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UNCOVERING WORKPLACE BULLYING

DUNCAN LEWIS

MICHAEL SHEEHAN

CATHERINE DAVIES

Centre for Research on Workplace Behaviours
University of Glamorgan, Wales, UK

ABSTRACT

Awareness of workplace bullying as an organisational phenomenon is one thing, but understanding the complexity and multifaceted nature of such a slippery concept is another. The gathering of information on workplace bullying can take many forms, including, for example, staff surveys, conversations, and casual anecdotes. How useful are these sorts of evidence in understanding and uncovering the phenomenon of workplace bullying? This article provides a case study that explores two routes to detecting the existence and prevalence of bullying at work. The use of a standardised instrument for measuring bullying at work coupled with an open-ended qualitative approach produces some interesting findings. By far the most useful evidence comes from the rich qualitative accounts of organisational participants. These everyday explanations of what bullying means to ordinary members of the workforce can be usefully classified using an existing typology of occupational violence. This classification might prove useful to those charged with eradicating the insidious behaviours that underpin bullying in organisations.

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INTRODUCTION

The last decade or so has seen a global surge of activity among those trying to deal with bullying and harassment at work. This is partly because workplace bullying has been reported as a burgeoning organisational problem by trade unions, human resource professionals, management representatives, and national policymakers (Einarsen et al., 2003; Lewis & Gunn, 2007). Most of the activities designed to deal with this problem have revolved around policy construction, training and awareness raising, survey activity (to establish prevalence, severity, and impact rates), and other forms of intervention such as counselling, mediation training, and conflict and dispute resolution activities. These enhanced activity levels are supported by findings appearing to indicate that organisations do indeed face challenges in tackling workplace bullying and harassment.

This article commences with a general explanation of the concept of workplace bullying, including its origins, labels, and methodological challenges. The article aims to demonstrate three elements of a typology of bullying drawing on a model used by Bowie (2002) to explain violence. The article provides background information on the organisation that is used as a case study and why and how reports of bullying were emerging from within this organisation. Organisational change, government policy, regional autonomy, and a new chief executive officer (CEO) were seen by some employees as reasons why bullying might be occurring. However, while external forces and a new leadership were cited in some quarters, evidence from our study showed that three types of violence (using Bowie's typology) were being acted out. Using evidence gathered through a quantitative survey supplemented by qualitative commentary, one type explains bullying as the actions of clients and customers toward employees of a public-sector organization; another explains bullying through the actions and behaviours of managers and peers; and the final type explains bullying as the actions of the organization itself. It is argued that in the effort to uncover these types of violence, the conventional behavioural scales used to measure the behaviours regarded as constituting bullying often fail to reach the deeper meanings associated with the application of the language and nomenclature of bullying at work.

BACKGROUND

The identification of bullying as an organisational problem has been well established over the last 15–20 years in Europe and elsewhere. Interest originated in Sweden through the work of clinical psychologist Heinz Leymann (1990), and it quickly grew in other Scandinavian countries, particularly in Norway (Einarsen & Raknes, 1997; Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996). Soon, other European countries followed, with research emerging in Britain (Hoel, Rayner, & Cooper, 1999; Lewis, 1999; Rayner, 1997), in Germany and Austria (Neidl, 1996; Zapf, Knorz,

& Kulla, 1996), and in other parts of Scandinavia such as Finland (Salin, 2001; Vartia, 2001) and Denmark (Gemzoe-Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2001). Other countries such as Australia (Djurkovic, McCormack, & Casimir 2006; Sheehan, 1999), the United States and Canada (Ferris, 2004; Keashly, 1998; Lutgen-Sandvik, Tracy, & Alberts, 2007) and Japan (Meek, 2004) have also reported the incidence of bullying at work, although there are inconsistencies in classification and obvious variations in methodologies.

