

Workplace Bullying in India : Acts, Consequences, and Control

*Rajnish Kumar Misra*¹

*Divya Sharma*²

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the acts and consequences from the perspective of all actors involved in workplace bullying and to provide suggestions to deal with this threat. A qualitative method was used to gather commentary from public and private sector management teachers as the topic is sensitive, complex, or dilemmatic and focused on describing or understanding the experiences of an individual. A deductive approach to thematic analysis revealed the various acts and consequences from the perspectives of all the parties, that is, perpetrator, victim, bystander, and witness, under one roof that has not been stated in the literature. Furthermore, if organizations follow the suggestions provided in the study to control workplace bullying, that will lead to a better and healthy working environment. The present study contributes to workplace bullying literature by using thematic analysis to explore the acts and consequences of workplace bullying faced by all parties. To strengthen the organization with a better work environment and committed people, this critical issue of bullying should be addressed with utmost priority. If it is addressed early, the treatment becomes easier as prevention is always better than cure.

Keywords : workplace bullying, qualitative research, individual performance, organizational performance, suggestions

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Workplace bullying appears to be pretty rooted in the culture, making it a common phenomenon (Einarsen, 2005). Bullying is a complex phenomenon that affects millions of individuals every year. Workplace bullying is a universal phenomenon that engulfs the whole organization, either small or big, and is not confined to one group, sector, or country. And, so many sectors are at more risk, and one such group is the educational sector. The workplace bullying field has advanced significantly in the last decades, with remarkable research on causes and consequences from the target's perspective (Matthiesen & Einarsen, 2007). It is widely acknowledged that research on this phenomenon is required to cover the view of all parties involved in workplace bullying.

Moreover, there is an increasing interest in identifying coping strategies to reduce workplace bullying. It is widely acknowledged that a well- designed research is required to uncover the interventions so that the impact of workplace bullying can be minimized or prevented as organizations or managements appears to be extraordinarily poor at providing effective or efficient protection from bullying (Hurley et al., 2016; Tuckey et al., 2018). The

¹ *Professor*, Jaypee Business School, Jaypee Institute of Information Technology, A-10, Sector - 62, Noida - 201 309, Uttar Pradesh. (Email : rajnish.misra@jiit.ac.in) ; ORCID iD : <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8660-0642>

² *Research Scholar*, Jaypee Business School, Jaypee Institute of Information Technology, A -10, Sector - 62, Noida - 201 309, Uttar Pradesh. (Email : divyasharma0390@gmail.com) ; ORCID iD : <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9559-7652>

previous studies on bullying specifically focused on the target perspective. Still, there is a need to study the phenomenon from all the parties' / actors' perspectives, and therefore, we cannot discount the role of other actors in this process. So, here, we focus on bridging the gap and studying the phenomenon of workplace bullying more deeply from the perspectives of a bully, target, bystander, and witness and provide suggestions to deal with this threat. Therefore, the objectives of this study are to (a) identify the acts and consequences of workplace bullying from the perspective of all parties and (b) list suggestions to combat bullying.

The current study develops a linkage of workplace bullying acts and consequences based on social exchange theory and conservation theory of resources. It evaluates the same with a sample of Indian management teachers. The emphasis on India is critical given its unique socio-cultural environment and augmented globalization, which has impacted the bullying dynamics.

Literature Review

Workplace Bullying

Bullying is an offensive behavior through vindictive, cruel, humiliating attempts to undermine an individual or group of people working in an organization, and these negative behaviors affect the professional and personal performance of an individual and can cause stress, anxiety, and physical & mental distress (Yamada et al., 2018). Bullying starts with an indirect behavior by which targets generally fall into a state of confusion about what is happening. As bullying increases, more direct behaviors like teasing, belittling, badgering, etc., are used. The target feels humiliated and tries to confront the perpetrator, which increases the negative behavior of the offender. After that, as the frequency increases, the target is stigmatized, feels powerless, and begins building up a feeling of hopelessness, pushing him/her to segregate himself/herself from other individuals in the work environment. In the final stage, the target goes into deep shock and either leaves the workplace or is removed because of poor performance or may show an emotional outbreak (Einarsen et al., 2011).

