

Workplace Bullying and Unethical Behaviors: A Mediating Model

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Abstract

Workplace bullying and unethical behaviors are increasingly being recognized as serious problems that warrant attention. However, there is no previous research has investigated the possible effect of workplace bullying on employees unethical behaviors. So, this study is an attempt to fill this void. Moreover, we investigated whether this effect is mediated by psychological ownership. The model of this study was tested using survey data collected from a sample of 295 commercial bank employees. Results provided support for the proposed model, as workplace bullying predicted employees unethical behaviors and psychological ownership partially mediated the workplace bullying-unethical behaviors relationship. Recommendations and directions for future research are provided.

Keywords: workplace bullying, psychological ownership, unethical behaviors, Jordan

1. Introduction

People spend a long time in their workplace, so how people behave at workplace is a major concern for researchers and organizations as well. Although, some of organizational behaviors are desirable and functional to achieve organizational effectiveness, like organizational citizenship behaviors (Organ, 1997) and commitment-related behaviors (Nehmeh, 2009) prosocial behaviors (Michie, 2009), there is another set of behaviors that may be undesirable and dysfunctional.

Bullying is one of these behaviors, it has been defined as "all those repeated actions and practices that are directed to one or more workers, which are unwanted by the victim, which may be done deliberately or unconsciously, but clearly cause humiliation, offence and distress, and that may interfere with job performance and/or cause an unpleasant working environment" (Einarsen, 1999, p. 2). Because these behaviors contribute negatively to both bullied individual and organizational effectiveness, it is a well-recognized and widely researched topic .

Bullying has negative consequences for both the individuals and organizations. At the individual side it may cause mental and emotional harm, physical illness, and career damage for the victims of bullying. It also has a huge effect on organizations; it may reduce productivity, profit, increase absenteeism and attrition, and loss of customers (Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, & Cooper, 2003; Namie, 2003). One important aspect that left unattended in bullying literature is its effect on unethical behaviors, so this study came to fill this gap. Being a victim of bullying might make employees feel powerless to restore justice or sense of control, so if employees felt powerless they may engage in unethical or deviant behaviors (Salin, 2003). The purpose of this study is to explore the direct and indirect effect of workplace bullying on unethical behaviors.

More specifically, this study will examine the potential direct effect of workplace bullying on employees unethical behaviors. Moreover, we intended to examine the mediating effect of psychological ownership on the bullying-unethical behaviors relationship.

2. Research Model

Although workplace bullying and unethical behaviors have long been of so much interest to investigators, to date there is little, if any, research examined the two topics' possible relationship. To fill this void, this study developed a mediation model to investigate employees' response to workplace bullying. The proposed model delineates mediating mechanism explains how and why workplace bullying promotes employees to engage in

unethical behavior. Figure (1) shows the model of this study. According to the model, we propose that in addition to the direct effect workplace bullying has on employees' decision to commit unethical behaviors; we posit that workplace bullying has indirect effect through the construct of psychological ownership.

This study expanded the existing literature in at least two ways. First, we explored a previously untested relationship between workplace bullying and unethical behavior. Second, we tested whether psychological ownership mediates this relationship.

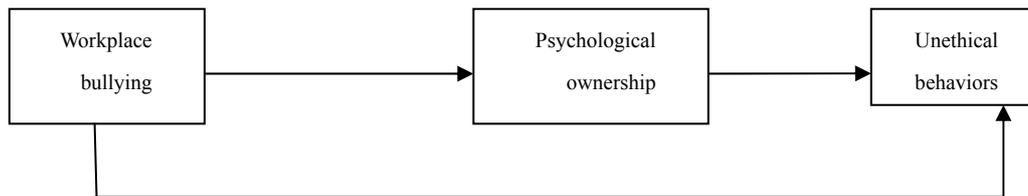


Figure 1. The model of the study

3. Theoretical Background

3.1 Workplace Bullying

Workplace bullying venerable roots can be traced back to the 1980s decade of the last century (Agervold, 2007). Research on bullying was initiated in Scandinavian countries, however, research effort was focused on studying schoolyard bullying. Later on, Heinz Leymann, who is considered by many to be the pioneer in this field of study (Lutgen-Sandvik, Tracy, & Albert, 2007) expanded the work on school bullying to workplace when he recognized similar kind of behaviors among adult workers (Leymann, 1996).

