

## Impact of Workplace Bullying on Employee Performance Ajay Pradhan and Jalsha Joshi\*

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### ABSTRACT

**Background of the study:** The past decade bullying has received growing attention in organization research where analysts have announced disturbing discoveries about the negative results related with harassing, both for the people and the associations concerned. It is a behavior that occurs over a period of time and is meant to harm someone who feels powerless to respond. Verbal bullying includes teasing and threatening to cause harm whereas social bullying is occurred in the workplace that might happen by leaving someone out of a meeting on purpose of publicly reproaching someone.

**Objectives:** The main objective of this study is to examine whether there is existence of any bullying practices in the Nepalese workplaces. It also aims to examine the association between workplace bullying and employee's performance.

**Methods:** The study was employed descriptive and causal comparative research design. Primary data for each variable was collected from 80 employees of different hospitals working in Kathmandu and Lalitpur. To observe the employee bullying and employee's performance, structured questionnaire was used to collect responses.

**Results:** Results of study reveals that workplace bullying, working environment and individual job characteristics have significant positive association with employee performance and negative relationship between organizational responses and employee performance.

**Conclusions:** The study concludes that the most persuasive factor that influences the employee performance is working environment followed by individual job characteristics, workplace bullying and the least one being organizational responses.

**Implications:** To meet organizational goal, respondents mentioned that hospital should create conducive working environment. The firm should imply "The Sexual Harassment at Workplace Prevention Act, 2015" as mentioned by Nepal Government. Everyone should be equally treated in an organization provided that every individuals' rights being protected at the same time.

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**Keywords:** Workplace Bullying, Employee Performance, Working Environment, Organizational Responses.

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## I. Introduction

Work environment harassing is characterized as continuous presentation to negative acts that the objective experiences issues safeguarding him/herself against due to a real or perceived power imbalance between the parties Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, and Cooper (2011). The past decade bullying has received growing attention in organization research where analysts have announced disturbing discoveries about the negative results related with harassing, both for the people and the associations concerned. Concerning the consequences for the association, tormenting has been appeared to be related with higher turnover and plan to leave the association, higher absenteeism, and decreased commitment and efficiency (Salin, 2003).

Employee performance is basically outcomes accomplished and achievements made at work. Performance refers to keeping up plans while going for the outcomes. Although performance evaluation is the heart of performance management, the performance of an individual or an organization depends heavily on all organizational policies, practices, and design features of an organization (Anitha, 2014).

Exposure to bullying in the workplace is not only associated with reduced health and well-being among those being bullied, it is also associated with individual, unit and organizational outcomes related to performance and productivity, negative outcomes for patient care, increased absenteeism, increased turnover intentions and reduced job satisfaction and engagement (Sheehan, McCabe, & Garavan, 2018).

Workplace bullying destroys the person in every sense, it not only affects their career but it also puts their health at risk. Workplace culture matters a lot as it has a direct impact on the employee's performance. If the organization culture is healthy, positive, an employee will able to give his/her best in an organization but if the work culture is not sound it will influence his/her performance in an organization and also in his/her family.

Namie (2007) states that abusive, insulting language, spreading gossip, rumors harmful or offensive initiation practices, physical assault or unlawful threats, giving too much workload to the person, setting the timelines for the employee which are difficult to achieve, giving the task that is beyond the ability of a person, continuously ignoring a person at the workplace, and purposely denying access to information that are considered as workplace bullying.

The purpose of this study is to identify whether there is existence of any bullying practices in the workplace at the organization. It further aims to explore the relationship among workplace bullying variables on employees' performance.

The paper is organized as follows: section II describes the overview of previous study and research methodology in section III. Section IV present the empirical results and section V draw the conclusion and managerial implications.

