Lambs to Slaughter? Young People as the Prospective Target of Workplace Bullying in Higher Education

Leah P. Hollis[1]

Abstract

While few studies examine the rights of younger workers (under 35), young people in the American workplace are one of the few groups that do not invoke United States Title VII federal protection. Other groups based on race, gender, age and disability can seek legal protections to prevent or subdue harassment if such incivility can be directly tied to these aforementioned statuses. The central research question of this analysis is: What is the impact of workplace bullying on young employees in American higher education? One hundred and seventy-five baccalaureate year colleges and universities were surveyed with the 35-questionnaire instrument inquiring about the occurrences, duration and type of workplace bullying in American higher education. A total of 401 (n=401) higher education respondents completed the survey. An analysis of the data set revealed that 71% of young respondents face workplace bullying in higher education, which is higher than the 62% rate for the general population of the study who report being affected by workplace bullying. Analysis of the findings and subsequent discussion is guided by Bolman and Deal's human resource frame (2013).

Keywords: Workplace bullying, Young employees,Employee abuse, human resource frame

Contemporary generational diversity brings four generations together in the workplace: Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, Generation Xers and Millennials. All with different values regarding work emerging from historical and social contexts of their respective upbringings, those with the least amount of organizational power, the Millennials, would be the most exposed to workplace bullying. Along with the lack of experience and insight on how to anticipate workplace trends and organizational behavior, they are not extended the legal protections of Title VII in United States federal legislation.

Some studies examine the extent of workplace bullying (Björkqvist, Österman & Hjelt-Bäck, 1994; Branch, Ramsay & Barker, 2013; Cowan, 2012; Duffy & Sperry, 2007; Fritz, 2014; Harvey, 2006; Leifooghe, 2010; Matthiesen & Einarsen, 2007; Yamada, 2000; Zabrodska & Kveton, 2013). While the topics include European sectors or corporate sectors, none of the aforementioned examines workplace bullying in American higher education administration. None of them considers the impact on the more vulnerable younger employee.

A review of the literature exposes a trend of treating young people (under 35) poorly in the workplace. While the breadth of literature in youth harassment is not extensive, a few studies confirm that younger workers often endure more abuse, more exploitation and less pay due to their lacking experience.

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[1] EdD, Community College Leadership Doctoral Program, Morgan State University, 1700 East Cold Spring Lane, Banneker Hall 200, Baltimore, MD USA 21251. Email: leah.hollis@morgan.edu, Phone: 443-885-1469

In addition, some studies show young women are even more susceptible and the disproportionate target of sexual harassment in addition to the garden-variety harassment and unfairness that is levied against younger generations (Kellner, McDonald and Waterhouse, 2011). Consequently, one can reasonably conclude that younger workers are disproportionally affected by workplace bullying. The Namie and Namie study (2009) also confirms that 37% of Americans face workplace bullying some time during their career; the same study confirms that 24% of young people face workplace bullying.

Literature Review

The naiveté that young people may bring to the workplace may make them an easy mark for bullies trying to prove their power and control within an organization. As bullies tend to pick on the perceived weaker or more compliant personnel, young people are potentially more susceptible to this type of bullying behavior. Young people have not had extended exposure to incivility and may be less equipt to counteract such aggression in a savvy manner.

Bullying is about power, controlling and manipulating targets (Goldblatt, 2001; Hauge, Skogstad & Einarsen, 2009; Hutchinson, Vickers, Jackson & Wilkes, 2010). Those with power have the latitude to support and mentor staff or tomanipulate and humiliate staff. As younger people typically hold entry-level positions, they often have less official power in the organization.

The younger work usually has not achieved tenure or raised money, activities which typically cultivate power in higher education. Consequently, they also would have less personal power or expert power given the limited longevity in their careers.

A presumed common experience in coming of age is that of the bigger kid picking on the smaller kid. This exertion of power even in adolescence is woven in to several cultures. An Icelandic study of 398 participants reflecting on age and gender in relation to bullying showed that young children avoid bullying, while their older counterparts are more aggressive:

These age differences might be explained by the fact that younger children are bullied more/and by older children. The younger children would therefore use escape as a strategy, due to their inability to defend themselves against often older bullies. 'Ignoring the bullies' may be prominent among older children again because of their greater physical strength, but they could also have developed this strategy to try to make the bully lose interest, to 'extinguish' the behaviour. (Olafosson and Johannsdottir, 2004, p. 321).