The results of a UK survey carried out in 2004 by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) showed that bullying and harassment are still "worryingly prevalent" in UK workplaces. A similar report by the UK's Chartered Management Institute (CMI; Woodman & Cook, 2005) showed that 39% of managers themselves reported being bullied and that this was greatest among middle managers (49%). Evidence emerging from nationally representative studies in Britain (Grainger & Fitzner, 2007), Ireland (O'Connell, Calvert, and Watson, 2007), and the European Union (Fourth European Working Conditions Survey, 2007) are estimating bullying prevalence at approximately 4% to 17%. British figures range from 3.8% (Grainger & Fitzner, 2007) to 5.1% (EU figures for the UK). The Irish data show prevalence at 7.9% (O'Connell, Calvert, & Watson, 2007), and individual EU country figures vary between 2% for Italy and 17% for Finland (Fourth European Working Conditions Survey, 2007). In spite of the variability in methodologies and research methods employed, the figures appear to indicate that a problem exists. The North American data show bullying as less prevalent, although this is in part due to the different labelling of the phenomenon, variously, as "emotional abuse" (Keashly, 1998, 2001), "incivility" (Andersson & Pearson, 1999), "harassment" (Bowling & Beehr, 2006), "social undermining"' (Duffy, Ganster, & Pagon, 2002), and "abusive supervision" (Tepper, 2000). However, recent studies by Namie (2003), Fox and Stallworth (2005), Lutgen-Sandvik and colleagues (2007), and Meglich-Sespico, Faley, and Knapp (2007) are demonstrating that bullying is increasingly being recognised in North America.

One of the challenges of understanding concepts such as workplace bullying is the various descriptors and labels that are used interchangeably by researchers and commentators. Bullying, mobbing, negative behaviours, incivility, toxicity, violence, and aggression are terms that are used to describe different types of tensions between members of an organisation's workforce and stakeholders. What is clear, however, is that the classification of terms such as these is not robustly established and their boundaries are blurred. This blurring also extends to definitions. A consistent feature of definitions of bullying is the regular, ongoing, and detrimental incidence of inappropriate behaviours toward one or more individuals. The behaviours that might be classified as bullying behaviours may, however, in fact encompass a broad spectrum of items ranging from physical violence to more subtle managerial tactics of denying access to rights or uncivil behaviours such as shouting or finger pointing. While much has been written on the challenges of

arriving at agreed-upon definitions (for debates, see Einarsen et al., 2003), the multiple interpretations of duration, persistency, and choice of whether to define behaviours as bullying or not make direct comparisons between studies extremely difficult.

Recent studies of bullying in the UK and Ireland have broadly speaking chosen one of two approaches. The first has been offering a definition and asking respondents to give a yes or no answer to the question of whether they have been bullied at work; this approach was used by Grainger and Fitzner (2007). The second has been providing a listing of negative behaviours that researchers argue constitute bullying plus providing participants with a definition; this approach has been used by Hoel, Sparks, and Cooper (2001), Lewis and Gunn (2007), and O'Connell and colleagues (2007). This latter approach is referred to as the "operational classification method" (see Notelaers et al., 2006). It appears that researchers are increasingly moving away from offering a single definitional approach and moving toward using lists of negative behaviours with or without definitions. This is partly because this latter approach results in higher estimates of bullying prevalence compared to the single definitional approach (Zapf et al., 2003). However, there are inconsistencies in the listings of behaviours in different studies, although there is growing evidence (Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2007; Notelaers et al., 2006) that the Negative Acts Questionnaire (NAQ) of Einarsen and Raknes (1997) is increasingly being used, thus allowing for improved levels of comparative analysis.

Alongside the challenges of providing respondents with definitions and lists of behaviours, there is the need to uncover the stories of workplace bullying in the everyday experiences of employees. There is a need to find out whether these common experiences match up to the behavioural items listed in instruments like the NAQ and whether employees define bullying in the same ways as researchers. There is also a need to find out whether employee experiences neatly compartmentalise themselves or whether they are more abstract and disparate.

INVESTIGATING THE TYPOLOGY OF BULLYING

Numerous researchers (see Einarsen et al., 2003, for abridged discussions) have demonstrated that the behavioural scales of instruments such as the NAQ of Einarsen and Raknes (1997) and the Leymann Inventory of Psychological Terror (LIPT; Leymann, 1990) can be grouped under two or three headings. Factor analysis reveals that these headings broadly classify bullying as managerial, organisational, or peer-to peer/social bullying (see Lewis & Gunn, 2007, for example). Using a workplace violence typology (after Bowie, 2002), the present article seeks to establish whether a single organisational case study would produce stories of bullying of types similar to those given in Bowie's typology of violence.

According to Bowie (2002: 1), "workplace violence has always been present in one form or another wherever people work together." Bowie (2002) suggests that

bullying is a set of dysfunctional workplace behaviours ranging from those that adversely impact emotional well-being and stability to physical violence causing injury and harm. Bowie (2002) highlights a typology of occupational violence using four areas (see Table 1).

