

Perception of Injustice, Job Insecurity and Workplace Bullying: The Moderating Role of Self-Control

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DOI: 10.6007/IJARBS/v5-i12/1965 URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBS/v5-i12/1965>

Abstract

Bullying in the workplace is a widespread phenomenon, which stems from bad behavior that affects both workers and organizations. Prior studies have highlighted the negative impact of workplace bullying on the health of the victims and the performance of the organization. The aim of this study is to examine the moderating role of self-control on the relationship between perception of injustice (distributive, procedural, interactional) and perception of job insecurity on workplace bullying. The researcher used a cross-sectional survey among convenience sample comprising 273 nurses working in five private hospitals in Amman, Jordan. The analysis finds a significant relationship between perception of distributive injustice and perception of interactional injustice and workplace bullying. In addition, the findings reveal that self-control moderates the relationship between perception of distributive injustice and workplace bullying. It is hoped that the findings of this study can help nurses, supervisors, and hospital managers to better understand the important effect of self-control in mitigating workplace bullying behavior.

Keywords: *perception of injustice, job insecurity, self-control, workplace bullying.*

Introduction

Bullying behavior can spread widely in the workplace; it is often considered from the worst kinds of behavior that impacts negatively on both workers and the organization (Liefoghe & Mac Davey, 2001). Bullying in the workplace leads to negative outcomes on workers and the organization, as it can damage the victims' health and alter the path of his or her relationship with family and the community.

Prior researchers have used different terms in order to describe workplace bullying (e.g., Leymann, 1993; Zapf, 1999). Most researchers from Northern Europe, the United Kingdom (UK)

and Australia have used the term, 'bullying', while Scandinavian and German researchers have utilized the term, 'mobbing' (Einarsen, 2000; Zapf & Einarsen, 2001).

Researchers have agreed on the classification of bullying as a regular negative behavior occurring over a period of time (Salin, 2003). Several researchers have referred to power imbalance in their definitions of bullying (Lutgen-Sandvik, Tracy, & Alberts, 2007; Salin, 2003), indicating that bullying is not a normal conflict between perceived equal power parties.

Workplace bullying has many negative physical and psychological health outcomes that impact the victims and individuals who witness the bullying (Vartia, 2001). The negative physical outcomes of bullying comprise illnesses, such as headache and backache (Moayed, Daraiseh, Shell, & Salem, 2006); while negative psychological outcomes involve illnesses as anxiety (Hansen, Høgh, Persson, Karlson, Garde, & Ørbæk, 2006).

In addition, workplace bullying has negative outcomes on the organization. Organizations began focusing on workplace bullying seriously in the 1990s as the health of the workers who had been bullied affected organizational costs, involving increased sick leave (Quine, 2001); and increased turnover rate of staff (Johnson & Rea, 2009).

Because of its significantly negative outcomes and higher costs, several antecedents of workplace bullying have been studied, including perception of injustice (distributive, procedural, interactional) and perception of job insecurity. Therefore, this study aims to examine the relationship between perception of injustice and perception of job insecurity with workplace bullying among Jordanian nurses in private hospitals. The study also aims to look into self-control as a moderator variable on the said relationship.

Literature Review

Bullying behavior usually spreads at the workplace (Needham, 2003); and can negatively impact the employees (Brink, 2009). Studies regarding workplace bullying over the past two decades have not covered all aspects of this phenomenon, such as physical violence (Awawdeh, 2007).

Previous studies have identified diverse causes of workplace bullying, including perception of injustice (distributive, procedural, interactional) and perception of job insecurity. Usually, perception of distributive injustice has been studied as one of the most important predictors of bullying (Giorgi, 2009; Santinello, Vieno, & De Vogli, 2011); followed by perception of procedural injustice (Brubacher, Fondacaro, Brank, Brown, & Miller, 2009; Giorgi, 2009; Oxenstierna, Elofsson, Gjerde, Hanson, & Theorell, 2012; Santinello et al., 2011); perception of interactional injustice (Giorgi, 2009; Santinello et al., 2011; Tsuno, Kawakami, Inoue, & Abe, 2010); and perception of job insecurity (Ariza-Montes, Muniz, Montero-Simó, & Araque-Padill, 2013; Baillien, Neyens, De Witte, & De Cuyper, 2009).

Previous studies have mainly indicated that perception of distributive injustice is a significant factor of bullying (Giorgi, 2009; Santinello et al., 2011). Furthermore, perception of procedural injustice is related significantly to bullying (Brubacher et al., 2009; Giorgi, 2009; Oxenstierna et al., 2012; Santinello et al., 2011); perception of interactional injustice is a significant antecedent for bullying (Giorgi, 2009; Santinello et al., 2011; Tsuno et al., 2010); and perception of job insecurity is associated significantly with bullying (Ariza-Montes et al., 2013; Baillien et al., 2009).