## II. Review of Literature and theoretical framework

According to Kiruja and Mukuru (2018), organizations would be more effective, efficient, flexible, committed and profitable as a result of an emphasis on trust, which goes hand in hand with productivity; less hierarchical and bureaucratic structure; a high level of worker involvement; all of which would create an employee and organization management systems. Einarsen, Raknes, and Matthiesen (1994) explained a person is bullied when he or she feels over and over exposed to negative acts in the workplace, acts that an individual may think that it's hard to guard themselves against. Typically, a victim of harassment and bullying is teased, badgered, and insulted and perceives that he or she has little plan of action to counter in kind. Workplace bullying is a significant issue with adverse consequences to organizational efficiency. Working environment harassing influences both individual performance and the performance of the organization as a whole. Targets of workplace bullying have reported decreased commitment to their jobs and organizations, decreased job satisfaction, poor morale, decreased productivity, increased errors, limited concentration, and increased absenteeism. Einarsen et al. (1994) recognized “direct bullying”, as an open verbal or physical attack on the victim, and “indirect bullying”, which appears as progressively inconspicuous acts, as excluding or isolating the victim from his or her peer group. Among 137 Norwegian victims of bullying and harassment at work, social isolation and exclusion, devaluation of one's work and endeavors, and exposure to teasing, insulting remarks and offending comments were the most common negative acts, as reported by these victims.

Devonish (2013) has advanced a conceptual model in which psychological well-being (job satisfaction and work-related depression) acts as a key mediating mechanism between workplace bullying and job performance using one theoretical framework of Nielsen and Einarsen (2012) outlining a model of diverse individual-level consequences of workplace bullying for victims. In particular, this model posits that exposure to workplace bullying is likely to influence both job-related outcomes and health-related outcomes. Their metanalytical results revealed strong support for the model where both cross-sectional and longitudinal findings suggest that exposure to bullying was associated with increased mental and health problems, increased burnout, and reduced job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

Second, a related theoretical model – stressor-strain model – has likewise been proposed to explain the outcomes of workplace bullying (Finne, Christensen, & Knardahl, 2014). The stressor strain model posits that employees are presented to distressing circumstances and conditions at work are likely to experience high levels of physical (e.g. somatic symptoms), psychological (e.g. depression), and behavioral (e.g. aggression) strain. Although the stressor-strain model is considered a traditional theoretical framework (Jex, Beehr, & Roberts, 1992), its application to the context of workplace bullying as a social stressor has

been recent. Using this framework in the area of workplace bullying, (Hauge, Skogstad, & Einarsen, 2010) examined this model by assessing the consequences of a range of social stressors including bullying and presented that it had been completely related to psychological strain (depression, job satisfaction anxiety), turnover intentions, and absenteeism. Third, a theoretical model – attributional model of workplace bullying plots that the impact of workplace bullying on a target's performance varies as indicated by the target's attributional processes (Samnani, Singh, & Ezzedeen, 2013). his model incorporates a lot of specific sorts of performance as well as OCBs, CWBs, and task performance that deviates from different models that examine overall world job performance factors.

Einarsen et al. (1994) analyzed that the victims react with withdrawal when attacked, and they have a more negative self-esteem. Bullies, on the other hand, are self-confident, impulsive and do not suffer from lack of self-esteem. They do, however, show a generally aggressive reaction pattern in many different situations. Victims of bullying and harassment at work have been described as conscientious, literal minded, and somewhat unsophisticated, often being overachievers with an unrealistic view of both themselves and their situation in which they emphasized the quality of the organization's work environment as the main determinant of misconduct. They concluded that harassment is primarily caused by work environment and social environment problems within the organization. Samnani et al. (2013) revealed key motives that may be driving perpetrator bullying behavior, contextual factors that shape employee perceptions and attributions of the bullying, and varying outcomes related to trust and performance. We believe that this model sets a solid foundation for future research in the workplace bullying area and offers several directions that build upon our attribution model. They believed that organizations should also increase policies and sanctions against bullying behavior to, at least, prevent non-work-driven bullying, which often takes place in the workplace affecting the employee performance as well as overall organizational productivity.

