

# **The experience and handling of workplace bullying**

Adèle Botha, M. Comm

A dissertation submitted as fulfilment of the requirements of the degree Magister Commercii at the  
North-West University, Potchefstroom Campus.

**Study Leader:** Prof. J.C. Visagie

Potchefstroom

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Preface A</b> .....	<b>vii</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	<b>viii</b>
<b>List of tables</b> .....	<b>ix</b>

## CHAPTER 1: THE EXPERIENCE AND HANDLING OF WORKPLACE BULLYING

1. INTRODUCTION .....	1
2. PROBLEM STATEMENT .....	4
3. AIM OF THE STUDY.....	7
3.1. General objectives.....	7
3.2. Specific objectives .....	8
4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....	8
4.1. Literature review .....	9
4.2. Research design.....	9
4.3. Research participants .....	10
4.4. Data gathering .....	10
4.5. Data analysis .....	11
5. DIVISION AND SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS .....	11
6. REFERENCES.....	13

**CHAPTER 2 – ARTICLE ONE: THE EXPERIENCE OF WORKPLACE BULLYING AND ITS PREVALENCE AT A MINE IN MPUMALANGA**

ABSTRACT.....	16
KEY WORDS .....	16
1. INTRODUCTION .....	17
2. BULLYING IN THE WORKPLACE .....	19
2.1. Defining workplace bullying .....	19
2.2. The operational and self-identification measurements.....	20
2.3. The characteristics and prevalence of workplace bullying .....	21
3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY .....	26
3.1. Sampling .....	26
3.2. Data collection .....	28
3.3. Measurement.....	28
4. RESULTS .....	29
4.1. The prevalence of workplace bullying based on the self-identification method .....	29
4.2. The prevalence of workplace bullying based on the operational method.....	32
4.3. The duration of the bullying behaviour.....	34
4.4. Individual as opposed to shared experience.....	35
5. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS.....	36
5.1. Summary of findings.....	37
5.2. Managerial implications.....	42
5.3. Limitations and directions for future research .....	43
5.4. Conclusion .....	44
6. REFERENCES.....	45

**CHAPTER 3 – ARTICLE TWO: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF NEGATIVE ACTS  
AS AN INTERACTIVE FORM OF ORGANISATIONAL BEHAVIOUR**

ABSTRACT .....	49
KEY WORDS .....	49
1. INTRODUCTION .....	50
2. THE ACT OF BULLYING IN THE WORKPLACE .....	52
2.1. Prevalence measures .....	52
2.2. Definition of negative acts .....	53
2.2.1. Work-related harassment .....	54
2.2.2. Work overload.....	54
2.2.3. Personal derogation.....	54
2.2.4. Social exclusion .....	55
2.2.5. Violent threats and intimidation.....	55
2.3. The prevalence of negative acts .....	56
3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY .....	59
3.1. Measuring instrument .....	60
3.1.1. The operational method .....	61
3.1.2. The self-identification method .....	62
3.2. Research Procedure.....	62
4. RESULTS .....	62
5. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS.....	68
5.1. Summary of findings.....	69
5.2. Managerial implications.....	73
5.3. Limitations and directions for future research .....	75

5.4. Conclusion .....	75
6. REFERENCES.....	77

## **CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION**

1. INTRODUCTION .....	80
2. DISCUSSION .....	81
3. RECOMMENDATIONS .....	84
3.1. Individual approach towards handling workplace bullying.....	84
3.1.1. Check for a workplace bullying policy and complaint procedure .....	84
3.1.2. Seek advice .....	85
3.1.3. Keep a record .....	85
3.1.4 Approach the perpetrator .....	85
3.1.5 Employee assistance programs and counselling .....	86
3.2. Organisational approach towards bullying .....	86
3.2.1. Assess the prevalence of workplace bullying .....	87
3.2.3. Assess the risk factors .....	88
3.2.3. Control the risk factors and develop a workplace bullying policy .....	89
3.2.4. Evaluate and review the policy .....	91
3.3. Legal remedies .....	93
4. DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH.....	94
5. CONCLUSION.....	95
6. REFERENCES.....	97

**Annexure A..... 99**  
**Annexure B..... 101**  
**Annexure C..... 102**

## **PREFACE A**

This dissertation is submitted in article format as described in rules A.14.4.2, A13.7.3, and A 17.7.5 of the North-West University.

This dissertation is submitted in the form of two research articles. The referencing style and editorial approach for this dissertation is in line with the prescriptions of the South African Journal of Labour Relations publication guidelines (attached hereto as Annexure A). This dissertation will be prepared using the Harvard formatting style as per the requirements of the publication and the agreement made with the department of Human Resource Management.

For the purpose of this dissertation the page numbering of the dissertation as a whole is consecutive. However, when publication is considered, each individual article will be numbered starting from page one.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank the following people for their contribution and assistance towards the completion of this dissertation:

- My study leader Prof. J.C. Visagie for his guidance throughout this study.
- My parents, friends and other family for their endless encouragement and loving support.
- A special thanks to Johann Smith for his support and assistance during the many hours spent working on this dissertation.
- The Bergen Bullying research Group for granting me permission to use the Negative Acts Questionnaire.
- I would like to gratefully thank the organisation that participated in the present study, especially Hannes Botha for making it possible.
- I would also like to thank each participant who took the time to participate in this study.



## LIST OF TABLES

### CHAPTER 2:

Table 1: Demographic profile of the participants .....	27
Table 2: Response rate and Cronbach's alpha coefficient .....	29
Table 3: Participants' self-reported experience of bullying over six months .....	30
Table 4: Participants' self-reported experience of bullying over five years .....	31
Table 5: Self-reported observation of bullying in the last five years .....	32
Table 6: Occurrence of at least one negative act on a weekly basis .....	32
Table 7: Occurrence of at least two negative acts on a weekly basis .....	33
Table 8: Duration of the bullying behaviour .....	35
Table 9: Individual as opposed to shared experience .....	36
Table 10: Summary of hypothesis and findings .....	37

### CHAPTER 3:

Table 1: Demographic profile of the participants .....	59
Table 2: Response rate and Cronbach's alpha coefficient .....	61
Table 3: Summary of participants' self-identified experience of bullying and observations .....	63
Table 4: Summary of the experience of negative behaviour .....	65
Table 5: Total negative acts score .....	67
Table 6: Summary of perpetrators .....	68
Table 7: Summary of hypothesis and findings .....	70
Table 8: Summary of the most frequent negative acts .....	72

## CHAPTER 1: THE EXPERIENCE AND HANDLING OF WORKPLACE BULLYING

---

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The employment relationship is a complex combination of human relationships between individuals in their capacity as employees, employers, managers, supervisors, shareholders, consumers, customers and members of the community in which the organisation operates. According to Ehlers (2004) a productive labour force is one of the key requirements in achieving organisational goals. Whether a person is self-employed or employed by a small, medium or large organisation, everybody will be expected to work with other people at some stage during their professional life. Within the employment context, bullying has attracted an increasing amount of attention in the past decade with a move towards international collaboration on the part of researchers and practitioners to understand the phenomenon in more depth (Jennifer, Cowie, & Ananiadou, 2003: 489).

Workplace bullying is described as repeated or persistent negative acts that are directed towards one or more individuals, which are unwanted and which may be done deliberately or unconsciously, causing humiliation, offence and distress that may interfere with job performance and/or cause an unpleasant work environment (Einarsen, 1999: 17). Whether deliberate or accidental, it constitutes a threat to an individual's self-esteem and/or professional competence (Agervold & Mikkelsen, 2004). Workplace bullying is claimed to be an extreme form of social stress (Matthiesen & Einarsen, 2004: 336). Pearson (2001) portrays work-related stress as an adverse reaction people have in reaction to excessive pressures or other types of demands placed on them. Stress can be positive (eustress) or negative (distress). Distress is a result of a sudden onset of events or a long duration of frustrating relationships, unsatisfactory work situations or daily hassles (Bergh & Theron, 2003: 398).

Workplaces are affected in a significant way by the occurrence of workplace bullying (Hoel & Cooper, 2000). In any given environment an employment relationship is based on an exchange of value that primarily exists between an employer and an employee within a framework established and maintained by the state (Emery, 2004). Employees mainly enter labour relationships because they wish to obtain wealth or security through an exchange for their labour, while other reasons also include social and other benefits that arise from group affiliation (Ehlers, 2004). According to Matthiesen and Einarsen (2004) the exposure to persistent, systematic or long-lasting bullying behaviour may result in a loss of productivity as well as various negative physical and mental health effects. They also found that workplace bullying is a more devastating problem for employees than any other work-related stressor.

The physiological effects of workplace bullying include headaches, migraines, sweating, shaking, irritable bowel, inability to sleep and/or loss of appetite, while the psychological includes effects such as anxiety, panic attacks, depression and/or fearfulness (Pearson 2001). In light of these effects bullying in the workplace is generally characterised as a tiring experience that can lead to a nervous breakdown or severe “burn-out” (Varhama & Björkqvist, 2004). On the other hand workplace bullying also has a number of serious consequences for the organisation. As mentioned before bullying in the workplace can result in a loss of productivity due to feelings of inadequacy, continued criticism, increased absenteeism and high staff turnover (Matthiesen & Einarsen, 2004). Workplace bullying could also lead to possible legal costs (Turney, 2003). According to Hoel and Cooper (2000: 5) organisations waste large sums of money on litigation where bullying behaviour has been identified as the main cause of the dispute. These cases, however, do not only lead to expensive litigation costs, but they also cause organisations’ public images to suffer.

According to Randall (2001) the acceptance of the existence of adult bullying in the workplace and the discovery of its ability to cause severe physical and psychological harm, has led to a vast amount of research. A number of international studies have established that bullying is an actual occurrence in the workplace (Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, & Cooper, 2003; Hoel & Cooper, 2000; Hoel, Cooper, & Faragher, 2001; Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2001; Varhama & Björkqvist, 2004). Two types of workplace bullying can be distinguished. Firstly, bullying can be dispute-related (Einarsen, 1999) which is the result of escalated conflict, described by Zapf (1999) as a casual chain of conflict development, with more than one possible factor contributing to its escalation (as cited in Jennifer *et al.*, 2003: 490). Secondly, bullying can also be classified into three types of predatory-bullying (Lutgen-Sandvik & Sypher, 2009), namely authoritative-, displaced- and discriminatory bullying. Authoritative-bullying is an abuse of power through a person's organisational position (Hoel *et al.*, 2001). Displaced-bullying is a form of aggression that occurs when frustration is taken out on others (Baron & Neuman, 1996). Discriminatory-bullying is a direct result of prejudice because a person "belongs to an outsider group" (Einarsen *et al.*, 2003; 19).

When discussing employee wellness, Ehlers (2004) refers to all the strategies, action plans and methods used to promote the physical and psychological health of employees. He also points out that if the pressures continue to arise as a result of the modern work environment without any provision of proper support systems, employees will suffer immensely at work and even at home. Knowledge and understanding is important in order to maintain a climate of harmonious labour relations where employers, managers and employees know how to handle workplace bullying. This particular study focused on exploring the nature and prevalence of workplace bullying and negative acts from the perspective of the victim. To embark upon understanding workplace bullying in South Africa, research was conducted a mine in Mpumalanga. The results were utilised to write two articles and to identify suitable strategies to handle such behaviour in the workplace.

## **2. PROBLEM STATEMENT**

In 2005 a large scale investigation into workplace bullying was commissioned by Personnel Today and the Andrea Adams Trust. Nearly 1400 Human Resources Professionals took part in the study, which was developed and conducted by Digital Opinion. The Andrea Adams Trust published the key findings of the study and reported that over half of the respondents had experienced bullying at work with perpetrators most often cited being immediate managers. Unfair criticism and intimidating behaviour were the most common forms of bullying behaviour reported in the study with small percentages indicating that they have not only been the victim of emotional abuse but also physical abuse. The effects of workplace bullying reported in the study vary from a lowering of confidence to worry about going to work. Over 43% of the participants said that it had affected the quality of their work and almost 17% said that it had caused them to take time off. An estimated 56% of the participants reported that as a consequence of their experience with bullying at work, they started looking for another job (survey research by the Andrea Adams Trust).

In addition to establishing the prevalence rate of workplace bullying international researchers have also explored the causes of such behaviour for many years. Since bullying is a multifaceted phenomenon individual, group and organisational factors should be considered when exploring the causes or antecedents of workplace bullying (Hoel & Salin, 2003). While some victims perceive envy and resentment as the main reason why they are bullied in the workplace, other victims might consider themselves being bullied because they have a deficit in self-esteem, are shy and/or lack effective coping strategies and conflict management skills (Einarsen, Raknes, & Matthiesen, 1994). According to Bergh and Theron (2003) self-esteem is an individual's subjective appraisal of him or herself as positive or negative. According to Einarsen (1999) the personalities of victims suffering from workplace bullying seems to differ to some degree from their colleagues. He, however, agrees

with Leymann (1996) that the difference in personalities may be a result or consequence of the bullying rather than being a cause thereof. Hoel *et al.* (2001) also agree that research suggesting that certain personality traits are associated with bullies is generally inconclusive with no substantial empirical evidence to support the notion.

Since workplace bullying shares certain similarities with conflict Anderson and Pearson (1999) described this form of behaviour as workplace incivility. The human relations view of conflict accepts it as a natural, inevitable part of human nature (Bergh & Theron, 2003: 225). This view advocates the acceptance of conflict and proposes that conflict may even have a beneficial effect on group performance. Organisational conflict can stem from a variety of factors, including incompatible personalities, value systems and other individual differences; unclear job descriptions; competition for limited resources; inadequate communication; and interdependent tasks or joint decision making. Organisational factors such as leadership, management and disagreement about core values can also give rise to conflict (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2004).

According to Thompson (2004) conflict that is based on personal and social issues will interfere with performance since people become preoccupied with reducing threats, increasing power and building cohesion rather than performing their duties. Matthiesen and Einarsen (2004) agree that productivity tends to decrease when conflict becomes dysfunctional and employees focus on their distress rather than their performance. In fact, Tehrani (2001) proposes that during times of high stress and when a relationship is perceived as negative, small issues such as not saying hello in the morning may be interpreted as an aggressive act. Envy and scapegoating have also been linked as group characteristics causing workplace bullying (Zapf, 1999, Baron & Neuman, 1996). Zapf (1999) describes scapegoating as a situation where groups direct their aggression to a less powerful individual who is not accepted by peers (as cited in Jennifer *et al.*, 2003).

In addition, the social context or organisational structure has also enjoyed a vast amount of research in this regard (Leymann, 1996; Einarsen, 1999; Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996; Einarsen *et al.*, 2003; Hoel & Salin, 2003). According to Hoel and Salin (2003) the changing nature of work, how work is organised, leadership styles and the organisational culture are very important factors to consider as causes of workplace bullying. Globalisation, mergers and current economic trends are referred to as the changing nature of work (Steinman, s.a.). Within the social context of work conflict management and performance appraisals are two examples of antecedents of bullying that are related to how work is organised (Einarsen, Raknes, & Matthiesen, 1994). Salin, (2001) suggested that bullying can also be associated with highly competitive workplaces. In this regard Salin (2001) pointed out that an organisational climate characterised by an increased level of organisational pressure may result in the prevalence of bullying as a response to the level of competition and need for survival. If the prevalence of workplace bullying is not addressed it can result in a corporate culture that fosters this kind of behaviour (Anderson & Pearson, 1999). In addition the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (2002) indicated that bullying can escalate due to individual and situational factors such as discrimination, intolerance, personal problems and use of drugs and alcohol.

With so many factors contributing to its prevalence it is expected that workplace bullying will also prevail in South African organisations. Although Pietersen (2007) concluded that workplace bullying is an actual occurrence in South Africa, limited empirical research findings is available to support this notion. The purpose of the study is therefore to obtain information on the prevalence of workplace bullying by conducting a local study. With workplace bullying being described as a genuine phenomenon that can occur in any organisation, effective strategies to handle such behaviour are essential in any organisation.

The key research question that emerges from this brief reflection on previous international research findings is whether *workplace bullying is occurring in the South African work context and how does it compare with international findings*. Secondly, and related to the aforementioned is *what forms of negative acts or behaviour are occurring in the South African work context where workplace bullying is taking place and what can be done to manage and handle such behaviour effectively*.

### **3. AIM OF THE STUDY**

According to Bendix (1996) labour legislation was introduced for the specific purpose of establishing parameters for conduct within a labour relationship. Workplace bullying must therefore be studied within this framework. This study focused on determining the overall prevalence of bullying as well as specific negative acts in the workplace in comparison with other international research findings. As a secondary consideration the study also focussed on identifying measures to implement in order to ensure the effective handling of such behaviour once it had been identified.

#### **3.1. General objective**

The paucity of empirical research on the prevalence of workplace bullying in the South African work context suggested that an exploratory study should be conducted to explore the experience and handling of such behaviour. The general objective of this study was to explore the nature and occurrence of workplace bullying and negative acts in a South African work context. The study was used to contribute to the effective management and prevention of bullying in the workplace by aiming at creating a broad understanding of this unique workplace phenomenon. A proper definition of workplace bullying and negative acts was identified in order to achieve the specific objectives of the study.



### **3.2. Specific objectives**

To achieve the general objective of the study, the following specific objectives were formulated:

- To define, identify and describe the characteristic features of workplace bullying.
- To determine the prevalence of workplace bullying at a mine in Mpumalanga.
- To determine the extent to which the prevalence of bullying varies between managerial levels.
- To determine the likely duration of the bullying experience at work.
- To analyse the degree to which bullying is an individual as opposed to a shared experience.
- To determine the nature of the prevalence of specific negative acts at a mine in Mpumalanga.
- To explore strategies and methods to consider when faced with handling workplace bullying.

## **4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Empirical research into workplace bullying can generally be divided into two types. The first type focused on the characteristics of victims and perpetrators, while the second type focussed on the social context in which the bullying took place (Jennifer *et al.*, 2003). This study focused on determining the prevalence of adult bullying from the perspective of the individual victim within the social context established in the workplace. The type of research used in this study is quantitative of nature. The research problem was based on the natural setting of the population and there was no manipulation of any variables. The research method consists of a literature review and an empirical study that will be briefly outlined in the ensuing section.

#### **4.1. Literature review**

A literature review was conducted to gather information regarding previous research in which workplace bullying was scrutinised. Information was obtained from both national and international publications such as journals, textbooks and reports from research institutions. The internet was used as a secondary source to gather general information associated with workplace bullying. Thus, an in depth literature review was used as the foundation to formulate a number of hypotheses for the articles presented in the next two chapters. These hypotheses included single variable hypotheses and hypotheses concerning the difference between two or more groups. Each hypothesis served as a provisional statement or estimate regarding the prevalence of workplace bullying. Single variable hypotheses are used to state certain expected values, while hypotheses concerning the difference between two or more groups are used to draw comparisons between different sub-groups of participants from the same sample (Diamantopoulos & Schlegelmitch, 2000).