Due to inconsistent findings regarding the relationship between perception of distributive injustice and workplace bullying and related behaviors, such as workplace deviance (e.g., Mccardle, 2007; Oladapo & Banks, 2013; Schroeder, 2009); perception of procedural injustice and workplace bullying and related behaviors, like workplace deviance (e.g., Oladapo & Banks, 2013; Stewart, 2013); perception of interactional injustice and workplace bullying (e.g., Oladapo & Banks, 2013); as well as the relationship between perception of job insecurity and workplace bullying and related behaviors, such as workplace deviance and aggression (e.g., Barney, 2013; Greenberg & Barling, 1999), several theoretical gaps exist in the literature. Many researchers have referred to bullying as one of the deviant workplace behaviors (Robinson, 2008); and as a form of workplace aggression (Neuman & Baron, 2003).

Self-control is an important predictor for studying workplace bullying. Relevant studies have indicated that a person's inability to control his or her emotions can be related to incidence of workplace aggression; thus, self-control is a factor that can effectively inhibit the occurrence of workplace aggression (Baron & Richardson, 1994). Past researchers have investigated the moderating effect of self-control on the relationship between revenge cognitions and workplace deviant behavior (Bordia, Restubog, & Tang, 2008); and between trait anger and workplace deviant behavior (Restubog, Garcia, Wang, & Cheng, 2010). In general, from the findings of these studies, the notion that self-control can decrease the propensity of individuals to perform bullying behavior in the workplace is supported.

Theoretically, although there is empirical support for self-control in inhibiting the tendency of workers to perform bullying actions, self-control has not been used as a moderating factor in the relationship between perception of injustice and perception of job insecurity and workplace bullying in different settings. Previous studies on workplace bullying have only used self-control as an independent variable (e.g., Archer & Southall, 2009; Moon & Alarid, 2014). Self-control is suggested as a moderator because it could increase our theoretical understanding on how self-control can act as a buffer between the impact of perception of injustice and perception of job insecurity on workplace bullying.

In the context of Jordan, studies regarding workplace bullying are generally scarce, particularly among nurses (Al muala, 2013); most of the studies have concentrated on verbal aggression, stress and violence (Awawdeh, 2007). Oweis and Diabat (2005), in their study, revealed that bullying among nurses in hospitals happens through verbal abuse, shame, humiliation and frustration. About 46.4% of Jordanian female workers in the healthcare sector have experienced bullying (Awawdeh, 2007). Furthermore, 49.5% of Jordanian nurses have been subject to a high degree of workplace bullying in public hospitals (Al muala, 2013).

Research Framework and Hypotheses

Based on the findings from previous studies, workplace bullying has been selected as dependent variable. In the case of independent variables, two variables have been selected, namely, perception of injustice (distributive, procedural, interactional) and perception of job insecurity. Self-control has also been selected as moderator variable.

Consistent with the objectives of the study, the postulated hypotheses for testing are:

H1: High perception of injustice is related positively to high workplace bullying.

- H1a: High perception of distributive injustice is related positively to high workplace bullying.
H1b: High perception of procedural injustice is related positively to high workplace bullying.
H1c: High perception of interactional injustice is related positively to high workplace bullying.
H2: High perception of job insecurity is related positively to high workplace bullying.
H3: Self-control moderates the relationship between perception of injustice and workplace bullying.
H3a: Self-control moderates the relationship between perception of distributive injustice and workplace bullying.
H3b: Self-control moderates the relationship between perception of procedural injustice and workplace bullying.
H3c: Self-control moderates the relationship between perception of interactional injustice and workplace bullying.
H4: Self-control moderates the relationship between perception of job insecurity and workplace bullying.

Methodology

This study utilized a cross-sectional survey among convenience sample including 273 nurses from five private hospitals in Amman, Jordan. The measurements of the variables were adopted from previous studies: perception of injustice used 20 items adopted from Niehoff and Moorman (1993); and perception of job insecurity utilized four items adopted from De Witte (2000). Additionally, the negative act questionnaire (NAQ) (Einarsen & Hoel, 2001) with 21 items was used to measure workplace bullying; while self-control used 13 items adopted from Tangney, Baumeister and Boone (2004). Partial least squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was utilized for data analyses.