There are various parties involved in workplace bullying: perpetrator or bully, target, bystander, and witness. Those who try to compensate for their weaknesses, fear, and low self-confidence by humiliating others; try to establish superiority over others; and make fun of others to overcome their feelings of incompetency can be defined as the perpetrators (Baltas, 2003). Gary Namie and Ruth Namie declared that 89% of the perpetrators were supervisors. Those who are highly talented or creative, competent, honest, devoted, work-oriented, and don't know politics, can quickly become the targets. Other actors in the bullying process also face adverse effects, but there have been fewer research studies on those parties, that is, bystander and witness (Knott et al., 2009). Few researchers considered bystanders a silent supporting cast who aid the bully through commission and omission, making bystanders different from witnesses. The other researchers highlighted the role of the witnesses as those who support the victim (Samnani, 2013). The sense of social justice motivates the witness to take a stand for others, a step against bullying, and consider that bullying is unfair and that no one deserves to be bullied (Cappadocia et al., 2012).

Acts and Consequences of Workplace Bullying

The ordinary acts of bullying highlighted in previous research studies are as follows: foul, rude, persistent threatening dismissal; providing meaningless tasks; criticism; humiliating conduct in front of other workers; ridicule taunts; contradictory instructions; undermining work performance; isolating and excluding persons; offensive messages on email; blocking someone's raise; overload; withholding information; offer impossible deadlines; threatening action; verbal form of sexual harassment (Vega & Comer, 2005); and work engagement

(Vashisht & Vashisht, 2020). Victims face bullying's work-related, physiological, and psychological consequences (Samnani & Singh, 2012). Those who experience bullying face short-term and long-term outcomes (Roscigno et al., 2009). The psychological effects of bullying at the workplace involve stress and well-being, which affect the work-life balance (Biswas & Chakraborty, 2019; Kala et al., 2017; Kang & Sidhu, 2015; Kar & Tripathy, 2021). An individual can react to stress physiologically and psychologically (Khairuddin et al., 2019), and can experience anxiety, depression (McTernan et al., 2013), and post-traumatic stress disorder (Matthiesen & Einarsen, 2004). The work-related effects of individual bullying include low job satisfaction, low morale, low job performance, lack of commitment, higher absenteeism rate, burnout, intention to leave (Namie, 2007), lack of unity in information groups, poor interpersonal relationships (Salin, 2003), higher training cost, higher turnover rate, and person-hour reduction (Namie, 2007; Rai & Tripathi, 2017).

The social exchange theory also helps understand this phenomenon wherein workplace bullying negatively affects the targets, and bullying behavior is harmful to the organization or management (Blau, 1964; Djurkovic et al., 2008). Another perspective on the consequences of bullying is clarified by the conservation of resource theory (Hobfoll, 1989), which states bullying situations where the target lost resources and tried to protect their remaining resources and even tried to increase or enhance their resources (Tuckey & Neall, 2014). These theories thereby provide a broader framework of workplace bullying.

Research Methodology

Sampling Framework

The sampling frame is an integral part of the research, which describes the population, sample, sampling method, and sample size. The sampling frame is from where a sample is drawn. The literature has clearly stated that workplace bullying desires to be better understood in the Indian context, especially in the higher education sector (Agarwal, 2016). So, in the present study, UGC and AICTE websites were used as the sampling frame because these two bodies in India look after the functioning of higher education. The higher educational sector was selected as the population of the study.

It's almost impossible to collect data from the whole unit. Hence, a smaller sample is to be chosen to represent the entire set of units. So, we chose management teachers as a sample from the higher education sector because management is the world's most popular degree as more than two lakh diplomas are awarded annually. And, in the current scenario, management education and managerial skills are essential in every domain of life. The value provided by management education to organizations, society, and individuals is almost immeasurable. AACSB International, 2005 defined several benefits of achieving this degree. The key elements that deliver management education to students are teachers and teachers' motivation and satisfaction reflected with the students' performance. Teachers' performance, well-being, and behavior are affected by bullying behavior at the workplace. Therefore, it is easy to imagine how complicated it must be for management teachers to develop leaders and transmit values when one feels bullied at his/her workplace.

Sampling Method

Purposive sampling was used to recruit respondents among India's public and private sector management teachers. This sampling strategy is a non-random technique where the researcher decides what needs to be known and sets out to find people who can & are willing to share the information or data under their knowledge and experience (Bernard, 2002). Only full-time teachers who faced bullying behavior were recruited for this study, and the study was conducted during the months of July – December 2020. A description was given about the topic, and respondents were asked if they were comfortable sharing their incidents related to workplace bullying.

