One-Off Clash or Persistent Behavior? Redefining Workplace Bullying in Pakistan

Hina Jaffery

Ph.D. Candidate, National College of Business Administration & Economics,
Lecturer, the University of Lahore.
Email: hina.jf.phd@gmail.com

Saadia Qaiser

Ph.D. Candidate, National College of Business Administration & Economics,
Lecturer, the University of Lahore

Iram Batool

National University of Modern Languages, Lahore

Abstract

Amidst superstitions originating from the word '*bullying*', there is a belief that people with specific personality traits are more prone to bullying than others. On the contrary there are researchers who seem to disagree with the notion. Similar ambiguities in the conceptualization of bullying have been prominent since the inception of the phenomenon in the 1970s. From schools to workplaces, this concept affects personal and professional lives of all that are in the vicinity. In order for preventive measures to be effective, it is necessary to create awareness, pre-requisite to which is the understanding of the concept. The purpose of this paper, hence, is to investigate the conceptualization of workplace bullying in Pakistan. For this purpose, grounded theory along with a multi-method approach (interview and focus group) is used in two samples: current and future employees. Qualitative analysis with three-step coding is carried out to extract the final themes for the definition of workplace bullying. The results suggest almost negligible discrepancy in the conceptualization of workplace bullying between the two samples. Results show that in Pakistan people perceive sexual and verbal harassment, and job-related or compensation-related mistreatment that is persistent for a week at least, as workplace bullying. Lastly, future directions are suggested for prospective researchers of this field.

Introduction

A common superstition that emanates with the word 'bullying' is that certain characteristics predispose a person to become a target of this phenomenon (Coyne et al., 2000). Alternately, there are others (Lind et al., 2009) who believe that personality profiles of targets and non-targets have minimal differences (Wu et al., 2020). Similarly, work-climates that are stressful and highly competitive are known to be one of the precursors (Lind et al., 2009), whereas conflict management-oriented work climates seem to contribute less to bullying (Einarsen et al., 2016). The existence of these ambiguities make workplace bullying a significant research area (Branch et al., 2013) with possible critical theoretical and practical implications. However, there are still ongoing debates about its' conceptualizations, role of the victim, perpetrator and bystander, antecedents, and effectiveness of anti-bullying HR policies.

Bullying is one of the strongest reasons for workplace stress, however it is a complex phenomenon that has various phenomenological manifestations (Paciello et al., 2019). It is believed to be a series of mistreatments that have negative consequences; however, the level of persistence varies from culture to culture (Wu et al., 2020). For example, Chinese employees consider bullying in most circumstances as normal due to high power distance that is inherent in their culture (Guo et al., 2015). To redress one of these situations and understand this often-oversimplified phenomenon (Branch et al., 2013), the current study focuses on the most fundamental gap: its' conceptualization in Pakistan.

Seminal work of Brodsky (1976) refers to workplace bullying as 'persistent attempts of a person to torment, frustrate or get a reaction from another'. These persistent attempts have been elaborated as being consistent over a period of at least 6 months (Nielsen et al., 2017; Lind et al., 2009). However, does this persistence mean that intense one-off clashes are not considered bullying? Do one-off clashes with multiple perpetrators mean the target is not bullied? For example, must an employee be inappropriately touched or ridiculed by his supervisor for 6 months to be considered bullied? The logical answer seems: NO. Surprisingly, to date these questions are still largely unexplored even though they create a significant dilemma for researchers and practitioners as workplace bullying has severe personal and organizational detrimental effects to the employee well-being (Vartia, 2001) and organizational productivity respectively (Branch et al., 2013).

Amongst all the work-related stress antecedents the most crippling one is workplace bullying as it leads to minor outcomes, like being distracted, to major consequences, like post-traumatic stress syndrome (Einarsen, 1999). Correspondingly, bullying becomes holistically detrimental when it affects work

engagement (Einarsen et al., 2016) and well-being (Nielsen et al., 2017) of an employee as these transforms to decrease in efficiency and productivity of the organization (Branch et al., 2013). Hence, the need to study the conceptualization of bullying becomes paramount for not only for the current and future employees, but also for the managers, especially HR professionals, corporate lawyers and the top management who have to subsequently deal with the claims by the target, possible litigation processes and the implementation of anti-bullying policies.