Results of previous studies suggest that workplace bullying is a problem for organizations internationally. Over years, a large and growing body of empirical results strongly suggests that workplace bullying is widely spread and costly phenomenon. Exposure to bullying oscillates across countries along the range from 3% to about 50% (Hansen et al., 2006; Leymann, 1996; Samnani & Singh, 2012; Cowie & Berdondini, 2001; Rayner, 1997). A study conducted by Rayner (1997) indicated that 53% of UK workers had been bullied. The same study showed that 77% of the participants indicated having witnessed bullying at work. Of the 180 respondents surveyed by Lee and Brotheridge (2006) 40% reported being bullied during the past six months. Comparable results were reported by Berry, Gillespie, Gates, & Schafer (2012) more specifically, the study found that 88 out of 197 (44.7%) participant in their study reported that they had experienced some form of bullying at the workplace over the past 6-month period. Other studies revealed that almost 30% of workers are bullied at some time in their career (Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2007). For good review of prevalence statistics see Fleming and Jacobsen (2010).

As it comes to the effects of workplace bullying, numerous prior studies have documented evidence for the severe consequences of bullying for both bullied individuals and for organization in which bullying takes place. There is sufficient evidence indicating that bullied employees suffer the effects of stress (Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2001), anxiety, high blood pressure, depression, excessive worry, and suicidal thought (Namie, 2003; Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2002; Groeblinghoff & Becker, 1996; Kivimaki et al., 2003). In most extreme cases this issue may cause suicide (Leymann, 1992; Fleming & Jacobsen, 2010). Also, there is empirical evidence to support the negative effect of bullying on employees' initiative, concentration, and sense of security (Leymann, 1992; O'Moore, Seigne, McGuire, & Smith, 1998). These figures must be of concern to managers as they grapple with organizational consequences. It is argued that individual effects of exposure to bullying "may manifest itself organizationally, as reduced motivation and creativity, as well as a rise in errors and accidents (Hoel, Sheehan, Cooper, & Einarsen, 2011, p. 130). Prior research provided evidence of the linkage between workplace bullying and an increase in employees withdrawal behavior (absenteeism rate, intention to leave and turnover) (Kivimaki, Elovainio, & Vahtera, 2000; Moayed, Daraiseh, Shell, & Salem, 2006). Other studies showed that bullying is negatively associated with productivity, satisfaction, and commitment, (Namie, 2007; Vartia, 2001; Fisher-Blando, 2008). When these effects are translated into dollar terms, they are in fact substantial. Several studies have demonstrated that bullying has dire economic repercussions on organizations. For example, Leymann (1990) indicated that the yearly cost of a case of bullying is between \$30,000 and \$100,000. Hoel, Einarsen, Keashly, Zapf, & Cooper (2003) reported a similar figure; they mentioned an estimate of approximately \$50,000. For more comprehensive details see Hoel et al. (2011).

Despite the overwhelming evidence indicating the prevalence of the problem worldwide, extensive review of research conducted on workplace bullying revealed surprisingly little attention paid to this topic in the Arab world in general and Jordan in particular. The burgeoning literature internationally concerning such topic and its absence in the Arab literature does not by any sense mean that this problem is endemic. No country is immune to bullying behaviors, and indeed that less developed countries (including Arab countries) are at more risk of experiencing this kind of problem (Fleming & Jacobson, 2010). Moreover, review of literature revealed that the effect of workplace bullying on unethical behaviors is glossed over. Thus, this study is a significant contribution to the literature as it addresses a gap that is left open.

The current study extended the literature by examining workplace bullying-unethical behavior association in the work context of developing countries. Up to the researchers' best knowledge; there is no previous study in which such assessment has been carried out. For that end, the present study developed a theoretically grounded process model that delineates the process that underlies employees' decision to engage in unethical behaviors. Direct as well as indirect (through psychological ownership) effects were included in the model.

