

# THE IMPACT OF WORKPLACE BULLYING ON WORK PERFORMANCE

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## Abstract

This study is concerned with investigating the relationship among workplace bullying, employees' work performance. Workplace bullying will measured by NAQ-R: Einarsen & Hoel, (2001) with variances person related bullying and work related bullying. Data was collected from 217 employees in an organization to complete the objectives of the study. The reliability test for workplace bullying was .923 and work performance was 0.836. The data analysis by SPSS 16.0 revealed that there was positive significant relationship between workplace bullying ( $r = .513$ ) and towards work performance. The independent-samples t-test was revealed that there were significant differences between workplace bullying and work performance between local and foreign employees. The result showed  $t (n = 217) = -1.022, p = 0.05$ . Multiple regression showed there was contribution for the variables such as person related bullying towards work performance. The results showed that the three predictor factors accounted 51.4% increase in change criterion (work performance). The study also found that the person related bullying was predicted as a strong contributor toward work performance. A predictor model was constructed via analysis of multiple regression analysis (stepwise). Several recommendations were presented to manufacturing, managers and leaders that some further plans can be carried out in order to develop quality environment for the employees to produce a good work performance.

## 1.0 Introduction

Workplace bullying is defines as the repeated mistreatment of one employee who is targeted by one or more employees with a malicious mix of humiliation, intimidation and sabotage of performance (Margaret, 2007). It includes being ridiculed in the presence of other employees, being lied about to others, feeling always being on guard, not able being to focus on work tasks, lost of self-confidence

on the job and out of control anxiety. Workplace bullies use their authority to undermine, frighten, or intimidate another person, often leaving the victim feeling fearful, powerless, incompetent and ashamed.

### **1.1 Workplace Bullying**

Workplace bullying is about a personalized, often sustained attack on one colleague by another colleague using behaviors which are emotionally and psychologically punishing (Arynne, 2009). Workplace bullying constitutes any persistent behaviors, unwanted, offensive, humiliating behaviors towards an individual or group of employees. Heather (2004) stated workplace bullying is an essentially an aggressive act, usually involve psychological violence but sometimes minor physical aggression. It is important to note that bullying may have extremely serious and possibly life-threatening.

Many researchers distinguished many types of bullying such as work related bullying versus person related bullying. The former work related bullying includes the behaviors as giving unreasonable deadline or unmanageable workloads. Person related bullying consists of such behaviors as making insulting remarks, teasing, spreading gossip and playing practical jokes (Einarsen & Hoel, 2001).

According to American Psychological Association (2005), the definition of a typical bully is a person whom exhibits “aggressive behavior” that is intended to cause harm or distress, occurs repeatedly over time, and occurs in a relationship in which there is an imbalance of power or strength. In this study, the term of bullying in this study refers to a situation in which one or more individuals perceive they are subjected to the persistent and repetitive negative acts that are meant to harm.

### **1.2 Person Related Bullying**

Person-related bullying is regarded as a form of stress capable of cause negative effects on workers' health, potentially leading to psycho-physical symptoms, alterations of mood and personality, psychiatric disorders such as anxiety-depression disorder, chronic adjustment disorder and posttraumatic stress disorder. Person related bullying behaviors are public humiliation, ignoring, insulting, spreading rumours or gossips, intruding on privacy, yelling etc. (Beswick, Gore, Palferman, 2006)

### **1.3 Work Related Bullying**

Bullying has been defined as all those repeated actions and practices that are directed to one or more workers, which are unwanted by the victim, which may be done deliberately or unconsciously, but clearly cause humiliation, offence and distress, and that may interfere with work performance and cause an unpleasant working environment (Einarsen and Raknes, 1997). Work related bullying behaviors are giving unachievable task, impossible deadlines, unmanageable workloads, meaningless task or supplying unclear information, threat about security etc. (Beswick, Gore, Palferman, 2006)

### **1.4 Studies On Workplace Bullying**

The literature revealed that poor ergonomics workstation environment is among the major contributor to the work stress problems. Zafir (2009) did a research issues in Malaysia to examine the relationship between

ergonomics workstation factors and the work stress outcomes. The major finding shows that ergonomically designed workstation is an important strategy in minimizing the work stress outcomes in organizations.

According to The Workplace Bullying Institute did a U.S. Workplace Bullying Survey, 37% of all U.S. workers have been targets of workplace bullies. Unfortunately, organizational leaders either do not recognize the damaging effects of workplace bullying, or they do not know how to productively occur (Salin, 2003). As a result, bullies continue their control of terror, and victims worry about the bully, lose trust in the company, or leave their workplace.

