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**IMPACTS OF WORKPLACE BULLYING AND ABUSIVE WORKING
ENVIRONMENT ON HEALTH OF FEMALE WORKERS**

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ABSTRACT

Workplace bullying is also known workplace hostility and abusive behavior. Workplace bullying is one of the most serious issues that almost every organization faces due to competitive environment. The study is unique in a sense that, the aim of following study is to address health and physical issues cause by workplace bullying and abusive working environment. The study is qualitative in nature that is carried out on 28 female workers of higher educational institute. In-depth interview technique is used to get detail information about respondent's workplace environment and their health related issues. Researcher also attempted to explain the connection between workplace bullying and abusive workplace environment with health of female workers in relation to performance and productivity. The study of **Impact of Workplace Bullying and Abusive Working Environment on Health of Female Workers** not only divert researchers attention towards important aspect of workplace bullying and issues related health of female worker for further research, but also help policy maker for doing effective planning and reforms for workplace environment and better health policies for workers.

Keywords: Workplace bullying, abusive working environment, Health

INTRODUCTION

Study bullying in the field of work and organizational psychology is highly increased in the past twenty years. In all over the world workplace bullying is increasingly recognized as an imperative area of debate, pointed out some common aspects such as a unfair use of power among the assailant and the harmful, organized and logical action against victim [1]. The victims find themselves inferior and starts experiencing the helplessness in this situation [2].

The bullying is an improper and intolerable behavior that adversely affects the worker overall personality. There are various types of bullying discussed in previous studies [3] for example, embarrassing behaviors, sexual behavior and aggressive behavior etc. Layman is taken work place bullying, as *workplace aggression, workplace incivility, emotional abuse* against others [4]. It is also proven by different researches that workplace bullying not only harms employee physically health but also affect them emotionally.

Workplace bullying can both verbal and nonverbal, but like these two cyber bullying is also another important type of workplace bullying. In this type of bullying the internet and mobile phones are used to victimize the people [5]. In short, workplace bullying is intentionally violent and malicious behavior

from one person in order to control and harm other one.

There is a lot of research exploring the impact of abusive supervision on organizational outcomes [5]. But, different researchers have pointed out that abusive supervision alone cannot lead to work withdrawal intention unless and until the stress or emotions create a feeling for this purpose. Abused subordinates face a coping dilemma where they have to maintain an unwanted relationship [5]. Sometimes, they resort to create a physical distance in order to grapple with unwanted relationship or they tend to escape from interaction that leads to work withdrawal intention.

The issue of workplace bullying is also discussed as workplace hostility and abusive behavior. [1, 2] explain, that bullying is the individual's aggressive and unwanted behavior against others. Bullying are of different types, but the workplace bullying is one of the most sensitive type of bullying. It is defined as the person's act of mistreatment that caused health and other overall personality damages. In the study of [3] he explains that workplace bullying is one of the most serious issue that almost every organizations face due to competitive environment [6]. The aim of following study

is to address health and physical issues caused by workplace bullying and abusive working environment. Such as physical suffering, bad health, mental stress and career failure of an employee. The concept helps to comprehend the violent prevailing behavior that is aggressive and conflicting at the workplace against another coworker. The results show that antecedents of workplace bullying caused morale decline and low self-respect among employees that increase not only depression but also mental and physical distress among workers [7].

As a result, employees face negative outcomes in form of increased work-family arguments (8), low job performance [9], and low life satisfaction, decreased self-esteem, and cause psychological distress [10] and increased deviant behavior [11]. It is evident from the literature that abuse creates a feeling of anxiety or stress and these feelings act as a catalyst for work withdrawal intention [10]. The feeling which generates negative intention may be due to frustration, dissatisfaction, meaningless work, lack of information and resources, obligations or promises which are not fulfilled by the organizations or supervisor, lack of control over the situations [2, 7, 8].

Although, plethora of studies have investigated that subordinates who

experience abuse reported higher turnover, less favorable attitude towards job life, greater conflict, greater psychological distress [5, 8, 11, 12]. This negative intention gained attention of researchers, since it affects the organization. Current study extends this belief and tries to fill the gap. These negative outcomes increase stress, emotional exhaustion, depression among the workers.

Research Question

What are the impacts of workplace bullying and abusive working environment on the health of female workers?

Objectives:

- To find out the impacts of workplace bullying and abusive working environment on the health of female workers.

METHOD

Sample and procedures

The study is qualitative in nature. Data comprised of 28 respondents. Participants are female academic workers of higher educational institutions. Researches show that female academic workers face ethical dilemmas of performance in their daily responsibilities due to pressure, workload and high job demands [7] that leads toward many physical and mental health issues. The female academic workers in the research were

informed about the study and were requested to cooperate with the researcher. To grasp the respondents, convenience sampling technique was used. The purpose for choosing this type of sampling method was the ease in reaching the respondents and covering the diversity of the higher educational institution.

RESULTS

Rather than relying on physical threats or violence, workplace bullies are far more likely to turn to emotional attacks to humiliate or undermine their targets. These persistent, negative interactions can lead to severe stress-related health issues, such as depression and anxiety. The study reveals negative health outcomes for employees due to workplace bullying, including increases in long-term sick leave and prescriptions for antidepressants.

Bullying doesn't just harm the health of individuals, it also hurts productivity. Research suggests that the adverse health effects associated with bullying lead to increases in absenteeism, sick days, and turnover. Research published in *Psychological Science* found that exposure to bullying in childhood predicted heightened risk of problems related to health, poverty, and social relationships in adulthood. By the time they were in their mid-twenties, people who had been bullied growing up were more

than twice as likely to have difficulty in keeping a job compared with peers who had never been bullied.