3.2 Psychological Ownership

Ownership is a linguistically opaque construct (Van Dyne & Pierce, 2004). Rudmin and Berry (1987) contended that, people identify themselves with what they have; therefore Belk (1988) suggested that our possessions are parts of ourselves. Etzioni (1991) conceptualized this concept as "dual creation, part attitudes, part object, part in mind, part real" (p. 466).

Therefore it is concerned with the feeling that the object is an extension of the self. Psychological ownership is a theory that attempt to explain this feeling of ownership, with its meaning difficult to grace without understanding the meaning people assign to this concept (Belk, 1988). Thus, it is difficult to discuss the meaning of ownership merely by observing physical objects because ownership is a matter of orientation rather than of physical objects (Avey, Avolio, Crossley, & Luthans, 2009). Based on this conceptualization, the experienced personal emotional bonding is paramount to understand the psychological ownership concept. Hence, ownership is difficult to comprehend outside of an intra-individual view (Pierce, Kostova, Dirks, 2003).

Based on this (Pierce, Kostova, & Dirks, 2001) defined psychological ownership as "the feeling of possessiveness and of being psychologically tied to an object" (p.299), also Van Dyne and Pierce (2004) defined this construct as "the psychologically experienced phenomenon in which an employee develops possessive feelings for the target" (p. 441). These definitions contain the "sense" aspect of ownership which manifested in the emotional connection with the target of ownership. This will induce "[a] state in which individuals feel as though the target of ownership or a piece of that target is 'theirs'" (Pierce et al., 2003, p. 86). Moreover, some researchers contended that the definitions of psychological ownership contain several important aspects, these aspects are: the sense of ownership is innately human, it occurs toward both tangible and intangible objects, and that psychological ownership has important emotional, attitudinal and behavioral effects on individuals who developed such feeling of ownership (Pierce et al, 2001).

Researchers distinguished between property and psychological ownership. While the former is economic state the latter is psychological state. Psychological ownership is developmental in nature, that it continually emerges from the course of life lived and work done, reflecting an experiential relation to objects, whereas property ownership is legal and economic status transferred by purchase or inheritance having no direct relation to human experience and development (Pierce et al., 2001; Van Dyne & Pierce, 2004; Mahto, Ames, & Busija, 2006).

Although legal and psychological ownership may coexist or possibly related they differ in several significant ways. First, since the core of psychological ownership is the experimental feeling an individual develops toward a target, it is recognized by that individual who experiences this feeling and it is the individual who manifest the right association with this kind of ownership. Conversely legal ownership is recognized by a society and hence is protected and enforced by its legal system (Pierce et al., 2001).

Secondly, legal and psychological ownership are independent of each other, that is psychological ownership can exist based on legal ownership or in the absence of it. In other words legal ownership is not necessary for the occurrence of psychological ownership, thus a person may experience a sense of ownership of an object he does not legally own (Chang, Chiang & Han, 2012). By the same token, some individuals may legally own an object, yet they don't claim the possession as their own, using McCracken (1986) own words "it never really seemed to belong to me" (p 79). This is because they don't find personal meaning in the object which is a necessary condition to evoke feeling of psychological ownership (Pierce et al., 2003).

Lastly, and in the same vein, these two kinds of ownership differ in the responsibility associated with each of them, whereas the responsibility associated with legal ownership come from the legal system, responsibility associated with psychological ownership result from the self-feeling of being responsible and acts of claiming the object as "mine" (Pierce et al., 2001; Sieger, Zellweger, & Aquino, 2013).

