

Behavior Physiology of Workplace Bullying and It's Role to Job Satisfaction and Psychological Distress among Workers at Water Supply Company

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Abstract.

Individuals strive to fulfill their essential needs by working. Every company has different work environment. The work environment tends to have impact on each individual. One of the key issues that usually occur at workplace is bullying. Workplace bullying can happen to anyone while both bullies and their victims may experience psychological effects from bullying. This study aims to see the effect of workplace bullying on job satisfaction and psychological distress among water supply company employees. This research design is quantitative using cross sectional design. The results showed that the psychological distress variable played a significant role in workplace bullying ($p. < 0.05$). However, the job satisfaction variable does not contribute to workplace bullying ($p. > 0.05$). The serotonin transporter-linked promoter region (5-HTTLPR) polymorphism of the SLC6A4 gene consists of an insertion/deletion that creates a short (S) 14 repeat or a long (L) 16 repeat allele. Genotype profile on one's serotonergic system is correlated by their dominance in the community. Individuals with allele LL type is more likely become bullies when they are encouraged by the environment. In contrast, individuals with SS allele type with in a characteristic of low transcription activity at transporter serotonin gene tend to become bullying victims in their workplace due to they more vulnerable to stress. Employee with amygdala which easily triggered and intimidated by the dominant individuals, more likely to experience workplace bullying. Those employee who work in supportive workplace show higher job satisfaction and they are not distress psychologically.

Keywords: workplace bullying, job satisfaction, psychological distress.

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1. INTRODUCTION

For the majority of people, having a job is one of their primary necessities. People having a job is to meet their basic needs, including social and physical necessities. Those who work aim to be able to meet both their financial and social needs. When people are working, they will undoubtedly run into a variety of issues at their work environment. One of the most common work problem today is bullying in the workplace. Violence in the workplace or referred as "bullying," is a topic that affects companies that has drawn significant attention from a variety of groups, including scholars, educators, protective organizations, and community leaders [1].

Workplace bullying is defined as the need for offenders to exert control over others as well as intentional, persistent interpersonal antagonism that is severe enough to endanger the target's health or financial situation [2]. Workplace bullying can happen to anyone in their work environment. Bullying at work is classified into three categories, namely 1) downward bullying, in which a bully targets their subordinate; 2) horizontal bullying, done by individuals or in group targeting their peers with the same position level; and 3) upward bullying, where subordinates harass individuals with higher managerial position [3].

According to the Workplace Bullying Institute's study findings in 2017, 19% of Americans experienced bullying at work, another 19% had witnessed bullying at work, and 63% were aware of bullying at work (Workplace Bullying Institute, 2017). Bullying does not only occur in developed countries, but also in developing countries such as Indonesia. Study done by Gunawan, Prihanto, and Yuwanto on Surabaya workers showed that bullying at work has an effect on both psychological conditions and behavior [4]. Psychological effects include feelings of anger, hurt, sadness, disappointment, loss of self-confidence, anger at oneself, feeling isolated, frustrated at work, and experiencing fear in dealing with other people, while behavioral effects include decreased performance, withdrawal, and decide to quit the job. The results of a systematic review study conducted by Akter (2019) also showed positive correlation between workplace bullying and psychological stress [5].

Bullying at work can certainly lead to feelings of discomfort in the work environment and will affect employee job satisfaction. The work environment has a significant impact on employee job satisfaction. O'Driscoll, et al. (2011) found that those who are bullied at work are under more stress, have lower emotional well-being, frequently miss work, have lower job satisfaction, and are less motivated to work [6].

According to findings from the study of behavioral physiology, people with the s/s allele type of the serotonin transporter gene who have low transcriptional activity features are more likely to experience bullying at work. they are tends to more vulnerable to stress, their amygdala is easily triggered and easily intimidated by the dominant individuals are more likely to experience workplace bullying.

Bullying at work not only impacting individuals, but also impacts group and organization. Bullying can affect team performance and established group norms. It is also affect organization's performance and existing organizational culture [7].

Based on the issues previously discussed, the researcher is motivated to study how workplace bullying affects water supply company Denpasar City employees' job satisfaction and psychological well-being.

2. METHODS

This research will be done in quantitative method using a cross-sectional study design. The dependent variable in this study is job satisfaction and psychological distress, while the independent variable in this study is workplace bullying. The research was conducted at Water Supply Company in Denpasar City in February 2023. The population in this study

being all employees of Water Supply Company in Denpasar City. The research sample was selected randomly using a simple lottery method, with 68 respondents in total.