The concept of bullying varies from culture to culture (Einarsen et al., 2016; Salin et al., 2018) which leaves a schism that needs to be filled through investigations in multiple nations, before any awareness or preventive strategies could be applied. Thereupon, the objective of the current study is to investigate the conceptualization of workplace bullying in Pakistan, especially focusing on how persistent the Pakistani employees think the negative acts should be, to be targeted as bullying. The reason to choose an Asian country particularly is due to the high prevalence of workplace bullying (Ciby & Raya, 2016). To accomplish its' aim the study adopts a multi-method approach in two different study samples (students and employees), data from which is analyzed using qualitative techniques. The reason for adding data from students was to verify whether there was any possible discrepancy in the conceptualization of workplace bullying in those who are going to enter the workplace in near future and those who are currently working.

Origin of Concept

Brodsky (1976) the pioneer of the concept of 'harassment' explained five basic types of bullying: name calling, sexual harassment, physical abuse; scapegoating and work pressures. Over the years researchers have added to the list of acts that may be labeled as bullying, for example, Leymann (1990) gave a list of 45 acts that could be considered bullying some of which are psychic terror, ganging up on someone, encroaching on personal rights etc. Simultaneously, there have been multiple concepts that are interchangeably used with bullying, for example, mobbing (Leymann, 1990), aggression (Baron & Neuman, 1996), incivility (Schilpzand et al., 2016), abusive supervision (Neves, 2014), emotional abuse (Keashly, 1998; Leymann, 1990) etc. However, the first known documented use of the word 'workplace bullying' was by Adams (2014) in her book, *Bullying at Work: How to confront and overcome it*.

Among the defining features of bullying, frequency of exposure to negative acts is most controversial as some researchers endorse weekly while others consider bi-weekly exposure for a period of 6 months (Ciby & Raya, 2016; Leymann, 1990) or 12 months (Yildrim, 2009) as a pre-requisite for negative acts to be labeled as bullying. (Bilgel et al., 2006) provided empirical evidence

through behavioral experience method that for Turkish employees' persistence of 12 months was part of their perception on bullying. Alternately, Bashir and Hanif (2011) conducted a survey on Pakistani telecommunication employees and D'Cruz and Rayna (2013) conducted a survey on Indian business processing unit employees; both of whom found that the persistence of 6 months was considered a pre-requisite for behaviors to be labeled as bullying. Table 1 shows examples of some other studies conducted in the Asia depicting multiple time durations for the frequency element in the workplace bullying, thus highlighting the need to rectify this conceptual ambiguity in the Asian countries. Hence, it is of interest to the researcher to resolve this obscurity around the conceptualization of bullying particularly in Pakistan.

Table 1
Perceptions about Persistence of Workplace bullying in Asia

Study	Population (employees)	n	Method	Persistence of Bullying
Bilgel et al., 2006	Turkish	877	Behavioral experience	12 months
Yildrim, 2009	Turkish	286	Behavioral experience	12 months
Bashir & Hanif, 2011	Pakistani	280	Survey	6 months
Seo et al., 2012	South Korean	-	Survey	6 months
D'Cruz & Rayner, 2013	Indian	1,036	Survey	6 months

Source: Ciby, M., & Raya, R. P. (2015). Workplace Bullying: A Review of the Defining Features, Measurement Methods and Prevalence across Continents. *IIM Kozhikode Society & Management Review, 4*(1) 38–47.

Review of Related Constructs

Workplace bullying is one of the cardinal problems in organizations across the continents (Ciby & Raya, 2016). Over the almost past three decades, there have been multiple concepts that are interchangeably used for bullying, like, mobbing (Leymann, 1990), aggression (Baron & Neuman 1996), emotional abuse (Keashly, 1998; Leymann, 1990), abusive supervision (Neves, 2014), incivility (Schilpzand et al., 2016) etc. Since workplace bullying is an umbrella concept under which these phenomena lie, we give a brief overview of the most dominant ones below for better clarity of the bullying phenomenon.