#### **4.2. Research design**

In order to gather quantitative information on the prevalence of bullying and negative acts in the workplace a cross-sectional survey or questionnaire in a pen and paper format was used. Permission was obtained from the Bergen Bullying Research Group to use the revised English version of the Negative Acts Questionnaire, also known as the NAQ-R. The NAQ-R was developed by Einarsen, Raknes, Matthiesen and Hellesoy (1994) to measure perceived exposure to bullying and victimisation in the workplace. The questionnaire started with sampling demographical information and followed with twenty nine items describing different kinds of negative acts (part 1). Each item or negative act is solely written in behavioural terms with no reference to the term bullying. This has the advantage of letting participants respond to each item without having to label themselves as

being bullied. After responding to these items, a definition of workplace bullying is introduced in the second part of the questionnaire. The participants can then indicate whether or not they consider themselves as victims of bullying at work according to the definition by answering a number of questions. The NAQ-R, was tested in a survey of 4996 United Kingdom employees recruited from 70 organisations in the United Kingdom. The response rate was 43% and an internal consistency with a Cronbach alpha of 0.92 was reported.

### **4.3. Research participants**

The research was conducted at one of South Africa's largest ferrochrome producers situated in Mpumalanga. The sample consisted of 159 adult employees (129 male and 30 female participants) employed by a specific mining company. The majority of the participants fell within the age category ranging from 31 to 40 years. The sample included employees from top management and middle management as well as other lower or operational levels of employment.

### **4.4. Data gathering**

In order to improve the response rate the participants were requested to complete and return a questionnaire before commencement of a health and safety training session. Data gathering by means of a questionnaire was chosen since it would produce standardised and specific information pertaining to the prevalence of workplace bullying. This method also has the advantage of being faster and easier than interviews with each participant. Each potential participant was informed that the questionnaire is voluntary and that the results will be treated in a strictly confidential manner. To ensure anonymity the participants were not required to use their names on the questionnaire. Instead, the questionnaire was assigned a unique survey code for purposes of statistical analysis.

#### **4.5. Data analysis**

The testing of hypotheses enabled the researcher to answer the research objectives regarding the overall prevalence and experience of bullying and negative acts in the workplace. Data obtained in response to the questionnaire was statistically analysed through the aid of different statistical techniques, which was carried out by the SPSS programme. Descriptive statistics were used to summarise and interpret the data. These statistics comprise of frequency distributions and measures of central tendency. The validity and reliability was expressed through correlation coefficients to demonstrate the effectiveness of the measurement.

### **5. DIVISION AND SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS**

- **Chapter 1: The experience and handling of workplace bullying:**

Chapter 1 introduces the concept of workplace bullying as a serious workplace issue and provides an explanation of why such behaviour is currently a relevant research topic internationally as well as locally in South Africa. This chapter also highlights the importance of understanding bullying in the workplace. The introduction is followed by the problem statement and an explanation of the manner and methods that were used to conduct this study.

- **Chapter 2: Article 1:**

Chapter 2 presents an article that is entitled “The experience of workplace bullying and its prevalence at a mine in Mpumalanga”. This article mainly focused on identifying certain defining characteristics of workplace bullying and establishing the prevalence thereof based on several hypotheses. A literature review was conducted to identify international research findings and conclusions relevant to the prevalence of workplace bullying. By means of the literature

review, the characteristic features of workplace bullying were identified and discussed in order to assist with exploring the experience and prevalence of workplace bullying. The prevalence of workplace bullying in a South African work context was compared to international findings. The extent to which the prevalence of workplace bullying varies between different managerial levels also received special attention.

- **Chapter 3: Article 2:**

The second article, entitled “A conceptual framework of negative acts as an interactive form of organisational behaviour”, is presented in chapter 3. This article explored the unique nature and prevalence of negative acts also referred to as bullying behaviour. A literature review was conducted to investigate the nature of negative acts and bullying behaviour in the workplace. International research findings and conclusions relevant to the prevalence of specific forms of bullying behaviour were used to draw comparisons with the findings of this study.

- **Chapter 4: Discussion, recommendations and conclusion:**

Chapter 4 summarises the extent to which bullying is prevalent by considering the findings reported in this study. Based on the reported findings a need is recognised for company policies that will offer appropriate protection for employees against workplace bullying. This chapter places an emphasis on the importance of creating a positive work environment based on respectful employment relationships. Once the findings are considered certain recommendations will be made to contribute towards the effective handling of workplace bullying from an individual and organisational perspective.

## 6. REFERENCES

- Agervold, M., & Mikkelsen, E.G. 2004. Relationships between bullying, psychosocial work environment and individual stress reactions. *Work & Stress Journal*, 18, 336 - 351.
- Anderson, L.M., & Pearson, C.M. 1999. Tit for tat? The spiralling effect of incivility in the workplace. *Academy of Management Review*, 24, 452-471.
- Baron, R.A., & Neuman, J.H. 1996. Workplace violence and workplace aggression: evidence on their relative frequency and potential causes. *Aggressive Behaviour*, 22, 161-173.
- Bendix, S. 1996. *Industrial relations in the new South Africa*. 3rd ed. Kenwyn: Juta & Co. Ltd.
- Bergh, Z.C., & Theron, A.L. 2003. *Psychology in the work context*. 2nd ed. Cape Town: Oxford University Press Southern Africa.
- Diamantopoulos, A., & Schlegelmitch, B.B. 2000. *Taking the fear out of data analysis: a step-by-step approach*. London: Thompson Learning.
- Ehlers, L. 2004. *Labour relations practice in South Africa*. 2nd ed. Pretoria: EAMS Publishing.
- Einarsen, S. 1999. The nature and cause of bullying at work. *International Journal of Manpower*, 20 (1 and 2), 16-27.
- Einarsen, S., Hoel, H., Zapf, D., & Cooper, C.L. 2003. *Bullying and emotional abuse in the workplace - International perspectives in research and practice*. London: Taylor & Francis.
- Einarsen, S., Raknes, B.I. Matthiesen, S.B., & Hellesoy O.H. 1994. *The negative acts questionnaire: Development, validation and revision of a measure of bullying at work*. University of Bergen, Norway.
- Einarsen, S., Raknes, B.I., & Matthiesen, S.B. 1994. Bullying and harassment at work and their relationship to work environment quality – an exploratory study. *European Work and Organisational Psychologist*, 4, 381-401.

- Emery, D.H. 2004. *Conversations with Dale. Aggregates and the imbalance of power*. Retrieved on October 04, 2007 from <http://cwd.dhemery.com/2004/04/aggregation>
- Hoel, H., & Cooper, C.L. 2000. *Destructive conflict and bullying at work*. Extracts of study report compiled for the Launch of the Civil Services Race Equality Network.
- Hoel, H., & Salin, D. 2003. Organisational antecedents of workplace bullying. In *Bullying and emotional abuse in the workplace: International perspectives in research and practice*, edited by S. Einarsen, H. Hoel, D. Zapf, & C.L. Cooper. 203-218. London: Taylor & Francis.
- Hoel, H., Cooper, C. L., & Faragher, B. 2001. The experience of bullying at work in Great Britain: The impact of organisational status. *European Journal of Work and Organisational Psychology, 10*, 414-425.
- Jennifer, D., Cowie, H., & Ananiadou, K. 2003. Perceptions and experience of workplace bullying in five different working populations. *Aggressive Behavior, 23*, 489-496.
- Kreitner, R., & Kinicki, A. 2004. *Organizational behavior*. New York: McGraw-Hill/Irwin.
- Leymann, H. 1996. Mobbing at work and the development of post-traumatic stress disorders. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology, 5(2)*, 251-267.
- Lutgen-Sandvik, P., & Sypher, B.D. 2009. *Destructive Organizational Communication*. New York: Routledge Press.
- Matthiesen, S.B., & Einarsen, S. 2004. Psychiatric distress and symptoms of PTSD among victims of bullying at work. *British journal of Guidance & Counselling, 32(3)*, 3335-356.
- Mikkelsen, E.G., & Einarsen, S. 2001. Bullying in Danish work-life: Prevalence and health correlates. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology, 10(4)*, 393-413.
- Pearson, P. 2001. *Keeping well at work*. London: Kogan Page Ltd.
- Pietersen, C. 2007. Interpersonal bullying behaviours in the workplace. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology, 33 (1)*, 59-66.

- Randall, P. 2001. *Bullying in adulthood. Assessing the bullies and their victims*. New York: Taylor & Francis Inc.
- Salin, D. 2001. Prevalence and forms of bullying among business professionals. A comparison of two different strategies for measuring bullying. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 10, 425-441.
- Steinman, S. [s.a.]. *The changing workplace*. Retrieved October 30, 2007 from <http://www.worktrauma.org/change/change.htm>
- Survey Research by the Andrea Adams Trust. Workplace Bullying – 2005 Survey of HR Professionals*. Retrieved September 07, 2007 from <http://www.andreaadamstrust.org>
- Tehrani, N. 2001. *Building a culture of respect. Managing bullying at work*. New York: Taylor & Francis Inc.
- Thompson, L.L. 2004. *Making the team. A guide for managers*. 2nd ed. New Jersey: Pearson Education Inc.
- Turney, L. 2003. Mental health and workplace bullying: The role of power, professions and ‘on the job’ training. *Australian e-Journal for the Advancement of Mental Health*, 2(2).
- Varhama, L.M., & Björkqvist, K. 2004. Conflict, burnout and bullying in a Finnish and a Polish company: Cross national comparison. *Perceptual and Motor Skill*, 98, 1234-1240.
- Zapf, D. 1999. Organizational, work group related and personal causes of mobbing/bullying at work. *International Journal of Manpower*, 20, 70-84.



## **CHAPTER 2 – ARTICLE ONE: THE EXPERIENCE OF WORKPLACE BULLYING AND ITS PREVALENCE AT A MINE IN MPUMALANGA**

---

### **ABSTRACT**

Previous studies have established that for some people a typical day at work starts with immense feelings of distress, anxiety and irritability caused by workplace bullying. Not only does bullying behaviour in the workplace have a negative impact on a person's professional life, but it is also detrimental to the effectiveness of the organisation. A survey focussing on the perceived exposure to bullying and victimisation in the workplace was administered to a sample of 159 employees employed by a mine in Mpumalanga. The results uncovered that more than a quarter of the participants reported that they had experienced workplace bullying. The study also discovered that line managers experienced more negative acts than senior managers. While those who only experience a brief spell of bullying behaviour at work survive their experience relatively unscathed, previous studies have also indicated that others are affected in a significant physical and psychological way. In conclusion this study determined that workplace bullying is an actual occurrence, not only internationally but also in South Africa. Employees and employers can therefore only benefit from understanding this unique workplace phenomenon. This article provides the opportunity for employed people to recognise the nature and prevalence of workplace bullying in order to prevent it from becoming a silent epidemic.

### **KEYWORDS**

Adult bullying, bullying prevalence, negative acts, aggression, incivility, workplace conflict.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

While it was once considered a childhood rite of passage, there is now a growing recognition that workplace bullying is an ever-increasing and multi-faceted phenomenon that managers and human resource professionals will have to address in the twenty first century (Pietersen, 2007: 59). Similar to childhood bullying, workplace bullying is also the tendency of individuals or groups to use aggressive or unreasonable behaviour to achieve their ends (TUC, 1998). Tactics such as fear, guilt, shame and intimidation are often used as bullying tactics to wear a victim down and gain complete power over him or her in the workplace (Varhama & Björkqvist, 2004). According to Einarsen (2006) workplace bullying is in some cases related an initial or on-going conflict that escalated in severity over time. Since anyone of any age can become a victim of workplace bullying, either directly as a target or indirectly as a witness (Mellor, 2000), this is an important topic to study under organisational behaviour.

Since Andrea Adams, a British freelance journalist recognised that bullying occurs in areas other than the school playground, it has been studied under various workplace concepts (Lutgen-Sandvik, Tracy, & Alberts, 2006). These concepts include workplace harassment (Einarsen & Raknes, 1997), workplace aggression (Baron & Neuman, 1996), mobbing (Leymann, 1990) and workplace incivility (Anderson & Pearson, 1999). The Trade Union Congress (TUC, 2008) described bullying as a serious workplace issue which is too often regarded as an occasional problem between two individuals, which is actually more than an occasional bout of anger. Von Bergen, Zaveletta and Soper (2006: 15) also noted that bullying is not about a clash of personalities, a misunderstanding or miscommunication. Nor do they believe that it should be confused with joking or horseplay, which is characterised by a lack of animosity.

The Workplace Bullying and Trauma Institute (WBI, 2003) discovered that bullying of subordinates by superior is the most common form of bullying in the workplace. According to a study conducted in a South African work context it was concluded that South Africa is one of the countries where awareness of workplace bullying is still in its infancy (Pietersen, 2007: 59). Given these considerations local research is needed to develop South Africa's understanding of the nature of this workplace phenomenon. Against this background, the key research question that emerged is *what is the prevalence of workplace bullying in a South African work context and how does it compare with international findings?*

To investigate the experience of workplace bullying and prevalence thereof the revised English version of the Negative Acts Questionnaire (NAQ-R) was administered at a mine in Mpumalanga. The sample consisted of 159 employees who participated in this study. The analysis of the results will provide the readers with a greater understanding and awareness of the nature and presence of workplace bullying within a South African organisation. Reference is made to the words victim and perpetrator to the point of describing those individuals who experienced bullying behaviour and those individuals who bullied others.

A literature study was conducted to identify a suitable definition of workplace bullying for the purpose of this study. By means of identifying a comprehensive definition of workplace bullying certain characteristic features were acknowledged. International studies and research findings were used to formulate single variable hypotheses as well as hypotheses concerning the difference between two or more groups. The literature review is followed by a discussion of the research methodology and the results of the study. The implications of the findings and a brief recommendation for future research to be conducted are discussed in conclusion of this article.

## **2. BULLYING IN THE WORKPLACE**

### **2.1. Defining workplace bullying**

While the term bullying is a well known term, relatively few people recognise it as an adult problem in the workplace (Pietersen, 2007). Bullies are delineated as people who are habitually cruel to others who are weaker or smaller (Randall, 2001). A comprehensive literature study of workplace bullying revealed several formal definitions. Von Bergen *et al.*, (2006) rightfully noted that there is no single agreed upon definition of workplace bullying. According to Quine (1999) the central difficulty in developing a single agreed upon definition of workplace bullying originates from a lack of consensus on what exactly constitutes adult bullying. Another contributing factor is the fact that bullying is recognised by various notions such as interpersonal mistreatment, psychosocial harassment, psychological violence, abusive workplace conduct antisocial employee behaviour, escalated incivility and psychological aggression (Von Bergen *et al.*, 2006: 15).

Bullying generally involves one person harassing another and is characterised by a pattern of deliberate, hurtful and menacing behaviours (Von Bergen *et al.*, 2006: 15). This description of bullying emphasises an element of intent in which workplace bullying is described as the wilful or conscious desire to hurt or threaten someone. Definitions containing an element of intent are helpful to emphasise the perpetrators' responsibility for the consequences of their actions (Mellor, 2000). It should, however, be noted that perpetrators are not always aware of the damage their actions are causing because their unkind and hurtful actions are in some cases unintentional (Einarsen, 1999; Hoel, Cooper, & Faragher, 2001).

Einarsen & Skogstad (1996: 185) defined workplace bullying as “a situation where one or several individuals over a period of time persistently perceive themselves to be on the receiving end of negative acts from one or several persons, in a situation where he or she experience difficulty in defending him- or herself against the negative acts”. This definition served as an appropriate definition for the purpose of this study since it focuses on the effects on the victim irrespective of the intention of the perpetrator as well as the detrimental or negative nature of the effects and persistence of such behaviour. This definition accordingly differentiates between bullying and ordinary conflict in the workplace in that bullying behaviour consists of a repeated pattern of behaviour (Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2001). While conflict is a process in which one party perceives that another party is negatively affecting its interests (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2004; Robbins, 2003; Verwey & du Plooy-Cilliers, 2003), bullying differs significantly in duration. Unlike conflict, bullying is generally characterised by features of persistent and repeated negative behaviours directed at a person who feels unable to guard him or herself (Einarsen 1999).

## **2.2. The operational and self-identification measurements**

In order to establish the prevalence of workplace bullying researchers have typically used two related yet different quantitative measures (Hoel & Cooper, 2000; Hoel *et al.*, 2001; Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2001; Lutgen-Sandvik *et al.*, 2006). The first measure utilises an operational method, which involves counting the occurrence of various negative acts over a specified period of time using a behavioural checklist. This method measures the exposure to negative acts without requesting participants to label themselves as a victim of bullying. The participants’ responses are therefore less likely to be prompted by their cognitive and emotional processing of the term bullying, which will subsequently yield more objective results (Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2001).

The second measure utilises a self-identification method, which allows a participant to identify him or herself as a victim of bullying based on a specific definition of workplace bullying. This method is, however, associated with a certain degree of underreporting (Lutgen-Sandvik *et al.*, 2006) because many participants decline the victim role, given that this role implies weakness and passivity, which are personal attributes that most people would feel do not fit their usual self image (Einarsen, 1999). For the purpose of this article both methods were used to investigate the prevalence of workplace bullying.

### **2.3. The characteristics and prevalence of workplace bullying**

Workplace bullying is mainly a subjective perception where the experience thereof is a direct result of the meaning that the victim attaches to the experience (Einarsen, 1999). The debate over objective and subjective data in this particular field of study seems to be controversial. Brodsky (1976) distinguished between subjective, as experienced by the victim, and objective, behaviour that breached the agreed criteria of acceptable behaviour, forms of harassment. The two forms, in his view, are linked through a basic mechanism in human reaction. In a previous study in which the scale and intensity of the bullying experience was investigated by means of the self-identification method, it was reported that one in ten (10.6%) participants reported that they had been bullied within the last six months prior to the study (Hoel & Cooper, 2000). This figure increased to 24.7% when the period was extended to the last five years prior to the study. Almost one in two (46.5%) participants had witnessed bullying taking place within the same time frame of five years. To assess the prevalence of workplace bullying in a South African context this study attempted to draw comparisons between previous studies and the findings of the current studies. Based on the research findings reported in Hoel & Cooper (2000) the following hypotheses are stated regarding the self-identified prevalence of workplace bullying:

Hypothesis 1: *At least 10.6% of the participants identified themselves as victims of bullying within the last six months prior to the study.*

Hypothesis 2: *At least 24.7% of the participants identified themselves victims of bullying when the time period was extended to five years prior to the study.*

Hypothesis 3: *At least 46.5% of the participants indicated that they have witnessed bullying taking place within the last five years prior to the study.*

As noted before bullies may in some instances bully a victim unknowingly (Einarsen, 1999, Hoel, Cooper, & Faragher, 2001, Mellor, 2000, Varhama & Björkqvist, 2004) and therefore the intention to bully is not recognised as a precondition in determining the prevalence of workplace bullying in this study. Workplace bullying is rather characterised by elements of intensity, frequency, duration and power, which can be experienced individually or collectively (Hoel & Cooper, 2001a; Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, & Cooper, 2003; Rayner & Keashly, 2005). These characteristics are the defining features that make bullying behaviour recognisable. Einarsen & Stogstad (1996: 187) argued that to be a victim of bullying a person must feel inferiority in defending him or herself in the actual situation. Bullying is therefore not limited to a set of objectively defined negative acts. By studying the characteristic features a comprehensive understanding of the presence of workplace bullying can be developed since these features differentiate bullying from conflict, aggressive behaviour and/or discriminatory acts.