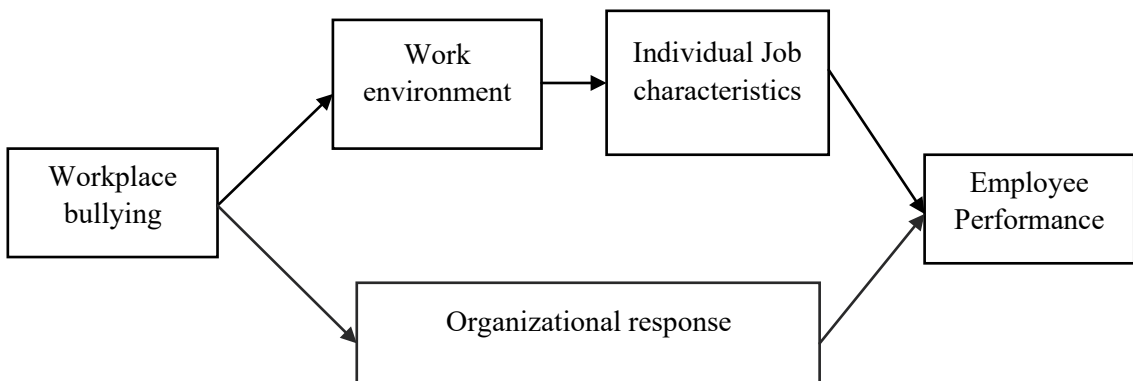
The study conducted by Devonish (2013) concluded that job satisfaction and work-related depression have an important role in the relationship between workplace bullying and employee performance highlighting managers made of aware of the diverse effects that workplace bullying can have on their employees including its potential impact on employee well-being and performance behaviors. Efforts from the management part must be improved in order to increase job satisfaction and happiness at work that can help in curbing of poor performances or increased counterproductive behaviors. This study best suggests that workplace health management consultants should provide continual educational programs on work-related stressors such as bullying and other social stressors for the benefit of both employees and managers.

The study of (Finne et al., 2014) demonstrated a broad set of psychological and social work factors predicted mental distress of potential clinical relevance, some of the most

consistent predictors were different from those traditionally studied and in addition to shedding light on processes driving the relationship of work with mental distress, this knowledge highlighted the practical starting point for efforts to improve working conditions and health where 14 out of 19 factors showed some prospective association with incidence of mental distress.

(Koh, 2016) review paper provides an overview of the current state of knowledge on work environment antecedents of workplace bullying and proposes an integrative model of bullying applied to registered nurses in which a prospective study was conducted in Singapore investigating the workplace bullying among nurses in a local tertiary hospital's operating theatre department and reported that 33.7% of the respondents reported having experienced verbal abuse, with 17.6% alleging abuse by nurse managers; importantly, the study also found that more than 70% of the staff choose not to report workplace bullying incidents.

According to Bedarkar and Pandita (2014), companies have to give their employees the liberty to make their work exciting and creating an environment for having an engaged work life as employees are the key resources to any organization and they are not given sufficient space and time to make a perfect blend of work and fun at workplace, then the sense of feeling of separation will rise within the employees. So, organization and employees are both dependent on each other to fulfil their goals and objectives. Employee engagement should be a continuous process of learning, improvement and activity. Thus, organizations should effectively anticipate satisfy worker's desires and in this manner, make an effect on the performance of employee, which directly affects the organization's performance. Conceptual framework is structured with the understanding working place bullying and employee's performance that leads positive working environment as shown in figure 1:



**Figure 1:** Conceptual framework of the study

In the above figure, the dependent variable is employee performance whereas the major independent variable is workplace bullying. From the review of various studies, these variables will be further influenced by the other independent factors as shown in the figure. These components are potential influencers of an organization's such as work environment, individual characteristics and organizational response.

**Workplace bullying:** The straight meaning of bullying is the use of strength or power that hurt frail employee. It can further be defined as online abuse, subtle bullying within friendships such as manipulation, intimidation, social exclusion and spreading of harmful rumors. It is as repeated mistreatment by one or more offenders of an individual or group in the working organization.

