

## PERCEPTION OF POLITICS IN ORGANISATION AND GENDER OF SCHOOL TEACHERS: AN INFLUENCE ON WORKPLACE BULLYING

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### Abstract

*The study examined the influence of organizational politics perception and gender on workplace bullying among school teachers in Awka, Anambra State. A sample of 200 teachers 95 (18.29) men and 105 (18.85) women served as participants in the study. Their ages ranged from 25 to 55 years with a mean age of 42.4 years and standard deviation of 18.5. The study made use of two instruments namely: 12 item Perception of Organizational Politics Scale and a 22 item Workplace Bullying Scale. The study adopted a 2 X 2 factorial design with a two-way analysis of variance as the statistics for analysis. Result showed no significant difference on workplace bullying between school teachers of high and low organizational politics perception  $F(1,196) = .752, p = .387$ . The results also showed no significant difference between female and male teachers on workplace bullying  $F(1, 196) = 0.69, P = .793$ . No significant interaction between gender and perceived organizational politics on workplace bullying was observed  $F(1, 196) = .400, P = .528$ . The findings were discussed and recommendations made based on the results.*

### Introduction

The increasing occurrence of unwarranted and invalid criticism, blame without factual justification, being sworn at, exclusion from responsibilities, social isolation in the workplace, being shouted at or humiliated amongst junior colleagues which has become the hallmark of Nigerian organizations today, has undermined organizational productivity especially in the face of economic recession in Nigeria. These have attracted the attention of researchers into attempting to understand the reasons behind such bully in the workplace, Owoyemi and Oyelere (2010). Glendinning (2001) affirmed the negative impact of bullying in the workplace by pointing out that workplace bullying is akin to cancer in the workplace; and if measures are not taken to cure it, both the organization and individual employees will become increasingly unhealthy. Workplace bullying is a form of psychological violence in the workplace. Hoel and Beale (2009), a Swedish pioneer in

the study of workplace bullying defines the phenomenon as “psychological terror involving hostile and unethical communication directed in a systematic way by one or a few individuals mainly toward one individual”.

Leymann (1996), defined workplace bullying as a way of harassing, offending, socially excluding members of an organization in a way that negatively affects their work task. For Einarsen (2006), workplace bullying is “repeated aggressive actions and practices aimed or directed at one or more workers”. They are offensive, abusive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, abuse of power which makes the recipient feel upset, threatened, humiliated or vulnerable, thereby leading to loss of confidence and stress. Bullying in the workplace is a problem that is more common than most people think. It can create a hostile work environment, which makes people miserable and affects work productivity, Mintzberg (1983). Workplace bullying involves the tendency of individuals or groups to use persistent aggressive or unreasonable behaviour against a co-worker or subordinate.

The subject of workplace bullying is particularly difficult to handle because workplace bullies often operate within the established rules and policies of their organization Lewis (2002) and as such, while bullying occurs regularly in the workplace, victims tend to be apprehensive about reporting it due to the difficulties often associated with proving it, Namie and Namie (2009). Although workplace bullying should be a serious concern for organization, it often goes unreported because the targets feel humiliated and shamed, Baron & Neuman (1998). Moreover, employees exacerbate the problem by discounting or ignoring complaints. Many targets suffer silently, some quit their jobs while others condone and absorb the behavior as stressful and unbearable which contributes to heart attacks or other stress-related physical ailment, Gardner & Johnson (2001).

### **Theoretical Framework**

The study is anchored on Self-Enhancement Theory as a theoretical framework. Compbell (1990) postulates that low self-concept individuals commonly engage in deviant behaviours. They lack confidence about their ability to succeed, and to prevent further erosion of their self-concept, they commonly withhold task-related effort and employ uncivil means in actualizing their set goals. This lack of effort then becomes the justification for their poor performance rather than more enduring problems like lack of ability, thus, the low self-concept person’s failure may reflect a rational decision to exert low effort rather than irrational consistency with the self-perceptual inadequacy (Dipboye, 1977). In precise terms, the theory argued that humans are always in constant struggle to enhance their self-concept despite their conditions. Connotatively, in organizational setting, many employees may have the need to enhance their self-concept as their primary objective to enhance their effectiveness in the organization.