The term intensity is used to specify the number of negative acts that a victim is subjected to over a period of time. Workplace bullying usually involves a pattern of negative acts rather than a single negative act. According to Leymann (1990) a person is bullied if he or she is exposed to at least one

negative act a week during a minimum of six months. Mikkelsen & Einarsen (2001) found that 14% of the participants reported experiencing one negative act at least weekly. The findings reported by Mikkelsen & Einarsen (2001) were used as a benchmark for a South African context. In line with the 14% respondents that reported experiencing one negative act at least weekly in Mikkelsen & Einarsen (2001) the following hypothesis is stated:

*Hypothesis 4: At least 14% of the participants experienced at least one negative act on a weekly basis within the last six months prior to the study.*

Although Leymann (1990) recognises bullying as one negative act weekly, other researchers believe that a minimum of two negative acts is a more accurate measure for the prevalence of workplace bullying (Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2001; Salin, 2001; Lutgen-Sandvik *et al.*, 2006). When employing this stricter criterion of exposure to two or more negative acts weekly, Mikkelsen & Einarsen (2001) reported that 7.8% of the participants may be classified as victims of bullying at work. Based on this finding in Mikkelsen & Einarsen (2001) it is hypothesised that:

*Hypothesis 5: At least 7.8% of the participants experienced at least two negative acts on a weekly basis within the last six months prior to the study.*

When negative behaviour is viewed in isolation it may often be considered as normal and relatively harmless behaviour (Kemshall & Pritchard, 2000). When the behaviour endures and the abnormal treatment becomes the normal treatment, it is considered becoming bullying (Mellor, 2000). The term frequency is therefore used to characterise workplace bullying as repeated and persistent behaviour. Negative acts must subsequently occur weekly or more to constitute bullying (Lutgen-Sandvik *et al.*, 2006). While it can be unpleasant to be the target of someone's occasional



aggressive behaviour, such behaviour would normally be considered to fall outside this definition, with the exception of severe intimidating behaviour that left the target in a permanent state of fear (Hoel & Cooper, 2001a).

With specific reference to the frequency of negative acts on a weekly basis the operational and self-identification method generally produces different prevalence rates (Lutgen-Sandvik *et al.*, 2006). Accordingly previous studies have indicated that the prevalence based on the number of negative acts is usually higher than suggested by the self-identification method (Hoel & Cooper 2000; Lutgen-Sandvik *et al.*, 2006). To investigate the prevalence rate of each measure within a South African work context it is hypothesised that:

*Hypothesis 6: When employing the operational method to measure the exposure to bullying, more participants will be victims than when the self-identification method is employed.*

An imbalance of power is also a characteristic feature of workplace bullying (MacIntosh, 2005). This suggests that one party perceive themselves to have less power than another. According to Einarsen (1999) a victim's reaction to bullying behaviour is especially pronounced if the perpetrator is in a position associated with some form of authority or power. An imbalance of power in the workplace may be drawn from a formal position within the organisational structure or from an informal source such as personal contacts, organisational standing, experience or even knowledge of the target's potential vulnerability (Varhama & Björkqvist, 2004). Since power is an important feature of bullying it is expected that bullying would be most prevalent among groups with relatively little formal power (Hoel & Cooper, 2001b). It is therefore hypothesised that:

*Hypothesis 7: When employing the operational method to measure the exposure to bullying, more middle management participants will be victims of bullying than senior management participants.*

The long-term nature of workplace bullying is a predominant and one of the most salient characteristic features, suggesting that bullying may endure as a drawn-out affair (Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2001). In Mikkelsen & Einarsen (2001) it was discovered that 40% of the self-identified victims of bullying had been bullied for a period between six months and two years, while 15% of the self identified victims indicated that the bullying had gone on for more than two years. Focussing on the long term nature of bullying and the findings in Mikkelsen & Einarsen (2001) it is hypothesised that:

*Hypothesis 8: At least 15% of the self identified victims of bullying indicated that the bullying had gone on for more than two years.*

Einarsen and Skogstad (1996) considered bullying to be an individual and/or shared experience. Hoel & Cooper (2000) established that 31.2% of the participants reported that they were individually bullied. In addition 54.9% reported that they were bullied with several other work-colleagues and 14.8% reported that their whole workgroup was bullied. In this regard Hoel & Cooper (2000) compared their findings to a previous study conducted in 1997 in which it was reported that 11.2% of the participants reported that they were the only ones bullied, 58.8% reported that they were bullied with several other work-colleagues and 31.2% reported that their whole workgroup was bullied (UNISON, 1997). In light of the comparison between the findings of the two studies Hoel & Cooper (2000) noted that the stigma attached to being bullied may cause some people to report that their experience is shared by others. They also noted that in cases where everyone in a workgroup is seemingly being exposed to workplace bullying, a repressive work-

regime may be present affecting everyone in the workgroup. This article focuses on the individual experience of workplace bullying to establish its prevalence. Based on the 31.2% of the participants that reported that they were the only ones bullied in Hoel & Cooper (2001) the following hypothesis is stated:

*Hypothesis 9: At least 31.2% of the self identified victims of bullying indicated that they were the only person bullied.*

### **3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1. Sampling**

A mine in Mpumalanga with approximately 500 employees was selected for the purpose of conducting a survey. The unit of analysis was the individual employee employed by the mine. Employees participating in a certain in-house health and safety related training session served as the sample. The sample consists of 159 employees who were each given a questionnaire to complete and return before the commencement of the training session. This was done in order to achieve a high response rate. Table 1 provides a demographic profile of the respondents. The sample consisted of 129 male participants and 30 female participants. The majority of the participants fall within the age category between 31-40 years (39.6%). Approximately 45.3% of the participants identified their organisational status as employees, 47.8% as middle management, and 6.9% as senior management. The majority (23.3%) of the participants had less than 5 years work experience.

**Table 1: Demographic profile of the participants**

		<b>Total N</b>	<b>Total %</b>
<b>Age</b>	18 - 30 years*	42	26.4
	31 – 40 years**	63	39.6
	41 – 50 years***	37	23.2
	51+ years****	17	10.7
<b>Gender</b>	Male	129	81.1
	Female	30	18.9
<b>Marital Status</b>	Married	112	70.4
	Divorced/Separated	9	5.7
	Widowed	4	2.5
	Single/never married	34	21.4
<b>Highest Level of Education</b>	Attended school	7	4.4
	Grade 12	63	39.6
	Diploma/Degree	70	44
	Higher Diploma/Degree	16	10.1
	Masters Diploma/Degree	3	1.9
	Doctorate	0	0
<b>Work experience</b>	0 – 05 years	37	23.3
	06 - 10 years	32	20.1
	10 - 15 years	29	18.2
	16 - 20 years	31	19.5
	21 - 25 years	12	7.5
	25+ years	18	11.3

<b>Employment status</b>	Full time	158	99.4
	Part time	1	0.6
<b>Organisational level</b>	Employee	72	45.3
	Middle management	76	47.8
	Senior management	11	6.9

\* Age categories 18-25 and 26-30 were combined to create the age category 18-30

\*\* Age categories 31-35 and 36-40 were combined to create the age category 31-40

\*\*\* Age categories 41-45 and 46-50 were combined to create the age category 41-50

\*\*\*\* Age categories 51-55 and 55+ were combined to create the age category 51+

### 3.2. Data collection

The questionnaire was developed and tested by Einarsen, Raknes, Matthiesen and Hellesoy (1994). Data were collected after permission was obtained from the Human Resources Department at the mine in Mpumalanga to distribute the questionnaire during an in-house training session. To encourage participation the questionnaire was anonymous and voluntary. Since the information collected in the questionnaire had to be treated in a strictly confidential manner the participants were not required to use their names on any documents. Each questionnaire was assigned a unique survey code for purposes of statistical analysis.

### 3.3. Measurement

The Revised English version of the Negative Acts Questionnaire (NAQ-R) developed by Einarsen *et al.*, (1994) was used to measure the perceived exposure to bullying in the workplace. The first part of the questionnaire contains a Likert type list of 29 behavioural items, which contains no reference to the term bullying. The second part of the questionnaire introduces a definition of workplace bullying. This definition is followed by the several questions based on the definition. The

participants who confirmed that they had been bullied in the workplace were asked to indicate its frequency, intensity and duration. The participants were also asked to indicate whether they had witnessed others being bullied at work. This study therefore utilised both the operational and self-identification method, as discussed earlier to investigate the prevalence of workplace bullying. The NAQ-R was tested in a representative survey of 4996 United Kingdom employees recruited from 70 organisations in the United Kingdom (Einarsen & Hoel, 2001), in which a response rate of 43% and internal consistency reliability of 0.92 was measured by the use of Cronbach's alpha coefficient. In this study a response rate of 100% was achieved and an internal consistency reliability of 0.94 was measured by use of Cronbach's alpha coefficient.

**Table 2: Response rate and Cronbach's alpha coefficient**

<b>Response Rate</b>	100%
<b>Cronbach <math>\alpha</math></b>	0.94

## 4. RESULTS

### 4.1. The prevalence of workplace bullying based on the self-identification method

When the self-identified victims are added together irrespective of the frequency of their exposure, 27.7% of the participants reported having been bullied over the 6 month period prior to the study. Table 3 presents the frequencies of the reported exposure to the bullying. A total of 27 participants (17%) indicated that they experience being bullied "very rarely". This percentage suggests that the participants' own definition of bullying does not necessarily correspond with the definition provided which focuses on intensity and frequency as characteristic features in defining the nature of workplace bullying.

For the purpose of this study the frequencies were combined to create two categories namely, occasionally bullied and regularly bullied. Strictly speaking the occasional bullied does not correspond with the definition of bullying provided (Hoel *et al.*, 2001). When applying the new categories to the data, the bottom part of table 3 reveals that 27.1% of the participants experienced bullying occasionally while only one participant (0.6%) experienced bullying regularly. Alternatively, if the frequency category “several times a month” is included within the regularly bullied category 3.7% of the participants would have been bullied.

Hypothesis 1 focused on the experience of bullying irrespective of the frequency and stated that at least 10.6% of the participants identified themselves as victims of bullying within the six months prior to the study. Table 3 indicates that this hypothesis is supported and reveals that 27.7% of the participants reported being bullied within the last six months. This is consistent with the finding of the study conducted by Hoel & Cooper (2000), in which it was concluded that one in ten participants experienced bullying.

**Table 3: Participants’ self-reported experience of bullying over six months**

<b>Have you been bullied at work over the last six months?</b>	<b>Total N</b>	<b>Total %</b>
1 Not bullied	115	72.3
2 Yes, very rarely	27	17
3 Yes, now and then	11	7
4 Yes, several times a month	5	3.1
5 Yes, several times a week	0	0
6 Yes, almost daily	1	0.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>100</b>

Total bullied irrespective of the frequency	44	27.7
Total occasionally bullied (2+3+4)	33	27.1
Total regularly bullied (5+6)	1	0.6
Total not bullied	115	72.3

When the time frame was extended to five years prior to the study a slightly higher percentage of the participants reported having been bullied in the workplace. Almost 29% of the participants reported to have been bullied in the last five years (see table 4). Hypothesis 2 expected a minimum of 24.7% based on a study conducted by Hoel & Cooper (2000) and is therefore supported.

**Table 4: Participants' self-reported experience of bullying over five years**

Have you ever been bullied at work over the last five years	Total N	Total %
Yes	46	28.9
No	113	71.1
Total	159	100

In response to witnessing bullying at work table 5 points out that 74 participants (46.5%) confirmed such observations in their workplace over the last five years prior to the study. This is a very interesting finding since the hypothesis 3 expected the same percentage of the participants indicated that they have witnessed bullying taking place in the last five years prior to the study. This hypothesis that is based on the findings on Hoel & Cooper (2000) is therefore supported in that almost one out of two participants confirmed experiencing bullying at work indirectly as a witness.



**Table 5: Self-reported observation of bullying in the last five years**

<b>Have you ever witnessed bullying at work over the last five years</b>	<b>Total N</b>	<b>Total %</b>
Yes	74	46.5
No	85	53.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>100</b>

When considering the results presented in the abovementioned tables it can be concluded that a substantial percentage of the working population are likely to experience workplace bullying either directly as a victim or indirectly as a witness at some time during their career.

#### **4.2. The prevalence of workplace bullying based on the operational method**

Hypothesis 4 specifically focussed on the experience of at least one negative act on a weekly basis. Table 6 reveals that 39.6% of the participants reported to have experienced at least one negative act on a weekly basis in terms of the operational method. Hypothesis 4 expecting at least 14% in line with the findings of Mikkelsen & Einarsen (2001) is therefore supported by the results and confirms that a substantial number of employees employed by the mine in Mpumalanga experienced some form of bullying at work.

**Table 6: Occurrence of at least one negative act on a weekly basis**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Frequency</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
<b>None</b>	96	60.3	96	60.3
<b>At least one negative act</b>	63	39.6	159	100

Hypothesis 5 employed the stricter criteria of at least two negative defined acts on a weekly basis in the last six months. It was expected that at least 7.8% of the respondents will experience at least two negatively defined acts on a weekly basis in the last six months as stated in Hypothesis 5. Table 7 reveals that hypothesis 5 is supported to the extent that 26.4% of the respondents reported experiencing at least two negatively defined behaviours on a weekly basis.

**Table 7: Occurrence of at least two negative acts on a weekly basis**

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
<b>Less than two negative acts</b>	117	73.6	117	73.6
<b>At least two negative acts</b>	42	26.4	159	100

Hypothesis 6 stated that when employing the operational method to measure the exposure to bullying, more participants will be victims of bullying than when the self-identification method is employed. For the purpose of this hypothesis bullying is accepted as the exposure to at least one negative act on a weekly basis over a time period of six months. Accordingly table 6 reveals that 39.6% of the participants indicated that they were exposed to at least one negative act on a weekly basis within the last six months, which indicates that the hypothesis 6 is supported in that only 27.8% self-identified themselves as victims exposed to bullying in the workplace (see table 3 in this regard). In line with previous studies conducted by Lutgen-Sandvik *et al.* (2006) and Hoel & Cooper (2000) it can be concluded that the operational and self-identification method produces different prevalence rates.

When the frequency of the bullying is taken into account and those who indicated that they were regularly bullied table 3 reveals that only one participant (0.6%) was bullied in this category. When comparing this result to the results of the operational measure, which indicated that 39.6% of the

participants indicated that they were exposed to at least one negative act on a weekly basis within the last six months, a vast degree of under reporting is seemingly present in this study. Hypothesis 6 is therefore also verified to the extent that the frequency of the bullying is taken into account.

Hypothesis 7 stated that when employing the operational method to measure the exposure to bullying, more middle management respondents will be victims of bullying than senior management respondents. For the purpose of this hypothesis it was tested if a significant difference exists between the mean negative act scores reported by the participants who indicated that they were on a middle management level and those who indicated that they were on a senior management level when employing the operational method to measure the exposure to negative acts. A  $p$ -value less than 0.05 indicate that the difference is not merely the result of a random sampling error and that the null hypothesis can be rejected with 95% confidence. Hypothesis 7 is supported in that a significant difference ( $p$ -value of 0.04) was found. It can therefore be concluded that middle manager participants reported more exposure to bullying than senior management participants.

### **4.3. The duration of the bullying behaviour**

The duration of bullying in the workplace is one of the characteristics identified in the definition and according to Tehrani (2001) an essential feature in determining the damage bullying inflicts on a victim. As far as the participants who identified themselves as bullied were concerned 34.1% of the participants indicated that the bullying started within the last six months prior to the study, while 40.9% of the participants indicated that that the bullying started between 6 and 24 months prior to the study. A quarter (25%) reported that the bullying started more than two years ago, suggesting that it has endured for a lengthy of period.

**Table 8\*: Duration of the bullying behaviour**

<b>When did the bullying start</b>	<b>Total N</b>	<b>Total %</b>
Within the last six months	15	34.1
Between 6 and 12 months ago	14	31.8
Between 1 and 2 years ago	4	9.1
More than 2 years ago	11	25
<b>Total</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>100</b>

*\*Only the participants who confirmed that they were bullied completed this question (n=44)*

Hypothesis 8 stated that at least 15% of the self identified victims of bullying indicated that the bullying had gone on for more than two years. Table 8 reveals that this hypothesis is supported in that 25% of the self identified victims of bullying indicated that the bullying had started more than two years ago. Based on the findings of Mikkelsen & Einarsen (2001) this study also indicates that a substantial number of self-identified victims of bullying had been exposed to negative acts for a lengthy period of time.

#### **4.4. Individual as opposed to a shared experience**

As discussed earlier workplace bullying is described as a situation where one or several individuals are on the receiving end of negative acts. The participants who indicated “yes” in reaction to the question whether they have been bullied within the last six months prior to the study were also individually asked to indicate how many people shared their experience of being bullied at work. As summarised in table 9 this study reveals that the majority (59.1%) of the victims experienced being bullied individually, while 40.9% of the participants reported a shared experience. A quarter (25%) reported that they have shared the experience with their colleagues, while almost 16% reported that

their whole workgroup have been bullied. Hypothesis 9 focused on the individual experience of workplace bullying and stated that at least 31.2% of the self identified victims of bullying indicated that they were the only person bullied is therefore supported. This study indicates that the majority of the self-identified victims of workplace bullying experienced negative acts individually.

**Table 9\*: Individual as opposed to a shared experience**

<b>How many were bullied</b>	<b>Total N</b>	<b>Total %</b>
Only you	26	59.1
Everyone in your workgroup	7	15.9
You and several work colleagues	11	25
<b>Total</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>100</b>

*\*Only the participants who confirmed that they were bullied completed this question (n=44)*

## **5. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS**

The principle aim of this study was to chart the prevalence of workplace bullying at a mine in Mpumalanga. To explore this unique form of organisational behaviour an integrated approach towards identifying and measuring workplace bullying was followed. The research findings contribute to behavioural studies within the workplace by developing a greater awareness of the presence of negative behaviour that might have devastating consequences if not understood and managed to the extent of non-existence.