**Work environment:** It is a place of surroundings where employees are working. It is an environment which comprises the psychological aspects of how the employees work is organized and their wellbeing at work.

**Individual job characteristics:** The job characteristics model, designed by Hackman and Oldham (1975), depends on the possibility that the task itself is key to employee motivation. It expresses that there are five core job characteristics (skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback) leads organizational work performance.

**Organizational response:** It is the extent of organization responses to the employees for the attainment of firm performance. Organizational responses process initiated with the advent of happening or occurring of any kind of events where an organization expresses or reacts. The consequences of organizational responses on the bullying scenario may either bring positive attitudes towards the organization or would rather take it in a negative aspects (Kvas & Seljak, 2014).

**Employee performance:** It is a function of capacity and inspiration, where capacity is comprised of the skills, training and resources required for performing a task and inspiration is defined as an inner force that drives individual to act towards organizational goal (Kiruja and Mukuru, 2018).

### III. Research Methodology

There is a systematic and theoretical analysis of the methodological approaches, tools and techniques applied in the study. It is basically an exploratory type of research study following survey design which explains samples and section process, data collection and nature of source data, analysis procedures and test statistics. Both the qualitative and quantitative (i.e. mixed method) are used in this research. Descriptive as well as exploratory research design was used. 130 employees working in hospitals inside Kathmandu and Lalitpur Valley were taken as sample respondents to conduct the present research, out of which 80 respondents' experienced were analyzed. Convenience sampling techniques were used

to select the sample of respondents. Questionnaire tool was used to conduct the survey whereby the collected data were analyzed, presented and used to produce the key findings. The collected data were analyzed by using IBM SPSS version 2.0 through normality and reliability test, correlation and regression were done to interpret the result. However, the result of this report concludes that the independent variables of the present research make some sort of impact on the dependent variable i.e. employee performance. Likewise there is only less effect of demographic variables on influencing the dependent and independent variable.

## IV. Data Presentation and Analysis

### Reliability

**Table 4.1: Reliability Statistics of dependent variable**

| Reliability Statistics |            |
|------------------------|------------|
| Cronbach's Alpha       | N of Items |
| 0.791                  | 4          |

**Table 4.2: Reliability Statistics of independent variable**

| Reliability Statistics |            |
|------------------------|------------|
| Cronbach's Alpha       | N of Items |
| 0.794                  | 28         |

The reliability test is done on two levels. The above table shows the first level that calculates 79.1% (0.791) of data collected from dependent variable and the second level calculates 79.4% (0.794) of data collected from independent variable which means that the survey conducted is fairly reliable for research administration.

### Respondent's Responses

Out of 130 respondents, 62% have experienced workplace bullying i.e. 80 people and 38% are safely working without any kind of bullying. So, for unbiased result, the present researcher has taken the responds of those 80 respondents only for actual analysis.

#### Have you ever experienced bullying in your workplace?

[CATEGORY  
NAME]  
[SERIES  
NAME]38%



[CATEGORY  
NAME]  
[SERIES  
NAME]62%

The respondents feel it more comfortable to share their bullying problem with their colleagues as 22% discussed their bullying issues with colleagues whereas 18% of the total respondents have the courage to go to their personnel and confront about it. Likewise, 19% choose to avoid such situation and 14% would not come up and ignored the bullying practices found in their workspace.

