Analyzing Organizational Impact Factors on Workplace Bullying Prevalence

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Abstract This paper deals with organizational antecedents of workplace bullying. Workplace bullying is examined as organizational process of escalated conflicts. Structural und cultural elements of organizations are analyzed with regard to their impact on bullying prevalence. On the basis of the structural and cultural analysis, conclusions are drawn on how workplace harassment can be prevented. Further, it is investigated which interventions and conflict resolution methodologies are appropriate for workplace bullying.

Key Words: Workplace bullying, harassment at work, bullying prevention, organizational culture, organizational research, human resources development, bullying resolution

1 Introduction

Bullying at the workplace has become a crucial organizational problem affecting individuals as well as organizations themselves as several recent studies of Einarsen et al. reveal [EHZ05]; [ZEH03].

In contrast to common conflicts and single acts of aggression that are a natural and intrinsic part of any organizational life workplace bullying is, as reported by Einarsen, Hoel, and Zapf, characterized by an distinct imbalance of power between the perpetrator and the victim. Thus the victim is persistently exposed to different kinds of aggressive bullying behavior [EHZ05, p. 230].

Due to the depicted conflict line-up intense negative impacts on individuals and organizations were observed [ZEH03, pp. 18-20]. Historically the main part of those studies focused on the individual and team aspects of bullying as Gelfand, Leslie, and Keller explain [GLK08, p. 139]. A reason for that focus might have been the desire to protected employees and to prevent severe psychological and health problems which are generally connected with bullying [Ein00, p.10].

Since workplace bullying does not only affect individuals but does also have negative effects on whole organizations [ZEH03, pp. 18-20] this analysis treats bullying as organizational problem. The intend of this paper is to find out how to prevent harassment at work and which tools are appropriate for resolving existing bullying situations on the organizational level. This observation level includes on the one hand structural elements as leadership, work environment and human resources and on the other hand cultural elements as norms, values, and conflict cultures.

In the subsequent discussion the expression 'workplace bullying' will be used synonymously with the phrases 'emotional abuse at work', 'harassment at work', or 'victimization at work', that were introduced by Einarsen, Hoel, and Zapf [EHZ05, p.229].

The research methodology of this analysis is an intense study of existing literature on organizational antecedents and implications of workplace bullying with a subsequent evaluation of relevance for the objectives of this research.

2 Bullying, an Organizational Process

Einarsen, Hoel, and Zapf define bullying as repeated and unwanted actions and practices solely directed against one target or a group of targets. The key element that distinguishes bullying from other workplace-conflicts and -violence is the repeated and persistent exposure to negative and aggressive behaviors. The *frequency and duration* of the harassment are key dimensions of bullying [EHZ05, p. 230]. These dimensions create the procedural character of bullying, that will be examined in the following analysis.

A further defining dimension is the *imbalance of power* between the bully and the target. The source of power can either be formal resulting from the organizational structure or informal for example originating in the knowledge of the target's 'weak point' [EHZ05, p. 231].

Further dimensions that influence a bullying-process are: *aggressiveness of the perpetrator, number of bullies, credibility of the target, self-awareness about being bullied, awareness of colleagues and supervisors, interventions of supervisors or managers and plausibility of the prejudices created by the bully* . All those elements influence the progression of harassment processes.

Einarsen, De Witte, and Notelaers depict how a bullying process can evolve

> Conflicts that are not resolved due to deficient leadership [...] or lack of conflict management [...], may escalate into workplace bullying because they trigger interpersonal aggression [EDWN09, p. 12].

Of course there are many more bullying-influencing factors that have been discussed deeply within the last years.

As further step within a bullying process the described dimensions begin to change. Usually the frequency and aggressiveness of the negative actions becomes higher. Often the perpetrator tries to get colleagues on his side what could increase the number of bullies. Also the perception of the degree of power imbalance can increase continuously.

> The stigmatizing effects of these activities, and their escalating frequency and intensity, makes the victims constantly less able to cope with his or her daily tasks ad the cooperation requirements of the job, thus becoming continually more vulnerable and a 'deserving target' [Ein00, p. 8].