## 5.1. Summary of findings

International research findings revealed that the prevalence rate of bullying is frightening in some countries. The results of this study, however, support the notion that workplace bullying is also an actual occurrence in South Africa. Table 10 provides a summary of the nine hypotheses, which were only tentative estimates regarding the prevalence of workplace bullying based on prior international research findings. This table also gives an indication of whether the hypotheses are supported or not.

**Table 10: Summary of hypothesis and findings**

Hypothesis based on previous research findings	Summary of findings
Hypothesis 1: <i>At least 10.6% of the participants identified themselves victims of bullying within the six months prior to the study</i>	Hypothesis one is supported: <b>27.7%</b> have been bullied within the last six months at work
Hypothesis 2: <i>At least 24.7% of the participants identified themselves victims of bullying when the time period was extended to five years prior to the study</i>	Hypothesis two is supported: <b>29%</b> have been bullied within the last five years at work
Hypothesis 3: <i>At least 46.5% of the participants indicated that they have witnessed bullying taking place within the last five years prior to the study</i>	Hypothesis three is supported: <b>46.5%</b> witnessed bullying taking place in the last five years at work

Hypothesis 4:	<i>At least 14% of the participants experienced at least one negative act on a weekly basis within the last six months prior to the study</i>	Hypothesis four is supported: <b>39.6%</b> experienced at least one negative act on a weekly basis at work
Hypothesis 5:	<i>At least 7.8% of the participants experienced at least two negative acts on a weekly basis within the last six months prior to the study</i>	Hypothesis five is supported: <b>26.4%</b> experienced at least two negative acts on a weekly basis at work
Hypothesis 6:	<i>When employing the operational method to measure the exposure to bullying, more participants will be victims than when the self-identification method is employed</i>	Hypothesis six is supported: More participants were victims of bullying according to the operational method than the self-identification method
Hypothesis 7:	<i>When employing the operational method to measure the exposure to bullying, more middle management participants will be victims of bullying than senior management participants</i>	Hypothesis seven is supported: More middle management employees were victims of bullying than senior management employees
Hypothesis 8:	<i>At least 15% of the self identified victims of bullying indicated that the bullying had gone on for more than two years</i>	Hypothesis eight is supported: <b>25%</b> Were bullied for more than two years

---

Hypothesis 9: <i>At least 31.2% of the self identified victims of bullying indicated that they were the only person bullied</i>	Hypothesis nine is supported:  <b>59.1%</b> Were bullied individually
---	---

---

Comparing the prevalence of workplace bullying across samples is intricate due to various variables, such as different perceptions of the nature of bullying as well as the different periods of time in which the studies were conducted. The findings of this study, however, suggest that the prevalence of bullying as reported in different international studies also utilising the NAQ are comparable. The above tabled results indicate that more than a quarter of the participants reported that they have experienced bullying in the workplace within the last six months prior to the study. This figure is higher than the expected figure, which could be the result of the nature of the mining industry. According to the UK National Workplace Bullying Advice Line the mining industry is associated with high levels of stress that can result in high levels of bullying.

The results shows a slight increase in the prevalence rate of bullying when the time period was extended to five years prior to the study. This is an interesting finding given the fact that the majority of the participants (23.3%) only reported having up to five years work experience. The results also indicate that bullying took place in front of an audience since almost one in two participants indicated that they witnessed bullying. The presence of bystanders or spectators could be of significant importance if the perpetrator wishes to establish a reputation characterised by power provided that the bystanders remain silent. The majority of the participants (34.1%) who indicated that they had been bullied specified that the bullying only started recently (within six months prior to the study), suggesting that this is a relatively new experience for most victims. In comparison to other international studies the findings of this study suggests that the occurrence of persistent negative acts is significantly higher.



With respect to prevalence levels reported by means of the operational method, more participants were likely to be victims of bullying than when the self-identification method was utilised. The results therefore clearly indicate that the method used to measure the prevalence of workplace bullying will have an influence on the prevalence levels reported. It should be noted that some victims might confuse conflict and bullying and that such confusion could have an influence on the prevalence rates reported in a study. Conflict at work and/or a difference in opinion is a natural part of labour relations. It should, however, not be allowed to escalate into behaviour that intimidates, offends, humiliates and/or harms people. A major difficulty with research based on self-reports on the part of the victim is that it is difficult to determine the accuracy of the participant's recollections over time. This problem can, however, be addressed by verification from witnesses.

When utilising the self-identification method the subjective perception created by each participant with reference to the definition will constantly present researchers with certain challenges in establishing the prevalence of workplace bullying. One person may view certain behaviour as bullying, while another person might not view the same behaviour as bullying. From the results it is evident that bullying is generally unrecognised or unreported. Subjective and objective data are therefore equally important in the development of this field.

The results pertaining to the exposure of negative acts associated with bullying uncovered that middle managers were more exposed to bullying behaviour in the workplace than senior managers. In this regard the study validated that workplace bullying is more prevalent amongst middle managers than senior managers. This indicates and corroborates that power and/or authority is an important feature of workplace bullying in many incidents. In determining the likely duration of the bullying experience the study found that a quarter of the participants reported that the bullying started more than two years ago. The findings therefore suggest that a substantial number of self-

identified victims of bullying have endured this experience for a lengthy period. It is, however, important to note that in some cases bullying may remain unacknowledged and unaddressed for long periods since the perpetrators in many cases use subtle or insidious tactics to achieve their ends. Organisations should, however, be careful not to leave bullying unaddressed since it might cause certain unwanted behaviours to develop into the general workplace practice.

With respect to the individual experience as opposed to a shared experience the results indicate that the majority of participants in this study experienced bullying individually in the workplace. From the findings reported in this study it is also evident that not all the participants who report themselves as having been bullied have been singled out for mistreatment. Since there is a stigma attached to bullying (Hoel & Cooper, 2001a) it is possible that some participants may try to draw attention away from their experience by reporting that their experience is shared by others. Incidents where everyone in a workgroup is reported to have been bullied could suggest that work groups are subjected to repressive management styles.

These findings are generally in line with previous international studies that also investigated the prevalence of workplace bullying. It clearly indicates that certain participants were subjected to persistent and prolonged experience of general bullying in the workplace over a period of time. The results also indicate that workplace bullying is a complex issue which needs to be treated with special care and attention within the context of employment relations. Based on the results it is therefore concluded that workplace bullying is also an actual occurrence in the South African workplace. The results obtained in this study should provide enough evidence that organisations have a responsibility to see to it that workplace bullying is managed at all levels of the organisation to the extent that it is prevented from rooting itself in the culture of the organisation.

## **5.2. Managerial implications**

Bullying is mainly the result of persistent negative behaviour from a senior person. Organisations should recognise that there is a very fine line between strict management and workplace bullying. The one will result in organisational effectiveness and the other in organisational inefficiency. The line is crossed when employees start showing general signs of distress that might be expressed in a variety of mental or physical signs. In general there is a significant cost associated with the loss of productivity, absenteeism, and ineffective interpersonal relationships as a result of bullying (MacIntosh, 2005). While personality characteristics may play some part, workplace bullying can only be fully understood in the wider context of the organisation and its culture and should not simply be interpreted as interpersonal conflict (Jennifer, Cowie & Ananiadou, 2003). In reality workplace bullying is a phenomenon that affects the whole person leaving a residual effect on the person's physical, mental and emotional health, which might endure even after the bullying stopped (MacIntosh, 2005). The consequences often stretch as far as social isolation, family problems and financial problems as a result of absence from work and/or ultimately the resignation or dismissal of an employee suffering from constant bullying at work (Von Bergen *et al.*, 2006).

The consequences for the individual victim are wide spread and in turn organisations also suffer equally from bullying occurring in the workplace (Belding, 2005). Randall (2001) compares the effects of workplace bullying behaviour to a stone dropped in a pool of water. The immediate impact is the harm done to the direct victim, while the ripples represent the disturbance around the victim. Consequently, organisations regardless of their size, should direct more attention at developing and implementing strategies to handle the prevalence of workplace bullying.

Bullying behaviour can only thrive when it is condoned (Hoel & Cooper, 2000). Organisations should therefore critically evaluate their practices and management styles that may contribute to the prevalence of bullying. These aspects can be addressed by means of special training in areas such as general managerial skills and stress management. In this regard organisations should redefine their management styles to one that is co-operative in nature. When considering the prevalence rates reported in this study it is concluded that no one is immune from bullying. Organisations should not wait for bullying to become a problem before attempting to identify and address it. Organisations should rather have proactive policies in place to prevent and address the issue in an effective manner when it occurs.

### **5.3. Limitations and directions for further research**

Certain limitations related to collection of data were observed. A first limitation might be the result of a non-probability sampling approach which was used and the fact that the results of the study can therefore not be generalised to a larger population on statistical grounds. A second potential limitation is related to the results of this study which is based on a single industry and the fact that the results can therefore not necessarily be generalised to other work contexts. The high number of male responses must also be taken into account when interpreting the data. When taking into consideration the potential limitations it can be argued that the results should be utilised as a point of departure for a comprehensive evaluation of the prevalence of workplace bullying in a South African work context. The results obtained in this study reveal valuable information in relation to estimates on the prevalence of workplace bullying and could be strengthened by supportive data collected and interpreted in other workplaces and industries in South Africa. Interviewing and observations can be utilised in future research studies to corroborate certain findings related to the experience of workplace bullying. Any future researcher should, however, be careful when

employing this specific technique to corroborate findings since his or her own values and attitudes might influence the answers provided by the participants. These limitations should be taken into consideration in inspiring future South African researchers to define their research agendas.

#### **5.4. Conclusion**

Bullying has become an important workplace issue over the past decade. Previous studies indicate that it can have severe consequences on an employee's experience of job satisfaction, his or her physical health and mental well-being as well as the overall functioning of an organisation. This article provided an overview of the defining features of workplace bullying and the prevalence thereof at a mine in Mpumalanga. The present study indicates that adult bullying is something that a number of individuals are likely to face at some stage during their working life. Employers should realise that it is only when the organisation as a whole take interest in the goals and aspirations of an individual employee will those employees take an interest to work hard in achieving the overall organisational goals. The concept of bullying behaviour in the workplace should therefore be studied as an ongoing matter and future research should also focus on establishing the exact nature of the negative acts or behaviour that constitutes bullying. Workplace bullying and negative acts should not be allowed to replace justice and fairness, which are two fundamental concepts in any workplace.

## 6. REFERENCES

- Anderson, L.M., & Pearson, C.M. 1999. Tit for tat? The spiralling effect of incivility in the workplace. *Academy of Management Review*, 24, 452-471.
- Baron, R.A., & Neuman, J.H. 1996. Workplace violence and workplace aggression: evidence on their relative frequency and potential causes. *Aggressive Behaviour*, 22, 161-173.
- Belding, S. 2005. *Dealing with the employee from hell. A guide to coaching and motivation*. London: Kogan Page Limited.
- Brodsky, C.M. 1976. *The harassed worker*. Toronto: Lexington Books, DC Heath and Company.
- Jennifer, D., Cowie, H., & Ananiadou, K. 2003. Perceptions and experience of workplace bullying in five different working populations. *Aggressive Behavior*, 23, 489-496.
- Einarsen, S. 1999. The nature and cause of bullying at work. *International Journal of Manpower*, 20 (1 and 2), 16-27.
- Einarsen, S. 2006. The way forward by looking backwards. A paper presented at the fifth International Conference on workplace bullying, Workplace bullying – the way forward. Dublin.
- Einarsen, S., & Hoel, H. 2001. The Negative Acts Questionnaire: Development, validation and revision of a measure of workplace bullying. Paper presented at the 10<sup>th</sup> European Congress on Work and Organizational Psychology. Prague.
- Einarsen, S., & Raknes, B.I. 1997. Harassment in the workplace and the victimization of men. *Violence and Victims*, 12, 247-263.
- Einarsen, S., & Skogstad, A. 1996. Bullying at work: epidemiological findings in public and private organisations. *European Journal of Work and Organisational Psychology*, 5, 185-201.
- Einarsen, S., Hoel, H., Zapf, D., & Cooper, C.L. 2003. *Bullying and emotional abuse in the workplace. International perspectives in research and practice*. London: Taylor & Francis.
- Einarsen, S., Raknes, B. I., Matthiesen, S. B., & Hellesoy, H. 1994. Negative Acts Questionnaire.

- Hoel, H., & Cooper, C.L. 2000. Destructive conflict and bullying at work. Extracts of study report compiled for the Launch of the Civil Services Race Equality Network.
- Hoel, H., & Cooper, C.L. 2001a. Origins of workplace bullying. Theoretical frameworks for explaining workplace bullying. In *Building a culture of respect. Managing bullying at work* edited by N. Tehrani, London: Taylor & Francis.
- Hoel, H., & Cooper, C. L. 2001b. Working with victims of workplace bullying. In *Good Practice in working with victims of violence* edited by H. Kemshall, & J. Pritchard, 1010-118. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Hoel, H., Cooper, C. L., & Faragher, B. 2001. The experience of bullying at work in Great Britain: The impact of organisational status. *European Journal of Work and Organisational Psychology*, 10, 414-425.
- Kemshall, H., & Pritchard, J. 2001. *Good practice in working with victims of violence*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Kreitner, R., & Kinicki, A. 2004. *Organizational Behavior*. New York: McGraw-Hill/Irwin.
- Leymann, H. 1990. Mobbing and psychological terror at workplaces. *Violence and Victims*, 5, 119-126.
- Leymann, H. 1996. Mobbing at work and the development of post-traumatic stress disorders. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 5(2), 251-267.
- Lutgen-Sandvik, P., Tracy, S. J., & Alberts, J. K. 2006. Burned by Bullying in the American Workplace: prevalence, perception, degree and impact. *Journal of Management Studies*.
- MacIntosh, J. 2005. Experiences of workplace bullying in a rural area. *Issues in Mental Health Nursing*, 26, 893-910.
- Mellor, A. 2000. Child victims of bullying. In *good practice in working with victims of violence* edited by H. Kemshall, & J. Pritchard, (75-88). London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

- Mikkelsen, E. G., & Einarsen, S. 2001. Bullying in Danish work-life: prevalence and health correlates. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 10(4), 393-413.
- Pietersen, C. 2007. Interpersonal bullying behaviours in the workplace. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology*, 33 (1), 59-66.
- Quine, L. 1999. Workplace bullying in NHS community trust: Staff questionnaire survey. *BMJ*, 318, 228-232.
- Randall, P. 2001. *Bullying in adulthood: assessing the bullies and their victims* . New York: Brunner-Routledge.
- Rayner, C., & Keashly, L. 2005. Bullying at work. A perspective from Britain and North America. In Counterproductive work behaviours edited by S. Fox & P. Spector, 271-296. Washington DC: American Psychological Association.
- Robbins, S.P. 2003. *Organizational Behavior*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Salin, D. 2001. Prevalence and forms of bullying among business professionals. A comparison of two different strategies for measuring bullying. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 10, 425-441.
- Tehrani, N. 2001. *Building a culture of respect. Managing bullying at work*. New York: Taylor & Francis Inc.
- Trades Union Congress. 1998. *Beat Bullying at Work: a Guide for Trade Union Representatives and Personnel Managers*. London: TUC.
- UK National Workplace Bullying Advice Line. History and statistics. Retrieved on January 05, 2009 from [http://www.bullyonline .org/workbully/worbal.htm](http://www.bullyonline.org/workbully/worbal.htm).
- UNISON. 1997. *Bullying at work. Bullying survey report*. London: UNISON
- Varhama, L. M., & Björkqvist, K. 2004. Conflict, burnout and bullying in a Finnish and a Polish company: cross national comparison. *Perceptual and Motor Skill*, 98, 1234-1240.



Verwey, S., & du Plooy-Cilliers, F. 2003. *Strategic Organisational Communication. Paradigms and Paradoxes*. Sandown: Heinemann Publishers (Pty) Ltd.

Von Bergen, C.W., Zaveletta, J. A., & Soper, B. 2006. Legal remedies for workplace bullying: grabbing the bully by the horns. *Employee Relations Law Journal*, 32 (3), 14-40.

Workplace Bullying and Trauma Institute Report on Abusive Workplaces. 2003. *About perpetrators, the bullies. Bully's rank relative to target*. Retrieved on January 05, 2009 from <http://bullyinstitute.org/home/twd/bb/res/2003.html>.

## **CHAPTER 3 – ARTICLE TWO: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK NEGATIVE ACTS AS AN INTERACTIVE FORM OF ORGANISATIONAL BEHAVIOUR**

---

### **ABSTRACT**

Researchers generally accept that bullying is behaviour that is aggressive or negative and carried out repeatedly. Previous research established that bullying can occur in any context where people interact. This article opens by synthesising a conceptual framework of negative acts as an interactive form of organisational behaviour from the available literature. Empirical research was done in order to investigate the prevalence of negative acts. The study found that more than a quarter of the participants had experienced bullying at some stage during their career with managers and supervisors predominantly reported as the perpetrators. The study also found that behaviour that tends to isolate individuals was generally reported as the most frequently experienced form of negative acts. By understanding workplace bullying both employers will be able to implement influence strategies aimed at dealing with this workplace phenomenon at levels of protection, intervention and dispute resolution. In conclusion it has been established that workplace bullying is not only a real problem in international workplaces, but also in South Africa. This means that employers not only have to cope with the consequences of employees performing badly but also behaving badly. This article presents an opportunity to understand negative behaviour in the workplace.

### **KEY WORDS**

Workplace bullying, negative acts, adult bullying, bullying behaviour, aggressive behaviour, harassment, discrimination.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Although workplace bullying and related concepts have been studied by various international researchers over the past decade (Hoel & Cooper, 2000; Hoel, Cooper, & Faragher, 2001; Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2001; Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, & Cooper, 2003; Lutgen-Sandvik, Tracy, & Alberts, 2006), little research has been carried out in this area in South Africa (Pietersen, 2007). As a result, the literature on workplace bullying is growing with the number of international studies that are conducted, but this literature does not capture South Africa's experience thereof. South Africa is therefore one of the countries where awareness of workplace bullying is still in its infancy (Pietersen, 2007: 59). Bullying in the workplace differs from ordinary workplace conflict in that bullying consists of repeated and prolonged infringements of an employee's personal dignity (Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2001: 394). Conflict, on the other hand is closely related to the concept of aggression and can be described as a state of discord caused by the actual or perceived opposition of needs, values and interests between people working together (Bergh & Theron, 2003).

Einarsen and Skogstad (1996: 185) defines workplace bullying as a situation where one or several individuals persistently over a period of time perceive themselves to be on the receiving end of negative actions from one or several persons, in a situation where the target of bullying has difficulty in defending him or herself against these actions. Bullying is thus described in terms of negative acts, which may range from mild on-the-job incivilities to physical violence (Von Bergen, Zavaletta, & Soper, 2006: 14). Von Bergen *et al.* (2006:15) described workplace incivility as low-intensity deviant behaviour with ambiguous intent to harm a person in violation of workplace norms for mutual respect. Bullying, on the other hand, includes a wide range of persistent negative acts, which are often used to create fear, guilt, shame, intimidation and a feeling of defencelessness (Varhama & Björkqvist, 2004).

