a contextualized and interdisciplinary approach. *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 44(2), 239-262.
- Hoel, H., & Cooper, C. L. (2000). *Destructive Conflict and Bullying at Work*. Manchester School of Management, University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology (UMIST).
- Hoel, H., & Cooper, C. L. (2001). Origins of bullying: Theoretical frameworks for explaining workplace bullying. In N. Tehrani (Ed.), *Building a Culture of Respect: Managing Bullying at work* (1st ed., pp. 3-19). London: Taylor & Francis.
- Hoel, H., & Salin, D. (2003). 'Organisational Antecedents of Workplace Bullying'. In S. Einarsen, H. Hoel, D. Zapf, & C. L. Cooper (Eds.), *Bullying and Emotional Abuse in the Workplace: International Perspectives in Research and Practice* (pp. 145-162). London: Taylor and Francis.
- Hoel, H., Cooper, C. L., & Faragher, B. (2001). The experience of bullying in Great Britain: The impact of organizational status. *European Journal of Work & Organizational Psychology*, 10(4), 443-465.
- Høgh, A., & Dofradottir, A. (2001). Coping with bullying in the workplace. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 10(4), 485-495.
- Jennifer, D., Cowie, H., & Ananiadou, K. (2003). Perceptions and experience of workplace bullying in five different working populations. *Aggressive Behavior*, 29(6), 489-496.
- Keashly, L. (1998). Emotional abuse in the workplace: Conceptual and empirical issues. *Journal of Emotional Abuse*, 1(1), 85-117.

- Keashly, L., Trott, V., & MacLean, L. M. (1994). Abusive Behavior in the Workplace: A preliminary Investigation. *Violence and Victims*, 9(4), 341-357.
- Lewis, S. E. (2006a). Nurse bullying: Organizational considerations in the maintenance and perpetration of health care bullying culture. *Journal of Nursing Management*, 14(1), 52-58.
- Lewis, S. E. (2006b). Recognition of workplace bullying: A qualitative study of women targets in the public sector. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, 16(2), 119-135.
- Leymann, H. (1990). Mobbing and psychological terror at workplaces. *Violence & Victims*, 5(2), 119-126.
- Leymann, H. (1992). *Vuxenmobbing pa svenka arbetsplattser [Adult bullying at Swedish workplaces]*. Solna: Arbetarskyddssyrelsen.
- Leymann, H. (1996). The content and development of mobbing at work. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 5(2), 165-184.
- Li, C. A., & Wearing, B. (2004). Between glass ceilings: Female non-executive directors in UK quoted companies. *International Journal of Disclosure & Governance*, 1(4), 355-371.
- Liefooghe, A. P., & Davey, K. M. (2001). Accounts of workplace bullying: The role of the organization. *European Journal of Work & Organizational Psychology*, 10(4), 375-392.
- McCarthy, P. (1996). The content and development of mobbing at work. *European Journal of Work and Organisational Psychology*, 5(2), 165-184.
- Namie, G. (2000). *US Hostile Workplace Survey, 2000: Survey results*. Retrieved from the Campaign Against Workplace Bullying Web site: www.bullybusters.org
- Neuman, J. H., & Baron, R. A. (1998). Workplace violence and workplace aggression: Evidence concerning specific forms, potential causes, and preferred targets. *Journal of Management*, 24(3), 391-419.
- Neuman, J. H., & Baron, R. A. (2003). Social antecedents of bullying: A social interactionist perspective. In S. Einarsen, H. Hoel, D. Zapf, & C. L. Cooper (Eds.), *Bullying and emotional abuse in the workplace. International perspectives in research and practice* (pp. 185-202). London: Taylor & Francis.
- Niedl, K. (1996). Mobbing and well-being: Economic and personnel development implications. *European Journal of Work and Organizational*