4. Hypotheses Development

4.1 Workplace Bullying–Unethical Behaviors

There is a well-established body of research suggests that bullying results in harmful consequences for both the victim and the employing organization (Einarsen et al., 2003; Namie, 2003). We extend extant research by exploring the effect of bullying on unethical behavior. Workplace bullying is an interpersonal phenomenon taking place in a social context (Giorgi, Arenas & Leon-Perez, 2011) which is conceptualized as a constant longstanding undesirable treatment by one or few individuals directed toward a person (the victim) (Einarsen, 1999). A general agreement exists among scholars that there is a power distance between bullies (the perpetrator) and bullied (the victim) (Vartia, 2003). Harvey, Treadway, Heames, & Duke (2009) contented that “unethical behavior occurring among individual actors will be limited if their relationship is of long duration, healthy, and systematic in nature relative to balancing power which most bullying acts are not” (p. 29–30). The power disparity between bullies and bullied (salin, 2003; Jacobson, Hood, & Van Buren, 2013) push individuals into a helpless and defenseless position. Therefore, the victims find it difficult for them to pay back the wrongdoings because they perceive that the perpetrator has more power than they have (Namie, 2003). Power disparity is essential element of bullying. Though, this implies that perpetrators are at higher hierarchical level of authority, Einarsen et al. (2003) noted that power imbalance may emanate from other sources (featured as informal) than hierarchical authority. These include, but not limited to, knowledge experience, and social and psychological dependence .

Thus, bullying generates an internal unpleasant psychological state to victims (Vartia, 2003). Organizational behavior research suggests that employee's reaction to the socially discontented environment would be translated into a variety of behavioral responses (Leymann, 1996). The choice among these alternatives is determined by the situation and job constraints. For example, research findings indicated that bullying has impact on victims' turnover intention (Houshmand, O'Reilly, Robinson & Wolff, 2012), however, bullied employees would not leave unless alternative employment is first available (Gerhart, 1990). Subsequently some employees will unwillingly remain in unwanted employment because of some constraints on quitting. Therefore, employees are motivated to engage in copying behaviors that result in a better psychological state at work.

How will employees respond to an aversive situation under constraint conditions? These "locked in" employees while maintaining organizational membership might actively engage in behaviors that are unfavorable and counter to the organization's interest (Crino, 1994; Terris & Jones, 1982). Empirical results support this argument, it has been shown that sabotage and stealing are adaptive behaviors adopted by employees in response to unfavorable incidents (Greenberge, 1990; Skarlicki, Van Jaarsveld & Walker, 2008).

Based on the above discussion, we propose that bullied individuals who believe that they are unfairly treated would experience anger and must, one way or another, vent their anger (Aquino, Tripp, & Bies, 2006). Victims of bullying want to exact punishment for an offense committed by an offender (Stillwell, Baumeister, Del Priore, 2008) and they tend to direct their response toward the perceived source of harm (Jones, 2009). Bullied individuals feel not only do they unfairly treated, but also perceive they have little power to return ham to the offender. In such situation, when a victim is inhibited from seeking to harm offender because they perceive the party responsible for causing the harm as more powerful, they are motivated to choose alternative coping strategy to relieve the discomfort of painful emotions. Sommers, Schell & Vodanovich (2002) suggested that “if employees feel they have been treated unfairly by those in power in the organization, they may resort to using indirect and covert forms of retaliation” (p. 209). According to personification argument (Levinson, 1965; Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison & Sowa, 1986) individuals are prone to perceive the actions of the organization's agents as acts of the organization itself. As such, we posit that when bullied employees are in an inferior position relative to the offender and thus unable to respond directly to the offender, are more likely to engage in unethical behavior as an indirect response against the cause of harm. Based on theoretical reasoning and empirical findings outlined above, the following hypothesis will be investigated:

H1: There is a positive direct relationship between workplace bullying and unethical behaviors.

4.2 Workplace Bullying–Psychological Ownership

Psychological ownership implies that individuals are psychologically intertwined and emotionally attached with their organization (Bernhard & O'Driscoll, 2011). Actually, the self and the target of possession are so interrelated to such an extent that it becomes difficult to separate them, so people may define themselves by possessions they own (Avey et al., 2009). In the same vein, Teuscher, (2003) contended that psychological ownership "serve[s] a symbolic function.... [Objects we possess] signal to ourselves and others who we think we are and how we wish to be regarded" (p. 20). Thus, Individuals would respond emotionally when the organization is praised or attacked because it is part of extended self .