Several terms are used to describe the concept ranging from workplace bullying, harassment, workplace aggression, workplace victimization, mobbing, workplace abuse

etc, Salin (2007). However, a lot of researchers in their bid to understand workplace bullying and its antecedents, have highlighted a lot of factors which includes personality, gender, socio-economic status (Sylvester, 2008). Though numerous studies have been conducted to investigate the link between organizational politics and workplace bullying, to the best of researchers' knowledge sufficient studies have not investigated the influence of perceived organizational politics on workplace bullying among men and women school teachers in Awka of South-eastern Nigeria. Hence the present study attempts to investigate the influence of perceived organizational politics and gender on workplace bullying among school teachers in Awka.

Organizational politics as one of the variables of interest in this study, is an integral part of organizational life. It is defined as the degree to which respondents view their work environment as political in nature, promoting the self-interest of others and thereby unjust and unfair from the individual point of view Kacmar and Carlson (1994). Organizations are made up of individuals with different beliefs, values, ideas and attitudes. These differences influence with organizational events like politics Sylvester (2008). Accordingly, organizations have been characterized as political arenas Mintzberg (1983). Organizations that are rife with politics provide an uncomfortable environment for people to work in, and not good for promoting positive work-related behaviours (Poon, 2002). Moreover, organizational politics is a potential source of stress and naturally creates an unpalatable atmosphere for people to work.

*Hypothesis 1:* School teacher who scored high on perception of organizational politics will score higher on workplace bullying scale than those that scored low.

Gender has also been reported to be a contributing factor to workplace bullying. Male individuals in the workplace tend to bully their female counterparts because women are generally described as weaker sex. Aremu (2006) reports that while victims of workplace bullying comprise all levels and professions, most of them are females. Gender has to do with the meaning that societies and individuals give to male and female categories Becker & Eagly (2004). The differences in gender happen in most social contexts and beyond social beliefs derived from gender behavioural stereotypes. Individual-level studies seem to have found that there are differences in the way that women and men leaders differ in their styles.

*Hypothesis 2:* Female and male teachers will differ on their workplace bullying scores.

*Hypothesis 3:* A significant interaction between perception of organizational politics and gender on workplace bullying is expected.

## Method

*Participants* A total of 200 secondary school teachers from Awka served as respondents in the study. The teachers were selected through a simple random sampling technique. Out of the 200 participants randomly selected, 95 (18.29) were males and 105 (18.87) were females with the ages of the participants ranging from 25-55 with a mean age of 42.49 and standard deviation of 18.56.

*Instruments* Two instruments were used in the study. First a 22-item workplace bullying scale by Einarsen & Raknes (1997) with a five point likert response format: 5- Strongly agree, 4-Agree, 3- Undecided, 2- Disagree, 1- Strongly disagree. The second instrument was organizational politics scale by Kacmar and Carlson (1994) intended to measure perception of organizational politics. The scale contains 12 parsimonious items measured on a five-point response scale ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree). A higher score meant a stronger perception of organizational politics. Sample items were “Favouritism rather than merit determines who gets ahead around here”; “There is a group of people in my department who always get things their way because no one wants to challenge them”.

*Reliability and Validity* Perception of organizational politics scale has been used by many researchers and the instrument has reliability coefficient .76 (Parker 1995); .77 (Vigodo, 2000) and .83 (Vigodi-Gadot, 2006). The workplace bullying questionnaire has reliability coefficient of .89 (Raknes and Einarsen, 1997). In order to determine the reliability of the instrument, the researcher conducted a pilot study using fifty participants who were primary school teachers and obtained an alpha coefficient of .68 for the perceived organizational politics scale while .96 was obtained for workplace bullying scale.