Sample Size

Few participants refused to share their thoughts. So, the total number of respondents is 47, with the age group of 20 – 68 years. Approximately one-third (28%) of the respondents were public sector employees, and the rest (72%) were private-sector employees. All participants were interviewed telephonically during the lockdown phase. The participants' socio-demographic details are presented in Table 1. In place of the original names, pseudonyms are used to maintain the confidentiality of the respondents.

Table 1. Socio-Demographic Data of the Respondents

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Sector	Exp.
AA	M	30	Private	8
SA	F	29	Private	6
SS	F	31	Private	6
AD	M	31	Private	8
GG	M	34	Private	9
RH	M	40	Private	11
NK	M	33	Private	5
NJ	F	28	Private	4
DT	F	27	Private	4
LP	F	25	Private	2
MA	F	29	Private	2.5
SA	F	32	Public	8
MS	M	30	Private	7
RR	M	27	Private	4
RS	M	26	Private	4
PW	F	29	Private	4
JT	F	28	Public	4
GI	M	24	Public	2
BT	M	33	Private	6
AP	F	38	Public	11
NM	F	40	Private	15
SN	F	35	Public	10
HG	M	31	Public	6
LD	M	33	Private	6
LS	M	26	Private	2
SS	F	43	Private	15
IA	M	68	Public	40
KI	M	55	Public	30
SK	M	47	Public	22
SR	F	43	Public	22
VS	F	39	Public	10
YM	M	29	Private	7

LS	M	34	Private	10
PD	M	35	Public	10
SG	F	32	Private	11
VS	F	36	Private	12
AD	F	30	Private	10
SK	M	40	Private	17
KH	M	38	Private	9
HR	F	28	Private	4
FJ	F	24	Private	2
BL	M	33	Private	6
AK	F	38	Private	9
NM	F	40	Private	11
MN	F	35	Private	10
LB	M	31	Public	6
AP	F	38	Private	11

Area

We collected data from management teachers of Delhi – NCR. Bakhshi and Sharma (2019) clarified that the rate of bullying in India is high and more across in North India and Delhi.

Measures

A qualitative method was chosen in this study as the topic is sensitive and exploratory, complex or dilemmatic in nature, and focuses on describing or understanding the experiences of an individual (Smith & Dunworth, 2003). We asked open-ended questions, and 10 experts verified those questions. The first and fundamental question asked by the interviewer was: Have you ever experienced a situation where someone used their power or strength to frighten or hurt you? Followed by, if yes, then when did it happen? Due to the informal nature, the interviewer was allowed to ask in between, such as can you tell me more about the incident? What do you want to say? The other question was, can you help me identify what behaviors they showed? Followed by what do you think is the impact of these behaviors? The interviewer aimed to get the participants' perspectives on acts and consequences of workplace bullying, and questions were framed so that the participants started sharing their incidents. The interviews lasted for an hour approximately. Few respondents were allowed to audiotape the discussion, and for the rest, field notes were prepared by us to describe thoughts, experiences, and observations of their incidents. The process of an interview was stopped when the interaction did not contribute to generating additional information.

Data Analysis of Interviews

Thematic analysis has been used in all 47 interviews to identify the standard categories and themes based on the participants' experiences. We identified the themes by analyzing the transcript of D'Cruz and Noronha (2015). Those issues and themes were also identified and mentioned in this study, which previous researchers have not identified.

In the first stage of thematic analysis, we familiarized ourselves with the data. It is required to read the words systematically and think of “what the data means.” We used the electronic file and maintained the record. After that, initial codes were created by us. At the same time, indulging in coding, we broke down the data into distinct parts and inspected it closely. The third stage helped shape the raw data into an artwork analysis where codes were categorized into potential themes. In this study, we observed that each eligible participant is one of the parties in the bullying process, so an individual actor's perspective is taken as the central theme of the study.

After that, themes needed to be reviewed for quality checking. An essential step is to check themes against the extracted data and examine whether the theme works with the data. We maintained the relationship between themes and data and moved to the next stage. The next step is defining and naming the themes and shaping the analysis into a fine-grained detail. In this study, based on the incident details provided, sub-themes were created as the acts and consequences of workplace bullying from the perspective of an individual actor. While analyzing the data, we kept in mind that “data do not speak for themselves.” We analytically narrated the data in the way of a story. In the end, a scholarly report has to be made. The themes should be connected logically to develop a report.