### Have you ever experienced bullying in your workplace?

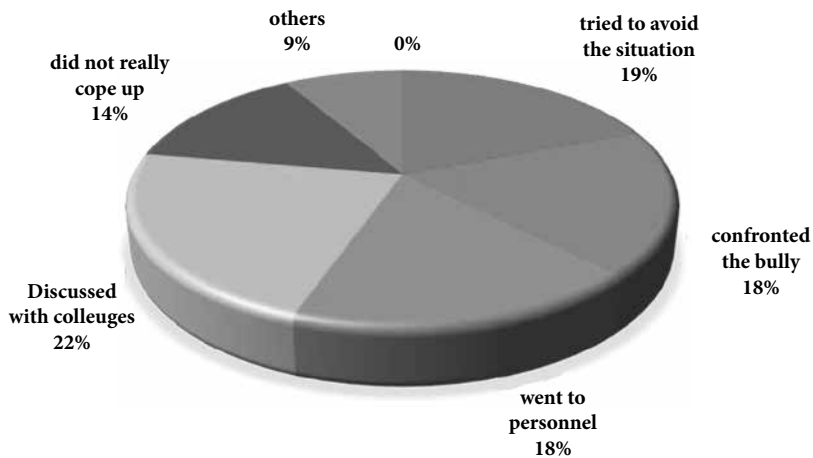


Figure 4.2: Respondent's responses to bullying

### Normality

The normality test is done on two levels. In the first one, the data of dependent variables collected from the survey is analyzed. In this study, the significance output of these data resulted as less than 0.05 (at 2-tailed test). Similarly, the second level includes the analysis of data of independent variable whose significance level is less than 0.05 for workplace bullying and other independent variables having significance level greater than 0.05. It is found that the test distribution of both dependent and independent variable is normal. Normality test was done by using one-sample Kolmogorov test.

Table 4.3: Descriptive statistics for the selected variables

|                                | Descriptive Statistics |                |    |
|--------------------------------|------------------------|----------------|----|
|                                | Mean                   | Std. Deviation | N  |
| Employee Performance           | 3.5906                 | 0.72068        | 80 |
| Workplace Bullying             | 3.1402                 | 0.63892        | 80 |
| Working environment            | 3.7156                 | 0.81106        | 80 |
| Individual Job Characteristics | 3.6575                 | 0.72719        | 80 |
| Organizational Responses       | 3.345                  | 0.75639        | 80 |



Table 4.3 displays the descriptive statistics. The overall mean of dependent variable employee performance is 3.5906 and the mean of each independent variable i.e. Workplace bullying, working environment, individual job characteristics and organizational responses is 3.1402, 3.7156, 3.6575 and 3.345 respectively. Since the mean is between 3 and 4 (the present researcher has denoted 3 as neutral and 4 as agree in the Likert scale) it shows that the respondents have positive or favourable impact of workplace bullying on employee performance which was surveyed through different questionnaires.

## **Independent Sample Test**

An independent sample test is performed to analyse if any significant difference between means of two groups. In an independent sample test, when the significance value is more than 0.05 then it is assumed that there exists no impact between the variables while a value of less than 0.05 signifies some impact between the variables.

Employee Performance (0.009), are less than 0.05 so we consider equal variance not assumed row. Looking at this row the 2-tail sig value of employee performance is 0.601. Since 2-tail sig value of employee performance, working environment and individual job characteristics is greater than 0.05 we can conclude that there is no impact of demographic variable gender on these variables. However, the significance value of variables i.e. workplace bullying (0.108), Working environment (0.088), Individual Job Characteristics (0.195) and organizational responses (0.323) are greater than 0.05 so we consider equal variances assumed row. By looking at this row the 2-tail sig value of workplace bullying is 0.849, working environment is 0.116 and individual job characteristics is 0.029 and organizational responses is 0.104 which means that there is an impact of demographic variable gender on individual job characteristics only as its 2-tail sig value is less than 0.05 and it is concluded that workplace bullying also has no significant relationship with demographic variable gender.

## **One-way ANOVA Analysis**

An ANOVA analysis is performed to analyze if any significant difference between means of two or more groups exists. In an ANOVA table, when the significance value is more than 0.05 then it is assumed that there exists no impact between the variables while a value of less than 0.05 signifies some impact between the variables.

There is significant difference between age, educational level, marital status and working experience with workplace bullying and significance difference between working experience with individual job characteristics. Likewise, no significance differences were found for age, educational level and average monthly income with the remaining independent variables.