The Workplace Bullying and Trauma Institute (WBI, 2003) found that bullying against subordinates is the most common form of bullying in the workplace. Major changes in social, political, technological and economic environments are creating a situation where South African organisations find themselves faces with complex environment. Increasing uncertainty in the operating environment of an organisation provide fertile ground for the onset of conflict and bullying in the workplace. Despite this the literature is almost silent on prevalence of negative acts in South Africa. Given these considerations a strong case can be argued for the probable prevalence of workplace bullying in South African organisations. In a qualitative study on the experience of interpersonal bullying behaviours, Pietersen (2007: 59) concluded that there is a definite need for more research on this topic in the South African work context. The key research question that emerges from this is *what forms of negative acts or behaviour are occurring in the South African work context where workplace bullying is prevalent?*

This article focussed on the prevalence and manifestation of negative acts in the workplace and essentially called for the effective handling of workplace bullying in South Africa. This article draws on international researchers such as Hoel & Cooper (2000); Hoel *et al.* (2001); Mikkelsen & Einarsen (2001); Einarsen *et al.* (2003); Lutgen-Sandvik *et al.* (2006) who have stressed the need for understanding bullying behaviour. In order to determine the prevalence of negative acts, data captured by means of a survey conducted at a mine in Mpumalanga was analysed. Since it was found in 1997 by the UK National Workplace Bullying Advice Line that the mining industry was one of the industries with the most stressful jobs, a mine in Mpumalanga was selected as a starting point for research on workplace bullying within a South African work context.

The analysis of the results investigated the individual's experience of negative behaviour and conflict at work without referring to the term "bullying". This approach was taken to reduce the influence of cognitive and emotional processes on the part of the participants. The words victim refers to those bullied and the word perpetrator to the bully. The findings of this article are expected to assist employees and employers with understanding this workplace phenomenon in order increase an awareness directed towards managing and preventing bullying from occurring in the workplace.

This article is divided into five parts. Part 1 consists of a review of the existing literature relevant to bullying behaviour in the form of negative acts. The Literature review will be followed by the research methodology in part 2 and data analysis in part 3. In part 4 the findings of the study relating to the prevalence of negative acts will be discussed and summarized. The paper will then be concluded in part 5 of the article with a discussion of the implications of the findings and a brief recommendation of future research to be conducted in this regard.

## **2. THE ACT OF BULLYING IN THE WORKPLACE**

### **2.1. Prevalence measures**

In order to establish the prevalence of workplace bullying researchers have typically used two related, yet different quantitative measures (Hoel & Cooper, 2000; Hoel *et al.*, 2001; Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2001; Lutgen-Sandvik *et al.*, 2006). The first measure utilises an operational method, which involves counting the occurrence of various negative acts over a specified period of time using a behavioural checklist. This method measures the exposure to negative acts objectively without requesting participants to label themselves as a victim of bullying. The participants'

responses are therefore less likely to be prompted by their cognitive and emotional processing of the term bullying, which will consequently yield more objective results (Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2001).

The second measure utilises a self-identification method, which allows a participant to identify him or herself subjectively as a victim of bullying based on a definition of workplace bullying. This method is, however, associated with a certain degree of underreporting (Lutgen-Sandvik *et al.*, 2006) because many participants decline the victim role, given that this role implies weakness and passivity, which are personal attributes that most people would feel do not fit their usual self image (Einarsen, 1999). For the purpose of this article both methods will be used.

## **2.2. Definition of negative acts**

One of the most startling impressions of even a cursory scan of case files concerning workplace bullying is the absolute ingenuity that perpetrators have shown in finding ways of inflicting misery on their victims (Randall, 2001). This study regards negative acts as any obvious or subtle behaviour that intimidate, offend, degrade or humiliate a particular person or a group of people in any given workplace. With almost a boundless set of bullying strategies available and an infinite supply of enthusiasm available for doing so, bullying behaviours should rather be categorised according to the effect that it may have on the victim and not the intention of the perpetrator (Leymann, 1996). In line with this principle negative acts that are frequently identified and associated with bullying are divided into five categories according to the effect the behaviour has on an individual irrespective of the intention of the perpetrator (Einarsen & Raknes, 1997 as cited in Hoel & Cooper, 2001a).

### **2.2.1. Work-related harassment**

Certain negative acts may cause an individual to feel isolated in the workplace. In other words these individuals experience an unpleasant feeling of standing apart or alone associated with a strong sense of emptiness and solitude resulting from inadequate levels of social relationships. Einarsen & Raknes (1997) categorised this form of behaviour as work-related harassment. Behaviour or negative acts that fall within this category include examples such as withholding information from someone, having one's responsibilities removed, withholding of resources, and unreasonable refusal of an application for leave, training or promotion.

### **2.2.2 Work overload**

Work overload entails increasing an employee's tasks to be performed and responsibility. Generally job enlargement is a means used to increase job satisfaction by eliminating boring job cycles (Grobler, Wörnich, Carrell, Elbert, & Hatfield, 2002). However, when the behaviour is used to create undue pressure to produce work, unnecessary disruptions in workflow or set unreasonable job demands and impossible deadlines the behaviour becomes a form of bullying (Hoel & Cooper, 2001a).

### **2.2.3. Personal derogation**

Examples of negative acts that falls within the category of personal derogation (or destabilisation) include examples such as the failure to give credit when due, being given meaningless tasks, removal of responsibilities, public professional humiliation and persistent, personal, unwarranted and/or invalid criticism (Hoel & Cooper, 2001a).

#### **2.2.4. Social exclusion**

One suggested sociological definition of social exclusion explains it as a multidimensional process of progressive social rupture, detaching groups and individuals from social relations and institutions and preventing them from full participation in the normal prescribed activities of the society in which they live (Power & Wilson, 2000). Social isolation is described as a problematic social interaction, which is manifested when an individual maintains fewer, or less satisfactory social relationships that the person really desires (Franzoi, 1996). Furthermore, we can not underestimate the social meaning of work (Ehlers, 2004). Examples of behaviour aimed at creating social isolation includes personal insults and/or name calling, teasing and/or inappropriate jokes, belittling opinions, constant undervaluing of efforts and/or a denial of accomplishments and destructive sarcasm (Hoel & Cooper, 2001a).

#### **2.2.5. Violent threats and intimidation**

Words are often described as the most powerful weapon in the armoury of bullies and repeated verbal threats of violence can be far more terrifying than physical violence (Mellor, 2000). This behavioural category includes examples of physical abuse, which is behaviour that not only causes pain, injury, or other physical suffering or bodily harm, but also feelings of intimidation (Bergh & Theron, 2003). On the other hand psychological abuse, also referred to as emotional abuse, includes verbal and non-verbal expressions (Randall, 2001) and is a form of abuse characterised by a person subjecting or exposing another to behaviour that is psychologically harmful. Examples of such behaviour include verbal and non-verbal threats of physical violence or harm, physical assault, hostility, damage to property and extreme intimidation.



### **2.3. The prevalence of negative acts**

Hoel & Cooper (2001b) concluded that 13.3% of the participants reported experiencing “someone that was withholding information which affects your performance” as the most prevalent negative act. They also established that 3.5% of the participants reported experiencing “having key responsibilities removed or replaced with more trivial or unpleasant tasks” regularly and that 2.1% of the participants experienced “being humiliated or ridiculed in connection with your work” on a regular basis, with 1.4% of the participants reporting being subjected to “spreading of gossip and rumours about you” regularly. For the purpose of this article the findings of the study conducted by Hoel & Cooper (2001b) will be used as a benchmark to compare prevalence of negative acts in a South African sample with international samples. Based on findings reported in Hoel & Cooper (2001b) the following single variable hypotheses are stated:

Hypothesis 1: *At least 13.3% of the participants reported being exposed to “someone that was withholding information which affects your performance” as a regular experience.*

Hypothesis 2: *At least 3.5% of the participants reported being exposed to “having key responsibilities removed or replaced with more trivial or unpleasant tasks” as a regular experience.*

Hypothesis 3: *At least 2.1% of the participants reported being exposed to “being humiliated or ridiculed in connection with your work” as a regular experience.*

Hypothesis 4: *At least 1.4% of the participants reporting being exposed to “spreading gossip and rumours about you” on a regular basis.*

According to the United Kingdom's National Workplace Bullying Advice Line bullying behaviour is behind all forms of harassment, discrimination, prejudice, abuse, conflict and violence. When bullying has an obvious bias towards race or gender it is expressed as racial discrimination or sexual harassment respectively. Bullying differs from harassment in that it lacks an obvious bias and the fact that it can result from a single or small number of incidents whereas bullying tends to be an accumulation of many small incidents over a long period of time.

The United Kingdom's National Workplace Bullying Advice Line also found that approximately 5% of the enquiries which they received during the period 01 January 1996 – 31 January 2004 involved probable racial, sexual and disability abuse or discrimination. According to the United Kingdom's National Workplace Bullying Advice Line the percentage of these enquiries are low mainly due to the fact that these forms of discrimination and harassment are prohibited in terms of legislation. South African legislation also specifically prohibits unfair discrimination and sexual harassment (Grogan, 2007). It is therefore expected that the study will report low figures of probable racial, sexual and disability abuse or discrimination. Accordingly it is hypothesised that:

*Hypothesis 5: Less than 5% of the participants indicated that they have been subjected to a negative act bearing "unwanted sexual attention" on a regular basis when measured by means of the operational method.*

*Hypothesis 6: Less than 5% of the participants indicated that they have been subjected to a negative act bearing "offensive remarks or behaviour with reference to your race or ethnicity" on a regular basis when measured by means of the operational method.*

Hoel & Cooper (2000) concluded that managers or persons in formal positions were in the majority (74.7%) of the incidences reported as perpetrators. The equivalent figures in this specific study were 36.7% for peers or colleagues, 6.7% for subordinates and 7.8% for clients (Hoel & Cooper, 2000). Workplace bullying can therefore occur horizontally between, for example, male and female colleagues, managers and subordinates or even upwards or downwards between different organisational levels (Branch, Sheenan, Barker, & Ramsay, 2004).

The United Kingdom National Workplace Bullying Advice Line reports that over 50% of the reported perpetrators were females, probably due to the fact that the majority of the callers represented employees in the teaching, nursing and social work industries called the advice line and the fact that these industries have a higher than average percentage of female managers. However, the United Kingdom's National Workplace Bullying Advice Line found that bullying is not a gender issue. Although they have no hard data on bullying-target-gender combinations they generally found that a bully prefers the same gender target on the basis that one knows one's own gender best and being intelligent bullies are usually keen to remain outside the provisions of anti-sexual harassment and discrimination laws. In light of the findings presented by the UK National Workplace Bullying Advice Line it is hypothesised that:

*Hypothesis 7: The gender of the majority of the reported perpetrators will correspond with the gender of the majority of the participants in the study.*

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The target population for this study consisted of adult employees employed by a mine in Mpumalanga. This industry was deemed appropriate due to the nature of the mining industry where it was expected that workplace bullying would occur to some degree due to the intricate nature of the industry. The sample consisted of 159 employees employed on a full time or part time basis participating in a certain health and safety related in-house training session. Table 1 provides a demographic profile of the participants who participated in this study. In this study 129 participants were males and 30 participants were females. The majority of the participants fell within the age category between 31-40 years (39.6%). Approximately 45.3% of the participants identified their organisational status as employees, 47.8% as middle management, and 6.9% as senior management. When considering work experience the majority (23.3%) reported up to 5 years work experience.

**Table 1: Demographic profile of participants**

		<b>Total N</b>	<b>Total %</b>
<b>Age</b>	18 - 30 years*	42	26.4
	31 – 40 years**	63	39.6
	41 – 50 years***	37	23.2
	51+ years****	17	10.7
<b>Gender</b>	Male	129	81.1
	Female	30	18.9
<b>Marital Status</b>	Married	112	70.4
	Divorced/Separated	9	5.7
	Widowed	4	2.5
	Single/never married	34	21.4

<b>Highest Level of Education</b>	Attended school	7	4.4
	Grade 12	63	39.6
	Diploma/Degree	70	44
	Higher Diploma/Degree	16	10.1
	Masters Diploma/Degree	3	1.9
	Doctorate	0	0
<b>Work experience</b>	0 – 05 years	37	23.3
	06 - 10 years	32	20.1
	10 - 15 years	29	18.2
	16 - 20 years	31	19.5
	21 - 25 years	12	7.5
	25+ years	18	11.3
<b>Employment status</b>	Full time	158	99.4
	Part time	1	0.6
<b>Organisational level</b>	Employee	72	45.3
	Middle management	76	47.8
	Senior management	11	6.9

\* Age categories 18-25 and 26-30 were combined to create the age category 18-30

\*\* Age categories 31-35 and 36-40 were combined to create the age category 31-40

\*\*\* Age categories 41-45 and 46-50 were combined to create the age category 41-50

\*\*\*\* Age categories 51-55 and 55+ were combined to create the age category 51+

### 3.1. Measuring instrument

The study utilised the revised English version of the Negative Acts Questionnaire (NAQ-R) developed by Einarsen, Raknes, Mattheisen and Hellesoy (1994) to measure the perceived exposure to the act of bullying in the workplace. The NAQ-R was tested in a representative survey of 4996 United Kingdom employees recruited from 70 organisations in the United Kingdom (Einarsen &

Hoel, 2001). This study reported a response rate of 43% and internal consistency reliability of 0.92 as measured by the use of Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The current study reported an internal consistency reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) of 0.94.

**Table 2: Response rate and Cronbach's alpha coefficient**

<b>Response Rate</b>	100%
<b>Cronbach <math>\alpha</math></b>	0.94

The first part of the NAQ-R contains a list of 29 behavioural items, which has no reference to the term bullying. This has the advantage of allowing the participants to respond to each item without having to be labelled as being bullied. The second part of the questionnaire introduces the definition of workplace bullying, which was developed by Einarsen and Skogstad (1996). This definition is followed by the several questions that must be answered with reference to the definition. The participants who confirmed that they have been bullied in the workplace were asked to indicate its frequency, duration, number of male and female perpetrators and the organisational position of the perpetrator. The participants also had to indicate whether they had witnessed others being bullied at work. This study therefore used two methods to investigate the prevalence of workplace bullying, namely the operational and self-identification method.

### **3.1.1. The operational method**

The prevalence is established by counting the occurrence of various negative acts over a specified period of time by using a behavioural checklist. Each listed negative act was accompanied by five alternative answers with regard to the frequency of their experience. The alternatives included "never", "now and then", "monthly", "weekly", and "daily".

### **3.1.2. The self-identification method**

To establish the prevalence and intensity of workplace bullying, the participants' perception of being bullied is measured by asking them to indicate whether they had been a target of bullying within the past six months based upon the definition which was introduced. This question was accompanied by six alternative answers being "no", "yes, very rarely", "yes, now and then", "yes, several times a month", "yes, several times a week", and "yes, almost daily".

### **3.2. Research procedure**

Data was collected by means of a questionnaire after permission was obtained from the Human Resources Department. To encourage participation the questionnaire was anonymous and voluntary. Since the information collected in the questionnaire had to be treated in a strictly confidential manner the participants were not required to use their names on any documents. Each questionnaire was assigned a unique survey code for purposes of statistical analysis.

## **4. RESULTS**

Table 3 indicates that more than one quarter (27.7%) of the participants in this study was bullied at some stage of their career, which is in line with previous findings (Hoel & Cooper, 2000). When the time frame was extended to five years prior to the study the figure rose slightly to 28.9%. When considering the total sample the figures in table 3 reveal that 46.5% of the participants reported having witnessed workplace bullying within their work environment in the last five years prior to the study.

**Table 3: Summary of participants' self-identified experience of bullying and observations**

<b>Have you been bullied at work over the last six months?</b>	<b>Total N</b>	<b>Total %</b>
No	115	72.3
Yes, very rarely	27	17
Yes, now and then	11	7
Yes, several times a month	5	3.1
Yes, several times a week	0	0
Yes, almost daily	1	0.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>100</b>
Total indicating “yes” irrespective of the frequency (Group1)	44	27.7
Total indicating “yes” excluding “very rarely” and “now and then”	6	3.8
Total indicating “no” (Group 2)	115	72.3

  

<b>Have you ever been bullied at work over the last five years</b>	<b>Total N</b>	<b>Total %</b>
Yes	46	28.9
No	113	71.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>100</b>

  

<b>Have you ever witnessed bullying at work over the last five years</b>	<b>Total N</b>	<b>Total %</b>
Yes	74	46.5
No	85	53.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>100</b>



Table 4 presents the participants' exposure to a list containing 29 negative acts. The participants were asked to state how frequently they had been exposed to the negative acts over a period of six months. For the purpose of this article response categories "about weekly" and "about daily" have been combined to make one category to represent a regular experience. In the combined "weekly/daily" category the study reports that the most frequent negative act was the act where someone withheld information affecting performance. This study expected that at least 13.3% of the participants reported the exposure to "someone withholding information which affects your performance" as a regular experience. Hypothesis 1 is therefore supported in that 15.7% of the participants reported that they have been exposed to this negative act on a regular basis.

Hypothesis 2 stated that at least 3.5% of the participants reported "having key responsibilities removed or replaced with more trivial or unpleasant tasks" as a regular experience. This hypothesis is supported in that 8.2% of the participants experienced this negative act on a weekly/daily basis. Table 4 also reveals that 5.7% of the participants reported "being humiliated or ridiculed in connection with your work" on a regular basis. Hypothesis 3 stating that at least 2.1% of the participants reported being exposed to "being humiliated or ridiculed in connection with your work" on a regular basis is therefore supported by the findings presented in table 4. When considering the negative act of "spreading of gossip and rumours about you" 6.3% of the participants reported a regular experience thereof. Hypothesis 4 stating that at least 1.4% of the participants reported being exposed to "spreading gossip or rumour about you" on a regular basis is therefore also supported by the finding of this study.

Table 4 indicates that 3.1% of the participants reported the exposure to unwanted sexual attention on a regular basis. Hypothesis 5 stating that less than 5% of the participants reported being subjected to a negative act bearing unwanted sexual attention on a weekly basis when measured by

means of the operational method is therefore supported. When considering the participants' responses on being subjected to offensive remarks or behaviour with reference to their race or ethnicity, table 4 reveals that 4.4% was subjected to this form of negative act regularly. Hypothesis 6 stated that less than 5% of the participants reported being subjected to a negative act bearing offensive remarks or behaviour with reference to his or her race or ethnicity on a weekly basis when measured by means of the operational method.