Findings and Discussion

Qualitative Findings and Discussion of Public and Private Sector Management Teachers

Based on the data, it was observed that each entitled participant is one of the actors of the bullying process, so an

Table 2. Themes and Subthemes with a Few Quotes from the Participants

Theme	Sub-theme	Collection of Quotes from Interview
Target Perspective	Acts of Workplace Bullying	"I was given late-night assignments." (RP2)
		"I was called to the office on weekends and expected to work even on holidays." (RP4)
		"My work was criticized even if I completed it before time." (RP11)
		"In meetings, my manager used to shout at me for little things in front of everyone." (RP32)
	Consequences	"I felt mental pressure every time of the day due to the work situation." (RP3)
		"I updated my CV on various job portals after that incident." (RP8)
Perpetrator Perspective	Acts of Workplace Bullying	"I was depressed during the incident, but now I can handle the situation tactfully and have a better decision-making power because of those events." (RP22)
		"He was not punctual that's why I gave him excessive work." (RP21)
		"She replied rudely to me in front of team members; now she has to work extra for this." (RP31)
		"Why should 'I' have to face the consequences?" (RP23)
	Consequences	"She left the workplace due to work pressure." (RP31)
		"My boss was biased for his nephew and used to appreciate him for no reasons." (RP12)
Bystander Perspective	Acts of Workplace Bullying	"The manager always used to shout at her publically." (RP25)
		"Due to the public shaming and criticism, she left the organization." (RP41)
		"The environment at the workplace forced me to look for better opportunities." (RP38)
		"I brought to the notice of HR about the abusive language used by my team lead." (RP46)
	Consequences	"I saw him losing his concentration in work day by day." (RP44)

individual actor's perspective is taken as the central theme of the study. Then, based on the story/incident details provided, sub-themes were created as acts and consequences of workplace bullying from the perspective of an individual actor. Few quotes are presented in Table 2 as exemplars representing the division of themes (targets, perpetrator, bystander, and witness perspective) and sub-themes (acts and consequences) in the study. The themes and subthemes formulated are described in Table 3.

Target Perspective

Twenty-six respondents who claimed to be the victims of workplace bullying shared the incidents.

↳ **Acts.** The most common acts of bullying considered by the respondents of this study were extra workload, jaxxing, criticism, physical threat, physical attack, unrealistic deadlines, arguments, always trying to demotivate other, public shaming, and spreading rumors followed by bitching, gossip, tease, taunting, flirting, abusive language (supported by 43%). The victims' other acts were bias, high pressure, a lot of work, blackmailing, threat, mental torture, harsh behavior, incivility, ignorance, false promises, insulting, loud voice, blame game, and treating employees as slaves (supported by 52%). These findings are consistent with the results obtained by Vega and Comer (2005).

↳ **Consequences.** During the interview process, 35% of the respondents revealed that they suffered from mental stress, and 21% suffered from depression and tension. Few respondents claimed that they lost their concentration on work or any task, had low confidence, were less focused, experienced decreased efficiency and effectiveness, turned into introverts, felt isolated, and faced difficulty in growth. Few respondents felt a reduction in self-esteem, became over-thinkers and felt hesitation while talking to strangers because they had fear in their mind related to that incident (supported by 14%). Forty percent of the targets claimed that they found difficulty in sleeping. The other 11% revealed that they suffered from health issues and physical weakness because of tension during or after the incident. The targets of bullying at the workplace claimed that they were always tensed, burdened, under pressure, and overloaded with work. Twenty-two percent of the targets mentioned that they started looking for a better opportunity and intended to leave the organization. Job dissatisfaction was experienced by 44% of the respondents, and 11% said they left the place because of the incident. One of the respondents claimed that she attempted suicide, but because of the strength and support of family and friends, she overcame the situation.

While sharing the incidents, few respondents mentioned the positive impact of workplace bullying by saying that they suffered from stress, depression, and tension during the process. But now, they were more confident, could handle the situation tactfully, and had better decision-making skills, and were more focused on work (supported by 11%). These results are consistent with the findings of Baltas (2003), Leymann (1990), Einarsen and Nielsen (2015), Matthiesen and Einarsen (2004), and Soni and Bakhru (2019).

