



Examining the relationship between workplace bullying and job performance

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Abstract

Bullying is a severe problem faced in many environments. For the purpose of this study, bullying is defined as an instance in which someone attacks another with harmful words or physical aggression. Discovering how bullying and related factors affect job performance, job satisfaction, and organizational citizenship behaviors is beneficial to an organization, as bullying may have critical effects at the individual and organization level. Past research has shown that bullying leads to critical negative outcomes. Some studies have shown that bullying leads to defensive and relational silence (Agarwal & Rai, 2017), and other studies have shown that bullying leads to aggression such as hateful words or conflict between coworkers. (Evans, 2019). Furthermore, prior research has demonstrated that bullying decreases job satisfaction (Fleischman & Valentine, 2017) and can have a negative impact on mental health (Beduna & Perrone-McGovern, 2019). Therefore, based on previous research, we hypothesize that counterproductive work behavior, such as bullying, peer conflict, or peer competition will have a negative relationship with job satisfaction, job performance, and organizational citizenship behaviors. The current study will use employees from a university teaching hospital and clinic to examine these relationships. Overall, the results of this study could help put a spotlight on the detrimental effects of bullying, peer conflict, and peer competition and encourage organizations to cultivate a safe work culture.

Literature Review

Workplace Bullying

Studies have shown that bullying leads to critical negative outcomes:

- ❖ Aggression, such as hateful words or **conflict between coworkers** (Evans, 2019).
- ❖ Studies have shown that aggression from superiors is **negatively correlated with performance appraisals and job performance** (Harris et. al., 2007).
- ❖ **Decrease in job satisfaction** (Fleischman & Valentine, 2017).
- ❖ Job strain and bullying contribute to **depression-related job productivity loss** (Dollard et. al, 2013).
- ❖ Workplace bullying also has an impact on **organizational citizenship behavior, intention to leave, stress, and task performance** (Arif et. al., 2018).

Peer Competition and Conflict

Studies have also shown that competition and conflict between peers can lead to negative outcomes:

- ❖ **Major distress** within the workplace (Black et. Al, 1987).
- ❖ **Low job satisfaction** (Michael Jerome Springs 2016).

Hypotheses

Counterproductive work behavior, such as **bullying, peer conflict, or peer competition** will have a **negative relationship with:**

- job satisfaction,
- job performance, and
- organizational citizenship behaviors.

Measures

- ❖ **Bullying:** The National Health Service staff survey (Carter et al., 2016) will assess the amount and severity of bullying, which is when someone physically or verbally attacks another with the intent to harm.
 - An example item would be, “*In the last 12 months how many times have you personally experienced harassment, bullying or abuse at work from... managers/team leaders or other colleagues?*” and is measured on a frequency scale from *Never* to *6-10 times*.
- ❖ **Peer Competition:** The survey of Perceived Peer Competition (self-constructed) will measure peer competition, which is the competition among peers for raises, promotions, compliments etc.
 - An example item would be “*My coworkers and I often need to compete for attention from my supervisor*” and is measured on a scale from 1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 7 = *Strongly Agree*.
- ❖ **Peer Conflict:** Peer conflict, defined as the disagreements that happen between employees in an organization, will be measured using a work conflict scale (Demerouti & Rispens, 2016).
 - An example item would be, “*We disagreed on how to do the task*”. These items are answered on a scale from 1 to 5 with 1 = *Not True at All* and 5 = *Completely True*.
- ❖ **Organizational Citizenship Behavior:** Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) will be measured with the Employee Job Satisfaction and Engagement report (Alonso et. Al, 2016). to assess the willingness to extend help to other employees for the bettering of the company as a whole.
 - An example question is, “*I enjoy volunteering for activities beyond my job requirements*”. These questions will be measured on a 6-point scale with 1 = *Strongly Disagree* and 6 = *Strongly Agree*.
- ❖ **Job Performance:** How well an employee performs their job will be assessed using the Job Content questionnaire (JCQ; Corbiere et al., 2013). Questions will be modified in order to be geared to supervisor evaluations of employees.
 - An example item would be, “*The [employee] work involves a high level of qualifications and the employee meets those qualifications*”. It will be measured on a scale between 1 and 7 with 1 = *Strongly Disagree* and 7 = *Strongly Agree*.
- ❖ **Job Satisfaction:** Job satisfaction, or how content an employee is with their job, will be measured using the Job Satisfaction Survey (Spector, 1985).
 - An example item would be, “*I like doing the things I do at work*”. This survey is measured on 6-point scale with 1 = *Strongly Disagree* and 7 = *Strongly Agree*.

Proposed Method

- ❖ Participants will be approximately 100 full-time employees working at a university clinic and teaching hospital
- ❖ Diverse set of occupational titles and job duties (e.g., front desk and physicians)
- ❖ Surveys will be randomized and emailed to employees
- ❖ Job performance will only be sent to supervisors and matched with employee IDs

Predicted Results

Table 1. Hypothesized relationships between study variables

	1	2	3	4	5
1 Bullying	--				
2 Peer Competition	(+)				
3 Peer Conflict	(+)	(+)			
4 OCBs	(-)	(-)	(-)		
5 Job Performance	(-)	(-)	(-)	(+)	
6 Job Satisfaction	(-)	(-)	(-)	(+)	(+)

Discussion

- ❖ This research can help organizations understand the drastic effects of bullying and the effects it will have on both employees (e.g., job satisfaction) and the organization (e.g., job performance and citizenship behavior).
- ❖ Understanding how peer conflict and peer competition is related to bullying and important work outcomes will help organizations take action to remedy these negative effects
 - For example, organizations could implement individual interventions or team building exercises to decrease the negative impact of peer conflict and competition.
- ❖ Knowledge of counterproductive workplace factors that influence employee performance may further benefit the overall success of an organization.

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