Mobbing

Interest in this phenomenon, with particular reference to workplace, was marked by the seminal work of Leymann (1990) who first gave the concept of 'mobbing'. He defined mobbing or psychic terror as 'the hostile and unethical systematic communication by group towards a colleague'. He further elaborated this concept in four phases: the original critical incident, stigmatizing, personnel administration and expulsion. In the initial phase there is usually a triggering

incident at workplace which may be a conflict of interest etc. For example, Mr. X joins as a manager in a team, where 5 other managers have been working together at a unit for 2 years, but have not been promoted yet. Mr. X due to his diligent work and positive personal relations with his subordinates gets promoted within a year at the same post. This situation creates a wave of envy and jealousy amongst the rest of the four managers, who think that they have been subjected with injustice as they were more deserving.

In the second phase, stigmatizing occurs through various types of manipulation which includes ruining victim's reputation, isolating victim, not responding to what he/she says and neither communicating with him/her, not letting them do their work or not assigning any important work to them and violence or threats of violence. In case of Mr. X, the other five managers in his team cut off all communications with him and do not respond to anything he says. Moreover, they start dropping hints to their boss, implying that Mr. X does some 'extra favors' for his subordinates due to whom they prefer him over the other managers.

In the third phase, the victim protests or claims to have been mobbed or bullied to the respective management, but is again considered to be the culprit instead of the victim due to the societal mindset that people with certain characteristics are predisposed to be targets (Coyne et al., 2000). Mr. X after being mobbed by his colleagues for few weeks started getting very upset and depressed, due to which he decided to complain to his boss thinking that he would help him resolve this situation. When he files a complaint expecting a solution, he gets surprised when his boss shifts him to another unit which is located at a remote location and is almost non-operational. In the fourth phase, the victim due to excruciating circumstances eventually quits the workplace or takes long absences/sick leaves. Mr. X eventually resigns from his position at the organization and additionally faces problems in obtaining a new job as his stigmatized reputation becomes widespread knowledge amongst the people in his field of work. Hence, for mobbing to occur the conflict should be in workplace, incident should be frequent for 6 months, involve negative actions of perpetrator, should have violence or threat of violence, power gap and intent for persecution (Costantinescu, 2014; Ege, 2002).

Mobbing, therefore, has three actors involved: perpetrator, victim and witness (Ege, 2002). The victim may be of five categories: captive (the one who recognizes mobbing but is not aware of preventive measures), passive (one who cannot say 'no'), ambitious (who remains efficient despite being mobbed), hypochondriacal (who always complains and complicates relationship as a consequence), and scapegoat (who is too weak to defend himself). The perpetrators on the other hand, mob colleagues to enhance their self-esteem,

gain/display power, to have fun, drive out an employee or to make their own career progress (Safina & Podgornaya, 2014). However, the witnesses may be active or passive. Active are those that either become part of mobbing or in sustaining it, while passive is those that are aware of the situation but do not do anything about it.

Aggression

Baron and Neuman (1996) suggested that workplace violence should be termed as 'workplace aggression' as there are rare instances where physical assault might take place while mostly verbal abuse and less dramatic physical actions are common in organizations. According to them the effect to danger ratio calculated by the perpetrator is based on two factors: probability of retaliation and presence of observers. In a workplace, colleagues are bound to interact or see each other over a prolonged period of time due to which the perpetrators have a higher chance of having a profound negative impact on the victim. At the same time since they want to keep their image positive they would look for situations where their covert (verbal, indirect, passive; Baron & Neuman, 1996) behavior does not seem threatening to the observers, simultaneously their overt (physical, direct and active; Baron & Neuman, 1996) behavior towards the victim may project their aggression.