**Table 4: Summary of the experience of negative behaviour at work**

<b>Over the last six months, how often have you been subjected to the following negative acts at work?</b>								
	<b>Never</b>		<b>Now and Then</b>		<b>Monthly</b>		<b>Weekly/Daily*</b>	
	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Someone withholding information which affects your performance	37	23.3	75	47.2	22	13.8	25	15.7
Unwanted sexual attention	134	84.3	16	10.1	4	2.5	5	3.1
Being humiliated or ridiculed in connection with your work	80	50.3	57	35.8	13	8.2	9	5.7
Being ordered to do work below your level of competence	73	54.9	50	31.4	15	9.4	21	13.2
Having key areas of responsibility removed or replaced with more trivial or unpleasant tasks	71	44.7	51	32.1	24	15.1	13	8.2
Spreading of gossip and rumours about you	8.2	51.6	46	28.9	21	13.2	10	6.3
Being ignored, excluded or being 'sent to Coventry'	89	56	43	27	15	9.4	12	7.5
Having insulting or offensive remarks made about your person (i.e. habits and background), your attitudes or your private life	97	61	49	30.8	7	4.4	6	3.8

Being shouted at or being the target of spontaneous anger (or rage)	98	61.6	48	30.2	8	5	5	3.1
Intimidating behaviour such as finger-pointing, invasion of personal space, shoving, blocking/barring the way	113	71.1	35	22	7	4.4	4	2.6
Hints or signals from others that you should quit your job	122	76.6	24	15.1	7	4.4	6	3.7
Threats of violence or physical abuse	144	90.6	10	6.3	2	1.3	3	1.9
Repeated reminders of your errors or mistakes	76	47.8	60	37.7	17	10.7	6	3.7
Being ignored or facing a hostile reaction when you approach	97	61	40	25.2	10	6.3	12	7.6
Persistent criticism of your work and effort	91	57.2	40	25.2	20	12.6	8	5
Having your opinions and views ignored	60	37.7	61	38.4	26	16.4	12	7.5
Insulting messages, telephone calls or e-mails	129	81.1	22	13.8	5	3.1	3	1.9
Practical jokes carried out by people you don't get on with	113	71.1	35	22	6	3.8	5	3.2
Systematically being required to carry out tasks which clearly fall outside your job descriptions, e.g. private errands	93	58.5	40	25.2	18	11.3	8	5
Being given tasks with unreasonable targets or deadlines	73	45.9	50	31.4	15	9.4	21	13.2
Having allegations made against you	105	66	37	23.3	11	6.9	6	3.8
Excessive monitoring of your work	77	48.4	47	29.6	18	11.3	17	10.7
Offensive remarks or behaviour with reference to your race or ethnicity	120	75.5	22	13.8	10	6.3	7	4.4
Pressure not to claim something which by right you are entitled to (e.g. sick leave, holiday entitlement, travel expenses)	116	73	26	16.4	10	6.3	7	4.4

Being the subject of excessive teasing and sarcasm	123	77.4	27	17	6	3.8	3	1.9
Threats of making your life difficult, e.g. over-time, night work, unpopular tasks	124	78	18	11.3	9	5.7	8	5
Attempts to find fault with your work	98	61.6	34	21.4	18	11.3	9	5.6
Being exposed to an unmanageable workload	84	52.8	45	28.3	17	10.7	13	8.2
Being moved or transferred against your will	129	81.1	14	8.8	9	5.7	6	3.8

*\*Response categories "about weekly" and "about daily" have been combined to make one category.*

The responses on the 29 items were added for each respondent to obtain a total negative acts score.

The mean score for all the respondents was 46.2 with a standard deviation of 15.7.

**Table 5: Total negative acts score**

<b>Mean</b>	46.2
<b>N</b>	159
<b>SD</b>	15.7

When considering the demographic information provided by the 159 employees who participated in this study, it has been reported that a total of 129 (81.1%) of the participants were male with only 30 (18.9%) being female. Due to the nature of the mining industry in which this study was conducted it was not unusual that the majority of participants were males. The findings indicated in table 6 below reveal that the participants who indicated that they have experienced bullying within the last six months prior to the study reported that they were more likely to be bullied by one or more male perpetrator(s) than one or more female perpetrator(s). Almost 16% of the participants

reported being bullied in the workplace by at least one male perpetrator, while 9.4% of the participants reported being bullied by more than one male perpetrator. Only one participant (0.6%) reported being bullied by a female perpetrator, while 1.9% of the participants reporting that they had been bullied by more than one female perpetrator. In light of the figures presented in table 6 hypothesis 7, stating that the gender of the majority of the reported perpetrators will correspond with the gender of the majority of the participants' is supported.

**Table 6: Summary of perpetrator/s**

<b>How many persons bullied you</b>	<b>Number of males</b>	<b>Percentage of males</b>	<b>Number of females</b>	<b>Percentage of females</b>
Only one	25	15.7	1	0.6
One to Three	12	7.5	2	1.3
Four to Eight	2	1.3	0	0
More than eight	1	0.6	1	0.6

*\*Only group 1 completed this question (n=44)*

## **5. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS**

This article introduced the act of bullying in the workplace and investigated the prevalence thereof within a South African work context. This article presents an opportunity to understand negative behaviour which underlies almost all reprehensible behaviour expressed in the workplace. It also contributes to behavioural studies within the workplace by demonstrating that workplaces are not immune against bullying. The results should in effect heighten the important of understanding and acknowledging this workplace phenomenon.

## **5.1. Summary of findings**

Research into workplace bullying should be used to broaden our understanding of the acts associated with bullying behaviour. According to the results 27.7% of the participants indicated that they had experienced bullying in the workplace within six months prior to the study with various levels relating to the persistency of their experience. With the time period extended to five years prior to the study 28.9% reported having experienced bullying in the workplace with almost one in two (46.5%) reported having witnessed bullying in their workplace within the same time period.

The results also confirmed previous research findings that focussed on the experience of at least one negatively defined act on a weekly basis in the last six months. In general these results indicate that adult bullying is a real occurrence in the workplace. In line with previous international studies this study found that more than a quarter (28.9%) of the employees represented in the study suffered from being bullied at work at some point in the last five years (Hoel & Cooper, 2000).

Ten research hypotheses were developed for the purpose of exploring the prevalence of negative acts at a mine in Mpumalanga. Table 7 provides a summary of the hypotheses, which were only tentative estimates regarding the prevalence of negative acts based on prior international research findings.

**Table 7: Summary of hypothesis and findings**

<b>Hypothesis based on previous international research findings</b>	<b>Summary of findings</b>	
<p>Hypothesis 1: <i>At least 13.3% of the participants reported being exposed to “someone that was withholding information which affects your performance” as a regular experience.</i></p>	<p><b>15.7%</b></p>	<p>Hypothesis two is supported: experienced “someone withholding information which affects your performance” as a regular experience</p>
<p>Hypothesis 2: <i>At least 3.5% of the participants reported being exposed to “having key responsibilities removed or replaced with more trivial or unpleasant tasks” as a regular experience.</i></p>	<p><b>13%</b></p>	<p>Hypothesis three is supported: Experienced “having key responsibilities removed or replaced with more trivial or unpleasant tasks” as a regular experience.</p>
<p>Hypothesis 3: <i>At least 2.1% of the participants reported being exposed to “being humiliated or ridiculed in connection with your work” as a regular experience.</i></p>	<p><b>5.7%</b></p>	<p>Hypothesis four is supported: Experienced “being humiliated or ridiculed in connection with your work” as a regular experience</p>
<p>Hypothesis 4: <i>At least 1.4% of the participants reporting being exposed to “spreading gossip and rumours about you” on a regular basis.</i></p>	<p><b>6.3%</b></p>	<p>Hypothesis five is supported: Experienced “spreading gossip and rumours about you” on a regular basis</p>

Hypothesis 5:	<i>Less than 5% of the participants indicated that they have been subjected to a negative act bearing “unwanted sexual attention” on a regular basis when measured by means of the operational method.</i>	Hypothesis six is supported:  <b>3.1%</b> Experienced “unwanted sexual attention” on a regular basis when measured by means of the operational method.
Hypothesis 6:	<i>Less than 5% of the participants indicated that they have been subjected to a negative act bearing “offensive remarks or behaviour with reference to your race or ethnicity” on a regular basis when measured by means of the operational method.</i>	Hypothesis seven is supported:  <b>4.4%</b> Experienced “offensive remarks or behaviour with reference to your race or ethnicity” on a regular basis when measured by means of the operational method
Hypothesis 7:	<i>The gender of the majority of the reported perpetrators will correspond with the gender of the majority of the participants in the study.</i>	Hypothesis eight is supported:  The gender of the majority of the perpetrator corresponded with the gender if the majority of participants in the study being male

In line with international findings this study found that “someone that was withholding information which affects your performance”, being a form of work-related harassment is the most prevalent form of bullying in the workplace. One of the research objectives aimed at establishing the most prevalent forms of negative acts. Table 8 gives a summary of the ten most frequently encountered negative acts listed in ranked order.



**Table 8: Summary of the most frequent negative behaviour**

<b>Negative Behaviour</b>	<b>Regular Experience</b>	<b>Occasional Experience</b>
Someone withholding information which affects your performance	15.7%	13.8%
Being ordered to do work below your level of competence	13.2%	9.4%
Being given tasks with unreasonable targets and deadlines	13.2%	9.4%
Excessive monitoring of your work	10.7%	11.3%
Having key areas of responsibility removed or replaced with more trivial or unpleasant tasks	8.2%	15.1%
Being exposed to an unmanageable workload	8.2%	10.7%
Being ignored or facing a hostile reaction when you approach	7.6%	6.3%
Being ignored, excluded or being sent to Coventry	7.5%	9.4%
Having your opinions and views ignored	7.5%	16.4%
Spreading of gossip and rumours about you	6.3%	13.2%

In South Africa the most prevalent forms of harassment encountered in the workplace are sexual harassment, racial harassment, sexual orientation harassment and religious harassment with sexual harassment being by far the most prevalent form of harassment encountered in the workplace (Basson, Christianson, Garbers, Le Roux, Mischke, & Strydom, 2005). The term sexual harassment is used to name a certain social problem and refers to persistent and unwanted sexual advances ranging from physical violence to procuring sexual favours by threatening to withhold or grant

benefits (Grogan, 2007). This study found that unwanted sexual attention and racial harassment are still prevalent in the workplace despite the fact that it is prohibited in terms of South Africa's labour legislation. Organisations should therefore continue to pay special attention to these forms of harassment since employment relations would be seriously undermined if employees were to be discriminated against, victimised and harassed freely.

It has been noted in previous studies exploring the nature of workplace bullying that bullies are usually cunning enough to keep their unwarranted behaviour under wraps. Since the expression of unwarranted behaviour through discrimination has been prohibited by current legislation, bullies have modified their behaviours to such an extent that they safely remain outside the provisions of legislation (Randall, 2001). This could explain why only a moderate amount of participants reported exposure to these specific negative acts on a regular basis. The findings of this study reported perpetrators being identified on various levels of the organisational structure with the gender of the majority of the respondents correlating with the majority of the gender of the reported perpetrators. In this regard special attention should be given to the nature of the industry in which the study was conducted since this specific industry, being the mining industry, is dominated by males. In accordance with previous international studies the results suggest that managers or persons in formal positions were reported as perpetrators in the majority of incidents.

## **5.2. Managerial implications**

Some forms of bullying behaviour may be seen as everyday normal interactions (Leymann, 1996). When this behaviour becomes a repeated behaviour pattern, in the workplace it may be classified as a case of workplace bullying (Randall, 2001). Situations like this cannot be seen as a mere clash of personalities or a misunderstanding and should also not be confused with mild conflict or joking

around and horseplay (Von Bergen *et al.*, 2006). When considering the characteristics of adult bullying in the workplace, it becomes clear that workplace bullying differs from ordinary workplace conflict in that it consists of a pattern of unwelcome conduct (Rycroft, 2009) that infringes upon an employee's personal dignity, self-esteem and life opportunities (Randall, 2001).

It is in the best interest of employers to take action to minimise the likelihood of bullying in their workplace. If left unacknowledged and unmanaged it can severely affect efficiency, productivity and profitability through increased absenteeism, staff turnover and poor morale (Randall, 2001). Employers need to be aware that workplace bullying may not always be committed by an employee. The perpetrator may also be a client, customer, person in position of authority, a subordinate or peer and it can be carried out by an individual or a group. Employers should ultimately take responsibility and limit the consequences of such behaviours. Practical guidelines should be developed to assist all workplaces to identify, assess, minimise, control and review the risks to health, safety and welfare caused by workplace bullying.

Everyone in the workplace, no matter what their position, deserves to be treated with dignity and respect. No one should suffer bullying while going about his or her work. Bullying can happen in any workplace and is best dealt with by taking steps to prevent it before it becomes incorporated in an organisation's workplace culture. The risk of bullying is minimised in workplaces where everybody treats their colleagues with dignity and respect, management leads by example and makes it clear that bullying will not be tolerated and individuals are encouraged to report incidents of bullying, knowing that they will be dealt with seriously, fairly and in a timely way. If bullying does occur, early intervention will eliminate potentially complex disputes and prevent a pattern of bullying becoming entrenched in the workplace. Appropriate policies and procedures that everyone in the workplace is aware of and able to use are crucial for effective intervention.

### **5.3. Limitations and directions for further research**

The limitations in this study mainly relate to the collection of the data and the interpretation of the results. Firstly, this study employed a non-probability sampling approach, which might have compromised the representativeness of the sample. However, the purpose of this study was to obtain an overview of the situation in a specific mine. Future research may employ probability sampling to enable researchers to make inferences of larger populations. Secondly, the results of the study were based on a single context or single workplace in a specific industry. The results can therefore not be generalised to other work contexts or workplaces. The high number of male responses must also be taken into account when interpreting the data. When taking into consideration all the potential limitations of this study it can be argued that the results cannot be utilised as a point of departure for a comprehensive evaluation of the prevalence of workplace bullying in a South African work context.

### **5.4. Conclusion**

The results obtained in this study reveal valuable information in relation to estimates on the prevalence of bullying behaviour and negative acts in South Africa. The results of this study should, however, be strengthened by supportive data collected and interpreted in other workplaces and industries in South Africa. As pointed out in this article bullying behaviour can be expressed in a wide variety of devious ways ranging from verbal, physical or even written tactics to non-verbal attacks aimed at a victim's dignity, self-esteem and life opportunities. Today's modern world of business has created even more devious and frightening ways to bully and inflict misery upon a targeted victim. Modern technology, for example the use of the internet services such as facebook cannot be ignored as potential strategic means to be cruel and overbearing to those they perceive as

smaller as or weaker than them. These limitations should therefore inspire future South African researchers to define their research agendas to investigate the extent to which individuals are affected by workplace bullying.

## 6. REFERENCES

- Basson, A.C., Christianson, M.A., Garbers, C., Le Roux, P.A., Mischke, C., & Strydom, E.M. 2005. *Essential Labour Law*. 4th ed. Centurion: Labour Law Publications.
- Bergh, Z.C., & Theron, A.L. 2003. *Psychology in the work context*. 2nd ed. Cape Town: Oxford University Press Southern Africa.
- Branch, S., Sheenan, M., Barker, M., & Ramsay, S. 2004. Receptions of upward bullying: An interview study. Paper presented at the 4th International Conference on Bullying and Harassment in the Workplace. Bergen, Norway.
- Ehlers, L. 2004. *Labour Relations Practice in South Africa*. 2nd ed. Pretoria: EAMS Publishing.
- Einarsen, S. 1999. The nature and cause of bullying at work. *International Journal of Manpower*, 20 (1 and 2), 16-27.
- Einarsen, S., & Hoel, H. 2001. The Negative Acts Questionnaire: Development, Validation and revision of a measure of workplace bullying. Paper presented at the 10<sup>th</sup> European Congress on Work and Organizational Psychology. Prague.
- Einarsen, S. & Raknes, B.I. 1997. Harassment in the workplace and the victimization of men. *Violence and Victims*, 12, 247-263.
- Einarsen, S., & Skogstad, A. 1996. Bullying at work: epidemiological findings in public and private organisations. *European Journal of Work and Organisational Psychology*, 5, 185-201.
- Einarsen, S., Hoel, H., Zapf, D., & Cooper, C. 2003. The concept of bullying at work. In *Bullying and emotional abuse in the workplace: International Perspectives in research and practice* edited by S. Einarsen, H. Hoel, D. Zapf, & C. Cooper, 3-30. London: Taylor & Francis.
- Einarsen, S., Raknes, B.I., Mattheisen, S.B., & Hellesoy, H. 1994. Negative Acts Questionnaire.
- Franzoi, S.L. 1996. *Social Psychology*. Madison, Dubuque: Brown & Benchmark.

- Grobler, P.A., Wörnich, S., Carrell, M.R., Elbert, N.F., & Hatfield, R.D. 2002. *Human resource management in South Africa*. 2nd ed. London: Thomson Learning.
- Grogan, J. 2007. *Dismissal, discrimination and unfair labour practices*. 2nd ed. Cape Town: Juta & Co Ltd.
- Hoel, H., & Cooper, C.L. 2000. Destructive conflict and bullying at work. Extracts of study report compiled for the Launch of the Civil Services Race Equality Network.
- Hoel, H., & Cooper, C.L. 2001a. Origins of workplace bullying. Theoretical frameworks for explaining workplace bullying. In *Building a culture of respect. Managing bullying at work* edited by N. Tehrani, London: Taylor & Francis.
- Hoel, H., & Cooper, C. L. 2001b. Working with victims of workplace bullying. In *Good Practice in working with victims of violence* edited by H. Kemshall, & J. Pritchard, 1010-118. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Hoel, H., Cooper, C. L., & Faragher, B. 2001. The experience of bullying at work in Great Britain: The impact of organisational status. *European Journal of Work and Organisational Psychology, 10*, 414-425.
- Kemshall, H., & Pritchard, J. 2001. *Good practice in working with victims of violence*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Leymann, H. 1996. The content and development of mobbing at work. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology, 5*, 165-184.
- Lutgen-Sandvik, P., Tracy, S.J., & Alberts, J.K. 2006. Burned by Bullying in the American Workplace: Prevalence, Perception, Degree and Impact. *Journal of Management Studies*.
- Mellor, A. 2000. Child Victims of Bullying. In *Good practice in working with victims of violence* edited by H. Kemshall & J. Pritchard, 75-88. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Mikkelsen, E. G., & Einarsen, S. 2001. Bullying in Danish work-life: Prevalence and health correlates. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology, 10(4)*, 393-413.