The first type of violence presented by Bowie is "intrusive violence," which describes behaviour associated with strangers. These may be external perpetrators who have no relationship or attachment to the workplace, for example, those perpetrating sabotage, criminal acts, or terrorism. The second type is "consumer/client-related violence," which involves aggressive acts by consumers/clients against staff or providers. According to Bowie (2002: 7), other types of consumer client-related violence may be committed against those who are in the "care and control" professions, such as police officers, lawyers, judges, social workers, rape counsellors, and child protection specialists. The third type is "relationship violence"; this is associated with worker/worker, worker/-management, or management/worker violence. According to Bowie, within the workplace, members of staff are seen to be perpetrators of violence and aggression against other members of staff through forms of harassment and bullying. This category also includes cases of stalking. The final type is "organisational

Table 1. Expanded Workplace Violence Typology

Type 1: Intrusive violence
• Criminal intent by strangers • Terrorist acts • Protest violence • Mental illness or drug-related aggression
Type 2: Consumer/client-related violence
• Violence by consumers/clients/patients (and families) against staff • Vicarious trauma to staff • Staff violence against clients/consumers
Type 3: Relationship violence
• Staff-on-staff violence and bullying • Domestic-related violence at work
Type 4: Organisational violence
• Organisational violence against staff • Organisational violence against consumers/clients/patients

violence," which describes behaviour associated with dysfunctional organisations, those with "corrosive" management or leadership styles and organisational cultures that condone violent forms of behaviour. For Bowie, this type is often seen in the literature but is labelled under different headings, including those of "structural violence," "systemic violence or abuse," or "institutional abuse" (2002: 12).

Recent evidence from Scandinavia suggests that a hands-off (laissez-faire) leadership approach is in fact destructive (Einarsen, Aasland, & Skogstad, 2007). Also, client behaviours as well as peer and management behaviour have been reported as being prevalent in the bullying experiences of employees (Lewis & Gunn, 2007). These findings suggest that the types of violence proposed by Bowie (2002) bear some resemblance to those found in the literature on workplace bullying. This article investigates whether there are indeed similarities between Bowie's typology of violence and bullying.

The concept of bullying is well established. With reported prevalence rates of 4% and upward, it appears that the reporting of bullying and harassment is sufficiently widespread to have merited attention for over a decade or more. One means of drawing management's attention to bullying is to make a business case for dealing with it. This is often best achieved by emphasizing the impact of bullying.

IMPACT

The impact or effects of bullying can best be thought of in terms of "first order" and "second order" effects (Heames & Harvey, 2006), where the "first order" relates to those individuals who are directly involved, such as the instigator and recipient, and the "second order" relates to individuals such as those who are either tasked with managing or resolving the situation (managers, human resources [HR] staff, employee representatives, occupational health specialists) or are observers/-witnesses or family members offering support to the parties involved. In all these scenarios there are costs, which can be financial, emotional, or both. Impact should also be considered in terms of organisational dysfunctionality, where individuals seek to leave an organisation or to avoid meetings and situations where the bullying behaviours/activities are likely to surface. The impact of bullying is reported as causing poor performance, damaged psychological health, and strong desires to leave the job (Einarsen et al., 2003; O'Connell et al., 2007).

Impact of Bullying on the Individual

It has been recognised that bullying impacts on the individual in a number of ways, causing physical (Einarsen, 2000), physiological (Lewis & Sheehan, 2003; Vartia, 1996), psychological (Leymann & Gustafsson, 1996; Shallcross, 2003), and psychosomatic problems (Einarsen et al., 2003). Physical problems include fatigue and muscular complaints (Eriksen & Einarsen, 2004) and the results of physical abuse (Wirth, 2003). Physiological problems include neuroticism (Zapf,

1999), feelings of shame (Lewis, 2004), diminished self-esteem (Rayner, 1999), and emotional exhaustion (Keashly & Jagatic, 2003). Psychological problems include posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD; Leymann & Gustafsson, 1996). Psychosomatic problems include chronic depression and victimization (Wirth, 2003) and sleeplessness (Eriksen & Einarsen, 2004). These feelings sometimes culminate in thoughts of suicide or in actual suicide (Einarsen & Matthiesen, 2002; Lewis, Coursel, & Herting-Wahl, 2002). Other impacts have been identified, such as depression, loss of confidence, decreased enthusiasm for the job or organisation (Ayoko, Callan, & Härtel, 2003), and economic costs for those who are bullied (Poilpot-Rocaboy, 2006).