In 2008, Judy Fisher-Blando wrote a doctoral research dissertation on *Aggressive Behavior: Workplace Bullying and Its Effect on Job Satisfaction and Productivity*. The data in this study determined that 75% of participants reported witnessing mistreatment of coworkers sometime throughout their careers, 47% have been bullied during their career, and 27% admitted to being a target of a bully in the last 12 months. This study also examined the most frequent negative acts by workplace bullies as reported by the participants. Einarsen et al. (2003) stated that the cases of workplace bullying needs to be explored in a sustained and systematic way because all the organizations have a responsibility to protect their employees from the psychological harassment of a workplace bully. Additionally, workplace bullying has a negative impact on a company's profitability and organizational leaders have to cure this issue effectively which can help the organizations to meet their goals (Keashly & Jagatic, 2003).

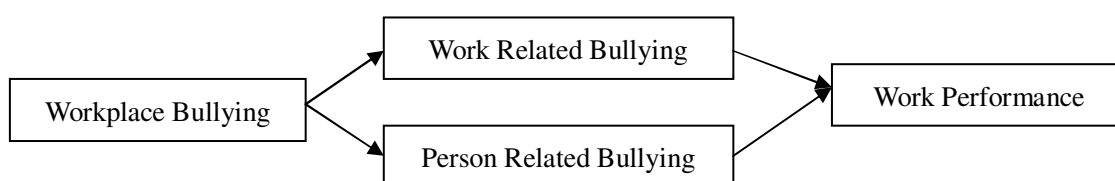
Judith (2008) with her research workplace bullying "Aggressive Behavior and its effect on job satisfaction and productivity" showed how the bullying behavior affects an individuals ability to perform their jobs, which can impact the morale of employees and the financial performances of an organization. The central findings of this study to show the frequency of workplace bullying, to examine the specific types of mistreatment and negative acts experienced by targets, to determine physical and mental stress associated with bullying, and to reveal a relationship between workplace bullying and its effect on job satisfaction and productivity (Azizi Yahaya et.al, 2009). The data in this study found that 75% of participants reported witnessing mistreatment of co-workers throughout their careers, 47% have been bullied during their career, and 27% admitted to being a target of a bully in the last 12 months. This study also examined the most frequent negative acts by workplace bullies as reported by the participants.

## 2.0 Objectives

The paper has two main objectives:

- i) To identify the most dominant factor of workplace bullying such as person related bullying and work related bullying.
- ii) To study the significant relationship between person work related bullying and work related bullying on the work performance

## 3.0 Hypothetical Model



## 4.0 Research Methodology

### 4.1 Data Collections

The population of this study is 217 employees from a plastic manufacturing company which it is a leading manufacturer and converter of flexible packaging in the ASEAN region, with its manufacturing operations located in Malaysia. This company is located in the industrial areas in Melaka, Malaysia.

## 5.0 Instruments

### 5.1 Questionnaire by NAQ Workplace Bullying

To measure workplace bullying with the “operational method”, the Negative Acts Questionnaire (NAQ) which consists 22-item of the negative acts is used. The NAQ is based on the definition of Einarsen et al. (2001). The NAQ, measuring how often during the previous six months respondents has been subjected to various negative acts, which when occurring on a frequent basic might be considering as bullying (Mikkelsen, 2001). All the items are asked without the words of “bullying”. It is an advantage to let the respondents answer to each item without having a perception of bullying before answering.

For this study, researcher utilized into two subscale: work related bullying and person related bullying from Negative Acts Questionnaire (NAQ; (Einarsen et al., 2001; Einarsen & Raknes, 1997). A reduced version of the NAQ was used to assess workplace bullying. This scale reflects typical bullying behaviors, and the respondents should respond to what degree they have suffered such behaviors during the last six months, on a 5-point Likert type rating scale, ranging from 1 (never), 2 (yes, but not rarely), 3 (yes, now and then), 4 (yes, several time a week) to 5 (yes, almost daily). The scale has shown high reliability and validity in previous studies (Einarsen et al., 1996; Einarsen & Raknes, 1997; Hoel et al., 2001).

The researcher translated the 22-item the English version of the NAQ-R into the Malay language and modified, for local employees and English Version remain for foreign employees. Then the first translated version was tested with a group of 10 employees to receive their feedback and revised accordingly.