**Table 4.4: Correlation analysis of factor affecting workplace bullying on employee performance**

|                                | Correlations         |                    |                     |                                |                          |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|---------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|
|                                | Employee performance | Workplace Bullying | Working environment | Individual Job Characteristics | Organizational Responses |
| Employee performance           | 1                    |                    |                     |                                |                          |
| Workplace Bullying             | .281*                | 1                  |                     |                                |                          |
| Working environment            | .736**               | 0.149              | 1                   |                                |                          |
| Individual Job Characteristics | .746**               | .435**             | .597**              | 1                              |                          |
| Organizational Responses       | .303**               | .234*              | .523**              | .311**                         | 1                        |

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The table 4.4 shows that the highest positive correlation exists between employee performance and individual job characteristics (0.746) followed by working environment (0.736) and organizational responses (0.303) while others are close to moderately positively correlated. However, we can observe that there is low positive correlation between workplace bullying and working environment with the score 0.149.

The above table clearly shows that the variables in the study are significantly and positively correlated. Thus, we can conclude that the null hypothesis set for the study is not accepted which means there is statistical relationship between the variables undertaken for the study.

**Table 4.5: Regression Model Summary of factor affecting workplace bullying on employee performance**

| Model | Model Summary |          |                   |                            |
|-------|---------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
|       | R             | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
| 1     | .835          | 0.698    | 0.682             | 0.40653                    |

The 0.698 value of adjusted R square indicates that the independent variables used in this research explains 68.2% of the variance caused in the dependent variable i.e. employee performance. The remaining 31.8% of the variance in the employee performance is explained by other variables not included in this research.

**Table 4.7: Regression Coefficient of factor affecting workplace bullying on employee performance**

|                                | Unstandardized |            | Standardized | t     | Sig.  |
|--------------------------------|----------------|------------|--------------|-------|-------|
|                                | Coefficients   |            | Coefficients |       |       |
|                                | B              | Std. Error | Beta         |       |       |
| (Constant)                     | 0.478          | 0.305      |              | 1.567 | 0.121 |
| Workplace Bullying             | 0.036          | 0.082      | 0.032        | 0.432 | 0.667 |
| Working environment            | 0.462          | 0.081      | 0.52         | 5.736 | 0.000 |
| Individual Job Characteristics | 0.455          | 0.087      | 0.459        | 5.199 | 0.000 |
| Organizational Responses       | -0.113         | 0.073      | -0.119       | -1.56 | 0.123 |

Regression coefficient helps show the unit change in dependent variable that the change in an independent variable may cause. For this purpose, the formula of  $Y = a + bx + e$  is used which can be interpreted as:

$$\text{Employee performance} = 0.478 + 0.036X_1 + 0.462X_2 + 0.455X_3 - 0.113X_4 + \varepsilon$$

Where,

a = constant

X<sub>1</sub> = Workplace Bullying

X<sub>2</sub> = Working environment

X<sub>3</sub> = Individual job characteristics

X<sub>4</sub> = Organizational responses

$\varepsilon$  = a random error

Here, The model implies that a unit changes in variables X<sub>1</sub>, X<sub>2</sub>, X<sub>3</sub> and X<sub>4</sub> leads to 0.036, 0.462, 0.455 and -0.113 respectively changes in the employee performance. A random error represents the remaining variables that affect the employee performance which are not included in this research.

## V. Conclusion

Based on the analysis and evaluation of collected data we can conclude that employee performance is very influential. Similarly, we found the existence of significant positive relationship of workplace bullying, working environment and individual job characteristics on employee performance whereas significant negative relationship is found between organizational responses and employee performance. Through the data presentation and analyses, the present researcher also found that these variables do not have significant relationship with gender, marital status and average monthly income of the consumer while some of these variables have some sort of relationship with age, educational level and working experience of the respondents.

## Managerial Implications

Organization should focus on creating a bullying free working environment to make the employees feel secured in their workplace. Organizations must imply “The Sexual Harassment at Workplace Prevention Act, 2015” as mentioned by Nepal Government. Everyone should be equally treated in an organization provided that every individuals’ rights being protected at the same time. The employees should be given a friendly environment and enough autonomy for sharing their problems with the management.

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