- Pietersen, C. 2007. Interpersonal bullying behaviours in the workplace. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology*, 33 (1), 59-66.
- Power, A., & Wilson, W. 2000. *Social exclusion and the future of cities*. London: Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion. London School of Economics.
- Randall, P. 2001. *Bullying in adulthood: Assessing the bullies and their victims*. New York: Brunner-Routledge.
- Rycroft, A. 2009. Workplace Bullying: unfair discrimination, dignity of violence or unfair labour practice? 22nd Annual Labour Law Conference.
- Tehrani, N. 2001. *Building a culture of respect. Managing bullying at work*. New York: Taylor & Francis Inc.
- UK National Workplace Bullying Advice Line. History and statistics. Retrieved on January 05, 2009 from <http://www.bullyonline.org/workbully/worbal.htm>.
- Varhama, L.M., & Björkqvist, K. 2004. Conflict, burnout and bullying in a Finnish and a Polish company: Cross national comparison. *Perceptual and Motor Skill*, 98, 1234-1240.
- Von Bergen, C.W., Zavaletta, J.A., & Soper, B. 2006. Legal Remedies for workplace bullying: Grabbing the bully by the horns. *Employee Relations Law Journal*, 32 (3), 14-40.
- Workplace Bullying and Trauma Institute Report on Abusive Workplaces. 2003. *Workplace Bullying & Trauma Institute Report on Abusive Workplaces*. Retrieved October 20, 2007 from <http://bullyinginstitute.org/home/twd/bb/res/2003B>.



## CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

---

### 1. INTRODUCTION

As pointed out in the previous chapters workplace bullying consists of a variety of unreasonable and inappropriate forms of behaviour, both obvious and discrete, that intimidates, humiliates or causes harm to an individual or group within a workplace. Bullying is characterised by features of repetition or frequency, intensity, duration and an abuse or misuse of power (Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, & Cooper, 2003). At first bullying behaviour may seem insignificant (Leymann, 1996), but when it becomes a repeated pattern of behaviour that is undermining an individual's confidence, self-esteem and health it can no longer be ignored and regarded as a minuscule problem (Randall, 2001). In reality anyone of any age can become a victim of bullying (Mellor, 2000).

Two conceptual articles based on literature, past findings and an empirical study of certain concepts related to workplace bullying were prepared as a part of this study. The first article focussed on exploring the perception and prevalence of workplace bullying at a mine in Mpumalanga by means of comparing the results obtained by two similar yet different measures. The second article focussed on investigating the nature and manifestation of negative acts in the workplace. The results reported in the two articles indicated that workplace bullying is an undeniable occurrence in the South African work context. Notwithstanding the statutory and common law protection of employees, workplace bullying cases have generally not been very successful and victims are left with little relief if the bullying is not handled correctly from the initial onset (Interagency Round Table on Workplace Bullying, 2008a).

Despite the growing awareness of employee health and well being, there are still employees who start each work day with a sense of doom as victims of bullying behaviour in the workplace. They go through what seems like a normal day at the office on a state of high alert in anticipation of the next attack (Randall, 2001). The results reported in this study suggested that appropriate policies and procedures should be developed for the effective handling and prevention of workplace bullying. Ultimately, organisations and their employees should strive to build an organisational culture of mutual respect. This chapter provides general guidelines on handling workplace bullying based on practical ideas and procedures suggested by researchers and agencies that formed part of the Interagency Round Table on Workplace Bullying. The measures described in this chapter will help employees and organisations to develop strategies to deal with bullying behaviour. Since bullying can easily become a part of the organisational culture it is best dealt with by taking preventive steps.

## **2. DISCUSSION**

The aim of this study was to create an awareness of workplace bullying in South Africa, where limited research has been conducted in the past (Pietersen, 2007). Bullying is not acceptable workplace behavior and in light of the prevalence of workplace bullying and the experience of negative acts reported in this study, individuals, organisations and bystanders should focus on developing and implementing creative strategies aimed at handling such behaviour. In addition organisations should pay close attention to distinguish between bullying and managing. Management and leadership styles should be aimed at working with, understanding and motivating people rather than employing confrontational management styles associated with an abuse of power. According to Dalton, Hoyle and Wattz (2006) power is often associated with negative images such as manipulation, control, domination, corruption and coercion. They suggest that

organisations should differentiate between influence and power, where influence is the application of power through actions and examples set to change behaviour and attitudes. John P. Kotter once wrote that professional excellence requires the knack of knowing how to make power dynamics work for us, instead of against us (as cited in Dalton *et al.*, 2006: 317).

Due to the fact that discrimination and sexual harassment are specifically prohibited in terms of legislation, this study expected low figures in this regard. The moderate levels of bullying behaviour related to sexual harassment and discrimination highlight the importance of establishing parameters for the conduct within a labour relationship by means of legislation to ensure the protection of employees. Cases of bullying differ from harassment in that there is no obvious bias towards race or gender (Von Bergen, Zavaletta, & Soper, 2006). While there is legislation concerning sexual harassment, workplace bullying in contrast is not governed by any specific legislation and victims can only rely on general workplace laws. The results also indicate that perpetrators are most probably well aware of the provisions of current legislation. A close perusal of the results indicated that employees more frequently experienced negative behaviour that is categorised by Einarsen and Raknes (1997) as work-related harassment (as cited in Hoel & Cooper, 2001). This specific category of negative acts typically includes tactics such as withholding information to affect an individual's work performance. These tactics are, however, difficult to prove and also less regulated by legislation.

When the results obtained by means of the self-identification method are compared to the results obtained by means of the operational method a clear indication is presented that bullying is currently under reported to a certain degree. This could be a direct result of different interpretations on workplace bullying and a participant's social reality. It is therefore necessary to create and promote an awareness of this social problem in the workplace. The Interagency Round Table on

Workplace Bullying (2008a) noted that victims may fear retribution from the perpetrator if they report grievances and cooperate with inquiries. Although many people might not report, alternatively be aware that they have become a victim of bullying, the fact remains that it is a compelling problem. The guidelines provided in this chapter is of significant importance, If bullying is not reported or identified and handled it could result in any of the following consequences summarised by the Interagency Round Table on Workplace Bullying (2008a: 6):

- **Consequences for individuals:**

Workplace bullying can cause extensive physical and psychological problems that can also have an indirect impact on an individual's colleagues, clients, customers, business associates, family members and friends. Individuals who are bullied may experience effects such as stress, anxiety, and sleep disturbances; panic attacks and an impaired ability to make decisions; incapacity to work, concentration problems, loss of self-confidence and self-esteem or reduced output or performance; depression or a sense of isolation; physical injury; reduced quality of home and family life; and suicide.

- **Consequences for organisations:**

The consequences of workplace bullying may include a reduced efficacy, productivity and profitability; increased absenteeism, sick leave and staff turnover; poor morale, erosion of employee loyalty and commitment; increased costs associated with recruitment and training; adverse publicity and poor public image; and an unsafe work environment. It should, however, be noted that these consequences could also be influenced by various other internal and external organisational factors.

### **3. RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **3.1. Individual approach towards handling bullying**

Given the destruction brought by bullying, it is important to examine approaches towards prevention and intervention. Self-identified victims of bullying should realise that they are not the source of the problem. Lutgen-Sandvik and Sypher (2009) noted that researchers such as Rayner, Hoel and Cooper (2002) and Zapf and Einarsen (2003) concluded that there is probably no such thing as a victim personality and that it is equally unlikely that there is a bully personality. The recommendations discussed in the ensuing section are based on the Interagency Round Table on Workplace bullying guide for employees (2008b: 7-8).

##### **3.1.1. Check for a workplace bullying policy and complaint procedure**

Victims should immediately gain control over the situation by identifying the specific behaviour that they find offensive. By identify the kind of behaviour that they experience negatively, they can also identify the kind of change in behaviour that they want to experience. Victims should also immediately check whether the organisation has a policy on workplace bullying that is accompanied by a complaint or grievance procedure. It should be noted that complaint procedures generally consists of informal resolution procedures, which could be helpful in resolving unacceptable behaviour in a conciliatory manner before embarking upon a formal procedure.

### **3.1.2. Seek advice**

Victims can approach health and safety representatives, human resources officers, union officials or shop stewards for advice and assistance when lodging an informal or formal complaint. The Interagency Round Table on Workplace Bullying (2008b) advises victims not to make allegations of workplace bullying or harassment to people not involved in the handling of complaints. Alleged perpetrators are protected by certain provisions in law and may be able to take legal action if a complaint is not handled properly.

### **3.1.3. Keep a record**

Pearson (2001) recommended that victims should also keep a detailed diary of the nature of the bullying behaviour and record the specific dates, times, places and witnesses in as much detail as possible. Victims should ensure that the record is accurate and supported by other evidence when possible. A formal record might be necessary when lodging a formal complaint since authorities generally need formal evidence of wrongdoing (Lutgen-Sandvik & Sypher, 2009).

### **3.1.4. Approach the perpetrator**

Since each workplace is unique, the particular work environment will determine how an individual should approach the perpetrator. Rayner *et al.* (2002) recommend that a victim should confront perpetrator as soon as possible to prevent unwanted behaviour from escalating. The perpetrator must be clearly informed that the behaviour is unwanted, unacceptable and that it will not be tolerated in the future. If the victim feels uncomfortable, he or she can also ask someone to make a

polite request on his or her behalf. If the behaviour continues the individual should consider lodging a formal complaint.

### **3.1.5. Employee assistance programs and counselling**

Since workplace bullying can have a devastating mental and physical effect on a victim, they should also take special care of their physical and mental health. According to Lutgen-Sandvik and Sypher (2006) self-care and social support is essential in handling workplace bullying. In ensuring self-care a victim should consider taking time off, trying not to take the experience personally and spending quality time with his or her family. Some workplaces offer counselling services or employee assistance programmes (EAP). Assistance in this regard can help victims with developing strategies to deal with the bullying and the effects thereof.

### **3.2. Organisational approach towards handling bullying**

Organisations are the key agent in the socialisation process associated with the employment context. Its influence is continuously expanding and it is critical to offer a safe working environment that should not be jeopardised by the prevalence of workplace bullying. As mentioned before bullying can take place in any workplace and it is clearly an organisational, not merely an individual problem (Lutgen-Sandvik & Sypher, 2009). Organisations should never assume that the work environment is free of bullying if there are no obvious signs or complaints of such behaviour. Bullying can become a silent epidemic if victims are reluctant to take action against perpetrators.

Some victims might experience a sense of helplessness or defencelessness. The results of this study support the notion that bullying is often not reported or recognised. In some cases employees fear the negative consequences should they lodge a formal complaint. Others might be ashamed of what is happening to them resulting in a situation where they would rather remain silent than face the humiliation associated with admitting that they are bullied. In turn bullying can also become accepted as the way things are done and it ultimately becomes a part of the organisational culture (Tehrani, 2001). Organisations should therefore make it a priority to create bully-free workplaces and sustain top-level commitment to dignity for all employees (Lutgen-Sandvik & Sypher, 2009). The following recommendations discussed below are made based on a four step process developed by the Interagency Round Table on Workplace Bullying guide for employers (2008a: 6-7).

### **3.2.1. Assess the prevalence of workplace bullying**

Organisations should start the process of prevention and intervention by conducting an organisational wide assessment to determine whether bullying is taking place or not. Organisations can, for example, conduct a survey to gain a comprehensive picture of the work environment (Lutgen-Sandvik & Sypher, 2009). The survey should focus on assessing how people feel about their workplace and whether the employees have witnessed or experienced bullying. Conducting a survey will also introduce the issue of workplace bullying for discussion and allow employees to give confidential information about the issue. According to the Working Women's Centre of South Australia (2003) conducting a climate survey will benefit an organisation in a number of ways in that it will introduce workplace bullying into discussions. Lutgen-Sandvik and Sypher, (2006) suggest that the assessment or survey analysis should be followed by interviews or focus group discussions to flesh out the quantitative findings.



### **3.2.2. Assess the risk factors**

According to Hoel and Cooper (2000) organisations should focus on recognising signs of workplace bullying, for example excessive absenteeism, unusual errors made by employees, low levels of employee commitment and morale, and irritable or obsessive behaviour. It can be useful for organisations to identify and assess risk factors in the workplace that could lead to workplace bullying. According to Pearson (2001) these risk factors may include:

- **Organisational culture:**

Organisations where the views of employees are ignored or undervalued, or where there is poor communication, unequal treatment, constant teasing or inappropriate practical jokes are more likely to experience workplace bullying.

- **Organisational change:**

Change such as restructuring, downsizing or technological changes can promote bullying behaviour in circumstances where employees feel uncertain or insecure.

- **Work satisfaction:**

Increasing demands for efficiency and speed, unrealistic or unmanageable work schedules, poorly defined job descriptions, poor job security can contribute to bullying behaviours developing in the workplace.

- **Poor management practices:**

This includes poor communication skills and a lack of effective leadership styles.

### **3.2.3. Controlling the risk factors and developing a workplace bullying policy**

Once the risk factors have been identified organisations should implement measures to manage workplace bullying to the extent of prevention and intervention. According to Tehrani (2001) organisations should implement equitable rewards systems and consider promoting employee-level control over tasks by foster an appreciation for individual diversity and performance. The range of intervention and prevention efforts is literally unlimited (Lutgen-Sandvik & Sypher, 2009). Lutgen-Sandvik & Sypher (2006) suggest that organisations can create respectful climates by rewarding desirable behaviour openly. According to them organisational members will, in most cases, behave as desired if the rewards are meaningful.

Awareness sessions are another useful tool that will allow employees to reflect on workplace bullying as a contemporary workplace issue. These sessions will also encourage employees to evaluate their own behaviour by focussing on what constitutes workplace bullying and how to recognise it. Awareness sessions will assist in creating an ideal organisational culture where a commitment to prevent bullying behaviour in the workplace is illustrated.

Employees in positions associated with authority or power should understand the consequences of workplace bullying and acknowledge that they have a responsibility to ensure that a bully-free work environment is maintained. Although top-level commitment is crucial in the effective handling of workplace bullying, Lutgen-Sandvik and Sypher (2006) suggest that middle managers have the greatest responsibility in creating a dignity-based climate and they should ultimately refrain from aggressive and autocratic styles of supervision. Organisations should ultimately implement policies and procedures dealing with workplace bullying.

A written policy will clearly communicate that bullying behaviour in the workplace is unacceptable and that it will not be tolerated. Organisational members will abandon bullying behaviour when the consequences outweigh the personal rewards. According to Lutgen-Sandvik and Sypher (2006) operant learning must apply by using consequences to reform behaviour. According to Hoel and Cooper (2000) workplace bullying is a very sensitive issue and the success of the policy is dependent on the degree of commitment to the policy which exists within the entire organisation.

The Working Women's Centre of South Australia (2003: 15-18) suggests that any workplace bullying policy should:

- Clearly define workplace bullying,
- Include a statement about management intention to treat the issue seriously,
- List the options for resolving bullying in the workplace and potential outcomes of the resolution processes,
- List people's right in relation to this issue,
- Identify advice and support agencies,
- Identify the different roles people hold in relation to bullying.

Implementation of the policy should be followed by education and training. Throughout this process management should illustrate commitment to create trust and faith in the policy. If employees have no faith in management they will not use the policy. In addition special training is required for human resource personnel, supervisors or managers who will be responsible for resolving complaints of alleged workplace bullying (Lutgen-Sandvik & Sypher, 2009). It is critical that the employees assigned with this responsibility should have access to training in the areas of conducting impartial investigations. Organisations should also pay special attention to the potential

damages an investigation may cause to future relationships and therefore Hoel and Cooper (2000) suggested that organisations should attempt to respond timely, consistently and provide clear feedback throughout the process.

#### **3.2.4. Evaluate and review the policy**

Any policy and its related strategies and procedures will need to be reviewed on an ongoing basis to determine the impact it has had and to address any gaps identified during its implementation. It is therefore essential to include an evaluation process in the policy that explains how the policy will be evaluated, who will be responsible for the evaluation and the timeframe within which the evaluation will occur. When bullying behaviour is reported, such incidents should be dealt with promptly. Employees who feel that they have been subjected to bullying behaviour should be allowed to choose between making an informal or formal complaint. The procedures should therefore not require employees to make an informal complaint before making a formal complaint.

Informal procedures to resolve complaints should focus on the behaviour that is of concern to an employee rather than on the person who is being accused of being a bully. A non-blaming approach should be used to aim at changing the behaviour without building resistance. A system of appointing formal advisors in cases of bullying will provide victims with a useful first point of contact. The procedure should focus on getting an agreement by a party or parties to change their behaviour and encouraged individuals to take responsibility for their own behaviour. According to Belding (2005) bullies are goal driven and therefore the informal procedure will have to focus on changing the bully's perception of what is in his or her best interest.

One of the effects, irrespective of the intention of the perpetrator, is social isolation. Employees who feel that they are being bullied should therefore be encouraged to talk about their experiences and gain support from their union, family, friends, or colleagues. These employees should be encouraged to develop a wide support network and Hoel and Cooper (2000) strongly suggest that organisations provide victims of workplace bullying with practical support to restore their work confidence and self-esteem that could have been undermined by the experience of bullying.

Formal procedures should also be available when employees have tried and failed at resolving the problems on an informal level or when the impact on the victim has been so severe that he or she is unable to confidently use an informal complaint procedure (Hoel & Cooper, 2000). It is critical that the procedures allow for addressing workplace bullying irrespective of who the perpetrator is. In many cases the complainant's supervisor or manager is the alleged perpetrator. Hoel and Cooper (2000) suggest that the policy needs to reflect this reality and provide alternative channels to report such complaints.

The fear of being named could be a result of the fear that the matter will not be dealt with effectively. The issue of confidentiality is a very contentious and important issue in the success of the complaint procedure (Hoel & Cooper, 2000). It is, however, not fair or reasonable to ask someone to respond to allegations if the complaints are made anonymously. An anonymous complaint may cause an employee to suspect that the complaint is fabricated and only made up. The policy should therefore ensure that an employee will not be victimised as a result of their complaint and the complaining employee should be protected during the procedure. When employees understand their rights and the steps involved in the formal procedures and believe that management will take their complaint seriously they will be less worried about being named.

Organisations should take progressive disciplinary action against bullying behaviour (Lutgen-Sandvik & Sypher, 2009). For a first offence a warning should normally be given, depending on the severity of the behaviour. If the unacceptable behaviour continues, it should be considered a punishable offence. Hoel and Cooper (2000) suggest that organisations look into the possible relocation of the alleged perpetrator if behaviour is not corrected by a series of warnings.

### **3.3. Legal remedies**

It has already been mentioned in the previous chapters that bullying is difficult to define and relates closely to harassment, victimisation, intimidation and discrimination. Although South African Labour Legislation currently does not provide a specific legal remedy for cases of workplace bullying, individuals still have a number options depending on the specific nature of the bullying behaviour. Employees generally enjoy protection under the Basic Conditions of Employment Act 75 of 1997, the Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995, the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998, and Occupational Health and Safety Act 85 of 1993 (Grogan, 2007).