The dynamics regarding age in the workplace are similar in that those with less power, by default often younger employees would engage in escapist and passive tactics. As the powerless target is not in a position to defend aggression from older or more seasoned peers, the coping tactics in the workplace include avoidance, sick leave, asking for transfer or walking off the job.

A Swedish labor market study revealed "17.3% of employed women and 9.5% of employed men had been exposed to violence or threat of violence at some time during the immediately preceding twelve months" (Vaez, Ekberg and Laflamme, 2004, p. 570). While this study confirms that both young men and young women ages 20-34 face workplace violence and harassment, young women "are proportionally more exposed (to workplace violence) than men" (p. 569). As confirmed in other studies, harassment and abuse at work affects the overall quality of life manifesting in sick time, unexplained absence and voluntary or involuntary separation from the job.

An Australian report also confirms that young people face more health and safety concerns on the job. Aside from being underemployed, the tasks assigned to young people are routine and psychologically demoralizing.

"The magnitude of these concerns suggests that young workers are often subjected to long working hours, compromised job conditions that threaten their health and safety, and other forms of exploitation" (McDonald, 2005).

During 2003-2004, Job Watch in Australia contacted 3,000 young people to inquire about their work conditions. Forty-eight and a half percent reported, "Problems with pay or conditions; 35.2% reported dismissal and redundancy, and 21% reported 'concerns regarding workplace bullying" (McDonald, 2007, p.14). McDonald comments in another report that many young people who are aware that their rights are being violated in regard to less pay or forced overtime, may not be aware of legal remedies or complaint process to resolve the conflict (McDonald, 2007, p.11).

A 2012 study in Brazil confirms similar reactions from young people in the workforce. In a qualitative interview of forty young employees under the age of twenty, a common coping strategy was to ignore the problem of bullying or 'pretend nothing was wrong' (Turte, 2012, p. 5675). Further, young workers in this study also commented they did not know avenues for resolving the problem or avoiding the abuse.

From another perspective, longevity in a career implicitly informs the workplace savvy a worker possesses to navigate the social climate on the job. Political skill can be a compelling element when managing self and others in the workplace, defined as "the ability to effectively understand others at work and to use such knowledge to influence others to act in ways that enhance one's personal and/or organizational objectives" (Ferris, Davidson and Perrewe 2005, p. 127). In a study examining 232 working employees, Harris et al consider 'political skill' as a position that 'has little need to use coworker abuse for personal gain, retribution, or any other self-serving behavior' (Harris, Harvey and Booth, 2005, p. 611). Further, politically skilled staff members know the long-term impact of bullying and may be less likely to engage in abuse. Arguably, the person with political skill would also know how to side step such land minds. With experience, employees know which battles to fight, and further know how to engage in workplace conflict with minimal damage or fanfare. In this context, the younger employee would be operating from a deficit position.

Harlan et al. (2005) refer to 'avoidance coping behaviors' from a subordinate seeking distraction in the midst of stress. In converse, Bass (1990) comments that confidence, respect and pride can increase resilience. Leadership can guide subordinates through difficult situations with "less fear and approach the situation in a more positive and confident way" (Harlan et al., 2005, p. 5). The study confirmed that subordinate resilience is positively affected by transformation leadership styles.

In contrast, one of the anecdotes to the ills of a hostile workplace is a compassionate and empathetic boss who can inspire subordinates through a tough workplace crisis and consternation. The leadership of young people sits in an interesting position of teaching their young staff how to behave as leaders and managers. Such leaders by default are training young staff what is acceptable leadership. An ethical and supportive leader will develop ethical and supportive staff; aggressive and abusive leadership respectively will cultivate the same elements in their staff.

An international study 187 respondents from an insurance company servicing Milan, Istanbul and Paris (Leroy, Bastounis, and Minibas-Poussard, 2012) examined the relationship between negative feelings counterproductive workplace behaviors. The findings confirmed that negative feelings and stress contribute to counterproductive behaviors on the job. In short, when employees feel they are enduring unfair treatment, they become angry leading to '…overt motivational reactions, such as verbal aggression, sabotage, and theft.' (Leroy, Bastounis, and Minibas-Poussard, 2012, p. 1350). Employees feeling fear on the job are more likely to '…engage in aversive behaviors such as absenteeism and taking repeated breaks' (1351). These results are consistent with previous findings and the assumptions of the cognitive theory of emotions (Fischer and Roseman 2007; Frijda, 1986; Vlaeyen and Linton, 1999). Further, the study confirmed that the reaction of anger precipitated active engagement in counter productive work behaviors, while fear resulted in passive engagement in counter productive work behaviors (Leroy, Bastounis, and Minibas-Poussard, 2012, p.1350).