The existence of these problems, either in isolation or in combination, has long-term health and well-being consequences for the victim of bullying. The problems associated with bullying have been considered to be an extreme form of social stressor (Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996; Leymann, 1990; Zapf, Knorz, & Kulla, 1996; Zapf & Gross, 2001). Einarsen (2000) established that 75% of more than 100 people who had experienced workplace bullying over a lengthy period had symptoms akin to those of posttraumatic stress disorder.

It is clear that the impact of bullying has significant negative consequences for individuals, the organisation concerned, and society. Organisations face difficult challenges in preventing bullying and dealing with incidents that may arise, as well as in the management of processes to deal with the problem. It is in light of exactly these challenges that the authors were approached to deal with reports of bullying in a specific organization.

METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

The authors of this article are co-directors and members of the Centre for Research on Workplace Behaviours (CRWB). It was through CRWB that the organisation in question made contact with the authors. Two senior managers from the organisation visited the authors to discuss concerns about reports of bullying emanating from organisational surveys and from manager reports given at team meetings and staff away-days.

The organisation is a public-sector body in the United Kingdom. It has a complicated remit that requires interaction with lawmakers and dispensers of justice as well as with other agencies such as social-work agencies and educational bodies. It is best described as a multiagency service provider. The organisation is complex and multifaceted, with a range of various types of professionals located in 12 geographically dispersed offices and engaged in service delivery to members of the public. The service provided is not only complicated but is delivered in volatile and difficult operating environments. For reporting purposes, the name of the organisation must be kept confidential.

Following an initial meeting with the two managers, meetings were held with the CEO of the organisation and with senior directors. This series of meetings

sought to establish what is already known about research into bullying at work and to explore different methodological approaches to studying bullying and harassment in the field. Meetings were also held with HR managers and with employee representative groups (trade unions) to ensure inclusivity and to maximise engagement. In total, 12 meetings were held over a six-month period.

These meetings established that a whole-organisation survey was required in order to identify the extent of bullying and harassment in the organisation. This method was chosen to establish the accuracy of the current in-house organisational survey data; and to establish that anecdotal reports from managers were capturing a true picture of the organisation. However, we recognise that self-administered surveys are not always the most appropriate mechanism to explore the organisational context for sensitive issues such as bullying. We therefore included a series of "write-in" sections in the survey, thus enabling individuals to note directly their day-to-day experiences and relationships at work. The full-time equivalent establishment of the organisation is about 220. We also offered face-to-face interviews and telephone interviews for staff who completed the survey, and a number of off-site confidential interviews took place. The idea behind these qualitative engagements was that staff could discuss what it was like to work for the organisation and share with independent researchers any workplaces issues. This mixed-method research design allowed us to determine the most informative and productive methods in the task of operationalising appropriate interventions for the organisation. We were particularly keen to establish whether the quantitative or the qualitative approaches yielded the most useful evidence.

An important point is that we did not use the terms bullying or harassment at any point in the data-gathering process. Instead, it was agreed with the organisation that we would refer to the study as an exploration of "negative behaviours at work." In this way we would hopefully negate any preconceptions about the study and any tendency to lead respondents to answer in particular ways.

Our approach to the survey design was to employ the Negative Acts Questionnaire (NAQ), after Einarsen and Raknes (1997). This standardised instrument is a battery of 22 items of negative behaviour with a scaled response of exposure from "Daily" to "Never." Although not mentioning the terms bullying or harassment, the items are deemed by researchers to present the types of behaviours that bullied victims report. Additional questions were asked about the sources of such behaviours, with the aim of establishing whether the perpetrators came from management grades, as was suggested by existing organisational data, or from other sources, such as colleagues or service users. The results presented here are therefore drawn from the survey responses and the open-ended questions.

FINDINGS

The findings showed that 58% of employees responded to the survey ($n = 126$). The survey highlighted an 80% gender bias toward women, which was broadly

representative of the organisation. As with most reported studies of bullying, the bulk of respondents (approximately 90%) do not appear to be experiencing repeated and persistent exposure to negative behaviours. The evidence in Table 2 shows that the application of a chi-square test strongly rejects the hypothesis that any of the responses are equally distributed across the four categories.

