Workforce Bullying: Prevalence and its Impact on Wellbeing of Employees

By Priyanka Panday & Dr. Gagandeep kaur

Chandigarh University, India

Abstract- Purpose: This paper examines the prevalence of workforce bullying in BPO- ITES services in Punjab region. Direct and indirect effects on physical and emotional wellbeing of employee. Further, the paper investigates the effectiveness of organizational initiatives against bullying and its impact on overall satisfaction of the employees.

Method: Data were collected from 130 employees in seven ITES-BPO service organizations in the state of Punjab. The research instrument was a questionnaire in three parts. The first section included the participants' demographic information; the other variables were measured in four categories: psychologically violent behaviours, workload, organizational effects and stress.

WORKFORCEBULLYINGPREVALENCEANDITSIMPACTONWELLBEINGOFEMPLOYEES

Strictly as per the compliance and regulations of:

Workforce Bullying: Prevalence and its Impact on Wellbeing of Employees

Priyanka Panday [α] & Dr. Gagandeep kaur [σ]

Abstract- Purpose: This paper examines the prevalence of workforce bullying in BPO- ITES services in Punjab region. Direct and indirect effects on physical and emotional wellbeing of employee. Further, the paper investigates the effectiveness of organizational initiatives against bullying and its impact on overall satisfaction of the employees.

Method: Data were collected from 130 employees in seven ITES-BPO service organizations in the state of Punjab. The research instrument was a questionnaire in three parts. The first section included the participants' demographic information; the other variables were measured in four categories: psychologically violent behaviours, workload, organizational effects and stress.

Findings: Of these, 35 employees were classified as bullied, as they had experienced at least two negative acts per week over the last 6 months.

Correlations revealed strong relationships between the work factors and bullying. Regression showed that dissatisfaction with the job and stress is regressing strongly with the other organizational factors. Targets consistently gave lower ratings than non-targets of the effectiveness of organizational initiatives to address bullying.

Implications: Workplace bullying is a measurable problem that negatively affects the psychology.

There is scant research on workplace factors that may reduce bullying and buffer its negative effects.

Keywords: workplace bullying, satisfaction, organizational support, emotional well being.

I. INTRODUCTION

The BPO industry is about a decade old in India. BPO is the fastest growing section of the Indian information technology (IT) - BPO sector (NASSCOM, 2009). Over the last decade, the BPO industry has grown at a fastest pace. Presently outsourcing industry in India indirectly employs 3.5 million employees and accounts for 6.6% of the GDP in India (NASSCOM 2015). BPO exports from India grew from 16bn$ in 2011-12 to 24bn $ in 2014-15.The call centre industry in India is located within the country's emerging ITES-BPO (Information Technology Enabled Services-Business Process Outsourcing) sector which encompasses the off shoring and outsourcing of such processes that can be enabled with information technology (IT). This sector has demonstrated impressive and consistent growth over time, even in

spite of the 2008 global financial crisis. The study was conducted in BPO sector because of its high attrition rate. The relevance in the present context is considerable due to retention and stressful work environment related issues in the BPO and ITES industry.

The review of literature revealed that there is an apparent dearth of studies on prevalence of workforce bullying especially in Indian population. The issue of bullying at the workplace is recognized in the west as violence. Pioneering research by Leymann (1996) identified a poor work environment as the key antecedent of bullying. Indeed, work environment factors may influence directly to the likelihood that bullying occurs.

Over the past two decades, researchers have examined extensively the predictors and consequences of workforce bullying. Workforce bullying differs according to the country, its culture and the company that the person is working in. Workplace bullying has long-lasting effects on organizations and its employees. Impacts include low productivity, absenteeism and stress (Einarson et al. 2003, Leymann, 1996).