- Psychology*, 5(2), 239-249.
- O’Leary-Kelly, A. M., Griffin, R. W., & Glew, D. J. (1996). Organization motivated aggression: A research framework. *The Academy of Management Review*, 21(1), 225-253.
- O’Moore, M. (2000). *A national Survey on Bullying in the Workplace*. Dublin: The Anti-Bullying Centre: Trinity College.
- Ostrov, J. M., Crick, N. R., & Keating, C. F. (2005). Gender-biased perceptions of preschoolers’ behavior: How much is aggression and prosocial behaviour in the eye of beholder? *Sex Roles*, 52(5-6), 393-398.
- Quine, L. (1999). Workplace bullying in NHS community trust: Staff questionnaire survey. *British Medical Journal*, 318, 228-232.
- Quine, L. (2003). Workplace bullying, psychological distress, and job satisfaction in junior doctors. *Cambridge Quarterly of Healthcare Ethics*, 12(1), 91-101.
- Rayner, C. (1997). The Incidence of Workplace Bullying. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, 7, 199-208.
- Rayner, C., & Cooper, C. L. (1997). Workplace bullying: Myth or reality-can we afford to ignore it? *Leadership and Organization Development Journal*, 18, 211-214.
- Rayner, C., & Cooper, C. L. (2006). Workplace Bullying. In E. K. Kelloway, J. Barling, J. Joseph, & J. Hurrell (Eds.), *Handbook of workplace violence*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Rayner, C., & Hoel, H. (1997). A summary review of the literature relating to workplace bullying. *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology*, 7(3), 181-191.
- Rutter, A., & Hine, D. W. (2005). Sex differences in workplace aggression: An investigation of moderation and mediation effects. *Aggressive Behavior*, 31(3), 254-270.
- Salin, D. (2001). Prevalence and forms of bullying among business professionals: A comparison of two different strategies for measuring bullying. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 10(4), 425-441.
- Salin, D. (2003) ‘Bullying and Organisational Politics in Competitive and Rapidly Changing Work Environments’. *International Journal of Management and Decision Making*, 4(1), 35-46.
- Salin, D. (2005). Workplace bullying among business professionals:

- Prevalence, gender differences and the role of organizational politics. (Harcelement au travail chez les professionnels du milieu des affaires. Prevalence, differences selon le genre et role de la culture organisationnelle). *Perspectives Interdisciplinaires sur le Travail et la Sante (PISTES)*, 7(3), Retrieved July 20, 2009, form <http://www.pistes.uqam.ca/v7n3/articles/v7n3a2en.htm>.
- Seigne, E., McGuire, L., & Smith, M. (1998). 'Victims of Workplace Bullying in Ireland'. *The Irish Journal of Psychology*, 19(2-3), 345-357.
- Skarlicki, D. P., & Folger, R. (1997). Retaliation in the workplace: The roles of distributive, procedural, and interactional justice. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 82(3), 434-443.
- Smith, P. K., Singer, M., Hoel, H., & Cooper, C. L. (2003). Victimization in the school and in the workplace: Are there any links? *British Journal of Psychology*, 94(2), 175-188.
- Stevens, S. (2002). Nursing workforce retention: Challenging a bullying culture. *Health Affairs*, 21(5), 189-193.
- Tubbs, W. (1994). The roots of stress-death and juvenile delinquency in Japan: Disciplinary ambivalence and perceived locus of control. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 13(7), 507-522.
- UNISON (1997). *UNISON Members' Experience of Bullying at Work*. London: UNISON.
- Vaez, M., Ekberg, K., & Laflamme, L. (2004). Abusive events at work among young working adults: Magnitude of the problem and its effect on self-rated health. *Relations Industrielles*, 59(3), 569-583.
- Vance, C. M., Ensher, E. A., Hendricks, F. M., & Harris, C. (2004). Gender-based vicarious sensitivity to disempowering behavior in organizations: Exploring an expanded concept of hostile working environment. *Employee Responsibilities & Rights Journal*, 16(3), 135-147.
- Vartia, M. (1996). The sources of bullying - Psychological work environment and organizational climate. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 5(2), 203-214.
- Vartia, M. (2003). Workplace-bullying - A study on the work environment, well-being and health. *Academic dissertation*. Finish Institute of Occupational Health.
- Vartia, M., & Hyyti, J. (2002). Gender differences in workplace bullying among prison officers. *European Journal of Work and Organizational*

- Psychology*, 11(1), 113-126.
- Weide, S., & Abbott, G. E. (1994). Murder at work: Managing the crisis. *Employment Relations Today*, 21, 139-151.
- Wilson, C. B. (1991). U.S. Businesses suffer from workplace trauma. *Personnel Journal*, 47-50.
- Yildirim, A., Yildirim, D., & Timucin, A. (2007). Mobbing behaviors Encountered by Nurse Teaching Staff. *Nurse Ethics*. London: Sage Publications.
- Zapf, D. (1999). Organisational, work group related and personal causes of mobbing/bullying at work. *International Journal of Manpower*, 20(1/2): 70-85.
- Zapf, D., & Einarsen, S. (2003). Individual antecedents of bullying: victims and perpetrators. In S. Einarsen, H. Hoel, D. Zapf, & C. L. Cooper (Eds.), *Bullying and Emotional Abuse in the Workplace: International Perspectives in research and practice* (1st ed., pp.165-184). Suffolk: Taylor & Francis.
- Zapf, D., Knorz, C., & Kulla, M. (1996). On the relationship between mobbing factors, and job content, the social work environment and health outcomes. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 5(2), 215-237.

Received May 17, 2019
Revision May 27, 2019
Accepted May 30, 2019