Such a bullying process may occur within vertical or horizontal organizational levels, as Salin clarifies: "Bullying is not restricted to tyrannical types of leadership behaviors; it can also occur among colleagues at the same hierarchical level or even upwards.", [Sal08, p. 221]. It is obvious that employees at each level of the organization can be affected by this challenging topic.

Einarsen argues that a long-term-study showed that 75 per cent of bullying-victims showed stress symptoms indicating a post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Even five years after the bullying had ceased 65 per cent of the former victims still showed symptoms of PTSD [Einarsen and Matthiesen qtd. in Ein00, p.11]. A glance at those statistics makes clear that efficient organizational tools are required in order to prevent organizational and personal damage within companies. In the following sections we cover formal and informal organizational factors impacting bullying prevalence in order to uncover essential prevention and intervention techniques.

3 Structural Factors Impacting Bullying Prevalence

3.1 Categories of Impact Factors

Salin divides impact-factors that can also be regarded as work related antecedents of bullying into three groups: *Enabling factors* that increase the likelihood of bullying and necessary antecedents (e.g. perceived power imbalance, low perceived costs of bullying for the perpetrator, and dissatisfaction and frustration); *Motivating factors* that make it worth while for the perpetrator to engage bullying (e.g. reward systems); and *triggering factors* that make bullying processes more likely to evolve (e.g. organizational changes like downsizing) [Sal03b, p. 20]. Salin's typology will be part of the later analysis of antecedents for workplace harassment.

> The enabling factors can be thought of as a filter, which determine whether motivating or triggering factors can actually give rise to bullying in a certain work environment and situation [Sal03b, p. 21].

A further categorization has been done by Hoel and Salin who divide antecedents of bullying into four main categories: *The changing nature of work, work organization, organizational culture and climate, and leadership* [HS03, p. 204]. Also Leymann and Einarsen found four factors to be prominent in eliciting harassment at work: *Deficiencies in work design, deficiencies in leadership behavior, a socially exposed position of the victim, and a low moral standard in the department* [Ein99, p. 21]; [Leymann qtd. in Ein99, p. 21]. The cited factors are discussed subsequently, in a large part, merely organizational culture and values are focused on later in a distinct analysis.

3.2 Leadership

The competence of leaders in companies is a strong antecedent for workplace bullying. Competencies of the leader, leadership style and use of power are elements that influence the occurrence of workplace harassment. As Einarsen, Hoel, and Zapf reveal 50-80 per cent of all bullying victims claim to be bullied by a superior [EHZ05, p. 237] what makes leaders and their attributes to an important bullying issue.

O'Moore et al. report that satisfaction with supervisor's ability to resolve work-related conflicts accounts for the largest difference between bullied and non-bullied respondents of a representative study [O'Moore et al. qtd. in EHZ05, p. 237].

As far as leadership styles are concerned Einarsen, Hoel, and Zapf report that bullying may be a result of an authoritarian leadership style that creates fear in combination with abuse of power an desperate acts to regain power [EHZ05, p. 238].

Power is a further leadership element that influences harassment prevalence. Power can be divided into *personal power* originating in the leaders personality and competencies and *position power* which is due to a formal position held within a organization as Medina, Munduate, and Guerra argue. They state, that position power induces a social distance that implies a higher potability of relationship conflicts [MMG08, p. 352]. Investigating both kinds of power with respect to leadership styles and relationship between leader and employee several antecedents were found. Medina, Munduate, and Guerra discovered that personal power bases decrease task and relationship conflict, especially in cooperative organizational context. Position power bases increase relationship conflict and a high perception of cooperative organizational environment decreases task and relationship conflict especially when leaders use low position power [MMG08, pp. 355-357].

3.3 Work Environment

Einarsen, Hoel, and Zapf bring into focus that an intensified global competition leading to restructuring processes like downsizing and leaning of organizations increases pressures on managers and workers [EHZ05, p. 241]. Further, Neumann discovered that the more organizational change recently happened within a company the greater the incidence of workplace bullying becomes [Neumann qtd. in EHZ05, p. 241].