Perpetrator Perspective

Four of the respondents who claimed to be the perpetrators shared the incidents.

↳ **Acts.** The respondents were in a lead or manager position and mentioned that other individuals considered the hostile or unfriendly environment and toxic leadership a bullying problem. Respondents denied the excess workload, work pressure, and acts of bullying as these were necessary for the growth of an organization. These observations are consistent with the finding of Einarsen (2005).

✎ **Consequences.** The respondents clearly stated: “Why should “I” have to face the consequences?” and clearly said that those who considered themselves the victim couldn't handle the pressure and left the organization. These observations are consistent with the findings of Gardner and Johnson (2001) and Namie (2007).

Bystander Perspective

Eleven respondents claimed to be bystanders and shared the acts and consequences.

✎ **Acts.** The respondents stated that they knew it was wrong but took no step. Twenty-eight percent of the respondents shared public shaming, criticism, physical threat to the other individual as the most common acts of workplace bullying. One of the respondents mentioned that the one doing all these acts was discriminating targets from others. Other mentioned acts of rudeness, bitching, taunting, teasing publically, jazzing, or sometimes inappropriate touching by the person were also seen by them. These observations are consistent with the findings of Vega and Comer (2005) and Lund and Ross (2016).

✎ **Consequences.** The respondents mentioned the two perspectives: consequences to target and consequences to self. As claimed by a bystander, one of the severe consequences faced by the target was brain death, while other consequences were depression and psychological stress on the target. Other respondents mentioned that during the incidents, the targets left the organization. Few bystanders clearly stated that “no consequence on me because that was not my business.” Other respondents mentioned job dissatisfaction and intended to leave the organization for a better opportunity. Few respondents said they left the organization because of the fear of becoming the next target. One respondent shared the incident and mentioned that he intended to leave but was still in the same organization because the flexibility, comfort zone, and higher salary did not encourage him to change the organization. He mentioned that “benefits in the organization weigh more than the fear of bullying.” These observations are consistent with the findings of Einarsen and Nielsen (2015) and Matthiesen and Einarsen (2004).

Witness Perspective

Six of the respondents claimed to witnesses and shared the acts and consequences.

✎ **Acts.** The ordinary acts of workplace bullying claimed by the witness were criticism, nasty comments, and harsh language by superiors. The bully always tried to publicly make fun of the target publicly by shaming or cracking a joke. These observations are consistent with the findings of Lund and Ross (2016).

✎ **Consequences.** The respondent mentioned the two perspectives: impacts on target and effects on the self. The consequences on target included suffering from depression, losing concentration on work, and psychological weakness. The target always tried to leave the place early to avoid or ignore the perpetrator. The witness mentioned consequences on self: perpetrators tried to bully and mentally torture in the same manner as they did with the target, but it did not last long because of the informal power. These observations are consistent with the findings of Salin (2003), Baillien et al. (2009), and Vega and Comer (2005).

The percentages mentioned above of acts and consequences are based on the number of respondents. Table 3 summarizes the acts and consequences provided by the actors.

As mentioned in Table 3, the consequences of bullying impact the individual's physical and mental state, affecting the productivity of an individual/organization. Thus, organizations should learn and apply the practices to keep their environment bullying-free as much as possible. Some suggestions are provided in the latter part of this study.

Table 3. Acts and Consequences of Bullying by All Parties' Perspectives

Themes	Sub-themes	Acts and Consequences
Target Perspective	Acts of Workplace Bullying	Extra workload, juzzing, criticism, physical threat, physical attack, unrealistic deadlines, arguments, always trying to demotivate other, public shaming and spreading rumors followed by bitching, gossip, teasing, taunting, flirting, abusive language, harassment, biased, high pressure, blackmailing, threaten, mental torture, harsh behavior, incivility, ignorance, false promises, insulting, loud voice, blame game, and treating employees as a slave
	Consequences	Mental stress, post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, tension, loss of concentration on work or at any task, low confidence, less focused, a decrease in efficiency and effectiveness, turning introvert, isolated, difficulty in growth, reduction in self-esteem, became over-thinker and hesitation while talking to new or strangers, difficulty in sleeping, health issues, physically weak, reduction in weight, burden, under pressure, work overload, started looking for a better opportunity, clear intention to leave the organization, left the place, suicide attempt, job dissatisfaction, confident, focused, good decision making power
Perpetrator Perspective	Acts of Workplace Bullying	Hostile or unfriendly environment, toxic leadership, workload, work pressure
	Consequences	No consequences on perpetrator and victim left the organization
Bystander Perspective	Acts of Workplace Bullying	Public shaming, criticism, physical threat, discrimination, rudeness, bitching, taunt teasing publically, juzzing, or sometimes lousy touch by the person
	Consequences	Consequences on target: Depression, psychological stress, job change, job dissatisfaction Consequences on bystander: Intention to leave, looking for a better opportunity, left the organization
Witness Perspective	Acts of Workplace Bullying	Criticism, nasty comments, harsh language, public shaming, or cracking jokes
	Consequences	Depression, loss of concentration on work, psychological weakness