Results

Demographic of respondents:

Out of 273 respondents, 168 (61.5%) respondents are females. The age of the respondents ranges between 18-48 years. Most of the respondents (74.0%) are registered nurses and licensed practical nurses, constituting (24.9%), and assistant nurses constituting (1.1%). A total of 59.0% of the respondents are married and 35.9% are single, while the remaining 5.1% are divorced. The nursing experience of respondents varies between 1- 38 years.

Hypotheses testing:

PLS-SEM was used to assess the significance of the path coefficients and to examine the strength of the moderating effect of self-control. The results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Structural Model Results

Hypotheses	Relations	Full Model (With Interaction)		Findings
		Beta	t-value	
H1a	Perception of Distributive Injustice	0.174	4.762	Supported
H1b	Perception of Procedural Injustice	-0.032	0.626	Not-supported
H1c	Perception of Interactional Injustice	0.292	4.995	Supported
H2	Perception of Job Insecurity	0.005	0.121	Not-supported
H3a	Perception of Distributive Injustice x Self Control	-0.061	1.616	Supported
H3b	Perception of Procedural Injustice x Self Control	-0.018	0.412	Not-supported
H3c	Perception of Interactional Injustice x Self Control	0.006	0.094	Not-supported
H4	Perception of Job Insecurity x Self Control	0.047	1.069	Not-supported

Note: *** $P < 0.01$ (1-tailed), ** $P < 0.05$ (1-tailed), * $P < 0.1$ (1-tailed).

The findings reveal a significantly positive relationship between perception of distributive injustice and workplace bullying ($\beta = 0.174$, $t = 4.762$, $p < 0.01$). Moreover, there is no significantly positive relationship between perception of procedural justice and workplace bullying ($\beta = -0.032$, $t = 0.626$, $p > 0.10$). Additionally, there is a significantly positive relationship between perception of interactional injustice and workplace bullying ($\beta = 0.292$, $t = 4.995$, $p < 0.01$). Therefore, two predictor dimensions of perception of injustice (perception of distributive injustice and perception of interactional injustice) impact the dependent variable in the hypothesized direction. While hypotheses 1a and 1c are supported, hypothesis 1b is not supported.

The findings indicate that perception of job insecurity does not have a significantly positive relationship with workplace bullying ($\beta = 0.005$, $t = 0.121$, $p > 0.10$); thus Hypothesis 2 is not supported.

For the moderating role of self-control, the findings reveal that self-control moderates the relationship between perception of distributive injustice and workplace bullying ($\beta = -0.061$, $t = 1.616$, $p < 0.10$); while interaction between perception of procedural injustice and self-control ($\beta = -0.018$, $t = 0.412$, $p > 0.10$) is statistically not significant. Similarly, the interaction between perception of interactional injustice and self-control ($\beta = 0.006$, $t = 0.094$, $p > 0.10$) is statistically not significant. Therefore, hypothesis 3a is supported; while hypotheses 3b and 3c are not supported.

The interaction between perception of job insecurity and self-control ($\beta = -0.018$, $t = 0.412$, $p > 0.10$) is statistically not significant. Thus, hypothesis 4 is not supported.

Discussion and Conclusion

The current study finds two directly significant relationships, namely: perception of distributive injustice and perception of interactional injustice and workplace bullying. Additionally, this study finds that self-control serves as a moderator of the relationship of perception of distributive injustice and workplace bullying.

Studies by Giorgi (2009) and Santinello et al. (2011) also indicated a positive correlation between perception of distributive injustice and perception of interactional injustice and workplace bullying; thus the present research confirms this result. Furthermore, the study's findings concur with other studies that have revealed self-control to have a moderating impact (e.g., Bordia et al., 2008; Mobarake, Juhari, Yaacob, & Esmaili, 2014).

The findings can help nursing supervisors, managers and policy-makers to better understand the workplace bullying phenomenon. Additionally, the findings provide an important insight into the significant role of self-control in mitigating workplace bullying behavior. This study's findings can help to enhance the information of human resource managers on workplace bullying behavior, including the types, duration and outcomes of bullying behavior in the workplace.

This study adds to the literature by investigating self-control as a moderating variable on the relationship between perception of injustice and perception of job insecurity and workplace bullying, particularly in five private hospitals in Amman, Jordan.

Future Research

The researcher recommends the investigation of some important areas in future:

1. This study is implemented to investigate workplace bullying among nurses working in private hospitals in the Jordanian capital (Amman). Future studies may be carried out in other fields and in other regions, such as public hospitals.
2. The researcher uses a single instrument (questionnaire survey) to collect the data. In-depth qualitative studies, using the interview technique can be conducted in future to assess the level of workplace bullying among nurses.

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