Some general findings concerning work environments are that there is, according to Salin, a relevant relationship between internal competition and workplace bullying [Sal03a, p. 9] as well as a significant negative correlation between the chance of skill utilization and workplace bullying as Einarsen, De Witte, and Notelaers say [EDWN09, p. 10]. A further look on competition and skill management will be done in the section on conflict cultures.

3.3.1 Demand and Control

Doef and Maes revive Karasek's Job Demand Control Model to analyze effects of work environments :

> [...] the Job Demand-Control Model focuses on two dimensions of the work environment: job demand and job control. *Job demands* refer to the workload, and have been operationalized mainly in terms of time pressure and role conflict. *Job control*, which is sometimes called decision latitude, refers to a person's ability to control his or her work activities [DM99, p. 88].

In consideration of bullying prevalence linked to work environment *high strain jobs* that are defined in the JDC Model as jobs with low control and high job

demand. Baillien, Einarsen et al. found out that high strain jobs are generally associated with more bullying [Bai+10, p. 17] since stressors make employees take behavioral and affective actions that might encourage other employees to victimize them [EDWN09, pp. 10-11]. Also Zapf et al. found that bullying targets tend to have little control over their own time in combination with high cooperation requirements [Zapf qtd. in EHZ05, p. 239].

Similarities to the control layer of the JDC Model can be observed in Einarsen's 'Opportunity for control' definition including task autonomy and participation in decision making. According to Einarsen task autonomy is not significantly related to workplace bullying whereas a higher level of participation in decision making is associated with less workplace bullying [EDWN09, pp. 3, 10].

3.3.2 Externally Generated Goals

According to Warr there exist three main job characteristics within the category 'externally generated goals': *Workload, cognitive demands*, and *role conflicts* [Warr qtd. in EDWN09, p. 4]. Einarsen, De Witte, and Notelaers identified all of them to be significant predictors of workplace bullying. Workload, cognitive demands, and role conflicts are strong positively associated with bullying. Role conflict seems to be the most significant antecedent of workplace bullying at all [EDWN09, pp. 10-11]; [Sal03a, p. 9].

3.3.3 Environmental Clarity

According to Warr environmental clarity is an umbrella concept covering *role ambiguity, job (in)security*, and *task-related feedback* [Warr qtd. in EDWN09, p. 4]. Einarsen, De Witte, and Notelaers brought to light that role ambiguity, job insecurity, and changes in the job are positively related to workplace bullying which means that unclear tasks, insecurity about the future of the job, and changes in the job are significant predictors of workplace bullying, whereas task-related feedback is negatively associated with bullying in the workplace [EDWN09, pp. 11, 13].

4 Cultural Factors Impacting Bullying Prevalence

4.1 Definition of Culture

Schein (1992) defines culture as:

> A pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems [Sch04].

Gelfand, Leslie, and Keller define organizational conflict cultures as "[...] strong situations that serve to define what is socially shared and a normative way to manage conflict", and refer to them as organizational-level construct [GLK08, p. 139]. Further they declare that distinct conflict cultures reduce the variation of individual conflict management strategies within organizations what in turn affects higher level outcomes in organizational settings [GLK08, p. 159].

4.2 Impacts of Different Conflict Cultures

Gelfand, Leslie, and Keller introduce a top-down typology of conflict cultures in organizations that draws upon two dimensions: *active versus passive* conflict management norms and *agreeable versus disagreeable* conflict management norms serving as concept for a macro-level analysis of organizational conflict cultures [GLK08, p. 139]. Basing upon this typology they discuss four distinct conflict cultures: *dominating*, *collaborative*, *avoidant*, and *passive-aggressive* conflict cultures. This typology of conflict cultures is used for the the analysis of impact factors on bullying prevalence.

4.2.1 Dominating Conflict Cultures

Gelfand, Leslie, and Keller describe dominant conflict cultures as follows: Active and disagreeable, employees are empowered to solve conflicts, disagreeable behavior is acceptable, few constraints on conflict behavior exist, heated debates are welcome and requested, the best idea should win, as well as "truth trough conflict wins" [GLK08, p. 143].