Overall the findings indicated a happy and satisfied workforce, with two-thirds reporting that they would recommend their organisation as a suitable workplace. There was limited evidence for any of the 22 negative behaviours being perpetrated on a regular basis or by one specific group of people. Negative behaviours appeared to occur relatively infrequently with no distinct pattern, and there was no evidence for any one of the behaviours being widespread in the organisation. Table 2 provides a listing of behaviours and their prevalence.

Table 2 indicates very little evidence of bullying behaviours occurring on a regular or semiregular basis in this organisation. The most prevalent behaviours are withholding information ($n = 26$), unmanageable workload ($n = 17$), having one's opinions ignored ($n = 13$), and persistent criticism of work ($n = 12$). It must be noted that the sources of negative behaviour are spread across the 12 locations of the organisation and across all levels and grades.

Qualitative Findings

An analysis of qualitative statements in the survey revealed over 90 statements. We applied Bowie's (2002) typology of occupational violence to analyse these, although we used only types 2, 3, and 4, as we found that the type 1, "intrusive violence," category was not appropriate for this organisation.

CONSUMER/CLIENT-RELATED BULLYING

Consumer/client-related bullying involves behaviours perpetrated by persons outside the organisation. This includes clients, customers, service users, and other stakeholders. Hoel and Cooper (2000), in their large survey of bullying in the UK, reported high levels of bullying by clients in the service sectors and the health service. This is also reported by Bowie (2002), particularly for social workers, care workers, lawyers, judges, and child protection specialists. The respondents to our survey work in a multiagency environment as indicated earlier and face difficult operating conditions, engaging with the types of clients and other professionals described by Bowie above. Phrases such as "hazard of the job" and "exposed to difficult situations" were used by a number of respondents. One respondent to our survey said that "service users have been very challenging and confrontational to me." Similarly, two other respondents highlighted the behaviours they face from the publics they serve:

> Hostility [comes] from outside the organisation. Threats, usually verbally, [occur] on rare occasions from service users.

Table 2. Behavioural Scale and Frequency of Exposure

Negative behaviour	Never/Rarely	Monthly	Weekly	Daily
Someone withholding information which affects your performance	n = 92 (73%)	n = 114 (11%)	n = 9 (7%)	n = 3 (2.0%)
Being humiliated or ridiculed in connection to your work	n = 113 (90%)	n = 3 (2.4%)	n = 3 (2.4%)	n = 1 (0.8%)
Being ordered to work below your level of competence	n = 111 (88%)	n = 3 (2.4%)	n = 3 (2.4%)	n = 5 (4.0%)
Having key areas of responsibility removed or replaced with unpleasant tasks	n = 115 (91%)	n = 3 (2.4%)	n = 1 (0.8%)	n = 2 (1.6%)
Spreading of gossip and rumours about you	n = 113 (90%)	n = 3 (2.4%)	n = 1 (0.8%)	n = 2 (1.6%)
Being ignored and excluded from activities	n = 109 (86.5%)	n = 7 (5.6%)	n = 3 (2.4%)	n = 2 (1.6%)
Being subjected to inappropriate materials in the workplace (for example, posters, e-mails)	n = 123 (98%)	n = 0	n = 0	n = 0
Having insulting or offensive remarks made about your person, your attitudes, or your private life	n = 120 (95%)	n = 2 (1.6%)	n = 1 (0.8%)	n = 1 (0.8%)
Being shouted at or being the target of spontaneous anger (or rage)	n = 110 (87%)	n = 9 (7.1%)	n = 3 (2.4%)	n = 0
Being subjected to intimidating behaviour such as finger-pointing or invasion of personal space	n = 112 (89%)	n = 7 (5.6%)	n = 4 (3.2%)	n = 0