Buss (1961) gave three dichotomous classifications: verbal-physical, direct-indirect, and active-passive. Verbal forms of aggression are in terms of words. For example, in a hypothetical situation if Mr. X (perpetrator) addresses his sub-ordinate by the word 'slacker' just because he does not do extra work for his boss, and this name stigmatizes his subordinate within the organization, it would be a form of verbal aggression. Similarly, physical form of aggression would be any bodily harm that makes the victim uncomfortable. For example, if Mr. X slaps his sub-ordinate on the head whenever he says no to him that would be included as an expression of physical aggression. It is important to note here that at times physical actions are subtle but they are still aggressive. For instance, suppose Mr. X stands too close to his secretary (female) whenever he wishes to speak to her and this makes her uncomfortable, although covertly it seems normal, it is still part of physical aggression as the body spacing is being used to make the victim uncomfortable. Such situation is what Keashly (1998) terms as overt aggression.

Correspondingly, the above-mentioned examples can generally be termed as direct forms of aggression as well, as the perpetrator is in direct contact with the victim. On the contrary, if Mr. X does not directly deal with the victim but spreads false rumors about his sub-ordinate, this would be termed as indirect aggression. Further on, the last dichotomy of active-passive is explained in such a

way that when harm is done by performing an action it is active aggression while when it is done by withholding an action it is passive. For instance, Mr. X slapping the sub-ordinates head is an active form of aggression, whereas, if Mr. X withholds the salary of the employee unjustly until he does personal endeavors for Mr. X then this would be passive form of aggression. From the discussion of classification, one can simple evaluate that any aggressive behavior cannot be categorized into one of the pairs given above. Hence different combinations of the six types mentioned in these three pairs are depicted in real life. For example, if Mr. X does spreads rumors about his subordinate, this situation will be termed as verbal-passive-direct aggression.

Emotional Abuse

Ensuing mobbing phenomena, Adam (2014) for the first time documented the word 'workplace bullying' in her book. Subsequently, Keashly (1998) opined that harassment may not always be propagated from a group to individual direction and that there are interactions where hostile verbal, non-verbal, and non-physical behaviors are manifested towards targets in order to undermine their competency. He labeled this kind of behavior as 'emotional abuse'. This particular term was coined to differentiate it from physical, sexual and racial abuses, also to explain that it would have severe long-term effects if not addressed.

According to Keashly (1998) emotional abuse is comprehensively explained through its' seven characteristics which include; (1) it may be verbal (tone of voice) or non-verbal (gestures), (2) it consists of a pattern or a single event, (3) includes unwanted behavior for the target, (4) it violates the personal rights of targets and the code of conduct of the organization, (5) results in having negative effects on the target, (6) the actions by the perpetrator are controllable by him (voluntary), and (7) there is power disparity between the target and the perpetrator.

Abusive Supervision

Abusive supervision is referred to as the subordinate's perception of the extent of sustained display of hostile verbal and non-verbal behavior only by the immediate boss/supervisor (Tepper, 2000). These behaviors include making fun/ridicule publicly, using harsh/rude words, making inappropriate gestures, not giving due credit for work/accomplishments etc. Suppose due to a road accident Mr. X reaches late for work and his manager, on hearing his excuse, calls him a liar, cheater, irresponsible person loudly in front of all the wok staff, this would be an example of abusive supervision. However, if we look into the manager's reason of behaving rudely it could be due to the fact that his boss had scolded him his sub-ordinate's' late arrival. If such is the case, this falls under displaced

aggression framework (Neves, 2014). According to this framework one of the reasons for supervisors/immediate boss becomes aggressive towards their subordinates is the fact that they are angry at some other person to whom they cannot project their emotions.