Gelfand, Leslie, and Keller report that dominating within conflict cultures employees are likely to experience greater stress, burnout and turnover. Further this culture is susceptible to flawed decision-making due to little consideration of alternatives [GLK08, p. 156], and integration of colleagues into the decision process. Those factors are all positively related to a high degree of bullying [EDWN09, pp. 3, 10-11].

Nevertheless they make clear that this culture creates potential for innovation and allows rapid decision making.

4.2.2 Collaborative Conflict Cultures

Gelfand, Leslie, and Keller characterize collaborative cultures by the following properties: employees are empowered to manage conflicts in an active way, cooperative reward systems for conflict resolutions and other behavior, agreeable and pro-social norms as basis for conflict management, active listening, mediation open discussions, and mutual respect. "The whole is more than the sum of its parts." [GLK08, p. 144].

Gelfand, Leslie, and Keller illustrate that collaborative cultures can foster innovation and creativity, are adoptive to change, improve organizational viability and conflict resolution, enhance satisfaction of employees as well as reduce burnout and turnover [GLK08, p. 156].

Tough they depict the drawbacks of this culture as time-consuming due to the integration of many people into decision processes.

4.2.3 Avoidant Conflict Cultures

Gelfand, Leslie, and Keller describe avoidant conflict cultures as the most efficient conflict culture type, with no time-consuming discussions, and generally very efficient [GLK08, p. 144].

Yet they see specific danger in this culture. This culture is low on adaptability, there is a lack of information sharing and innovative solutions are prevented, conflicts will perpetuate unresolved, which creates tension, and distrust. This has exactly the opposite effect of the one actually desired [GLK08, p. 157].

4.2.4 Passive-Aggressive Conflict Cultures

Gelfand, Leslie, and Keller outline this culture as harmonious on the surface but with a high degree of dysfunction well covered. Low organizational viability and high levels of stress, burnout and turnover due to backstabbing as well as negative conflict management behaviors can be noticed. Innovation is likely to be stifled and efficiency tends to be low because of withholded information. They recognize even further dangers in this culture. This culture is low on adaptability, there is a lack of information sharing and innovative solutions are prevented, conflicts will perpetuate unresolved, which creates tension, distrust. This has exactly the opposite effect of the one actually desired [GLK08, pp. 157-158].

5 Implications for Bullying Prevention

Einarsen clarifies that the organizational intolerance of bullying and effective support systems for victims are essential for inhibiting bullying behavior [Ein00, p. 11].

5.1 Organizational Implications

5.1.1 Human Resources Management

Einarsen, Hoel, and Zapf estimate the scope of influencing the range of personalities and personal characteristics within an organization by means of selection and promotion processes as insufficient [EHZ05, p. 241]. They promote other

organizational measures that identify, prevent, minimize and control organizational risk factor associated with bullying. Instead of concentrating on personal characteristics Einarsen, De Witte, and Notelaers recommend to concentrate on job characteristics and to create jobs that are characterized by 'not-bullying-provoking' properties [EDWN09, p. 14].

Gelfand, Leslie, and Keller promote a different view. They illustrate that the attributes of people working in an organization are crucial determinants of organizational culture [GLK08, p. 153]. Hiring individuals that fit to the organizational culture yields a process of developing, what Kozlowski and Klein call 'shared realities' [Kozlowski and Klein qtd. in GLK08, p. 153].

Gelfand, Leslie, and Keller introduce a concept that explains personalities of employees create distinct organizational cultures [GLK08, p. 154]:

– Avoidant cultures: agreeable and introverted

– Collaborate cultures: agreeable and extraverted

– Dominating cultures: disagreeable and extraverted

– Passive-aggressive cultures: disagreeable and introverted

Detailed information on shared realities, norms and the fact why congruent employee and company values boost conflict resolution success can be found later on in the analysis of cultural implications.

Einarsen, Hoel, and Zapf propose to accept bullying as inherent problem that's presence should be minimized by a risk-assessment approach [EHZ05, p. 242]. They consider the company intern definition of bullying as well as an risk-assessment by means of questionnaire surveys or appraisal discussions as basic intervention for bullying prevention. As next steps they suggest preventions or remedial actions and of course leadership actions like conflict-management an identifying and controlling aggressive behavior.