### Subscales and Corresponding Item Numbers of the Workplace Bullying

Item Component	No of items	Total no. of items
Work Related Bullying	1, 14, 15, 16, 18, 19, 21	7
Person Related Bullying	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 17, 20, 22	15
Total items		22

The factor labeled work related bullying related to the feeling of useful achievement, the use of skills, the amount of perceived challenges, the quality of work and the extent to which the job is seen as varied and interesting. Researcher utilized this part into work-related bullying and person related bullying. The work-related bullying questions are related to the work performance individual, unpleased tasks or unmanageable tasks. The person-related bullying questions related to the person being ignore, teasing or abuse.

## 6.0 Validity

Each of the measures was analyzed to review the validity of the measures included in this study. Item analysis evaluates each item in a measure separately in order to determine that item’s ability to differentiate

between subjects (Waltz et al., 2005). The validity was constructed and chosen based on extensive usage in many earlier studies.

## 7.0 Reliability

The reliability of this instrument obtained from past researches by past researchers. Workplace bullying has high cronbach's alpha coefficients (0.91 – 0.95) of the internal consistency reliability by NAQ-R (Kanami et al, 2010). All of the dependent variables considered and measured using existing questionnaire instruments, each of which had a Cronbach's Alpha  $\alpha > 0.95$ , indicating good internal consistency. The English version of the questionnaires was translated into Malay and modified using Malay language expressions, by the researcher. The translated version was tested with a group of employees. To ensure the results, internal reliability was retested to verify the validity of the instruments after translating them into Malay, as well as to ensure the instruments were at a good grade reading level for the participants.

## 8.0 Results

**Table 1: Descriptive data for each item of Work Related Bullying**

Work Related Bullying	Distribution on responses (%)					Mean	SD
	Strong disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree		
	1	2	3	4	5		
Someone withholding information which affects your performance.	50 (23.0)	87 (40.1)	43 (19.8)	18 (8.3)	19 (8.8)	2.293	1.182
Having your opinions and views ignored.	72 (33.2)	105 (48.4)	24 (11.1)	13 (6.0)	3 (1.4)	1.940	.898
Practical jokes carried out by people you don't get on with.	91 (41.9)	84 (38.7)	24 (11.1)	11 (5.1)	7 (3.2)	1.797	1.002
Being given tasks with unreasonable or impossible targets or deadline.	91 (41.9)	84 (38.7)	24 (11.1)	11 (5.1)	7 (3.2)	1.884	1.001
Excessive monitoring of your work.	85 (39.2)	81 (37.3)	23 (10.6)	13 (6.0)	15 (6.9)	2.041	1.168
Pressure not to claim something which by right you are entitle to (e.g. sick leave holiday entitlement, travel expenses).	117 (53.9)	70 (32.3)	13 (6.0)	10 (4.6)	7 (3.2)	1.710	.997
Being exposed to an unmanageable workload.	111 (51.2)	76 (35.0)	14 (6.5)	8 (3.7)	8 (3.7)	1.737	.995
n = 217		Overall mean = 1.930			SD = .770		

The statement of the “Excessive monitoring of your work.” generates the highest mean = 2.041 (SD = 1.168). 39.2% (n = 85) strongly disagreed with this statement. 37.3% (n = 81) disagree, 10.6% (n = 23) neutral, 6.0% agree and 6.9% (n = 15) strongly agreed. “Having your opinions and views ignored.” generates the lowest mean = 1.940 (SD = .889). 48.4% (n = 105) agreed with this statement. 33.2% (n = 72) strongly agree, 11.1% (n = 24) neutral, 6.0% (n = 13) disagree and 1.4% (n = 3) of the employees stated strongly agree.