Purpose

The purpose of the study was to examine the prevalence of workplace bullying in American higher education and the impact on young employees.

Tabulation of the general data set revealed that 62% of respondents stated they had been affected by workplace bullying; the secondary analysis of the same data set which is the subject of this article looks at the younger population (under 35).

Several studies, examine the proliferation of workplace bullying (Björkqvist, Österman& Hjelt-Bäck 1994; Cowan, 2012; Branch, Ramsay & Barker, 2013; Duffy & Sperry, 2007; Yamada, 2000; Matthiesen & Einarsen, 2007; Fritz, 2014; Harvey, 2006; Leifooghe, 2010.) Other studies examine the corporate sector, European trends, and impact on health and wellness for staff facing workplace bullying (Constanti and Gibbs, 2004; Thomas, 2005; Djurkovic and McCormack & Casimir, 2008; Query and Hanely, 2010). Unlike the aforementioned studies, this examination specifically considers the different departments of higher education including athletics, academic affairs, student affairs, human resources, development, admissions/financial aid, information technology, and executive ranks.

For the purpose of this study, bullying means:

…Harassing, offending, socially excluding someone or negatively affecting someone's work tasks. This behavior occurs repeatedly and regularly over a period of time about six months. With the escalating process, the person con- fronted ends up in an inferior position and becomes the target of systematic negative social acts. (Einarsen, Hoek, Zapf, & Cooper, 2003, p.22).

Further note, the definition of workplace bullying is particularly similar to the EEOC definition of harassment. However, the definitions clearly state that those over 40 are protected. Younger workers do not have Title VII protection unless they claim harassment by membership of another protected class:

Harassment is unwelcome conduct that is based on race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy), national origin, age (40 or older), disability or genetic information. Harassment becomes unlawful where 1) enduring the offensive conduct becomes a condition of continued employment, or 2) the conduct is severe or pervasive enough to create a work environment that a reasonable person would consider intimidating, hostile, or abusive.

http://www.eeoc.gov/laws/types/harassment.cfm (EEOC. Gov 2012).

Bullying and harassment feel the same for the target with one exception. Harassment is based on Title VII distinctions and actionable in court. Bullying typically is not based on protected class; therefore the target remains vulnerable with not legal recourse to escape the abuse. Young people who have not aged into the "over 40" protected class, are potentially more vulnerable to abuse. Further in higher education, the younger employee typically does not have the power within the organization to repel bullying. Such power in higher education tends to align with tenure or the ability to general revenue.

Theoretical Frame

Bolman and Deal's human resource approach serves as the theoretical frame for this analysis (2013). While the human resource frame has been controversial over the years, this approach considered staff motivation as a critical part of the organization's success. They claim that "people and organizations need each other…[and] when the fit between individual and system is poor, one or both suffer" (Bolman and Deal, 2013, p.117). Within this consideration, employees are not reduced to cogs in a wheel, simply reporting to work to collect a paycheck. Those who subscribe to the human resource frame recognize that staff members need to feel important, inspired and appreciated. If the organization governs its staff with Maslow's view within the human need for belonging, inclusion, respect and esteem, (Bolman and Deal, 2013) the resulting staff productivity should reflect the energy and engagement needed for organizational success.

While this analysis will focus on young employees, employees regardless of age, gender, race, or any background has the human needs discussed in the human resource frame. Workplace bullying in any organization counters the human need for belonging and inclusion. Bullying typically isolates and ostracizes the target, creating an environment from which the target seeks escape. Whether those escape routes are external through sick time, tardiness and turnover, or through internal escape routes of disengagement, apathy and listlessness, those leaders who do not consider the human resource frame risk demoralizing the critical human resource required to run any organization.

Limitations

The data regarding young people emerge from an existing data set collected with the following limitations. Distribution of the survey relied on the Internet; however many colleges and universities have Internet security to protect from unknown emails. While the research invited participants from executive leadership, middle management and entry level, most of the participants were from middle management and entry-level positions.