Workplace bullying is the persistent exposure to negative and aggressive behaviours, which may be psychological, verbal, or physical. Such negative behaviours are labelled as bullying when they "occur repeatedly and regularly (e.g., weekly) and over a period of time (e.g., about six months)" (Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, & Cooper, 2011). In recent decades, bullying has come to be realized as a problem that was ultimately counterproductive, (Mata, 2012) in the same way, Einarson, hoel, Zapf and cooper(2011) suggested that exposure to bullying had been claimed to be a more devastating problem for employees than any other work related stress put together.

In a study conducted via in depth interviews of Indian workers who were target of workplace bullying, Premila D'cruz and Ernesto Noronha concluded that human resource managers created "an environment in which bullying remains unchallenged, actually encouraged in indirect way." Organizational factors play a very important role in creating such environment which is encouraging for bullies (D'cruz and Noronha 2009).

Harrington *et al*. (2014) recently found similar results in the UK. This finding emphasises the importance of the work environment in validating and sustaining bullying activity (Salin and Hoel, 2011).

Author α σ: Research scholar (USB) Asst. professor Chandigarh university Apex institute of management Gharuan (Mohali) Chandigarh university (mohali). e-mail: Priyanka.pandey13@gmail.com

Addressing specific work environment issues could work against prevalence of bullying.

According to statistics, 81 per cent bullies are bosses. Many people become bullies through job pressure but also can resort to bullying because they lack self-esteem or find it an escapist's way of correcting their personality flaws by grasping for power which they believe is theirs. Beneath the combative veneer all bullies are cowards and liars". (The Hindu).

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

On the basis of the literature review and research gap analysis, the following objective was formulated:
1. To examine the prevalence of workforce bullying in Indian BPO-ITES sector.
2. To study the relationship between workforce bullying its impact on physical and emotional wellbeing and overall satisfaction of the employee in the organization.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

a) Data source and sample frame

The research study, being empirical in nature, relied on primary source of data. The target population for the study consists of staff of BPOs of Punjab and Haryana. The study employed the use of self-structured questionnaire to collect the required primary data. Descriptive statistical analysis technique was employed to obtain useful summary of responses. Simple random sampling is used and total sample population hundred employees.

This research will cover the aspects related to the activities which explain the prevalence of bullying. The data was collected from lower level of employees as the target group of the study. This research took a period of two months during which data was collected from the field, organized, analysed and presented in analytic form. The significance of this study is to find that which motivators affect the performance of employees the most. Therefore findings of this study will provide important information to decision makers and human resource managers to formulate the policies to deal with this problem which is playing a significant role in making work environment stressful and affecting overall productivity. The results of the study will also add to the existing body of knowledge on the issue of workforce bullying and its impact on organizational productivity.

b) Data analysis and presentation

The data collected was processed using the statistical package for social science (SPSS). The survey results were analysed with descriptive and inferential statistics. The result of the study is shown in the tables, percentage charts and graphs. Both qualitative and quantitative methods of data analysis were used for the study. The variables of interest to the researcher were prevalence of workforce bullying and effect on stress level was analysed. The following table shows the frequency distribution of the data.

Table 1 : Frequency distribution of data

Measure	Item	Frequency
gender	Male	78
	Female	40
Job experience	0-5 years	80
	6-10 years	22
	11-15 years	13
	16 years or more	2
Age group	20-30	75
	30-40	24
	40-50	17
	50 or above	2

c) Measures

A questionnaire was prepared to study the prevalence of workforce bullying and its relation with stress and wellbeing of the employees. The questionnaire was started with information relating to the demographic profile of the respondents, i.e. age, gender, experience in the present organization and familiarity with the workforce bullying. The items to know the prevalence of workforce bullying was scored on 5 point Likert scale according to the following response categories (1= never, 2 A few times, S= sometimes, O= often, 5= very often). The items to know the satisfaction level was also recorded on same scale according to the following categories (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree).

IV. FINDING AND OBSERVATION

a) Descriptive statistics

To obtain a holistic view and summarize research data, descriptive statistics are given in the following table for the quantitative research. For all the measures used in the study table shows the means standard deviation variance and values calculated for the 118 sample participants.