**Table 2: Descriptive data for each item of Person Related Bullying**

Person Related Bullying	Distribution on responses (%)					Mean	SD
	Strong disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree		
	1	2	3	4	5		
Being humiliated or ridiculed in connection with your work.	77 (35.5)	89 (41.0)	29 (13.4)	11 (5.1)	11 (5.1)	2.032	1.073
Being ordered to do work below your level of competence.	69 (31.8)	83 (38.2)	36 (16.6)	16 (7.4)	13 (6.0)	2.715	1.137
Having key areas of responsibility removed or replaced with more trivial or unpleasant tasks.	95 (43.8)	81 (37.3)	24 (11.1)	10 (4.6)	7 (3.2)	1.862	1.004
Spreading of gossip and rumours about you.	89 (41.0)	79 (36.4)	26 (12.9)	15 (6.9)	6 (2.8)	1.940	1.032
Being ignore, excluded or being “sent to Coventry”	103 (47.5)	73 (33.6)	22 (10.1)	16 (7.4)	3 (1.4)	1.816	.983
Having insulting or offensive remarks make about your person. (i.e. habits and background) your attitudes or your private life.	99 (45.6)	74 (34.1)	28 (12.9)	12 (5.5)	4 (1.8)	1.839	.975
Being shouted at or being the target spontaneous anger (or rage).	96 (44.2)	84 (38.7)	22 (10.1)	10 (4.6)	5 (2.3)	1.820	.953
Intimidating behavior such as finger-pointing, invasion of personal space, shoving, blocking/ barring the way	117 (53.9)	56 (25.8)	26 (12.0)	10 (4.6)	8 (3.7)	1.783	1.064
Hints or signal you are from other that you should quit your job.	118 (54.4)	63 (29.0)	15 (6.9)	13 (6.0)	8 (3.7)	1.756	1.063
Repeated reminders of your errors or mistakes	46 (21.2)	108 (49.8)	35 (16.1)	12 (5.5)	16 (7.4)	2.281	1.088

Being ignored or facing a hostile reaction when you approach.	111 (51.2)	66 (30.4)	27 (12.4)	9 (4.1)	4 (1.8)	1.751	.954
Persistent criticism of your work and effort.	63 (29.0)	110 (50.7)	24 (11.1)	13 (6.0)	7 (3.2)	2.037	.966
Having allegations made against you.	113 (52.1)	72 (33.2)	15 (6.9)	10 (4.6)	7 (3.2)	1.727	1.000
Being the subject or excessive teasing and sarcasm.	133 (61.3)	56 (25.8)	11 (5.1)	11 (5.1)	6 (2.8)	1.622	.988
Threats of violence or physical abuse or actual abuse.	133 (61.3)	55 (25.3)	9 (4.1)	13 (6.0)	7 (3.2)	1.645	1.031

n = 217 Overall mean = 1.873 SD = .762

Table 4.4.2 indicates that the statement of the “Being ordered to do work below your level of competence.” generates the highest mean = 2.715 (SD = 1.137). 38.2% (n = 83) disagreed with this statement. 31.8% (n = 69) strongly disagree and 16.6% (n = 36) neutral. Only 7.4% (n = 16) disagree and 6.0% (n = 13) strong agree. “Being shouted at or being the target spontaneous anger (or rage).” generates the lowest mean = 1.820 (SD = .923). 44.2% (n = 96) strongly disagreed with this statement. 38.7% (n = 84) disagree and 10.1% (n = 22) neutral. 4.6% (n = 10) of the employees stated agree and 2.3% (n = 5) strong disagree with this statement.

**Table 3: Workplace Bullying subscales with mean and SD**

Workplace Bullying Subscales	Mean	SD
Work Related Bullying	1.930	.770
Person Related Bullying	1.873	.762

n = 217 Overall mean = 1.891 SD = .744

The standard deviations of the main study variables ranged from .762 to .770, suggesting that none of the measures were marked by excessive restrictions in range. The mean of the main study variables lies between 1.930 and 1.873. Work related bullying is the most dominant factor of workplace bullying due to the mean score is 1.930 bigger than person related bullying with mean 1.873.

To successfully increase the number of productivity and work performance in organization, research has suggested investigate the relationship within workplace bullying on employee’s work performance. Also, differences between local employees and foreign employees were evaluated.

**Table 4: Correlation Coefficient between workplace bullying (person related bullying and work related bullying) on work performance**

Workplace Bullying	Work Performance
Person Related Bullying	.514**
Work Related Bullying	.469**

There have positive significant relationship between workplace bullying and work performance. The hypothesis shows that there is a positive relationships with workplace related bullying ( $r = .514$ ) and person related bullying ( $r = .469$ ).

### 8.1 Analysis Of T-Test

Independent sample t-test is using to carry out the investigating of statistical differences between local and foreign employees. The researcher seeks to find out whether there were any significant differences between local and foreign employee towards workplace bullying on work performance. The findings of the comparison analysis are reported in Table 5.

**Table 5: Comparison Analysis of t-test on Workplace Bullying and Work Performance between local employees and foreign employees**

		N	Mean	SD	t	p
Workplace Bullying	Local employee	152	1.803	.760	-2.705	.007
	Foreign employee	65	2.097	.667		

For workplace bullying result, foreign employees showed the mean with 2.097 compare to the mean of local employees 1.803. It showed the result of mean 2.097,  $t(n = 217) = -2.705$ ,  $p = .007$  (two-tailed).