Additionally, there is a belief that some employees might be more prone to become abuse victims than others (Coyne et al., 2000). Aquino and Lamertz (2004) explain that when an employee projects that his position in a social group is weak, he is giving two kinds of messages to the prospective perpetrators, (1) he is vulnerable for exploitation and, (2) the chances of retaliation are very less. Even in this scenario, there are factors that make such employees weaker thereby resulting in them being abused. For example, a stressful and rigid work environment promotes a lot of power gap between an employee and his supervisor, resultantly if the employee is abused he/she becomes reluctant to take any action against their boss due to lack of open communication channels (Neves, 2014). Similarly, situation like downsizing, mergers etc. lead to increase in chances for the supervisors to abuse their sub-ordinates due to the displaced aggression caused in these stressful situations and due to the fact that potential victims project their weak positions in the organization. Alternately, if coworker support is present and the employees have high self-esteem there are more likely to withstand the abusive supervision effectively and also are less likely to become targets as the perpetrators fear their retaliation (Tepper, 2000).

Incivility

Workplace incivility is defined as the ambiguous, low intense intent to harm the other person (Schilpzand et al., 2016). It is different from other related constructs of mobbing, emotional abuse etc. due to its ambiguous nature and also because of its reduced intensity which makes it difficult for the victim to identify it. Hence, it could be said that incivility is mostly dependent on the perception of the victim. This phenomenon was originally defined by Andersson and Pearson (1999) who proposed that incivility is basically reciprocal in nature and leads to subsequent negative work climate.

Since this phenomenon is socially constructed, it becomes imperative to explore it within different cultures (Schilpzand et al., 2016). For example, in case of Mr. X it is possible that if the company developed a crystal-clear promotion policy and hired career counselors to guide their employees up their career ladder, it was possible that Mr. X might not have gotten mobbed. Alternately, after the promotion he was in a more powerful position than the other four managers but they still managed to create problems for him which shows that even with authority the negative workplace behaviors may have serious consequences if the victim himself becomes passive.

There are, to this date, three types of known incivilities: experienced, witnessed and instigated (Schilpzand et al., 2016). Experienced incivility occurs to those (victims) that have the dispositional attributes of being a minority, young, disagreeable and neurotic. Witnessing incivility is basically the observers who are not a direct part of the situation but still have negative consequences like being depressed, feeling insecure etc. due to observing the uncivil behavior. Lastly, instigated incivility is the perpetrator's motives and goals to initiate the incivility at workplace. In the example above, Mr. X is going through experienced incivility, the other four managers are going through instigated incivility, and the rest of colleagues observing them are going through witnessing incivility.

Antecedents & Consequences

It is mostly observed that literature on workplace bullying focuses more on its consequences than its antecedents. However, some studies provide direction as to the factors which become contingent in causing occurrences of bullying. Keashly (1998) suggested, in his seminal work on emotional abuse, that rigid hierarchical organizational structure, authoritarian leadership, power distance between employees and poor communication are some of the factors that lead to bullying especially in terms of verbal abuse. Likewise, Baron and Neuman (1996) explain that when organizations go through changes like technological changes, reengineering, restricting, management change etc. there are more chances that workplace aggression will escalate, especially in verbal and passive forms.

On an individual level the consequences of bullying may be social (e.g. unemployment), socio-psychological (e.g. weakened coping mechanism), psychological (e.g. anger) and psychosomatic (e.g. hyperactivity) (Leymann, 1990). On an organizational level the consequences include high turnover, slandering of organization's name, absenteeism, presenteeism, early retirements etc. The victims of mobbing usually suffer from psychosomatic and psychological problems where they might have problems in sleeping patterns, concentration, sexual disorders (psychosomatic) or mood disorder, anxiety, and in extreme cases post-traumatic stress disorder (psychological) (Ege, 2010).

Method

Research Design

The present study uses grounded theory to explore the ambiguities surrounding the conceptualization of workplace bullying specific to Pakistan. Grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) helps researchers in understanding the interrelationship between the perception and manifestation of research population. To accomplish the study objectives multi-method and multi-source approach is used consisting of interviews and focus groups. Semi-structured

interviews are a much better source for collecting information to conceptualize a phenomenon as compared to survey techniques (Wech, Howard, & Autrey, 2020).