Delimitations

The researcher chose administrators from 175 colleges in the Eastern Time Zone. Collecting the 3200 individual emails presented a sizeable task; therefore, the east coast parameters narrowed possible participants. Further, the researcher did not include community colleges, career/ vocational schools or for-profit colleges. Community colleges typically have different missions than traditional four-year colleges, with more emphasis on teaching and less research focus. Higher educational leadership in traditional four-year colleges and universities tend to emerge from academic research. Career and vocational schools often offer certificates and experiential learning through faculty who are practitioners in the field (for example in plumbing, welding, motor cycle repair). The for-profit sector is a business model laid over higher education as its product; therefore, participants from for-profit education would presumably have experiences incongruous with traditional four-year colleges and universities. To strengthen validity, the study focused on one type of higher education, the traditional four-year baccaraluate degree granting colleges and universities.

Research Methods

In an effort to examine workplace bullying dynamics in higher education administration, a thirty-five-question survey was developed. The institutions surveyed include liberal arts colleges, Research-I institutions, Ivy League universities, historically black colleges, state universities, and large private universities. The commonality in this cross-section of colleges and universities was the tradition of conferring the baccalaureate degree.

During 2012, over 3200 participants were asked to complete the survey. The population comprised staff of four-year colleges and universities. As no other survey existed to specifically examine workplace bullying in American higher education administration, the researcher created a new instrument, which was beta-tested for reliability by four professionals and researchers in higher education administration before the official launch of the study. The researcher used Survey Monkey^{TM} to host the thirty-five-question instrument and collect incoming data. Each of 175 colleges or universities that comprised the population received 18 invitations to staff to participate in the study. Two participants were selected from each of the following: athletics, student affairs, information technology (IT), human resources, executive level, admissions/ financial aid, academic faculty (science), academic faculty (arts), and external affairs/development. The selection of the colleges and universities was random, yet across the east coast of the United States.

Procedures

The researcher emailed the survey to participants inviting them to complete the survey via web link provided. Over a five-week period, the researcher sent four additional reminders to the sample to encourage participation and remind them of the $100 American Express gift card to be raffled to a participant. The fifth and final reminder offered a last chance for participants to include their voice in this study.

Through the five-week data collection period via email, 14% of the population (448) was unreachable as email invitations were undeliverable due to protections on university and college servers. Another 5% of the population opted out of the study (161). Of the remaining 2,592 in the sample, 15.5% (n= 401) completed the informed consent process and subsequent survey. Survey design and administration adhered to ethical standards and aesthetic discussed by Cozby (2009).

Central Research Question

For the purpose of this analysis focusing specifically on younger employees (those 35 and under) the following served as the central research question.

1. What is the impact of workplace bullying on young employees in American higher education?

The data set on young people emerges from the larger data set collected via the aforementioned methods. In turn, for young employees in this analysis n= 70.

Internal and External Validity

In regard to internal validity with the survey instrument, the instrument was beta-tested by four higher educational professionals: an EEO officer, a faculty member, a dean and a vice president. Their perspectives were included in revisions such as adding vicarious bullying or questions about time lost managing a bully. Those who contributed their expertise to the instrument all had at least 15 years in higher education administration. As noted by Creswell (2009) such beta-testing ensures clarity of questions. Further, the maturity of those reviewing the instrument strengthens validity Creswell (2009), and the researcher has conducted previous studies which included instrument design.

The researcher was a 22-year veteran of higher education. Having served in athletics, student affairs, and academic affairs, the researcher had first-hand knowledge about traditional higher education. Such experiences when incorporated with the expertise of those in the beta-test guided the development of the original instrument.

The researcher controlled for external validity through chosen delimitations. Only traditional four-year baccalaureate degree granting schools were in the population. Community colleges were not part of the population. Further, for-profit and technical/vocational schools were outside the scope of the study.

The Results

The participants of this segment on young people ages 21-35 are a subset of a larger existing data set that was collected to examine the extent of workplace bullying in higher education. Findings specific to young people reveal that the sample of young people faces a rate of workplace bullying higher than the general population. Similar to findings in Australian and Brazilian studies, young people have the entry-level position and therefore the least amount of power in the organization. In American higher education, the entry-level position equates to 25.8% were entry-level, 31% assistant director, coordinator or managers; 25% were directors. Only nine participants ages 21-35 held position of assistant dean, associate dean, dean or provost.