### 8.2 Multiple Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analysis for contributions of independent variable workplace bullying (work related bullying and person related bullying) on dependent variable work performance are shown as table below.



**Table 6: Multiple Regression Workplace Bullying towards Work**

Mode	R	R	R	Adjusted	F	Sig.	df	df	Standardized	t	Sig.
1		Square	Square	R			1	2	Coefficients		
			Change	Square					Beta		
1	.514 <sup>a</sup>	.264	.264	.028	77.119	.001	1	215	.514	8.782	.001

a. Predictors: (Constant), Person Related Bullying

b. Dependent Variable: Work Performance

Through the analysis of the model 1 (person related bullying),  $R^2$  change is 0.264. The smaller of  $R^2$ , the less capable the independent variable (person related bullying) to explain the dependent variables (work performance),  $F(1, 215) = 77.119$ ,  $p = 0.001 < 0.05$ . When viewed from the beta, organization design factor is (Beta = .514,  $t = 8.782$ , Sig = 0.001). This means that the proposed model that fits the data is 26.4 % of the variance of work performance. The conclusion is also supported by analysis of variance whose value of 0.001 is significantly lower than the specified significance level of 0.05. The conclusion of that regression results, the dimensions of design organization increases per unit, the score of work performance will increase by 26.4 percent

## 9.0 Discussion

Miles et.al (2002) determined that perceptions of workplace environment such as interpersonal conflict, related to negative emotions, which all of this positively correlated with counterproductive behaviors. Workplace bullying, such as belittling comments, persistent criticism of work and withholding resource, appears to inflict more harm on employees. It can affect the ability of an individual to perform well and the organization as well. It is costly to both individual and the organization. According to research from Queensland's Griffith University in Australia (McPhilbin, 2004), "3.5 per cent of the working population is bullied, and the average cost of serious bullying is \$20,000 per employee". This revealing bullying might be very expensive for organizations, affecting the bottom line through an influence on stress and productivity included work performance.

Kahn, et al. (1964) pointed out an important relationship between attributes of personality and the experience of role conflicts and ambiguity. It is, therefore, necessary to consider the person variables, or personality characteristics, of a pastor as those variables interact with the force situation of role stress. Kahn, et al. (1964) also suggested that a consideration of person variables is significant with the several reasons such as person variables affect the expectations role sender hold toward the pastor or focal person and thus determine the kinds of pressures they apply on him.

The work of the Herzberg (1959) has demonstrated another phenomena concerning motivational theory which directly influence the negotiation process. Herzberg sets out to show that the factors leading to positive work attitudes and those leading to negative work attitudes would differ. In term of stressors investigated, Herzberg (1959) has mentioned that some type of work conditions act as satisfier while others may act as dissatisfies if they are not meet in an appropriate manner. In sum, the results lead to the conclusion that while organizational climate and workplace bullying can to be as satisfied as other types of employees with their work and with their co-workers, they are somewhat less satisfied than others with the supervision they receive.

### 9.1 Implications of the Study

This study adds to organization's effort to understand the relationship among workplace bullying and employees' performance. The study contributed a new idea in the research of management by opening up discussion on the importance of employee participation in producing a perfect work performance. This fact that statistically there are correlations and regression that workplace bullying has an impact on the dependent variables work performance.

This finding also suggested that management might be able to decrease the level of job stress by increasing satisfaction with compensation, policies, work conditions and increasing the interactions with employees in staff meeting. This research also sheds light on how workplace bullying can be effected towards work performance. There are few recommendations that the management should consider to reduce ambiguity and work intensification stressors.

The results of the study also supported by Einarsen et al. (2003) stated that the cases of workplace bullying needs to be explored in a sustained and systematic way because all the organizations have a responsibility to protect their employees from the psychological harassment of a workplace bully. Additionally, workplace bullying has a negative impact on a company's profitability and organizational leaders have to cure this issue effectively which can help the organizations to meet their goals (Keashly & Jagatic, 2003).

### 10.0 Conclusion

Workplace bullying is a deleterious problem leading physical, emotional, and psychological damages to employees. Additionally, organizations incur damage such as decrease of performance, employee lack of morale, and monetary costs due to this problem (Cheryl, 2009). In this study, a quantitative approach explored the problem of workplace bullying from a theoretical perspective. This study found that organizational cultures make worse the problem when the leaders either do not understand workplace bullying or discharge it as hard management. The study concluded that a systems approach to designing a training program that addresses the root causes, involves all individuals from all levels, and provides skills for dealing with this phenomena can promote a harmonious working environment.

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