Hints or signals from others that you should quit your job	n = 118 (94%)	n = 3 (2.4%)	n = 0	n = 1 (0.8%)
Threats of violence or physical abuse	n = 123 (98%)	n = 0	n = 0	n = 0
Repeated reminders of your errors or mistakes	n = 112 (89%)	n = 5 (4.0%)	n = 3 (2.4%)	n = 4 (3.2%)
Being ignored or excluded or facing a hostile reaction when you are approached	n = 116 (92%)	n = 2 (1.6%)	n = 4 (3.2%)	n = 1 (0.8%)
Having your opinions and views ignored	n = 110 (87%)	n = 6 (4.8%)	n = 4 (3.2%)	n = 3 (2.4%)
Persistent criticism of your work and effort	n = 108 (86%)	n = 7 (5.6%)	n = 5 (4.1%)	n = 0
Practical jokes carried out by people you do not get along with	n = 122 (97%)	n = 1 (0.8%)	n = 0	n = 0
Having allegations made against you	n = 116 (92%)	n = 6 (4.8%)	n = 0	n = 0
Being subjected to excessive monitoring of your work	n = 113 (90%)	n = 5 (4.1%)	n = 1 (0.8%)	n = 4 (3.2%)
Being pressured not to claim something to which by right you are entitled (for example, sick leave, holiday entitlement, etc.)	n = 118 (94%)	n = 3 (2.4%)	n = 1 (0.8%)	n = 0
Being the subject of excessive teasing and sarcasm	n = 120 (95%)	n = 1 (0.8%)	n = 1 (0.8%)	n = 0
Being exposed to an unmanageable workload	n = 101 (80%)	n = 13 (10%)	n = 2 (1.6%)	n = 4 (3.2%)

Note: Rows do not total 100% because of nonresponse.

> Negative behaviours from service users: swearing, finger pointing, name calling and personal comments, attempts to use body language to intimidate are regular occurrences.

A respondent commented that exposure to these behaviours is the result of the type of work that is carried out by the organisation and the result of the variety of clients with whom staff members deal:

> Most of the negative behaviours we experience are due to the nature of [our] work and the frustration caused to clients.

One respondent highlights that while the negative behaviours may be linked to those formally outside of the organisation, more emphasis needs to be placed by the organization on policies to combat the behaviours employees face:

> Many examples of poor behaviour are service user led. Not appropriate and should not be unchallenged. Stronger challenges and robust policy and procedures are needed to be utilised properly.

Much of the literature on workplace bullying focuses on the internal relationships of managers and employees (see, for example, Zapf et al., 2003). It is clear, however, that if clients or customers are the source of negative behaviours at work, employees have the right and expectation to be protected by policies and procedures enacted by leaders and managers. As one respondent said, negative behaviours come from clients/service users and not from fellow staff. This is a hazard of the job.

RELATIONSHIP BULLYING

Managerial Bullying

Managerial bullying can be described as bullying of employees by managers that is seen to have a negative impact on the victims. The types of behaviours most often associated with managerial bullying include having one's views and opinions ignored, excessive monitoring of work, and withholding information, to name just a few. For example, one respondent commented on being "excluded from responsibility by the line manager." Two more respondents identified

> having opinions and views ignored [which] relates to policy decisions made in [the organisation];
>
> [and] excessive monitoring of my work, repeated reminders of very small mistakes and not being treated with dignity and respect.

Hoel and Cooper (2000) reported a high proportion of managerial bullying in medium- and small-sized organisations (our case study is of one such organisation in a public-sector context). In our study, the CEO was mentioned a few times as one of the perpetrators of bullying:

> There is a bullying culture in this organisation that starts at the very top with the Chief Executive.
>
> The unfettered power of the Chief Executive needs to be reined in and controlled.

These illustrations of managerial bullying are widely reported in the workplace bullying literature (see Einarsen et al., 2003, for debates).

Several respondents commented upon polices and processes associated with bullying. Although as researchers we were provided with copies of polices and documents relating to bullying and harassment, there appeared to be confusion and a lack of awareness about these:

> Bullying and harassment has never been dealt with appropriately and I wouldn't know what the procedures in place are, if any. I am aware that bullying has taken place in another office and the perpetrator was rewarded by being promoted.
>
> [I] was not aware of any procedure in place to tackle such a situation or of any point of contact—neither am I at present.
>
> The negative feelings one may have about [the organisation] emanate from above—in the sense many feel senior management does not pass on any sense [that] we are valued in what we do.

The perceived confusion around policies and processes and disappointment over lack of support from the leadership are in practice relatively easy to overcome. What is required is management action and better communications.

Peer-to-Peer Behaviours

Peer-to-peer behaviours are well documented in the bullying literature (Keashly & Jagatic, 2003; Lewis & Gunn, 2007; Zapf et al., 2003). Behaviours such as gossip and rumours, isolation, practical jokes, teasing, and sarcasm are commonly associated with, but not limited to, peer-to-peer relationships. Table 2 indicates very little exposure to these types of behaviours. Nevertheless, the qualitative data reveal a different story. Here a respondent reports peer jealousy:

> I have acted up [deputised] in an administrative manager's post while they were on sick leave. Certain colleagues made this position difficult for me during this period by refusing to undertake work.