*Design Statistics* The research is survey study employing a 2 (low vs high perception of organizational politics) x 2 (men vs women) factorial design with workplace bullying as the dependent variable. Two Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was the statistical tool used to analyse the data that tested the three hypotheses.

## Results

TABLE1: SUMMARY TABLE OF MEAN AND STANDARD DEVIATION OF GENDER AND ORGANIZATIONAL POLITICS WITH RESPECT TO WORKPLACE BULLYING.

Organizational Politics	Mean	N	Standard Deviation
Male	62.03	95	18.29
Female	61.12	105	18.87
<b>Total</b>	<b>61.56</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>18.56</b>
Organizational Politics	Mean	N	Std. deviation
High	60.20	93	18.69
Low	62.73	107	18.46
<b>Total</b>	<b>61.56</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>18.56</b>

Table 2: SUMMARY TABLE OF TWO WAY ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE ON THE INFLUENCE OF GENDER AND ORGANIZATIONAL POLITICS ON WORKPLACE BULLYING.

Source	Type in sum of squares	d/f	Mean square	F	Sig
Gender	24.06	1	24.06	.069	.793
Org.Politics	261.14	1	261.14	.752	.387
Politics x Gender	139.09	1	139.09	.40	.528
Error	68090.07	196	347.39		
<b>Total</b>	<b>826365.00</b>	<b>200</b>			

Result of table 2 indicates no significant main effect for perception of organizational politics on workplace bullying at  $F(1,196) = .752, P = .387$  level of significance. This means that the first hypothesis which stated that school teachers who scored high on perception of organizational politics will score higher on workplace bullying scale than those that scored low was rejected. Also the second hypothesis which stated that female and male teachers will differ significantly on workplace bullying was rejected at  $F(1, 196) = .069, P = .793$ . Finally, the results showed that there was no significant interaction between gender and perception of organizational politics on workplace bullying  $F(1, 196) = .400, P = .528$ .

### Discussion

In this study, three hypotheses were tested. The first hypothesis which stated that there will be a significant difference between workers who are high on organizational politics and workers who are low on organizational politics on workplace bullying was not confirmed. This indicated that organizational politics is not a contributing factor to workplace bullying, rather other factors like personality can account for that. This can be buttressed by research conducted by Salin (2004). He examined the relationship between the big five personality dimension and workplace bullying with a sample of 105 sales customer service staff of a foreign based banking/financial institution in the Northern Region of Malaysia. Results indicated that extroversion and agreeableness are positively related to workplace bullying. Emotional stability/neuroticism, conscientiousness and openness to experience did not show any significant relationship with workplace bullying. The findings established the existing of a relationship between the big five personality dimension and workplace bullying although they are not very strong or extensive.

The second hypotheses which stated that there will be a significant difference between female and male workers on workplace bullying was rejected. This result was not in tandem with the research conducted by the workplace bullying institute (WBI) (2006). This institute investigated the relationship between gender on workplace bullying using 330 American health workers, one hundred and fifteen (115) males and one hundred and fifteen (115) females. Result showed that male health workers have high record of incidence of bullying when compared to their female counterpart in the same organization.

Owoyemi (2010) explored the relationship between gender and workplace bullying. Data were collected from 120 health workers based in the UK. Result showed that there was a significant relationship between gender and workplace bullying.

Finally, the result showed that there was no significant interaction between gender and organizational politics on workplace bullying thereby rejecting the third hypotheses.

### **Conclusion and Recommendation**

Based on the findings, the researcher concludes that gender differences and perception of organizational politics in the educational sector do not have significance on workplace bullying among school teachers.

The outcome of this study has provided fertile grounds for extensive work in organizational politics to be conducted in Nigerian organizations. Researchers could focus on variables like organizational culture, workplace environment and personality difference as possible antecedents of organizational politics. Variable like unemployment rate in the country, organizational tenure and organizational type (i.e private and public) could also be controlled in future studies.

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