According to Salin it is important to address bullying-enabling factors to reduce bullying instead trying to completely disabling it. This can by done by increasing the perceived cost to the perpetrator of supporting satisfaction and clarity in general [Sal08, p. 221].

Salin argues that bullying related training is an important tool to reduce bullying [Sal08, p. 231] through creating awareness and providing strategies for dealing with bullying situations.

Furthermore Salin points out that in general more steps to prevent bullying are taken by municipalities where 'sophisticated HR practices' were in use [Sal08, p. 228]. Those practices include appraisal discussions, performance-based pay, training and attitude surveys.

5.1.2 Leadership

Einarsen, De Witte, and Notelaers found that it is crucial for leaders to attend bullying-related leadership training in order to be able to recognize bullying as soon as possible and to solve conflict situations as bullying [EDWN09, p. 14]. A further leadership tool to keep track of organizational conflict culture is to check the environment and monitor the staff for example through employee surveys [Sal08, p. 241].

A further duty for managers of all levels is to keep employees informed about bullying, because knowledge about the topic regarding how to identify bullying and how to deal with it is crucial for bullying prevention.

Medina, Munduate, and Guerra suggest supervisors to use their charisma, special knowledge and experience of tasks to influence subordinates in order not to generate sub-ordinate's resistance [MMG08, p. 358] to decrease conflict and mobbing probability.

Concerning goal interdependence the creation of organizational structures that promote goal interdependence should be favored as this situation decreases the frequency and intensity of conflict according to Medina, Munduate, and Guerra [MMG08, p. 360]. Further they state that the employment of an cooperative environment allows supervisors a low use of position power what is not acceptable in a competitive environment. However they further observed that a cooperative environment can not mitigate the conflict-related negative consequences of a higher use of position power [MMG08, p. 360].

5.1.3 Work Environment

Baillien et al. propose to invest in job designs with a fair workload and high levels of autonomy in order to prevent targetization [Bai+10, p. 17]. What relates to this fact is that Einarsen discovered that task autonomy is not significantly related to workplace bullying [EDWN09, p. 10].

Einarsen, De Witte, and Notelaers recommend employers to continuously monitor job characteristics that influence bullying prevalence, as workload, cognitive demands, role conflicts, role ambiguity, changes in the job, and job insecurity [EDWN09, pp. 14-15].

Einarsen, Hoel, and Zapf explain that as a consequence of economical difficult situations the nature of the relationship between first-line managers and workers may change into the direction of more automatic practices among managers [EHZ05, p. 241].

5.2 Cultural Implications

5.2.1 Norms, Values and Politics

Einarsen, Hoel, and Zapf see organizational culture as a regulating mechanism within organizations. Prevailing norms and values influence bullying by either rewarding or permitting aggressive behavior [EHZ05, p. 242]. Yet the sole existence of those values is not a sufficient prevention tool. Organizations must intervene in situations where these norms and values are disregarded. In accordance with Einarsen, Hoel, and Zapf we suggest direct interventions like informal mediation, formal complaint management and perpetrator sanctioning.

Salin argues that bullying can have a political dimension and be a 'rational' choice as strategy for improving one's own position within an organization or for getting rid of persons considered as threats. In addition they discovered a tendency towards such elimination techniques at high levels of organizations [Sal03a, pp. 3, 9]. Such activities can only take place in organizations which accept such aggressive behavior as cultural value. Employers and top managers are in charge to create an organizational culture where aggression-permissive norms are banned.

Salin further states that a significant correlation can be found between a high degree of organizational politics and the perception of bullying incidents at a workplace. A causal relation was not found, however considering the high costs of bullying for organizations this correlating factors should be kept track of [Sal03a, pp. 7,12].

5.2.2 Anti-Bullying Policies

Einarsen, Hoel, and Zapf consider the definition of anti-bullying policies as one important first step within organizational culture processes. Those policies deals with reporting processes, the possibility of counseling and social support as well as an independent system for complaint management and directions for informal solutions of bullying-conflicts [EHZ05, p. 243].