This sense of "us and them" comes through in other responses about cliques: "There is certainly a clique within the organisation which exhibits favouritism and cronyism." As other employees told us, "There appear to be entrenched behaviours with some long serving individuals," and "The persons concerned are part of a peer group who protect themselves."

These explanations of peer behaviours show how the organisational climate results in tensions, anxieties, and frustrations resulting in factions. Coyne, Craig,

and Smith-Lee Chong (2004) have demonstrated how team cohesion and team effectiveness are affected by the presence of bullied victims, with team success diminishing as a result of bullied members within the team. Clashing with work-group norms was also shown to be an important indicator of feeling bullied (Zapf & Einarsen, 2003). In the next example we see how an employee, despite enjoying working for the organisation, suffers because of the controlling influence of another person upon her work team:

> I enjoy working for [X organisation;] however, within the team there is a small influential clique with one person, who I feel harasses others by sarcastic, derogatory remarks.

This negative perception of the team spills over to the organisation and its leadership when a different employee says:

> I hope that the new CEO may be able to remove many of the cliques/buddy groups/cronyism from the organisation but I am not convinced.

The multiagency nature of the organisation results in the fact that employees from a number of different professions, including those involving legal, educational, and social work, have to work together. This appears to spill over into fractured relationships between professionals as well as between administrators and professionals. As one respondent said: "The relationship between administration and social work staff often results in the types of negative behaviours listed in the survey."

It is clear from the responses regarding peer-to-peer behaviours given here that there is an undercurrent of anxiety about the behaviours of colleagues and the behaviours of administrators and other professionals toward each other. This is not only likely to lead to the negative impact on individuals described above but also to a negative impact on the general workplace climate. The hopes, aspirations, and doubts about leadership acting to remove the negative climate broaden the damage caused by peer behaviors and question the likelihood of effective management action.

ORGANISATIONAL BULLYING

Organisational bullying involves systems or processes that are established in organisations to support people in the fulfilment of their job, roles, and responsibilities but result in feelings of oppression and controlling dominance. Organisational bullying includes the failure to provide the human and financial resources that are necessary to complete operational tasks and fulfill organisational and strategic goals. This could include, for example, a failure to ensure that adequate staffing is provided, as well as sufficient space and technology. Writers such as Leymann and Gustafsson (1996) and Einarsen and Raknes (1997) have focused on how bullying has been associated with a stressful working environment. Poor

working conditions may contribute to an escalation of workplace bullying. One respondent highlights the working environment and states that there is "no space to plan work." Along similar lines, another respondent comments as follows:

> We are quite a large team working in an office that has limited space. More office space is needed for staff and files.

Some other respondents comment on the constant high workload and the constant pressure they feel they are under to perform:

> High workload, constant turnover of reports, allocation of work, whether you are there or not, to fit work-load quota. This causes huge difficulties by poor planning.
>
> The main difficulties come from a high workload.

Another respondent highlights staff absences, saying that they have a "case load [that is] not manageable on occasions due to staff shortages etc."

Hoel and Salin (2003) tell us that unreasonable workplace demands and working conditions may result in protests from employees, which in turn may lead to retaliatory responses from managers. The pressure on public-sector workplaces is well reported across Europe (see Zapf et al., 2003). Hoel and Cooper's (2000) study showed that bullying was more commonplace in the public sector than in other sectors. The evidence noted above suggests that both employees and managers are under pressure to meet high expectations as to workload performance. Nevertheless, the next respondent argues that the impact of a high workload is directly related to incivility:

> I would like to add that there often appears to be an organisational pressure/-expectation to carry excessive workloads which undermine civility at work and employee work life balance. It can be distressing but I couldn't see how to cut it here.

As this organisation operates in the public sector, the imposition of central policies from the UK Civil Service is also seen as a form of organisational bullying. The application of the organisation's own policies alongside or instead of central Civil Service policies frustrates employees in different ways as evidenced below.

> All employees need a clear picture of the policies under all aspects of the Civil Service.
>
> Clear guidance with policies and procedures in respect of the Civil Service is essential. We must have an independent advocate to speak to [outside the organisation] before behaviours escalate.

The challenge for the organisational leadership is therefore not only to implement its own policies and procedures to deal with bullying but also to recognise the over-arching policies of a centralised bureaucracy such as the UK Civil Service. While most mainstream organisations in the UK are slowly getting to

grips with implementing policies on bullying at work (Richards & Daley, 2003), our case study reveals the complexity of multiagency operations with multilevel governance.