Individuals tend to view themselves in positive light, they would be proud to belong to an organization that they believe to have positive attributes (Van Dyne & pierce, 2004) otherwise they would detach themselves from it (Fuller, Hester, Barnett, & Relyea, 2006). Pierce et al. (2003) suggested that the sense of psychological ownership is not eternal. He contended that certain formal rituals such as estrangement, hostility, and devaluation might decouple an individual's attachment with the target of psychological ownership. Victims of bullying have been reported to suffer a wide range of negative psychological and physiological effects (Vartia, 2001; Hauge, Skogstad, & Einarsen, 2009; Niedhammer, David, & Degioanni, 2006; Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2002). Experiencing such adverse effects would likely detach individuals from their organizations, thereafter diminish the sense of ownership.

Moreover, people develop a sense of Psychological ownership to fulfill several basic and important needs including sense of control, home (comfort and security), and self-identity. Pierce et al. (2003) suggested that the sense of ownership for a particular object will be maintained so long as that object allows those needs to be satisfied. Inability of a target to satisfy those fundamental needs can dissipate the sense of ownership. Victims of mistreatment reported reduced levels of self-esteem (Burton & Hoolber, 2006), control (Duffy, Ganster, & Pagon, 2002) and sense of security (Glover, Gough, Johnson, & Cartwright, 2000). Lastly, we enumerate empirical results supporting the claim that workplace bullying can curtail the sense of psychological ownership. Bernhard and O'Driscoll, (2011) found that leaders behaviors exhibited toward their followers affect the employees' feeling of psychological ownership. Another study in different, but related field of study, found that fair treatment is related to organizational attachment (Haque & Asalm, 2011). On this basis we put forward the following hypothesis:

H2: There is a negative direct relationship between bullying and psychological ownership

4.3 Psychological Ownership-Unethical Behaviors

Numerous previous studies has examined the positive effect of psychological ownership on employees behaviors and attitudes (Baer & Brown, 2012; Mayhew, Ashkanasy, Bramble, & Gardner, 2007; Bernhard & O'Dresscoll, 2011; Chang et al., 2012). However, Pierce et al., (2001) posited that psychological ownership may motivate employees to behave dysfunctionally. That's might occur, for example, when individuals unwillingly separated from objects for which they have a sense of psychological ownership. Previously, we mentioned that certain conditions might detach individuals from their organizations. This decoupled state can result in a sense of normlessness (Pierce et al. 2003). Normlessness or anomia "refers to a state of amoral existence where there are no values to which one can refer and adopt for use in deciding and living and, as a result, people feel detached from society" (Tsahuridu, 2006, p. 166). Detachment from an organization with the subsequent normlessness may lead to a situation in which people become more prone to misbehave. Cohen (1995) noted that being psychologically detached and emotionally distant has been cited as a major factor in the willingness to inflict harm on others. There is enough evidence to suggest that normlessness is related to people's unethical behaviors and decisions (Caruana, Ramaseshan, & Ewing, 2001; Karassavidou & Glaveli, 2007; Mansfield, 2004; Rosenbaum & Kuntze, 2003). For example, Karassavidou and Glaveli (2007) reported a positive association between ammonia (normlessness) and attitude toward unethical behaviors. Thus, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H3: There is a negative direct relationship between psychological ownership and unethical behaviors.

H4: psychological ownership will mediate the relationship between bullying and unethical behaviors.

5. Methodology

5.1 Sample Description

The model of this study was tested using data from a sample of bank employees in northern region of Jordan. A total of 380 questionnaires were distributed to the targeted sample of which 303 questionnaires were returned, 8 questionnaires were excluded from the analysis. This left us with 295 usable questionnaires representing

approximately 78% response rate. Of the total sample about 54% were males. Almost half of the participants ranged between 25 and 35 years of age. The majority of the sample (86.4%) was bachelor degree holders. In terms of years of experience, about 56% of the respondents indicated that they have 5 or more years of experience. With respect to marital status, about 52% indicated that they are married.