It is important to involve staff from all levels in the process of developing an bullying policy to increase awareness and acceptance among all employees. A high preciseness of the policy that is being elaborated is important. Einarsen and Hoel argue that an impreciseness of a regulation may induce employees to perceive themselves too quickly as bullying victim. For easier realization of policies they recommend to provide detailed guidelines making an accurate appliance easier [EH09, pp. 36-37].

According to Salin anti-bullying measures are more common in municipalities with young human resources managers whereas educational level and gender did have no significant consequences in this regard [Sal08, pp. 227-228].

Salin assumes that, concerning the creation of bullying policies, best practices are being shared and spread in a way of 'copy and paste' [Sal08, p. 228].

Einarsen and Hoel emphasize a negative side of legal anti-bullying regulations: The sole existence of regulation-frameworks with a missing practical realization and execution may be detrimental for bullying targets, because policies may rise expectations of bullying targets which are subsequently dashed when their hope for support does not come true [EH09, p. 36]. Parallel conclusions can be drawn in consideration of company internal policies with the analogy of missing realization.

Salin detected, in the survey of 431 municipalities in Finland, that written anti-harassment policies, as recommended by many experts, did not increase the likelihood among human resources managers of taking conciliatory, transfer or punitive measures [Sal09, p. 39]. Considering this result is one more reason to carefully use harassment policies and particularly not to copy and paste them without involvement of employees and without creating awareness and competence.

5.2.3   The Culture of Choice

Basing on Gelfand's theories the typology of conflict cultures and their characteristics described earlier, the following conclusions can be drawn. It is neither useful nor possible to recommend a universally valid organizational culture that is appropriate to prevent workplace bullying.

Though it is obvious that passive-aggressive conflict cultures provide culture mediums where bullying can flourish. Dominating conflict cultures are not the best basis for bullying prevention, because there is a high degree of stress. Avoidant conflict cultures seem to be a useful choice for bullying prevention, but the likelihood is rather high that due to too much oppression the numbers of bullying situations ascend rapidly. Collaborative conflict cultures are generally a rather good choice for harassment prevention as long as discussions and decision processes do not take too mach time. In this case aggression could emerge easily and bullying quotes would probably rise.

All in all organizational developers have to be aware of the advantages and disadvantages of all types of organizational culture. They have to continuously develop and adopt the culture to the corporate goals, the environment as well as the concerns and personalities of employees.

6 Implications for Bullying Resolution

6.1 Organizational Implications

6.1.1 Organizational Responses Strategies and Intervention Types

Ferris reports three main reactions of organizational representatives to bullying allegations: (1) acceptance of bullying behavior, (2) misinterpretation as conflict of personalities, and (3) defining the bullying behavior as inappropriate and harmful [Fer04, p. 389]. Effective solutions like short time counseling for bullying victims can be applied within the third type of organizations. Organizations of the second type usually get sued at any time, realize the costs of handling bullying in a false way and advance to organizations of type three. Organizations of type one usually don't change their view and bullying victims often leave the company [Fer04, pp. 391-393].

Hubert divides possible intervention types into *formal* and *informal* ones [Hubert qtd. in Sal09, p. 28]. As informal intervention types he adduces arbitration or mediation by a third party. Formal complaints as punitive measures are only recommended for later stages of bullying processes when informal measures would no longer take effect.

Salin developed a 2x2 matrix for classifying organizational responses to harassment. The matrix exists of two dimensions: (1) Focus on protecting the target and (2) focus on altering the perpetrator's attitude and behavior [Sal09, p. 29]. The four fields of the matrix are defined in the following way:

> **Avoidance** Low target and low perpetrator focus. Taking no measures.
> **Transfer measures** High target und low perpetrator focus. Transfer of perpetrator or victim.
> **Reconciliatory measures** High target and high perpetrator focus - corresponding to Hubert's informal intervention type. Discussion with parties involved; Consulting health care services; Counseling or other help for target or perpetrator.
> **Punitive measures** Low target and high perpetrator focus - corresponding to Hubert's formal and punitive measures. Dismissing perpetrator; Not promoting perpetrator; Not prolonging work contract.
> [Sal09, p. 30]

Salin points out that the main part of responses to harassment are of the 'reconciliatory type' (72.7 per cent - consulting occupational health care services respectively 78.5 per cent discussing with the parties involved). Only about twelve per cent of the surveyed organizations did at least once not respond to bullying, whereas punitive measures were nearly not taken at all (4.4 per cent - not prolonging work contracts respectively 2.9 per cent - dismissing an employee) [Sal09, p. 34].