With young people, n=70, 68.6% of the respondents were 28-35, 28.6% were 28-23. Sixty- one percent were white while 32.9% of those under 35 were African American. 68.6% were female. The mean salary was $35,000 to $45,000 reflected 29% of the respondents, with another 21.7% making $45,000-$55,000. With all

respondents included, the average salary is $55,144. Over half were at the master's level, 55.7% and 30% only held a Bachelor's degree. Thirty-one percent were assistant directors, coordinators or managers. Twenty- five percent were directors. See Table 1.

Table 1: Demographics

68.6%	28-35
28.6%	23-28
61%	White
32.9%	African American
68.6%	Female
31.4%	Male
29%	35,000-45,000
21.7%	45,000-55,000
55.7%	Masters
30%	Bachelors
31 %	Assistant directors, coordinators or managers
25%	Directors

Of the findings, 71% of respondents under age thirty-five have witnessed or experienced workplace bullying in the eighteen months prior to the study (n= 51) which is 11% higher than the general population of the study 62% of were affected by workplace bullying in the eighteen months prior to the study. See Table 2.

Table 2: Affected by Bullying

71%	Under 35
62%	General population

In regard to creating a healthy work environment, when asked to choose from several elements that contributed to such, young respondents stated 'respect from the boss and administration was the major contributing factor (81.8%). 'Respect from colleague' (80.3%), 'positive attitude of from colleagues' (75.8%) and 74.2% cited 'positive attitude of the boss contributed to healthy work environment. See Table 3.

Table 3: Elements in a Healthy Work Environment

81.8%	Respect from boss and administration
80.3%	Respect from boss and administration
74.8%	Positive attitude from colleagues
74.2%	Positive attitude of the boss

When asked to choose from six potential venues for bullying, 80% of young respondents stated bullying occurred primarily in one-on-one meetings and 68.9% stated bullying occurred in front of other staff. See Table 4.

Table 4: Where are Young People Bullied

80%	One on one meetings
68.9%	In front of other staff

When asked how targets were bullied, 60% responded they were the target of group gossip and rumors, 55.6% were the subject of harsh memos notes or commands, while 53.3% stated they were overlooked and ignored. See Table 5.

Table 5: How are Young People Bullied

60%	Target of group gossip and rumors
55.6%	Subject of harsh memos and notes/commands
53.3%	Overlooked and ignored

The top three organizational abuses included 'goals and tasks changed without notice' (40%), 'responsibilities budget and reporting structured change without notice,' (37.8%) and being assigned unreasonable tasks (35.6%). See Table 6

Table 6: Organizational Abuse

40%	Goals and tasks changed without notice
37.8%	Responsibilities budget and reporting structured change without notice
35.6%	Being assigned unreasonable tasks

The duration of bullying occurred two to three calendar years, 31.1% and for a full calendar year 20%. See Table 7. From the perspective of the young respondent, 63.6% of targets of workplace bullying stated that the target isolated themselves, 31.8% reported the bullying to the supervisor, and 29.5% took more sick time. Nonetheless, 43.2% of young respondents found no relief in dealing with a workplace bullying on campus. See Table 8.

Table 7: Duration of Abuse

31.1%	Two to three years
20%	Full calendar year

Table 8: Reaction to Bullying

63.6%	Targets of workplace bullying stated that the target isolated themselves
43.2%	Found no relief from bully
31.8%	Reported bullying to superior
29.5%	Took more sick time

Respondents under thirty-five spend on average 3.67 hours a week strategizing on ways to avoid the bully on campus. In the typical fifty weeks worked a year, 183.5 hours or 4.9 weeks (assuming a 37.5 hour week) is wasted by strategizing to get away from a bully. With the average salary in the study of people under thirty-five being $55,144, mean young employees on average earn $1102 a week with an average hourly rate of $29.39. If 183.5 hours annually is lost, $5393.07 is lost in disengagement annually per person on average. Thirteen percent spent at least a full day per week engaging in escapist strategies.

This 13% spends 400 hours a year or 10.67 weekly evading the bullying and abuse on campus. For those spending an average of a full day per week disengaging from a bully, the cost to the institution is $11,756. See Table 9.