Phase 1-Current Employees

Participants

The population for this phase includes employed individuals in various industries in Pakistan. The sample was not identified or pre-set as the data was collected as long as new information on the topic was achieved. Purposive sampling was used to engage the participants as the information being asked was regarding bullying and the victims or perpetrators cannot be identified. Therefore, those employees who were willing to engage in conversation were made part of the study. Data saturation was accomplished after 24 interviews that were conducted on telephonic and face-to-face interface.

Procedure

Face-to-face and telephonic interviews were carried out from these employees to collect information about (1) their perception of workplace bullying, (2) their take on persistence, and (3) awareness of any existing anti-bullying policies in their workplace. Prior to each interview the respondent was debriefed about the purpose of the interview and they were assured that their anonymity will be maintained and their confidentiality will not be harmed in any way. Each participant was initially told that they would be asked three main questions as explained above and they should answer according to their own perception as there is no right answer that the researcher has identified. Additionally, in face to face interviews the respondents were given an option that if they were not comfortable in narrating their answers to the researcher, they could write them down and hand over the information. Only two out of the twelve participants that were interviewed personally used this option.

Phase 2-Future Employees

Participants

The population for phase 2 was the future employees who were the graduates and post-graduates in the last semesters of their programs. Similar to phase 1 the sample for this part was also dependent on the data saturation achievement. The data from Pakistani students was collected through focus groups.

Procedure

Seven focus groups of about 5-8 participants each were carried out to obtain the same information as mentioned in study 1 except for the information on policies. Two independent reporters were asked to manually record all the

information that was provided by the respondents. The researcher was herself the facilitator for these focus groups which were held for 20 minutes respectively. Initially the group members were debriefed about the objective, the time duration and certain rules that need to be followed.

The rules included: not to use any abusive language, bring about critical topics like religion and to try and give everyone an opportunity to state their opinions. Once the focus group was in motion the independent reporters wrote down the exchange of ideas that took place and later the two observations achieved were matched for similarities and differences in observations. It was seen that the observations were more or less similar with just minor differences of synonyms used for same concepts.

Emerging Themes Discussion

The data collected from both samples was coded to explore the various themes that emerge for the definition of workplace bullying and its' persistence. There are three types of coding that was done. Firstly, open coding was done as the initial step in which exhaustive themes were generated from both the data (i.e. current and future employees). Subsequently axial coding was done in which the emergent themes were further amalgamated into categories. Lastly, selective coding was carried out to give the final dominant codes/themes that were extracted from the data and would form the part of the final definition. The coding process led to two main common emergent themes in current and future employees: harassment and job-related mistreatment. Within the data from the future employees there was an additional theme of compensation-related mistreatment.

Harassment

The analysis of the data from the current and future employees suggested that the first main theme that describes the workplace bullying is harassment: physical and verbal. Within the physical harassment the respondents identified just one category of sexual harassment. This theme is also supported by Keashly (1998) who is of the opinion that harassment in the form of sexual offences are part of bullying as they have long term severe consequences. However, it is important to notice that in the past, physical harassment has not just been described in terms of sexual offence but also in fighting, hitting, and assault situations.

Table 2
Three-Step Coding

Open Coding	Axial Coding	Selective Coding
Hurting feelings	1. Emotional disturbance	1.Harassment
Disappointing,	a) Hurting feelings	A)Physical harassment
Making feel very bad	b) Disappointing	a)Sexual harassment
Tease	c) Making feel very bad	B)Verbal harassment
Destroy self-respect	d) Demoralizing	a)Threats of violence
Personal comments	e) Demotivating	b)Stigmatizing
Stigmatize		(destroy self- respect)
Rude names	2. Violence	i)Personal comments
Demoralizing	a) Leg-pulling, misbehavior,	ii) Rude names
Degrading,	b) Health harming treatment,	iii) Degrading
Demoting,	c) Invasion of space,	c)Stereotyping
Distracting from work	d) Sexual harassment	
Leg-pulling,	e) Physical harassment	
Health harming	f) Threats	2. Job-related
treatment		Mistreatment
Physical harassment		a) Demotivating,
Invasion of space	3. Stigmatizing	b) Distracting from work
Sexual harassment	a) Destroy self-respect,	c) Demoting
Giving stressful tasks	b) Insult,	
	c) Personal comments,	3. Compensation-related
Threats	d) Personal attacks,	Mistreatment
	e) Rude names	a) Not giving due
		compensation
		b) Underpaid for work
Improving attitude		
Turnover Intentions	4. Job-related stress	
Delayed salary	a) Demoting,	
Underpaid for work	b) Distracting from task	
Insult	c) Giving stressful tasks	
Personal attacks	d) Late salary/underpaid	
Demotivating	e) Turnover intentions	