Salin stresses that many organizations do not collect any data on the effectiveness of their bullying prevention and intervention strategies [Sal06, p. 20].

Reconciliatory measures are more often used by female human resources managers than by male ones and are mainly useful in early stages of conflicts but not in later stages where the bullying process has escalated [Sal09, p. 37].

The transfer strategy is mainly used by companies with sophisticated human resources management [Sal09, p. 39].

The size of companies positively correlates with the choice of not reacting to bullying. Big companies with male human resources managers are those who are most likely not to react to harassment [Sal09, p. 35]. However companies that have at least once ignored bullying complaints say that this is the most unlikely action they will take the next time they are confronted with a bullying complaint [Sal06, p. 18].

6.1.2   Factors Affecting Response Strategies

Salin discovered an indication that there is an higher tendency for men to take punitive measures, whereas female personnel managers are more prone to see workplace bullying as organizational issue and are more prone to intervene in bullying situations [Sal09, p. 30] with non-punitive interventions.

She further states that there is a relationship between preventive organizational measures and responsive organizational measures taken. Employees of organizations that have invested in prevention und training are more likely to react to harassment, perhaps because they feel more competent to deal with this type of problems [Sal09, pp. 31-32].

Sophisticated human resource practices as attitude surveys, extensive training, performance-based pay and formal appraisal systems are also related to active organizational responses to harassment [Sal09, p. 30].

Salin argues that the size of the organization affects the way it responds to harassment at work. She associates this with the fact that bigger organizations are more likely to have written anti-bullying policies and usually have more sophisticated human resource experts [Sal09, p. 32].

6.1.3   Mediation or Counseling

Saam illuminates that mediation is an inappropriate intervention strategy in workplace bullying because it focuses on a dyadic level of the bully and the target which does simply not exist in bullying processes due to the power differentials between the victim and the harasser [Saa09, p. 19]. Furthermore mediation does not punish past inappropriate behavior of the perpetrator, so the right for recognition of the harm done to the target is ignored [Saa09, p. 5].

Counseling is a suitable intervention strategy as Saam depicts. It is an intervention in a group context [Saa09, p. 19] supporting the victim and the group of involved colleagues. Crucial for successful counseling are follow-up interventions in order to assure no problems were overseen. Further he recommends to use counseling techniques in combination with organizational development to ensure problems on organizational levels are solved to prevent bullying in the future as he pointed out [Saa09, p. 20].

Tehrani stresses that also the bully is, due to his aggressive behavior, likely to need counseling in order to change his behavior [Tehrani qtd. in Sal06, p. 20].

It is proposed that the possibility to address oneself to a counselor before approaching a supervisor for help is useful in order to be prepared for negative organizational responses [Fer04, p. 393] that can happen in every organization no matter how well trained and informed supervisors are due to the personality of supervisors, politics or competition as already discussed. This would generally by a reasonable approach no matter which action a victim takes, it has to anticipate negative responses as described in Rayner's study about results of bullying complaints [Ray99, p. 35].

If a bullying victim is traumatized Ferris does not recommend counseling because of the risk of further trauma [Fer04, p. 393]. In this cases human resources managers and supervisors have to find the best fitting actions to take.

6.2   Cultural Implications

6.2.1   Norms and Values

The more a conflict culture fits the organizational context the more likely it will have a positive effect on conflicts [GLK08, p. 159]. This is one of the basic considerations for cultural bullying prevention, because in the case of bullying problems organizational development including company value development should be considered. As Gelfand, Leslie, and Keller emphasize conflict cultures are not static, rather processes associated with them can be change actively [GLK08, p.160]. Also Gelfand, Leslie, and Keller demonstrate that conflict cultures can be changed rather fast through actions of top managers or at least slowly by employees challenging conflict norms in organizations [GLK08, p. 160]. Even in organizations where bullying is not a main problem a continuous adaption of organizational conflict to organizational goals is recommended a as preventive measure.