Theoretical Implications

The theoretical contributions are drawn and presented based on the study's various aspects, including forms and consequences. What was reported by the participants did not seem to be unheard of in the literature. However, the forms differed in light of the contextual antecedent of intentionality. In other words, the perpetrator's choice of form of bullying seems to be influenced by his intentions. Hence, the escalation in the severity of bullying behavior was not seen in all the cases. Also, what was seen is that certain forms of bullying affected the targets more than other forms. Hence, in light of these findings, it is essential to understand the reasons behind the adopted form of bullying and its influence on the target, which can lead to a better understanding of why the phenomenon happens the way it happens. The identified consequences echo the contributions of literature; however, the intensity of the consequences was influenced based on characteristics of the target, for example, generation and gender.

Moreover, consequences also depended on the preparedness of the targets. Further, escalation in the severity of effects, based on duration and target characteristics, was seen despite the non-escalation of the forms. This gives a direction on exploring more on how the forms are related to consequences and also that there is an interplay within the various consequences of bullying. In addition, the effects influenced the choice of coping mechanisms.

The study addresses the what, how, and why questions of bullying. These findings bring into light the faulty interpersonal relationships within organizations. This could help the scholars understand the dynamics of the phenomenon and how a target deals with it. As the study addresses the various aspects, namely forms, consequences, and coping mechanisms, it provides a holistic view of the phenomenon.

Managerial Implications and Suggestions for a Bullying - Free Workplace Environment

To combat bullying situations, everyone needs first to come and accept that it exists and there could be a problem from within. If it has been addressed early, the treatment becomes easier as prevention is always better than cure. Mentors need to supervise and monitor individuals' behavior to ensure that they engage in a healthy conversation to build an amicable environment. An open environment should be stimulated for any wrongdoing. Because once bullying behavior has been recognized, appropriate action can be taken for it. Those actions will provide a lesson to others also. Appropriate strict and written warnings can be provided to the bully from the authorities on time. If, after notice, an individual's behavior does not improve, the HR should decide on appropriate action. If the employee is helpful for the company, HR should consider transferring that employee but keeping him/her at the workplace.

It is suitable for the managers or mentors to formulate checks and controls for appropriate identification of bullying behavior in the organization as it provides them ample time to intervene. It could be made possible during the period of recruitment and selection. Personality tests can be taken along with the technical and managerial assessment so that the organization gets an idea about the nature of an applicant. This could also help save the organization from upcoming disasters or an unhealthy environment. The same could be followed for the present employees at the time of the appraisal. Interpersonal skill development training programs may help reduce the risk of a bullying environment. If the organization does not have the mechanism to monitor bully and bullying behavior, external analysts can be involved in helping targets, bystanders, and witnesses and reorienting the bullies.

Additionally, counseling sessions can be provided to all the parties individually and in groups to confront the bullying phenomena. After multiple warnings or interventions, it is better to propose a safe exit to an individual responsible for developing a bullying environment. Once you have identified the individual with bullying traits, you have to make sure more do not recur in the future. To start with, clearly mention the intolerable behavior at the beginning. Appropriate steps by targets, bystanders, witnesses, and policies can make a massive difference in creating a bullying-free environment.