On the contrary the respondents in the current study have just focused on sexual harassment indicating that in Pakistan there is insignificant trend of physically assaulting employees. For example, one of the respondents referred workplace bullying as '*asking for immoral demands from female staff by threatening job security*'.

Verbal harassment was however sub-divided into three main forms: threats, stigmatizing and stereotyping. For example, one of the current employees explained bullying as '*Teasing and degrading your colleagues without any reason*', whereas, future employees described it as '*It is leg pulling of juniors or colleagues to point out their weak points in front of others*'. According to the respondents, if an employee is threatened to be expelled from his job and asked to perform any kind of act, be it legal or illegal that would be considered part of bullying. This coincides with Keashly's (1998) explanation of over aggression

who explains that perpetrators usually project their bullying intentions through verbal and non-verbal behavior. Baron and Neuman (1996) also agree with the notion that it is rare that employees are physically assaulted in organizations; alternately mostly situations involve employers or superiors using verbal and non-verbal ways of exploiting their sub-ordinates. It is also seen that verbal abuse is also part of the three dichotomies that Buss (1961) has given in his explanation of aggressive behavior.

Stigmatizing was further explained as any act that destroys the self-respect of employees, for example calling him rude names, passing personal comments or degrading him in any possible way. This theme is supported by Leymann's (1990) work on mobbing where he explains that it occurs in three stages, second of which is stigmatizing. According to him post a triggering event the perpetrator always tries to stigmatize his victim with something negative. This stigma could also be a stereotype (Sa & Fleming, 2008). For example, in a multinational company if an employee belongs to rural areas he could be tagged as 'backward' and 'uneducated' which would be categorized by both stigmatization and stereotyping. However, stereotyping is separated from stigmatizing as most of the current study's respondents referred to gender stereotypes only. The Pakistani employees believe that when females are not given their due rights in workplace it is a severe form of bullying. It is important to note here that our data was predominantly of males, but still this theme has emerged indicating that there is no biasness due to same gender in this emergent theme.

Job-related Mistreatment

The job-related mistreatment that emerged was workplace bullying through demotivation, by demoting a capable employee, distraction from work by creating hurdles (for example, not proving resources), and giving tasks that the supervisor knows the sub-ordinate is not capable of performing. Although many studies (Keashly, 1998; Leymann, 1990; Schilpzand et al., 2016) have claimed that stress is an outcome of workplace bullying, in the current study it is being explained as an inherent part of any form of bullying.

The reasons for taking stress as a form of bullying rather than as consequence is that our analysis has provided specific situations that may be termed as bullying. For example, if a supervisor knows that his subordinate cannot understand English and he still deliberately gives him orders in written English this is a form of bullying as well, as it will cause undue stress to the employee. This is an example of conflict in interpersonal relationship which is also a part of bullying according to S.A., and Fleming (2008).

Compensation-related Mistreatment

The future employees were of the opinion that workplace bullying can also occur at an organizational level with reference to the compensation system for example, when an employee is either underpaid for his job or when his salary is delayed to invalid reasons. It is very common, indeed, that compensation holds great value for employees across the globe. Equally significant is the fact that there is always a tug-of-war between the supervisor and subordinate over the incentives given (Gupta & Shaw, 2014).

