

Gender

Womens Experiences of Workplace Violence, Harassment and Bullying

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The threat of violence and harassment for working women has steadily increased (Estrada et al (2011). In light of this, this paper reflects on the many experiences of bullying and harassment faced by women in the workplace. In doing so it focuses on perpetrators who are both internal and external to the workplace, for example co-workers, clients and service users. Additionally it addresses a wide range of experiences encountered by women throughout their working lives. These experiences range from verbal aggression, to psychological abuse and physical violence. Furthermore the paper concentrates on additional risks that are posed to working women. These risks manifest themselves in the form of infatuation, sexual harassment, sexual acts, and stalking.

The paper theoretically frames the experiences of women in patriarchy. This is because men, more than not, traditionally hold the positions of power in the workplace. As such they are more likely to be the boss, the manager or the supervisor, and at times this power is abused. Additionally men create hostile working environments, in this way protecting male dominated workplaces and areas (Bowland, 2005). That is not to say however that women do not adopt similar practices themselves. Women have a tendency to both target and bully other women in the workplace, whilst men however prefer to spread their attention equally between genders. In essence this increases the vulnerability of women in the workplace (Padavic & Reskin, 2002).

As a consequence, women suffer in a variety of ways. This can result in the victim taking sick leave or eventually relinquishing her role completely. Currently there are few studies that relate specifically to working women's experiences in relation to workplace violence. More often than not, they tend to be generalised with that of men's in relation to workplace violence, bullying and harassment (Gunnison & Fisher, 2000), plus they tend to focus on physical violence as opposed to psychological harms. This paper will present analysis of in-depth qualitative research carried out with women from a broad range of occupations across the working sectors, in the south west of England. The paper therefore will provide a valuable insight into women's experiences in the workplace, and how women themselves understand these experiences.

'Bullying Cultures?' - How organizational values and norms impact upon victimization and coping strategies of women

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The impact of (conflicting) cultural and gender norms on bullying perceptions and conflict management has been put forward by scholars (e.g. Archer 1999; Salin 2009). Yet the relationship between organizational culture, aggression and culture-specific coping behavior of men and women lacks extensive empirical evidence. In this comparative case study majority-minority settings are applied to investigate whether aggression against female minority

members is a valve for value conflicts rooted in the specific organizational culture and majority gender norms. Selected departments of three organizations - the Austrian Armed Forces (abbr. AAF, n= 443), a public university of Science & Technology (n=325) and a private insurance Company (n=174) - with hypothesized different professional (sub)cultures and different gender proportions were sampled to reveal differences within and across cases.

Following a triangulation approach culture perceptions and bullying rates are surveyed with well-established and partly adapted instruments (LIPT; Diagnosing Organizational Culture Instrument, Harrison and Stokes 1992) as well as through in-depth narrations with targets and third parties.

Quantitative results reveal a bullying rate of 6.7% in AAF, 3.3 % in academia, and 0.5 % in the private company. Yet bullying rates vary heavily across departments: In elite and training units of AAF as well as in university schools aggression levels are significantly higher than in purely administrative departments of all three organizations. Across all cases 'power culture' perceptions are linked to individual aggression experience. Only in AAF results reveal significantly higher victimization rates for female minorities, scapegoating and collective bullying against women - predominantly in training centers. Preliminary qualitative results undermine that aggression in AAF is caused by socialization processes, cultural norms and hierarchical gender orders: Collective aggression against female novices leads to token coping strategies, i.e. trivialization and aggression against other fellow women who do not accomplish male performance criteria. For the two other organizations no quantitative gender effects were found, yet token dynamics (for example trivialization of aggressive behavior) also apply for female academe.

Our results suggest taking socio-cultural aspects, especially token and gender dynamics, into consideration for future bullying research.