DISCUSSION/CONCLUSIONS

When we were first contacted, the CEO and the senior managers were concerned about the rumblings and stories of bullying that they were hearing. These stories came from line managers and from a centralised civil-service HR functionary who reported the findings of an in-house civil service survey. These different sources of data and storytelling resulted in the management team scrambling for solutions to a problem about which they knew little. Survey findings were presented as percentages and anecdotal accounts and often as third- or fourth-hand reports, and were unreliable or not sufficiently detailed to be of any real value in helping the leadership tackle the real or perceived problems. These sources were also identified by the trade unions and were being brought to bear upon management in terms of demands for action and involvement.

Our initial findings indicated that incidents of bullying and harassment were actually quite small in number, replicating the findings of nationally representative studies (Grainger & Fitzner, 2007; O'Connell et al., 2007). While a single case of bullying could be argued to be one case too many, the organisational reality based on our evidence was that bullying was far from widespread and was not located within a single corpus of people, structure, or geographic location.

Had we simply relied upon a survey designed around behaviours, this could have indicated a relatively healthy organisation. However, the more than 90 qualitative statements clearly reveal a different and in some cases contradictory story.

The qualitative data appears to present evidence of a range of negative behaviours that were managerial, peer-to-peer, organisational, and originating from service users. This was similar to the findings reported by Lewis and Gunn (2007). The results therefore match well with three of the four types of violence in Bowie's (2002) typology. Our findings also suggest that the task of dealing with bullying is much more complicated than the leadership team might have realised and goes beyond a simple case of colleagues or managers bullying each other. The reality of providing complex services in an operating environment laden with emotionally charged scenarios brings into sharp focus the multifaceted relationships that interplay with one another.

While those in management were partly aware of these difficult theaters of operation, they had not considered that some employees might be categorising their experiences under the broad umbrella of bullying. Our findings show that clients or service users were just as likely to be cast as perpetrators as management, and this came in some part as a relief to the management team. Equally enlightening was the finding that peer-to-peer disputes and conflicts were reported at the same levels of frequency as managerial bullying. These three

types of negative or bullying behaviours largely replicate the typology of violence espoused by Bowie (2002).

This case study shows how perceptions of bullying can manifest themselves in a number of ways. This study, like many other others (for example, Grainger & Fitzner, 2007; O'Connell et al., 2007), shows that most people do not report negative behaviours at work. Those who do, although they are in the minority, may present their experiences in complex ways, as seen through different lenses. These ways of "seeing" reveal that some perceive bullying as managerial, administrative, or from the very customers the organisation serves. Others see bullying as an embedded way of operating where management fails to recognise the challenges employees face from clients. All this provides clear signals to management as to what needs to happen. Giving respondents the opportunity to express their views directly to independent researchers reveals that areas of concern cannot simply be uncovered using the previously available in-house organisational or Civil Service surveys. Moreover, surveys themselves are blunt instruments bounded by those who design them and their perceptions of what bullying is or is not. The issues and concerns brought to our attention through a qualitative approach were hidden below the organisational facade. By bringing these issues to the surface, we believe we have helped the organizational leadership to recognise that bullying behaviours are not solely within the provenance of management but also involve colleagues, service users, and the organisation itself. This research has helped leadership to recognise the complexity of organisational relationships and the need for affirmative action to restore positive engagement with the organisation.

Our article reveals that there are clear deficiencies not only with regard to our questionnaire but also with regard to surveys on workplace bullying more generally. Surveys often fail to pick up on Bowie's second type of violence, where customers or service users lie behind bullying behaviours. All employees have the right to be heard if they encounter bullying behaviours, and this article shows that surveys are not the best way to give voice to organizational constituents. With UK public sector workers commonly complaining of "survey fatigue," as managers and policy makers drive an agenda of measuring employee participation, satisfaction, and engagement, surveys just may be limited in their usefulness. It also appears, at least in the context of workplace bullying, that surveys are understating the problem, thus giving management a false sense of organizational well-being.

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Direct reprint requests to:

Professor Duncan Lewis
Co-Director, Centre for Research on
Workplace Behaviours
University of Glamorgan
Treforest
Pontypridd CF37 1DL
Wales, UK
e-mail: dlewis.ac.uk