Table 2 : Descriptive statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Undermine work	1.619	1.0695	1.144
Unjustified criticism	2.492	1.2247	1.500
humiliation	2.534	.9756	.952
Personal integrity	3.169	1.2697	1.612
sarcasm	3.093	1.2471	1.555
jokes	3.034	1.2190	1.486
demoralize	3.000	1.1398	1.299
Gossips and rumours	3.017	1.2675	1.607
Withholding information	3.008	1.2018	1.444
Refusal of application	3.153	1.2028	1.447
Being ignored	3.059	1.2285	1.509
Unreasonable pressure	2.958	1.1723	1.374
Impossible deadlines	3.220	1.0792	1.165
Shifting goal post	3.203	1.1137	1.240
Under valuing efforts	3.169	1.0963	1.202
Verbal threats	3.144	1.0960	1.201
teasing	3.288	1.0468	1.096
violence	3.186	1.1090	1.230
anger	3.356	1.0421	1.086
Negative effect on work	2.246	1.3135	1.725
Lowered self confidence	2.924	1.0634	1.131
Dissatisfied with the job	2.915	1.1441	1.309
absenteeism	3.042	1.1124	1.238
Emotional health	3.000	1.1911	1.419
Physical health	3.076	1.0951	1.199
Changing job	3.169	1.1040	1.219
Increased stress level	3.119	1.3085	1.712

In the above data mean clearly shows that respondents are agreed with the fact that they sometimes or a few times feel bullied in the organization. Which affects their overall performance and stress level but people have not openly indicated that as mean value lies near neutral. Standard deviation of the above data is less than 1 case of maximum variable which support that data is normal.