The results showed that women reported the same types of negative, bullying behavior from coworkers and similar negative health effects immediately after being exposed to bullying. However, after being bullied, women appeared to have very different long-term health outcomes.

The study indicates that Bullying is positively related to mental as well physical health problems and somatic. A self-reinforcing process between mental health and bullying indicates the association between mental health problems and subsequent bullying. The study reveals that workplace bullying and abusive behavior of coworkers cause various health related issues like anxiety, depression and frustration among the workers. This anxiety and frustration can easily observed in the behavior of victim employees. Mostly respondent agreed that workplace bullying make them disturb mentally and physically. Some of workers are develop cardiac-related illness, such as heart disease or stroke. In other words, the *incidence* of heart-related problems was increased by 59% in the bullied compared with the non-bullied. The researcher also discovered a response

relationship: the more frequently participants are of opinion that more often they were bullied, their risk of developing cardiac problems is greater.

The heart isn't the only thing that might be affected by workplace bullying. In similar studies of participants in researchers found that a recent history of being bullied at work was associated with a 1.46 times increased risk of developing diabetes over the ensuing decade [14].

The study also explain how bullying leads directly to physical illness. These include chronically rising levels of stress hormones, and bullying victims adopting harmful coping behaviors. As some workers added that even after job hours influence of their workplace bullying and abusive behavior not release, as a result they always feel fatigue, muscular pains, headaches etc. respondents also complains some other physical issues like high blood pressures, irregular heartbeat, and diabetes due to which they are unable to perform their household responsibility as well as official assigned work. This situation leads toward Role conflict and victims have to go through Role failure. Other health issues like low appetite and poor digestion are also noticed in victims of abusive workplace environment. There was evidence that bullying had a long-term, negative

impact on women's health: Women's rate of sickness absence doubled and their use of antidepressant prescriptions increased after experiencing bullying. Men who reported being bullied were twice as likely to leave their jobs as their non-bullied peers, but there wasn't a significant relationship between bullying and long-term sickness absence or medical treatment. Some worker also share with researcher that for avoiding stress some time they are using relaxing medicines that make them lazy and inactive all the day.

"For women, we found increases in the use of antidepressant medication in the years after bullying, indicating long-term health consequences of exposure to bullying," the researchers write. "For men, we found no significant effects on long-term health, although there was some indication that men reported higher levels of presenteeism when exposed to bullying."

Nevertheless, bullying result mental health issues, research evident that mental health problems are resulting in being bullied. Research further added that people who experience negative emotions are at a greater risk of being bullied. The study indicates that, people with lower well-being are more interpreting aggressive behavior as an indication of bullying because they have less tolerance for such behavior. Another view

proposes that those with mental health issues violate norms of friendly behavior and other people's expectations, and thus incite aggression in others.

As a part of the 2006 Bullying Cohort Study, a comprehensive survey was emailed to employees of 60 different Danish companies. The questionnaire included questions gauging respondents' stress, health, sleep, sickness absences, and experience of negative bullying behaviors at work. In an attempt to obtain more objective measures of bullying, the researchers used a validated assessment that avoided the term "bullying" altogether. Rather than asking participants to self-report their perceptions of whether they had been bullied at work."

The study also highlights the fact that victim employees of workplace bullying are taken more sick leaves than a non victim employee. Researcher attempts to explain the relationship between workplace bullying

DISCUSSION

People who have been bullied in the workplace experience a wide range of problems. Many experience post traumatic stress disorder, in part because people self-identify so strongly with their work. Prolonged bullying may cause panic attacks, depression, stress breakdown, poor concentration, insecurity and compromised

with employee health and job performance in order to understand connections between employee performance and productivity and bullying prevalence. The result of the study indicates that workplace bullying and abusive working environment have a strong connection with physical health and well being of respondents and are directly and indirectly affect employee performance and productivity. Study also explain role of mental exhaustion and job burnout in any organization. Respondents' further added that this continuous mental stress and anxiety mostly encourage turnover intention among employees and feeling of mental and physical stress initiated the idea of psychological contract breach. Study also emphasis on the importance of supportive working environment. Researcher believed that supportive working environment is essential ingredient for ensuring work performance and productivity of employee. memory. Victims may become irritable, obsessive, hyper-vigilant or overly sensitive. They experience mood swings, indecision or a loss of humor, and may begin biting their nails, grinding their teeth or a relying on such substances as caffeine, nicotine, alcohol or sleeping aids. Bullied employees experience a wide range of physical effects. The World Health Organization ties together workplace

stress, much of which is caused by bullying, to chronic fatigue syndrome. Bullying also causes stress, anxiety and a lowered resistance to such things as colds, coughs, flue and fever. Other reported symptoms include high blood pressure, migraine headaches, pains in the back and chest, hormone disturbances, physical numbness, irritable bowel syndrome, thyroid problems, skin irritations and ulcers. A medical study at the University of Helsinki linked workplace bullying to a greater risk of cardiac disease. Researchers are exploring whether there is an indirect link between bullying and such diseases as asthma, allergies, fibromyalgia, multiple sclerosis, diabetes and some forms of cancer.

Workplace bullying has effects on those who witness it as well as those who experience it, affecting the overall health of an organization. Victims spend much of their time trying to gain support and defend themselves from the bullying, time that would otherwise be spent working. Dr. Charlotte Rayner, a U.K. researcher, found that 20 percent of those who witness workplace bullying look for another job and that 98 percent are distressed by it. Other effects of bullying on workplace productivity include greater absenteeism and turnover, more accidents, lower quality customer

service, higher costs for employee assistance programs and decreased motivation and morale.

Conflict of interests

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interests.

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