Table 9: Cost of Workplace Bullying with Targets Under 35

3.67 hours spent per week x 50 weeks= 183.5 hours wasted per year
29.39 /hour x 183.5 wasted per year= $5593.07 lost per person

In higher education, many entry-level positions require master's degree; 55.7% of young respondents have such a degree. Note the scope of the study didn't include administrative support staff. In short, the entry level position, typically filled by young people, endures the brunt of bullying in higher education.

Close to 91% of the young respondents stated that the organization did nothing to deal with a bully. Further, 66.7% perceived that the toxic work environment definitely had an impact on morale and 40.5% stated the toxic work environment definitely had an impact on service to staff internally. Forty-five percent of young respondents stated that the toxic work environment had no effect on fundraising and alumni functions; fifty percent report no effect on enrollment; close to 36% reported no effect on academic integrity; just under 24% reported no effect on compliance with policy or regulations. Thirty-eight percent reported that student affairs were the most likely division to harbor workplace bullying on campus.

In regard to the frequency and proportion of bullying, age does not appear be a factor. The contingency table (Table 10) shows the similar frequency in being bullied, witnessing bullying, or facing vicarious bullying regardless of age.

Table 10: Age as Factor in Being Target of Bullying

	Under 35 n= 70	Over 35 n=325
Bullied	38.25%	31.07%
Witnessed	36.76%	38.19%
Not bullied	44.12%	38.19%
Vicariously bullied	16.18%	17.88%
Witness Vicarious bullying	29.59%	29.77%

Contingency Table

To further analyze the question, what is the impact of workplace bullying on young employees, the aforementioned contingency tables were created. While Table 10 shows no significant frequency in the occurrence of workplace bullying based on age, the contingency table in Table 11 shows age might be a factor in the duration of workplace bullying in higher education. The hypothesis related to this question is:

H_1. There is a relationship between age of the person and the duration that he or she endures bullying in higher education.
H_o There is no relationship between age of the person and the duration that he or she endures bullying in higher education.

The following contingency table outlines the frequency of responses related to each variable. See Table 11.

Table 11: Age as Factor in Duration of Bullying

	Under 35	Over 35
One academic term	20%	19.58%
Two academic terms	11.11%	10%
Full calendar	20%	17.08%
Two- three years	31.11%	26.25%
More than 3 years	17.78%	27.00%

The contingency table (Table 11) shows a discrepancy in frequency of duration in relation to age being in at the "more than 3 years" duration level. If the null hypothesis were true:

"H$_o$ There is no relationship between age of the person and the duration that he or she endures bullying in higher education" then the discrepancies highlighted in Table 11 at the "more than 3 years level" would not exist. There would be no notable difference in the cell proportions and the marginal proportions. This discrepancy in observed proportions warrants the Chi Square test to determine if the null hypothesis should be rejected. To qualify for the Chi Square test, the variables of the study "age under 35" or "age over 35" and at least five participants answered each question. Age under 35 were coded as "0" and Age over 35 were coded as "1."

 In regard to frequency, one academic term= "0," two academic terms = "1," full calendar = "2," two- three years = "3," and more than three years= "4." The IBM SPSS Statistical Package was used to calculate the Chi square frequency of expected versus observed. See Table 12 and Table 13:

Table 12 Frequency * Under 35 Crosstabulation

			Under 35		Total
			.00	1.00	
Frequency	1.00	Count	9	46	55
		Expected Count	8.7	46.3	55.0
	2.00	Count	5	23	28
		Expected Count	4.4	23.6	28.0
	3.00	Count	9	44	53
		Expected Count	8.4	44.6	53.0
	4.00	Count	14	61	75
		Expected Count	11.9	63.1	75.0
	5.00	Count	8	65	73
		Expected Count	*11.6*	*61.4*	73.0
Total		*Count*	*45*	*239*	284
		Expected Count	45.0	239.0	284.0

Table 13 Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	1.902[a]	4	.754
Likelihood Ratio	2.009	4	.734
Linear-by-Linear Association	.479	1	.489
N of Valid Cases	284		

While the Chi Square reveals some association between the age of bullying target and higher education at the "bullied more than 3 years level," the test for this sample doesn't yield statistically significant results at the .05 level (P-value of .754). See table 13. With n=284, a future study would need a larger sample to further investigate the possibility of a statistically significant relationship between the age of the target and enduring bullying more than 3 years. The contingency tables and Chi Square test reveal there is no difference in age of target and duration of bullying in the levels one term, two terms, full calendar, two to three years.