b) *Correlation*

Table 3 : Correlation

Correlations

	UW	UC	humiliation	PI	sarcasm	jokes	demoralize	rumours	WI	ROA&T	ignorance	UP	ID	shifting goalpost	UE	VT	teasing	violance	anger	effect on work	low confidence	dissatified	absenteeism	emotion alheath	physica lhealth	changing job	incresedstresslevel
undermine work		.301**	.107	.186*	.123	.043	.000	.099	.295**	.019	.102	-.033	-.060	.058	-.003	-.069	.099	-.149	.115	-.152	-.139	-.243**	.028	-.081	-.128	-.242**	-.096
unjustified	.301**	1	.029	.320**	.104	.132	.190*	.044	.206*	.221	.015	-.051	-.083	.001	.179	-.021	-.131	-.018	.036	-.124	-.102	.036	.010	-.164	-.003	-.151	-.117
humiliation	.107	.029	1	.361**	.050	-.030	.131	.311**	.120	.090	.223*	.020	.155	.033	.027	.015	-.077	.010	.055	-.083	-.117	-.120	-.092	.059	-.206*	.082	-.063
personalintegrity	.186*	.320**	.361**	1	.195*	.278**	.071	.163	.150	.151	.076	-.007	.060	.042	.053	.062	.104	.020	.148*	-.194*	.086	-.037	.092	.011	.009	.083	-.059
sarcasm	.123	.104	.050	.195*	1	.093	.132	.102	.142	.178	.013	-.079	.080	.202*	-.049	-.066	.012	.080	.053	-.035	-.033	.012	-.064	-.023	-.080	-.192*	-.007
jokes	.043	.132	-.030	.278**	.093	1	-.018	-.061	.081	.165	-.076	.091	.124	.052	.015	.079	.099	-.192*	.108	-.145	.037	.029	-.028	-.087	-.136		
demoralize	.000	.190*	.131	.071	.132	-.018	1	-.047	-.050	.087	.079	.269**	.076	-.074	.185*	.185*	-.100	.128	-.065	-.097	-.113	-.039	-.027	-.157	-.021	-.095	-.178
rumors	.099	.044	.311**	.163	.102	-.061	-.047	1	.095	.054	.224*	-.120	.072	.149	.047	-.100	-.036	.065	.067	-.033	-.062	-.017	-.249**	.096	-.315**	-.045	-.027
withholding information	.295**	.206*	.120	.150	.142	.081	-.050	.095	1	-.001	.104	.025	.038	.082	.181	.096	.073	.044	-.002	-.072	-.020	-.099	-.051	.018	-.195*	-.143	-.185*
refusal of application	.019	.221	.090	.151	.178	.165	.087	.054	-.001	1	.069	-.038	.086	.213*	.006	.029	.080	.235*	.134	-.116	.023	.171	-.011	-.310**	.043	-.200*	-.175
being ignored	.102	.015	.223*	.076	.013	-.076	.079	.224*	.104	.069	1	-.081	.119	.116	-.020	.152	-.033	-.008	.077	-.036	.003	-.142	-.158	-.199*	-.156	-.039	.150
unreasonable	-.033	-.051	.020	-.007	-.079	.091	.269**	-.120	.025	-.038	-.081	1	.028	-.150	.065	.131	.121	.000	-.155	-.121	-.099	-.219*	-.077	.153	-.024	.025	
impossibledeadl	-.060	-.083	.155	.060	.080	.124	.076	.072	.038	.086	.119	.028	1	-.059	.048	-.034	-.095	.094	.082	-.039	.000	-.012	-.058	.086	-.094	.019	-.097
shifting goal post	.058	.001	.033	.042	.202*	.052	-.074	.149	.082	.213*	.116	-.150	-.059	1	.035	-.136	.037	.135	.106	-.029	.085	.054	-.166	.077	-.160	-.133	-.122
undervaluing effort	-.003	.179	.027	.053	-.049	.015	.185*	.047	.181	.006	-.020	.065	.048	.035	1	.022	.046	.262**	.029	.125	-.018	.093	-.076	.052	-.025	-.017	-.098
verbal threats	-.069	-.021	.015	.062	-.066	.079	.185*	-.100	.096	.029	.152	.131	-.034	-.136	.022	1	.068	.027	.000	-.096	-.086	-.092	.093	-.052	.012	-.006	.012
teasing	.099	-.131	-.077	.104	.012	.099	-.100	-.036	.073	.080	-.033	.121	-.095	.037	.046	.068	1	.233*	.328**	-.095	.173	-.136	.026	.014	-.019	-.191*	.006
physicalviolance	-.149	-.018	.010	.020	.080	-.192*	.128	.065	.044	.235*	-.008	.000	.094	.135	.262**	.027	.233*	1	.157	-.058	.027	-.014	-.097	-.019	.009	.093	.002
anger	.115	.036	.055	.148	.053	-.111	-.065	.067	-.002	.134	.077	-.155	.082	.106	.029	.000	.328**	.157	1	-.058	.056	-.003	-.168	-.151	-.069	-.068	.038
negative affect on work	-.152	-.124	-.083	-.194*	-.035	-.192*	-.097	-.033	-.072	-.116	-.036	-.121	-.039	-.029	.125	-.096	-.095	.015	-.058	1	.264**	.423**	.104	.213*	.278**	.124	.072
lowered selfconfidence	-.139	-.102	-.117	.086	-.033	.108	-.113	-.062	-.020	.023	.003	-.099	.000	.085	-.018	-.086	.173	.027	.056	.264**	1	.276**	.335**	.236**	.196*	.113	.234*
dissatified with the job	.243**	.036	-.120	-.037	.012	-.145	-.039	-.017	-.099	.171	-.142	-.219*	-.012	.054	.093	-.092	-.136	-.014	-.003	.423**	.276**	1	.365**	.182*	.210*	.269**	-.033
absenteeism	.028	.010	-.092	.092	-.064	.037	-.027	-.249**	-.051	-.011	-.158	-.077	-.058	-.166	-.076	.093	.026	-.097	-.168	.104	.335**	.365**	1	.110	.306**	.154	.020
emotional heath	-.081	-.164	.059	.011	-.023	.029	-.157	.096	.018	-.310**	-.199*	.153	.086	.077	.052	-.052	.014	-.019	-.151	.213*	.236**	.182*	.110	1	.046	.253**	.066
physical health	-.128	-.003	-.206*	.009	-.080	-.028	-.021	-.315**	-.195*	.043	-.156	-.024	-.094	-.160	-.025	.012	-.019	.009	-.069	.278**	.196*	.210*	.306**	.046	1	.194*	.328**
changing job	-.242**	-.151	.082	.083	-.192*	-.087	-.095	-.045	-.143	-.200*	-.039	.025	.019	-.133	-.017	-.006	-.191*	.093	-.068	.124	.113	.269**	.154	.253**	.194*	1	.246**
incresed stress level	-.096	-.117	-.063	-.059	-.007	-.136	-.178	-.027	-.185*	-.175	.150	-.114	-.097	-.122	-.098	.012	.006	.002	.038	.072	.234*	-.033	.020	.066	.328**	.246**	1