Every employee believes that when he works hard, he should be fairly compensated for it. In situations where an organization underpays an employee or when salary is delayed due to personal reasons, the actions come under the umbrella of bullying. However, it is important to note here that this theme emerged from the respondents who are not yet employees. Therefore, they do not know of the different organizational cultures and reasons an organization has for not giving salaries up to the employee's mark. Also there are additional contradictory factors for not being satisfied with the pay which may include the employee's own grandiose image of himself, the financial state of the company, increase in taxes and tariffs etc. hence, delayed salary due to personal reasons might be included in our final definition but underpaid is still very hazy as a concept.

Persistence

As mentioned in our introduction section, bullying has been defined in terms of its persistence since the beginning when Brodsky (1976) referred it as persistent attempts of a person to torment, frustrate or get a reaction from another. Alternately, this theme of persistent attempts have recently been elaborated as being consistent over a period of at least 6 months by researchers of the field (Lind et al., 2009; Nielsen et al., 2017). The data provided in the current study, however, explains results on the contrary.

The respondents were asked two main questions related to this theme: (1) Do they think that persistence is a compulsory element in bullying? (2) How persistent do they think actions should be before they can be tagged as bullying? To answer the first question, we analyze Table 3 below which shows that out of 69 total respondents (Phase 1 and 2) the majority (48) believed that persistence of specific actions was important in defining bullying.

Table 3
Persistence as an Element of Definition

Employees	Gender	Persistence		Total
		Yes		
Current	Male	13	9	2
	Female	1	1	2
Future	Male	19	6	5
	Female	15	5	20

To explain the second question asked we analyze the results of Table 4 which relates the frequencies of persistence the respondents feel should be estimated for actions to be termed as bullying. It can be seen that the majority of respondents, both from the current as well as the future employees, believe that if the specified action are ongoing for a period of one week they can be termed as bullying. Also important to note is that none of the respondents claimed a period of 6 months or 12 months as mentioned by researchers previously (Bashir & Hanif, 2011; Bilgel et al., 2006; Ciby & Raya, 2016; D'Cruz & Rayner, 2013; Seo et al., 2012; Yildrim, 2009).

Table 4
Frequency of Persistence

Persistence Frequency	Employees		Total
	Current	Future	
1 month	4	3	7
2 months	1	1	2
1 week	8	19	27
2 weeks	1	7	8
Once	0	1	1
Twice	0	2	1

Emergent Working Definition

To sum up the discussion above, there are three main themes of workplace bullying in Pakistan: harassment, job-related mistreatment and compensation-related mistreatment. Additionally, the persistence of these three kinds of behaviors should be at least one week before they can be termed as bullying. Hence, in the Pakistani context workplace bullying may be defined as:

'Acts and instances of sexual harassment, verbal harassment (threats, stigmas and stereotypes), job-related mistreatment (demotivation, distractions, and difficult tasks), and compensation-related mistreatment (delayed salary), that are persistent for a week are termed as workplace bullying.'

Future Direction

Along with the different emergent themes our data provided us with two more directions that are yet to be explored in the Pakistani context. One of them was the awareness of anti-bullying policies in organizations. Out of the 24

current employees that were interviewed only five commented that such policies existed at their workplaces. However, when asked to describe those policies briefly none of them were able to tell us the process and conditions required for such complaints. Therefore, future scholars should shed light on the awareness level of employees regarding such policies and also empirically test the application of such policies in different sectors.

Conclusion

This paper contributes to the existing body of knowledge on workplace bullying. It provides an eastern perspective to this common occurrence of bullying. Three main themes have emerged from our analyses which include harassment and work-related mistreatment which are similar to the existing literature and an additional theme of compensation-related mistreatment in the form of delayed salary.

Additionally, the level of persistence required for these acts to be considered bullying is one week in Pakistan as compared to 6 to 12 months in other countries showing that the people in this part of the world are less tolerant of such behaviors. However, we have also seen that an additional perspective that we could not explore that much is the existence and awareness of anti-bullying policies in the organizations. Future scholars should focus on this aspect of bullying as it would be of more value from practitioner's point of view as well.

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