The Occupational Health and Safety Act enforce the Common Law principle that it is the employer's duty to provide healthy and safe working conditions (Ehlers, 2004). Employers who are found to be negligent may face heavy fines or even prison sentences. A resignation based on intolerable working conditions can for example lead to a claim for constructive dismissal. Under the Labour Relations Act employees are protected against unfair dismissals. Employees are also protected against unfair labour practices in terms of the Labour Relations Act, in which a specific list of unfair conduct by an employer is provided. Under the Employment Equity Act employees are protected against discrimination and harassment based on grounds of race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, family responsibility, ethnic or social origin, sexual orientation, age, disability,

religion, belief, political opinion, culture, language or birth. The Code of Good Conduct: Sexual Harassment specifically protects employees against any form of sexual harassment in the workplace.

In this regard it is recommended that further research should be conducted to establish whether a Code of Good Practice for the prevention of bullying in the workplace should be developed to protect employees against more generalised forms of harassment as discussed in this study. An important legal issue that will have to enjoy a considerable amount of attention is what Leighton (2001) calls the “floodgates” argument created by all the potential legal actions that will follow as a result of perceived workplace bullying. According to Leighton (2001) this argument presents a control mechanism with which a legal system can prevent courts and tribunals from becoming overwhelmed by particular types of claims. It should, however, also be noted that litigation should be the last resort in any case of workplace bullying. It is firmly recommended that organisations develop and should implement internal procedures to handle workplace bullying, and that they should take this responsibility very seriously.

#### **4. DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

When taking into consideration the limitations discussed in chapter 2 and chapter 3 it can be argued that the results reported in this study should be utilised as a point of departure for a comprehensive evaluation of the prevalence of workplace bullying in a South African work context. To fully conceptualise the individual experience and perception of workplace bullying both quantitative and qualitative research is needed across different industries. The perception of the alleged perpetrators should also be investigated in future research to broaden our understanding of this workplace phenomenon. A follow up study is recommended where more employees from a variety of

industries should participate. Future studies could also use interviews with participants to explore the effectiveness of prevention and intervention strategies as discussed in this chapter.

The advantages of knowledge in this area are highlighted by the number and severity of the potential consequences of workplace bullying. There is no doubt that workplace bullying is a complex workplace issue. Methodology issues with prevalence studies, a lack of a unifying definition of what constitutes workplace bullying, the behavioural aspects of workplace bullying and bullying acts, and the discussion of the variety of antecedents that causes the prevalence of workplace bullying have ensured that this workplace phenomenon will continue to need research as the work environment continues to change.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

The prevalence of workplace bullying and the severity of its consequences are frightening. Understanding and overcoming bullying behaviour in the workplace requires knowledge of the underlying issues concerned. International studies have shown that workplace bullying is an issue that requires energy, wisdom and creativity in order to change and prevent its destructive patterns from spreading throughout an organisation. This chapter reviewed valuable information in relation to estimates on the prevalence of workplace bullying and potential measures of prevention and intervention.

As demonstrated in this chapter, the destructive consequences of workplace bullying are generally inexcusable, since it can be managed in the workplace. Lutgen-Sandvik and Tracy (2009) noted that despite certain capital-labour ideologies that dehumanise employees and posit that increased pressure increases productivity, there is no evidence that bullying nets any substantive gains for



organisations. Increasing an awareness of bullying in the workplace and encouraging employees to report situations where they have become victims thereof can make an enormous difference. Organisations on the other hand should also accept their responsibility to reengineer and introduce policies and procedures to handle challenging situations where bullying behaviour may be the cause of actual or potential workplace disruptions. This study is of paramount importance in understanding workplace bullying as a starting point in investigating the overall prevalence and handling of workplace bullying in the South African work environment.

## 6. REFERENCES

- Belding, S. 2005. *Dealing with the employee from hell. A guide to coaching and motivation*. London: Kogan Page Limited.
- Dalton, M., Hoyle, D.G., & Watts, M. 2006. *Human relations*. 3rd ed. United States of America: Thomson South-Western.
- Ehlers, L. 2004. *Labour relations practice in South Africa*. 2nd ed. Pretoria: EAMS Publishing.
- Einarsen, S., Hoel, H., Zapf, D., & Cooper, C.L. 2003. *Bullying and emotional abuse in the workplace - International perspectives in research and practice*. London: Taylor & Francis.
- Grogan, J. 2007. *Dismissal, discrimination and unfair labour practices*. 2nd ed. Cape Town: Juta & Co Ltd.
- Hoel, H., & Cooper, C.L. 2000. *Destructive conflict and bullying at work*. Extracts of study report compiled for the Launch of the Civil Services Race Equality Network.
- Hoel, H., & Cooper, C.L. 2001. Origins of workplace bullying. Theoretical frameworks for explaining workplace bullying. In *Building a culture of respect. Managing bullying at work* edited by N. Tehrani, London: Taylor & Francis.
- Interagency Round Table on Workplace Bullying. 2008a. *Preventing workplace bullying. A practical guide for employers*. New South Wales: Work Cover Inc.
- Interagency Round Table on Workplace Bullying. 2008b. *Preventing workplace bullying. A practical guide for employees*. New South Wales: Work Cover Inc.
- Kemshall, H., & Pritchard, J. 2001. *Good Practice in working with victims of violence*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Leighton, P. 2001. Dignity at work. In *Building a culture of respect. Managing bullying at work* edited by N. Therani. 97-114. New York: Taylor & Francis Inc.

- Leymann, H. 1996. Mobbing at work and the development of post-traumatic stress disorders. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 5(2), 251-267.
- Lutgen-Sandvik, P., & Sypher, B.D. 2009. *Destructive Organizational Communication*. New York: Routledge Press.
- Mellor, A. 2000. Child Victims of Bullying. In *Good Practice in working with victims of violence* edited by H. Kemshall & J. Pritchard. 75-88. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Pearson, P. 2001. *Keeping well at work*. London: Kogan Page Ltd.
- Pietersen, C. 2007. Interpersonal bullying behaviours in the workplace. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology*, 33 (1), 59-66.
- Randall, P. 2001. *Bullying in adulthood. Assessing the bullies and their victims*. New York: Taylor & Francis Inc.
- Rayner, C., Hoel, H., & Cooper, C.L. 2002. *Workplace bullying: What we know, who is to blame and what can we do?* London: Taylor & Francis.
- Tehrani, N. 2001. *Building a culture of respect. Managing bullying at work*. New York: Taylor & Francis Inc.
- Von Bergen, C. W., Zavalette, J.A. ., & Soper, B. 2006. Legal Remedies for workplace bullying: Grabbing the bully by the horns. *Employee Relations Law Journal*, 32 (3), 14-40.
- Working Women's Centre of South Australia. 2003. *Workplace Bullying: Making a difference*. South Australia: Working Women's Centre SA Inc.
- Zapf, D. & Einarsen, S. 2003. *Individual antecedents of bullying*. In *Bullying and Emotional Abuse in the Workplace: International Perspectives in Research and Practice* edited by S. Einarsen, H. Hoel, D. Zapf, & C.L. Cooper (165-184). London: Taylor & Francis.

## ANNEXURE A

### EDITORIAL POLICY AND GUIDELINES FOR CONTRIBUTORS EDITORIAL MISSION

It is the purpose of the journal to promote and facilitate the understanding and development of theories and practices concerned with people in relation to employment in its broadest sense, by providing a forum for constructive debate, discussion, analysis, report and commentary.

#### SCOPE OF THE JOURNAL

Apart from articles of an academic nature which are research based, the journal will publish commentaries, analyses, overviews, case studies, survey results and reports on aspects related to employment relations (in the broadest sense) in South and southern Africa in particular — as well as any relevant international issues in terms of current ideas, theory-building and developments in practice. While interested authors from any country are invited to submit their work for possible publication, Africa-related themes are especially encouraged in the context of the dire need to develop indigenous theory and understanding of people management in the African context. “Employment relations” is a term which is broadly defined as including aspects related to: work, employment and unemployment; labour and trade unionism; organisational behaviour, change and development; education, training and management development; labour law; collective bargaining, direct and indirect forms of worker participation and industrial democracy at all levels from the shop floor to the national level of tripartism; labour economics and labour market developments; forms of industrial conflict; organisational and crosscultural communication; national labour policy trends and developments; human resource management topics, including, but not limited to, equal opportunities, affirmative action, discrimination, diversified and multi-cultural workforces, human resource planning, job and work design, recruitment and selection, organisation entry, performance management, career and succession management, health, safety and employee well-being, motivation, leadership, remuneration and reward management; broader environmental trends as they relate to employment; and international comparative employment relations and themes related to people management strategies and practices in general. The journal will therefore be of interest to practitioners, researchers, academics, trainers and educators as well as policy-makers in the private, public and semi-public sectors of South Africa and other countries.

#### SUBMISSION

The journal welcomes the submission of manuscripts by policymakers, practitioners, academics and researchers. Contributions for the *Academic* section (accredited) are especially welcome. The criteria for acceptance are based on the soundness of the research base and/or the academic rigour of the arguments provided. Also welcome for the *Forum* section (non-accredited) are comments and/or reports on interesting and relevant developments and/or case studies with significant practical value but without the necessary theoretical or academic underpinning. As far as possible, manuscripts should display a fine balance between well attested facts and well-informed opinion and argument and a writing style which is intelligible to specialists and non-specialists. Manuscripts should preferably be submitted in English, in double-spaced typescript with wide margins. Articles for the *Academic* section should be between 5 000 and 10 000 words, and those for the *Forum* section between 2 000 and 5 000 words. All submissions should have a title of preferably no more than fifteen words and should be accompanied by a brief autobiographical note which

includes the name(s) if the author(s), the position held and the name of the employer as well as an abstract of 100-150 words. The abstract and the note should be typed on separate pages. As far as possible, manuscripts should be produced on a computer with an IBM PC-compatible package (preferably WP8). **Three copies** of the manuscript should be submitted together with the **disk**. The word-processing package and the name of the document should be clearly indicated on the disk and the manuscript. The disk may be returned to the author on request. Clearly numbered graphs and figures should be typed or drawn on separate sheets, preferably in the form of camera-ready copies. The place in the text where figures, graphs or tables should be inserted must be clearly marked. The Harvard system of referencing should be used. Footnotes should be avoided; if notes are necessary these should be endnotes. Italics (underlining) should be avoided and should be reserved for emphasis. (Prospective contributors may use recent copies of the journal as guidelines.) The Editor reserves the right to accept other styles, to make minor alterations to the style of to reject any manuscript because of style, content or other deficiencies.

### **REFEREEING PROCEDURE**

The Editor will decide whether to publish an article or not. Manuscripts may be evaluated by members of the Editorial Committee - especially those intended for the Academic section of the journal. The journal subscribes to a "blind" refereeing procedure.

### **COPYRIGHT**

Authors are required to indicate whatever their manuscript has been submitted or published elsewhere - even in a different form such as a paper at a conference. Also, authors who submit manuscripts for publication guarantee that the work contains nothing which may be an infringement of any existing copyright and indemnify the publisher against any breach of such warranties. Furthermore, all articles published in the journal are subject to the journal's copyright and may not be published or reproduced in any form without the prior consent of the editor.

### **EDITORIAL ADDRESS**

The Editor  
*South African Journal of Labour Relations*  
Graduate School of Business Leadership  
Unisa  
PO Box 392  
0003 Pretoria  
\*\*\*\*\*

## ANNEXURE B

samancor<sup>CR</sup>



**Middelburg Ferrochrome**

Address:  
Hendrina Road  
Middelburg, 1055  
Private Bag X251846  
Middelburg, 1050  
Telephone number: +27 (0) 13 249 4497  
Facsimile number: +27 (0) 13 249 4895

**Middelburg Ferrochrome**

*A business unit of  
Samancor Chrome Limited*

Registered Address:  
Block B, Cullinan Place, Cullinan Close  
Morningside, Sandton, 2196  
PostNet Suite 803, Private Bag X9  
Benmore, 2010  
Telephone number: +27 (0) 11 245 1000  
Facsimile number: +27 (0) 11 245 1200  
www.Samancorcr.com

18 August 2008

**TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN**

**SURVEY : MS ADELE BOTHA - Mcom Industrial Sociology studies**

It is hereby confirmed that Ms Adele Botha received permission to distribute questionnaires for completion amongst full time employees which were also completed by employees of Middelburg Ferrochrome.

Kind Regards

**L v d Merwe**  
**Human Resources Manager**

Directors: M R Bagus; Dr D Končar (Croatian); B Lazovic (British); Dr A Ruiters; J Saraf (British);  
J Schalamon (German); Dr J Sittard (German)  
Company Secretary: PM Calicchio  
Company Registration No. 1926/008883/06

## The Negative Acts Questionnaire

© Einarsen, Raknes, Matthiesen & Hellesoy, 1994

You have been selected to assist with the completion of the Negative Acts Questionnaire. The main purpose of this study is to investigate the experience and handling of workplace bullying and to make recommendations that will lead to the effective management of labour relations within your organisation.

The information collected in this questionnaire will be treated in a strictly confidential manner. Your participation will not be revealed under any circumstances, nor will your name be required on any documentation. Each official survey will have a code assigned and the data gathered will be compared with other answers. This survey will be conducted and processed by *Adèle Botha* and its results will be used in an empirical study in order to comply with requirements set by the North West University in awarding the Magister Commercii in Industrial Sociology.

*Survey Code*

## NAQ - DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

---

### INSTRUCTIONS:

Please answer the following questions by circling the number that corresponds best with your description.

#### A. What is your age?

1	18 – 25 Years	2	26 – 30 Years	3	31 – 35 Years	4	36 – 40 Years
5	41 – 45 Years	6	46 – 50 Years	7	51 – 55 Years	8	55 + Years

#### B. What is your gender?

1	Male	2	Female
---	------	---	--------

#### C. What is your marital status?

1	Married	2	Divorced/separated	3	Widowed	4	Single/never married
---	---------	---	--------------------	---	---------	---	----------------------

#### D. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

1	Attended school	2	Matric	3	Diploma/Degree
4	Higher Diploma/Hons. Degree	5	Master's Diploma/Degree	6	Doctorate

#### E. Previous work experience (Years)?

1	0 – 05 Years	2	06 – 10 Years	3	10 – 15 Years
4	16 – 20 Years	5	21 – 25 Years	6	25 + Years

#### F. What is your current employment status?

1	Full-time	2	Part-time
---	-----------	---	-----------

#### G. At which level in the organisation do you work?

1	Employee	2	Middle management	3	Senior management
4	Other, Please specify:				



## NAQ: PART 1

### NEGATIVE BEHAVIOUR AND CONFLICT AT WORK

---

#### INSTRUCTIONS:

The following behaviours are often seen as examples of negative behaviour in the workplace. Please circle the number that best corresponds with your experience over the last six months:

1 Never	2 Now and then	3 Monthly	4 Weekly	5 Daily
------------	-------------------	--------------	-------------	------------

**Over the last six months**, how often have you been subjected to the following negative acts at work?

1.	Someone withholding information which affects your performance	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Unwanted sexual attention	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Being humiliated or ridiculed in connection with your work	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Being ordered to do work below your level of competence	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Having key areas of responsibility removed or replaced with more trivial or unpleasant tasks	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Spreading of gossip and rumours about you	1	2	3	4	5
7.	Being ignored, excluded or being 'sent to Coventry'	1	2	3	4	5
8.	Having insulting or offensive remarks made about your person (i.e. habits and background), your attitudes or your private life	1	2	3	4	5
9.	Being shouted at or being the target of spontaneous anger (or rage)	1	2	3	4	5
10.	Intimidating behaviour such as finger-pointing, invasion of personal space, shoving, blocking/barring the way	1	2	3	4	5
11.	Hints or signals from others that you should quit your job	1	2	3	4	5
12.	Threats of violence or physical abuse	1	2	3	4	5

13.	Repeated reminders of your errors or mistakes	1	2	3	4	5
14.	Being ignored or facing a hostile reaction when you approach	1	2	3	4	5
15.	Persistent criticism of your work and effort	1	2	3	4	5
16.	Having your opinions and views ignored	1	2	3	4	5
17.	Insulting messages, telephone calls or e-mails	1	2	3	4	5
18.	Practical jokes carried out by people you don't get on with	1	2	3	4	5
19.	Systematically being required to carry out tasks which clearly fall outside your job descriptions, e.g. private errands	1	2	3	4	5
20.	Being given tasks with unreasonable or impossible targets or deadlines	1	2	3	4	5
21.	Having allegations made against you	1	2	3	4	5
22.	Excessive monitoring of your work	1	2	3	4	5
23.	Offensive remarks or behaviour with reference to your race or ethnicity	1	2	3	4	5
24.	Pressure not to claim something which by right you are entitled to (e.g. sick leave, holiday entitlement, travel expenses)	1	2	3	4	5
25.	Being the subject of excessive teasing and sarcasm	1	2	3	4	5
26.	Threats of making your life difficult, e.g. over-time, night work, unpopular tasks	1	2	3	4	5
27.	Attempts to find fault with your work	1	2	3	4	5
28.	Being exposed to an unmanageable workload	1	2	3	4	5
29.	Being moved or transferred against your will	1	2	3	4	5

## NEGATIVE ACTS QUESTIONNAIRE: PART 2

---

### INSTRUCTION:

We define bullying as: a situation where one or several individuals persistently over a period of time perceive themselves to be on the receiving end of negative actions from one or several persons, in a situation where the target of bullying has difficulty in defending him or herself against these actions. We will not refer to a one-off incident as bullying.

Using the above definition, please answer question 30 to 37 by circling the number that corresponds best with your description.

### 30. Have been bullied at work over the last six months?

1	No (continue to question 36)	2	Yes, very rarely
3	Yes, Now and then	4	Yes, several times per month
5	Yes, several times per week	6	Yes, almost daily

### 31. When did the bullying start?

1	Within the last 6 months	2	Between 6 and 12 months ago
3	Between 1 and 2 years ago	4	More than two years ago

### 32. How many persons bullied you?

Number of men:	1	Only one	2	1 – 3	3	4 – 8	4	More than 8
Number of women:	5	Only one	6	1 – 3	7	4 – 8	8	More than 8

### 33. Who bullied you? (You may tick more than one category)

1	Student/s	2	Colleagues/s
3	Subordinate/s	4	Client/s or customer/s
5	Supervisor or line-manager/s	6	Senior manager/s

**34. How many were bullied?**

1	Only you	2	Everyone in your workgroup
3	You and several other work colleagues		

**35. Have you observed or witnessed bullying taking place at your workplace over the last 6 months?**

1	No, never	2	Yes, but rarely
3	Yes, now and then	4	Yes, often

**36. Have you ever been bullied at work over the last 5 years?**

1	Yes	2	No
---	-----	---	----

**37. Have you ever witnessed bullying at work over the last five years?**

1	Yes	2	No
---	-----	---	----

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND PARTICIPATION**

---