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The above correlation table is showing the interdependency of various organizational factors on workforce bullying. The correlation values among the factors affecting buying decisions are mostly negatively correlated.Negative impact on work and absenteeism is correlated to factors like undermining work, unjustified criticism, demoralization, verbal threats and teasing. There are factors like humiliation, unreasonable criticism, impossible deadlines, and undervaluation of efforts which is showing strong negative co-relation with emotional and physical wellbeing of the employees. This ultimately results into increased stress level. Behavioral aspect and organizational conditions are highest contributing towards employees feeling bullied in the organization.

c) *Regression*

Table 4 : Regression

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.730[a]	.534	.400	.8860

dependent variable- Dissatisfaction with the job

Above table is showing regression analysis in which dissatisfaction of employee has been taken as dependent factor and others as independent factors. Dependent factor is regressing by 73%. This table provides the R and R2 values. The R value represents the simple correlation and is 0.730 (the "R" Column), which indicates a high degree of correlation. The R2 value (the "R Square" column) indicates how much of the total variation in the dependent variable, satisfaction can be explained by the other independent variable. In this case, 73% can be explained, which is very large.

Table 5 : Analysis of variance

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	81.723	26	3.143	4.004	.000^b
	Residual	71.430	91	.785		
	Total	153.153	117			

This table indicates that the regression model predicts the dependent variable significantly well. Here, $p < 0.0005$, which is less than 0.05, and indicates that, overall, the regression model statistically significantly predicts the outcome variable (i.e., it is a good fit for the data).

adopted. Table demonstrates that the value is .520 which indicates that factor analysis is appropriate because it exceeds the minimum requirement of .50.validity of measures checked by confirmatory factor analysis.

d) *Validity of measures*

To check the adequacy of sampling measures Kaiser-Meyer Olkin(KMO and Bartlett's test was

KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.520
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	591.894
	Df	351
	Sig.	.000

A Principal Axis Factor (PAF) with a Varimax rotation of the 17 Likert scale questions from this attitude survey questionnaire was conducted on data gathered from 118 participants. All variables have been clubbed into six components. Variable 1, 2, 4 and 3, 7, 21, 23

has been clubbed into variable 2 and 1 respectively. Variable 15,17,18,19 is now part of component 6 same as variable 22 and 13 is the part of component 3 and 4 respectively.