Further Gelfand, Leslie, and Keller report that conflict culture effects are especially strong within organizations that are characterized by highly interdependent tasks than within organizations with a lot of autonomous tasks. On the other hand they disclose that within organizations with primarily routine operational tasks the effect of conflict culture relatively weak [GLK08, p. 158]. So

norms and value development is especially for organizations with interdependent tasks a useful and profitable method.

It should also to be mentioned that Gelfand, Leslie, and Keller observed that a frequent intrinsic carrying out of conflicts within an organization is a prerequisite for conflict cultures to take effect [GLK08, p. 158]. So organizations have to be aware that it will take some time to get newly developed cultures implemented.

Finally a zero tolerance and an awareness culture is crucial for bullying prevention [Hubert et al. qtd. in Sal06, p. 20] . Clear sanctions against unacceptable bullying actions are a main value that is required for bullying resolution and prevention as clear examples for desired future behavior within the organization. Concerning this topic anti bullying strategies still seem to be the best way to work as useful basis as discussed in the following section.

6.2.2 Anti-Bullying Policies

Anti-bullying policies seem to be a best practice solution with several drawbacks as described in previous sections. If organizations decide to use anti bullying policies they have to be aware that this decision must include the decision to involve all levels of employees into an policy development process in order to create necessary awareness. The developed anti-bullying policy should at least contain the following elements [DMHC03, p. 76]; [Richards and Daley qtd. in Sal06, p. 20]:

- Commitment to a bullying-free environment: a statement that bullying is an organizational issue and that such behavior will not be tolerated.

- Outlining what kind of behaviors are seen as bullying (and which are not).

- Stating the consequences of breaking organizational standards.

- Indicating the responsibility of different actors, such as line managers and human resources professionals.

- Naming contact persons and responsibilities.

- Explaining the procedure of making informal/formal complaints and describing how complaints will be handled (incl. comments on confidentiality).

- Support available for targets and perpetrators.

- Victims have the right to file a complaint.

- Monitoring and yearly report of the policy development.

Further bullying specific training has to be offered simultaneously in order to prepare managers, supervisors but also other employes for bullying situations, as knowledge is a prerequisite for taking the right actions. An important element that should be added concerning policies is a bullying controlling process since bullying can also be misused by supervisors to get rid of employees they see as personal menace or similar situations.

The realization of the policy is the most crucial element because victims raise their hope because of written rules that promise them help. If this hope gets defeated be a missing realization or reaction of a supervisor a drastic effects on the employee are very likely.

7   Conclusion

In summary, it beecomes came clear that there are effective measures that can be taken especially to prevent workplace bullying within a complex organizational system. The main recommendation concerning prevention of harassment is to create bullying awareness among all levels of employees and business units. A further basic step is to minimize bullying enabling factors as discussed, as far as company targets and industrial environment allow this.

For managers and supervisors it is important to get special training on bullying in order to be able to identify bullying when it happens and to be able to differ between harassment and other conflict situations. Leadership training is especially important if organizations decide to develop and employ a anti-bullying policy, because it is even more crucial that leaders react correctly in case of bullying if such policies exist. As described the development of policies must always involve people and accompany awareness training to be useful at all.

A further issue concerning managers and supervisors is the fact that according to Rayner's study about every other bullying complaint has no results at all [Ray99, p. 35]. This is definitely a situation that has to be changed by the responsible people within organizations.

Human resource managers should know that selecting people that fit to the organizational culture helps developing and stabilizing that culture. Altough there exist contradictory points of view as far as selecting future employees according to their personality, it should be clear for human resources managers that culture develops out of the combination of the employees' personalities, so it can be useful, especially if there are potentially enough applicants and the company is young, to select employees with regard to the desired conflict culture. Finally, organizational development including conflict culture development is a never ending process but if the right tools are chosen for change a continuous adoption in direction of bullying prevention is manageable.

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