Hence, the hypothesis is not accepted. However, while the contingency table shows slight association at the "more than three years level, though the association is not statistically significant the association leads one to reject the null hypothesis, "H_o There is no relationship between age of the person and the duration that he or she endures bullying in higher education."

Discussion

A strong link exists between bullying and suicide, as suggested by national news reporting bullying-related suicides in the U.S. and other countries. According to the Centers for Disease Control, suicide is the third leading cause of death among young people (Davidson and Harrington, 2012). Reportedly, for every suicide among young people there are at least one hundred suicide attempts. Over fourteen percent of high school students have considered suicide, and almost seven percent have attempted suicide at least once.

Bullying victims are between two and nine times more likely to consider suicide than non-victims. But bullying is not just a problem with young people, nor is it restricted to the school environment. (Davidson and Harrington, 2012).

 When mistreated, young people may take a protective stance and in turn, disengage from the toxic environment and the organizational tasks embedded in that environment. Disengagement is a defensive and protective mechanism which includes gathering in a different part of the department to avoid the bully and making 'every interaction with the supervisor as short as possible…' (Starrat and Grandy, 2009, p. 150). Such disengagement is consistent with the human resource frame that states that absenteeism and quitting are responses any employee would have to an unhealthy work environment (Bolman and Deal, 2013). Further, mistreated employees "… stay on the job but withdraws psychologically, becoming indifferent and passive and apathetic" (Bolman and Deal, 2013, p. 126).

Young people will also dismiss the supervisor's power and referring to abusive bosses with childlike adjectives… immature or incapable of adult behavior (Starrat and Grandy, 2009, p.148). As with other targets of workplace bullying, absenteeism escalated in the young population; avoidance and walking off the job became coping mechanisms. One participant noted about the bully boss 'the only thing you can do is turn your head and turn over your mind.

When they are talking, pretend it's the teacher from Charlie Brown…' (p. 150). Outcomes of the Starrat study included 'justifying retaliation, distancing and leaving the job to cope. Organizational outcomes produced higher employee turnover and creation of a 'destructive culture.'

The findings show that the frequency of bullying does not change in relationship to age. Initially, those over 35 and those over 35 will endure the abuse, yet some employees under 35 will apparently leave the institution sooner than the general population after three years' abuse. The human resource frame offers a clear explanation why workplace bullying hurts any organization regardless of the age of the employees. Leadership that does not consider the human needs of their employee will lose staff productivity.

Recommendation for Future Study

The findings reveal that close to two-thirds of higher education respondents are affected by workplace bullying. The sample for this study focused on the east coast. Future studies could provide the perspective of young people nationally by including campuses from four time zones. Such a national study on young people would gather a larger sample size for employees under 35 in higher education.

The aforementioned literature review comments on how young people are easier targets for bullies. Additional research could analyze the training provided to young staff about their employment rights.

Also, while the analysis offered an association between age of target and the duration of bullying at the "more than three years level," a qualitative inquiry could review why young participants appear to leave at this point where the general population will endure. One could imagine that younger people do not have the commitments that will tie an employee to colleges, such a children's tuition remission, housing commitments, or health care issues.

Conclusion

An old adage that youth is wasted on the young implies an envy that society might have for those enjoying the years in there twenties and thirties. However, several international studies show that the youth is the disproportionate target of workplace hostility and unfair treatment.

While this study shows young people face workplace bullying in American higher education with similar frequency of all age groups, young employees tend to escape from workplace bullying sooner than other age groups. Nonetheless, targets as young people are perceived as almost powerless as the weakest kids on the block; hence, they are most likely target for unfairness. As workplace bullying is often about power, unsurprisingly, those without power endure the greatest threats. Regardless of the subset reviewed in regard to the toxic environment created by bullies, the cost to the organization only skyrockets and the human toll even for young people is incalculable. Consistent with the workplace bullying findings for the general population in higher education, and consistent with several studies on organizational culture and leadership, the leadership, the people with the organizational power, shape the culture and in turn lead the way to productivity. Those who continue abusive and coercive tactics, only foster disengagement. In the minds of upcoming leadership burgeoning from youthful ranks, abusive leadership is often reduced to the cartoonish antics of adults who have yet to gain the respect of those young people they manage.

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