Table 6 : Factor Analysis
Rotated Component Matrix

	Component					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Undermine work	.145	.539	-.274	.024	-.320	-.030
Unjustified criticism	-.109	.570	-.310	.129	.171	-.235
Humiliation	.539	.330	.264	-.041	.146	-.120
Personal integrity	.088	.739	.211	-.055	.095	.118
Sarcasm	.103	.313	-.162	.235	.136	.098
Jokes	-.147	.460	.004	-.273	.066	.167
Demoralize	-.005	.074	-.199	-.297	.558	-.237
Gossipsandrumours	.638	.145	.142	.274	.053	-.003
Withholding information	.209	.456	-.051	-.032	.019	.003
Refusal of application	-.107	.253	-.354	.244	.434	.252
Being ignored	.446	.069	-.001	.069	-.020	.077
Unreasonable pressure	-.008	-.029	.064	-.673	.200	-.062
Impossible deadlines	.261	.048	.191	-.072	.304	.008
Shifting goalpost	.238	.091	-.118	.423	.115	.269
Undervaluing effort	.038	.047	.045	-.018	.549	.006
Verbal threats	-.082	.067	.003	-.450	.134	.054
Teasing	-.080	.089	-.034	-.218	-.064	.765
Physical violence	.066	-.122	.031	-.015	.571	.475
Anger	.161	.036	-.118	.174	.019	.586
Negative effect on work	-.227	-.267	.334	.427	.149	-.112
Lowered self confidence	-.345	.123	.468	.241	-.042	.355
Dissatisfied with the job	-.396	-.042	.303	.569	.314	-.154
Absenteeism	-.622	.267	.290	.056	-.072	-.101

Emotional health	.037	.017	.684	-.028	-.028	-.049
Physical health	-.634	-.070	.210	.058	-.005	.031
Changing job	-.070	-.147	.652	-.019	.061	-.140
Increased stress level	-.085	-.195	.342	.052	-.339	.215

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization
a. Rotation converged in 8 iterations.

e) *Findings*

Participants were employed in India's international-facing call centres which are housed in foreign or Indian MNC organizations and form an important constituent of the country's ITES-BPO sector.

V. CONCLUSION

Scientific research on workplace bullying is fairly new but is gaining more attention in both international and Indian research communities. WB as a severe form of workplace abuse must be dealt with on a wider scale in the 21st century. We are encouraged by the depth and breadth of academic research emerging on the topic in the last 20 years. Researchers can build on the findings of this study to assist development of theory about bullying in both and especially in the service sector environment. The results can also help organisations and individuals identify and eradicate bullying in the workplace by creating environments based on dignity and respect for all. This paper has considered the impact of bullying on the individual who experiences it as traumatic or who has ongoing or previous trauma in their life for which the bullying magnifies the trauma experience. The weakness of current policies and lack of management training is likely contributing to the trauma employees experience when subject to protracted and extreme bullying. The researcher is of the opinion that decision makers have to conceive and implement anti bullying policies which will have as prerogatives the prevention and control of workplace bullying,

REFERENCES RÉFÉRENCES REFERENCIAS

1. Leymann, H. and A. Gustafsson (1996). Mobbing at work and the development of post-traumatic stress disorders. European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology. Vol. 5(2), 251-275.
2. Leymann, Heinz. The content and development of mobbing at work. European Journal of Work & Organizational Psychology, 1996, Vol. 5 (2), 165-184.
3. Einarson, S., H. Hoel, Zapf and C. L. Cooper (ed.) (2003). Bullying and Emotional Abuse in the Workplace.London: Taylor & Francis.
4. Taru, B. (2003). the workforce bullies. *The Hindu*.
5. D'Cruz, P. (2012). *Workplace bullying in India.* New Delhi, IN: Routledge.
6. D'Cruz, P., & Noronha, E. (2009). Experiencing depersonalized bullying: A study of Indian call center agents. *Work Organization, Labor and Globalization*, *3,* 26-46.
7. D'Cruz, P., & Noronha, E. (2010). Protecting my interests: Target coping with workplace bullying. *The Qualitative Report, 15,* 507-534. Retrieved from http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR15-3/dcruz.pdf.
8. D'Cruz, P., & Noronha, E. (2012). Clarifying my world: Identity work in the context of workplace bullying. *The Qualitative Report, 17,* 1-29. Retrieved from http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR17/dcruz.pdf.
9. D'Cruz, P., & Noronha, E. (forthcoming). Ambivalence: Employee responses to depersonalized bullying at work. *Economic and Industrial Democracy.*
10. D'Cruz, P., & Noronha, E. (2013). Breathers, releases, outlets and pauses: Employee resistance in the context of depersonalized bullying. *The Qualitative Report, 18*(72), 1-24. Retrieved from http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR18/dcruz72.pdf.