This research using three questionnaires as research instrument. The Negative Acts Questionnaire-Revised (NAQ-R) and Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K-10) questionnaire were adapted from Erwandi, Kadir, and Lestari's research (2021) [8]. The NAQ-R questionnaire was used to measure subject's exposure to bullying over the previous six months at work. The NAQ-R questionnaire contains 22 items with five possible answers: "never," "occasionally," "every month," "every week," and "every day." Based on *corrected item total correlation*, results of the NAQ-R validity test range from 0.721 to 0.897. The NAQ-R also contains three questions that were asked that used the term “bullying”. The first question that was asked was whether the respondents had ever been bullied at work over the last six months. The second question was about the person who bullied of the bullying that they experienced. The last question was the numbers of persons who bullied them. For measuring the psychological distress we used the Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K-10) questionnaire. K-10 comprises of 10 questions regarding the emotions the individual has experienced during the past month.

Measurement of job satisfaction was carried out using the Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS) questionnaire (Spector, 1997) and has been adapted by Rindyantika and Safitri (2014). The JSS scale consists of a score of 1 to 6 with categories ranging from "strongly disagree", "disagree", "somewhat disagree", "somewhat agree", "agree", and "strongly agree". The statistical test was used to analyze the effect of workplace bullying on job satisfaction and psychological distress was the Two Way Anova test with a significance value of $p < 0.05$.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis in this study used Two Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The following is a table of analysis results using ANOVA

Table 1. Results of data analysis

Variable	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Workplace bullying on job satisfaction	416.572	3.559	0.064
Workplace bullying on psychological distres	467.731	35.261	0.000

Based on table 1, the workplace bullying variable on job satisfaction shows a significance value of 0.064 ($p > 0.05$). This means that workplace bullying does not play a significant role in job satisfaction. The results of this study are quite different from previous studies, most of which said that workplace bullying had an effect on job satisfaction. However, based on the results of research conducted by Giorgi, Leon-Perez, and Arenas, intense exposure to bullying behavior can not affect job satisfaction [9]. Even if someone experiences workplace bullying, this does not affect their job satisfaction. This can be influenced by other several factors, such as culture, coping mechanisms, and also motivation. According to Giorgi, Leon-Perez, and Arenas, country with high bullying prevalence tend to tolerate negative actions such as bullying [9]. Apart from that, employee motivation also influences job satisfaction. Employees tend to accept bullying behavior at work when bullying at work is considered to have benefits for their career development, especially in situations of financial crisis [10]. The results of this study may also be in line with research conducted by Lee, Yun, &

Srivastava (2013) which shows that employees obtain higher creativity scores when supervision carried out by supervisors is at a medium level compared to very low or very high levels [11].

Apart from that, in table 1 the results also show that workplace bullying plays a significant role in psychological distress ($p < 0.05$). Employees who experience bullying at work tend to have an impact on their mental condition. Samsudin, Isahak, & Rampal conducted a systematic review which stated that bullying behavior can cause individuals to experience burnout, mental strain, and undesirable psychosomatic effects [12]. Workplace bullying also has a positive effect on employee emotional exhaustion, which means that the higher the workplace bullying experienced, the higher the employee's emotional exhaustion [13]. Individuals who experience bullying will usually experience psychological distress which will certainly cause them to become emotionally tired.

The serotonin transporter-linked promoter region (5-HTTLPR) polymorphism of the SLC6A4 gene consists of an insertion/deletion that creates a short (S) 14 repeat or a long (L) 16 repeat allele [14]. Based on aspects of behavioral physiology studies, genetically, individuals with the SS allele type characterized by low transcriptional activity in the serotonin transporter gene are at risk of experiencing bullying in the workplace. This is because this group is vulnerable to stress and also the amygdala is easily stimulated, easily feeling afraid of dominant people so they are vulnerable to becoming objects of bullying in the workplace [15]. Arnsten, Raskind, Taylor, and Connor provided a neurobiological interpretation of the adverse effects of stress exposure on emotional responses [16]. This is because the increased release of catecholamines that occurs during stressful situations is detrimental to the top-down cognitive function of the prefrontal cortex. This includes the regulation of behavior, thoughts and emotions, the generation of mental representations necessary for flexible and goal-directed behavior, including the ability to inhibit inappropriate impulses, the regulation of attention, and insight into the actions of oneself and others. But it also strengthens the basic emotional reactions of the amygdala – which include the consolidation of traumatic memories and conditioned emotional responses [16]. Therefore, employees who experienced more workplace bullying would show greater levels of psychological distress [17].

4. CONCLUSION

Workplace bullying is a problem in the workplace that needs attention because it can have an impact on employees. One of the impacts of workplace bullying is that it can affect a person's psychological condition. Based on the research results, it was found that workplace bullying plays a role in psychological distress. Workplace bullying can affect an individual's psychological condition. However, this research also found something unique, namely that workplace bullying did not affect in job satisfaction. Based on several studies, workplace bullying may have a positive effect on employees to motivate or boosting up their performance regarding the bullying behavior they received.

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