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WORKPLACE BULLYING: A CASE ON SERVICE SECTOR EMPLOYEES

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BACKGROUND

Managing human resources is the most typical job for an organization to ensure a competitive advantage. Human resource management supplies competitive intelligence because it assists employees in facilitating the success of an organization. Kusluvan et al. (2010) argued in their study that the efforts of the employees are the fundamental factors to ensure sustainable competitive advantage, quality assurance, and organizational performance in service organizations. Organizations try their best to deliver quality customer service, where interpersonal communication plays a significant role in customer satisfaction. Customers usually revel in interpersonal interaction with employees to choose their preferred services. Hartline and Jones (1996) also supported this fact and found employee behavior a prerequisite factor for the ultimate sale. To facilitate excellent service, organizations need to understand the expectations of the peoples. Research showed that a healthy workplace pursues a soothing environment where the physical, psychological, social, and organizational conditions confirm togetherness to achieve an agreed vision (Bentley et al., 2012).

On the other hand, workplace bullying poses a negative impact on the organizational environment, and employees feel a threat in their everyday working lives. Moreover, a poor working environment works like a typical antecedent for bullying and confirms in anxiety, depression, absenteeism, and turnover among the employees (Hogh et al., 2011; Leymann, 1996). It also influences organizational practice adversely, which may hamper the organizational understanding incompetently to develop insights and information among the employees to deliver the expected services to their clients. However, having this backdrop, it is noteworthy to find to what extent individuals are involved in bullying in the different organizations and how far they are happy with their work environment. There is a huge opportunity to earn more from the service sector since it has remained untapped, and the firms need to be competitive in innovative ideas.

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Finally, it would be interesting to explore and develop a case that how the contextual factors of workplace bullying reduce the commitment among the employees to provide services and what are the prospects may develop from this study considering the findings.

METHODOLOGY

The case study aims to achieve dual objectives, first, to exercise and develop academic knowledge. Second, identify potential problems through the studied questions. As suggested by Hasan et al. (2019) and Islam et al. (2018), the approach was followed to collect as many studies as possible and eliminate biases caused by the study-identification procedure. To understand workplace bullying: a computerized keyword search was performed in the repositories (e.g., emerald, Google Scholar). Based on the situation developed in this case, we conclude with the questions for further implication and justification. Moreover, regarding the technicality, this is a qualitative study that predominantly explores workplace bullying. To observe and elicit narratives from the real scenario of the organizations, we visited four organizations that are operating in Bangladesh's service industry and conduct the focus group discussion (FGD) for data collection. All the questions were adopted are adapted from Srivastava and Dey (2019) and Hauge et al. (2007) to observe the workplace bullying. Participants were asked to share their ideas, thinking, and point of view based on the questions adopted from the Srivastava and Dey 2019 and Hauge et al. (2007) see table 2.

THE CASE STUDY

The service sector plays an essential role in guaranteeing the competitiveness of an economy. In an individual, organizational prospect to remain competitive in the marketplace, it is necessary to have an environment where employees could exercise their activities at ease. In organizations, efficiency and productivity are enhanced by human efforts. The organizations are more interested in sustaining their activities towards success may need to control the unexpected behaviors, e.g., bullying. Therefore, it is necessary to explore the bullying activities among employees in different organizations and develop a proper understanding that may suggest a beneficial solution.

WORKPLACE BULLYING

Workplace bullying has immersed speculation over the years in academic and professional considerations (Eisele, 2016). Bullying regularly confirms consistently violent, unreasonable behavior, and derogatory acts by individuals against individuals in the work environment (Yeun and Han, 2016). These ill-treatments and malpractices damage the individuals on such a level that they feel inferior and couldn't defend himself/herself in a situation (Rai and Agarwal, 2017; Ciby and Raya, 2015). Workplace bullying can occur by unrealistic deadlines, disproportionate workloads, constant job control, practical jokes, rumors, derogatory remarks, and target-oriented threats (Srivastava and Dey, 2019 p. 3).

In addition, based on the management literature, it is often confusing to categorize negative behaviors in the workplace (Burnes and Pope, 2007; Einarsen et al., 2003). In most situations, bullying in the workplace may or may not cause any specific physical damage (Martino, 2003). The definition of bullying behavior at work can differ significantly, while others, like incivility, appear near harmless, not indicate their emotional impact or of the psychological distress they can cause (Burnes and Pope, 2007, p. 287). One of the most commonly known definitions of bullying at work is: "To bully at work means intimidating, abusing, socially excluding or adversely affecting others' work. According to Srivastava and Dey (2019), when the conduct happens frequently and consistently for a week or may persist for six months, the mark bullying can be established in a given operation. This systematic malicious social act escalated when someone targeted and confronted an inferior position (Sheehan and Griffiths, 2011). Therefore, different issues may categorize which tend to occur bullying in the organizations where Rayner and Hoel (1997) and Burnes and Pope (2007) present the bullying in different categories: victimization and humiliation, the threat to professional standing; rudeness and intimidation, the threat to personal reputation; social alienation; excessive workload with imminent targets and Lack of recognition where the error is due or frequently reported.