At last, in this study, we explore the acts, consequences, and coping strategies of workplace bullying in India through thematic analysis. Although the previous studies related to the phenomenon are consistent in their findings from the target's point of view, there was a need to study this phenomenon from all parties' perspectives. Additionally, the literature on workplace bullying has highlighted that organizational response to bullying situations is poor. Even after three decades of research, we know very little about "how to handle and prevent workplace bullying" (Nielsen & Einarsen, 2018). This paper has also presented a list of suggestions to combat bullying. This paper aimed to investigate the acts, consequences, and strategies to combat bullying from the workplace. Doing so extends the ambit of bullying theory to a broader context. This study makes several contributions, like an attempt to include the viewpoint of all the actors under one umbrella. We find the various negative impacts of workplace bullying, namely depression, confusion, anxiety, stress, PTSD, headache, and other health issues. We also identified the positive effects of bullying as being more focused, work-oriented, and motivated, unlike previous research. This study is also an eye-opener for the top management, whose focus should be on building a positive, civil, and cooperative environment (Hodgins et al., 2020).

Conclusion

To conclude, workplace bullying is a problematic issue. This research highlights the realistic assessment of the acts and consequences of workplace bullying from the perspective of all the parties, that is, perpetrator, target, bystander, and witness under one roof. The suggestions provided in the study will prevent and reduce the chance of workplace bullying. This study is also an eye-opener for the top management of the organizations, which often take bullying for granted. Attention needs to be given to preventing such behavior, leading to a toxic environment. The present study does not compare “how each control system would fare against another.” It would be motivating to assess which strategy would function more efficiently and in what context. Also, if organizations follow the suggestions provided in the study to control workplace bullying, that will lead to a better and healthy working environment. To strengthen the organization with a better work environment and committed people, this critical issue of bullying should be addressed with utmost priority.

Limitations of the Study and the Way Forward

We acknowledge several limitations. The first limitation, the study's cross-sectional nature, limits our ability to make causal conclusions. Longitudinal studies and experimental design are needed to replicate the present findings of the study. Second, we collected data from public and private sectors and did not distinguish across industries so that future researchers can differentiate among private and public sectors' management teachers. Also, a division can be done in the context of age, that is, to know which age group considers which acts as bullying and significant consequences on those age groups. Fourth, this research had fewer witnesses and bystanders. Witnesses can play a significant role in curbing bullying, but only in 1% of the cases, they raised their voices against the bully and defended the target (Einarsen et al., 2011). So, future researchers should conduct research focusing on these two actors to know their perspectives about bullying. Fifth, there were few perpetrators in the study because they didn't open and accept their actions. So, a significant challenge is to search for the bully among the respondents. Hence, future researchers should study the perspectives of bullies because all parties play an essential role and try to identify the significant attributes of an individual like bully, target, bystander, and witness and develop & validate the measurement. Sixth, as few respondents claimed to experience a positive impact of workplace bullying, like becoming more confident and focused towards work, which is different from the previous findings, future studies can be conducted on the positive effects of workplace bullying. Additionally, the effect of demographic attributes on workplace bullying remains an open, empirical question that should be addressed in future research. This research suggests the significant consequences of bullying faced by all the parties of different age groups and sectors. So, future researchers can empirically measure the outcomes of bullying (e.g. stress, PTSD, suicidal tendency, etc.) in other sectors, namely academics like B- school faculties in the Indian context.

Authors' Contribution

Dr. Rajnish Kumar Misra conceived the idea and developed a qualitative design to undertake the study. Divya Sharma extracted highly reputed research papers, filtered these based on keywords, and generated concepts and codes relevant to the study design. Dr. Rajnish Kumar Misra verified the methods and supervised the study. Both authors conducted the interviews and numerical computations. They also contributed to the interpretation of the results; provided critical feedback; and helped shape the research, analysis, and final manuscript.

Conflict of Interest

The authors certify that they have no affiliations with or involvement in any organization or entity with any financial interest or non-financial interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

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About the Authors

Rajnish Kumar Misra is a Professor in human resource management at Jaypee Business School, Noida (India), and has more than 18 years of academic experience with premier B-schools. He has conducted several training programs for both services and manufacturing companies. Dr. Misra's research areas comprise of employer branding, behavioral issues in implementing Web 2.0, leadership development, career management, and his current research interests are in bullying, incivility, employability, entrepreneurial orientation, engagement, well-being, passion, workplace bullying, and role of social media in understanding people.

Divya Sharma is a doctoral scholar in Jaypee Business School, IIIT, Noida, India. Her current research interests include areas like bullying and incivility. Her ongoing projects include studies on workplace bullying in India (Interview data, survey). With a rich and diverse experience of 8 years in academics and corporate, her quest for wisdom makes her better suited for research.