Moreover, these manifestations of the bullying may compel either the intended behaviors evident to observers and unintended actions where the offenders go unnoticed. Bullying gives negative conclusions, and companies face the implications in their day-to-day interactions through position conflict, position uncertainty, work anxieties, and insufficient decision-making power (Bohle et al., 2017). This real phenomenon exists with a deleterious environment in the organization because the adverse effect of bullying not only suffers the targeted individual but also hampers the effectiveness of the organization (Einarsen et al., 2003). Individual bears consequences of bullying through anxiety, depression, negative feelings, overt frustration, sleep issues, job burnout, and exhaustion, which may result with more absenteeism, reduced task efficiency, lower productivity, lower employee values, lesser employee satisfaction, inferior

innovation in organizational activities (Rajalakshmi and Naresh, 2018). For instance, it can also assume that this phenomenon is somehow vague since there is a lack of consensus about "Bullying" (Hoel, Faragher, and Cooper, 2004). A variety of actions may describe negative workplace behaviors in the workplace, but these are not labeled as bullying because of the existence or the frequencies. Therefore, such behaviors may avoid either being regarded as part of the rough or tumbling of organizational life (Pearson et al., 2001).

FINDINGS

Data were collected mostly from the mid-level employees as they are the key informants. Most of the participants have a master's degree with considerable work experience to showcase the bullying activities in their organizations. It is evident in Table 2 that there is bullying activity in different organizations. Among the four groups, all participants agreed that bullying exists in their organizations. After recording all the statements from the groups, group 1 explain that out of the 22 questions, they agree with 13 situations where they face bullying wherein 8 cases disagree with the statements where only one matter they posit their position neutral. Based on group 2 comments, it shows that in their organizations, they are suffering humiliation, work ordering error, rumors, withholding information activities. Their response was conservative with the rest of the 18 statements represents bullying; most of them votes disagree, and only two situations they remain silent to answer. After analyzing group 3 responses, it confirms that most of the interviewees perceived that bullying is happening in their organization to a great extent. Out of the 22 items, they agree with 16 behavior, which is alarming for the employee wellbeing and organizational performance. The observation about the group 4 interviews, opinion about "agree" is deemed to be adequate by the employees since the total score is 12. They also disagree with behaviors that score 10.

Table II: Bullying scenario in different organizations

Workplace Bullying	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4
In your organization/institution….				
1. Someone hiding information impacting your success	√	√	√	√
2. Be embarrassed or mocked for your job	√	√	√	√
3. Ordered to work below the skill point	√	√	×	√
4. Remove or substitute leading roles with more trivial or harmful tasks	√	‡	‡	×
5. Spreading the rumors around you	×	√	√	×
6. Ignored, omitted, or "given to Coventry"	√	×	√	×
7. Have disrespectful or offensive remarks about your personality (i.e., behavior and background), attitudes, or privacy	√	×	√	√
8. Shouting or expressing sudden indignation (or rage)	×	×	×	√
9. Intimidating actions such as finger-pointing, personal space violation, firing, blocking	×	×	√	×
10. Tips or signs from others that you will leave your job/position	×	×	×	×
11. Repeated reminders of your mistakes	×	×	×	√
12. Be ignored or face aggressive responses when approaching	×	×	×	×
13. Continuous questioning about your work and strength	√	×	√	√
14. Ignoring your thoughts	×	‡	√	√
15. Practical comments by people you don't get on with	‡	×	√	×
16. Tasks of unrealistic deadlines	√	×	√	√
17. Devising accusations against you	√	×	√	×
18. Excessive job control	×	×	√	×
19. The pressure to not demand anything to which you have right (e.g., sick leave, vacation allowance, travel expenses)	√	×	√	√
20. Be the subject of unnecessary sarcasm and teasing	√	×	√	√
21. Exposed to unchanged workload	√	×	‡	√
22. Crime threats or physical abuse or violence	√	×	×	×

Source: prepared by authors

Notes: × = Disagree ‡ = neither agree nor disagree √ = Agree

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This case aimed to investigate the patterns of bullying in Bangladeshi organizations. Workplace bullying is a negative exposure and aggressive behavior made by the individuals to suffer someone psychologically, verbally, or physically to produce lower self-esteem, more negative emotion, anxiety, stress, fatigue, burnout, and depression. In this case study, four different organizations were chosen for this exercise. The result of this study made a further assumption after observing the organizational practices. Based on the theory, it is confirmed that the concrete definition of organizational bullying is yet to develop. Different organizational suffering may relate the bullying behavior differently. The result of this study also agree with these facts and found other workplace behavior among the participated organizations. In a discussion, one of the asked questions was "having insulting or offensive remarks made about your person (habits and background), your attitudes or your private life." The result reveals with two groups behavior one group comply with disagreeing that this behavior was not available in their organization where others group agrees with this fact. Therefore, based on the result, it can be assumed that bullying behavior is not universal, but it depends on the organizational context and practice referred by Pearson et al. (2001). Bullying is not expected in the workplace since this is a vital issue for employee productivity, prosperity, and performance.

The findings of the case study revealed several behavioral beliefs. Therefore, to address bullying in organizations, the following issues can be discussed with practitioners, policymakers, scholars, and students of Human Resource Management.

CASE QUESTIONS

- How workplace bullying embarrasses organizational progress?
- How service organizations manage workplace bullying by changing their workplace behavior?
- How organizational leaders tackle workplace bullying?
- What are the implications of confronting workplace bullying with perceiving organizational support in organizational practice?
- How does the anti-bullying campaign could take place in the organization to stop bullying?

Finally, the study commits several limitations; one of the major limitations is the sample size; therefore, the generalization of this topic is not possible. Though the study has limitations, it offers further opportunities too. Using the bullying questions, any service organizations operating Bangladesh may understand their company situation may work forward for improvement. The study also throws some implications with questions that could be a source for future research. This study also recommends a longitudinal study with a large sample to portray pictures lucidly.

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