5.2 Instrument

Data was collected via anonymous self-reporting questionnaires measuring the variables included in the research model. To measure workplace bullying we used the short-negative acts questionnaire (Notelaers & Einarsen, 2008). This instrument is composed of 9 items representing typical bullying behaviors. Respondents were asked to indicate the frequency that they have experienced such behaviors at their present workplace during the last six months on a scale ranging from never (1) to daily (5).

The 7-item instrument developed and validated by Van Dyne and Pierce (2004) was adopted to measure psychological ownership. Participants were asked to rate their level of agreement-disagreement with each item on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

We utilized 16-items taken directly from a scale developed by Newstorm and Ruch (1975) to measure unethical behavior. Each item represents a short description of unethical behavior. Participants indicated the extent to which they have engaged in each of the unethical behaviors. Responses were obtained on a 5-point scale ranging from never (1) to daily (5). It is worthnoting that we excluded one item because it does not fit with the Arab culture context.

6. Results

Simple linear regression was conducted to test the main effects hypotheses. The results of regression analysis are shown in table (1). From these results, it can be observed that workplace bullying was positively associated with rating of unethical behavior ($B = .606$, $t(13.44)$, $p < .001$), and negatively related to psychological ownership ($B = -.652$, $t(-6.39)$, $p < .001$). It was also found that workplace bullying explained a significant portion of variance in self-reported unethical behavior ($R^2 = .382$, $p < .001$) and psychological ownership ($R^2 = .122$, $p < .001$). These results give support for hypotheses one and two. Additionally, the results of the regression indicated that there was significant direct negative effect of psychological ownership on reported unethical behaviors ($B = -.19$, $p < .001$). The amount of variance accounted for by this factor was 13% ($R^2 = .13$, $p < .001$). These results confirm hypothesis three.

Table 1. Results of regression analysis

Model	predictor	Dependent variable	B coefficient	t-value	R ²	F-value	Standard error
1	Workplace bullying	Unethical behaviors	0.606	13.44	0.382	180.8	0.045
2	Workplace bullying	Psychological ownership	-0.652	-6.39	0.122	40.86	0.102
3	Psychological ownership	Unethical behavior	-0.190	-6.6	0.13	43.7	0.029
4	Workplace bullying	Unethical behavior	0.550	11.630	0.405	99.491	0.047
	Psychological Ownership		-0.087	-3.409	0.405	99.491	0.025

All reported values are significant at $p < .001$.

To test the mediation effect of psychological ownership on the relationship between workplace bullying and unethical behavior a procedure recommended by Baron and Kenny (1986) was used. This approach requires several regression analyses. First the dependent variable (unethical behavior) is regressed on the independent variable (workplace bullying). Second the mediator (psychological ownership) is regressed on the independent variable. Third, the dependent variable is regressed on both the independent and the mediator variables. When the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable in the first analysis turns out to be nonsignificant or substantially reduced in the third analysis, we can infer that a mediation effect is found. Regression results (Table 1) indicate there is a significant relationship between workplace bullying and unethical behavior (model 1). Moreover, model 2 indicates that workplace bullying is significantly related to

psychological ownership. These results satisfy the first two conditions outlined by Baron and Kenny (1986). Finally, comparing results of model 1 with those of model 4 we see that the effect of psychological ownership remained significant while the significant effect of workplace bullying was reduced from 0.606 to 0.550.

We calculated the Sobel test to evaluate the significance of the mediating variable effect. The results indicated that the reduction in regression coefficient is significant ($t(4.57) p < .001$). Collectively, these results establish for the partial mediating effect and supporting hypotheses four.

7. Discussion and Recommendations

Workplace bullying has been extensively investigated since the early work of Leymann (1990). Numerous studies have shown that workplace bullying can result in severe negative consequences on both the victims and the organizations (Namie, 2003). We extended the extant literature by empirically demonstrating that workplace bullying has direct and indirect effect on employees' unethical behavior. To that end a process model was developed and tested. Regression results revealed that workplace bullying was significantly related to employees' unethical behavior in the workplace. This result corroborates findings of Mitchell and Ambrose (2007) who found a significant positive relationship between abusive supervision and workplace deviance.

This result suggests that workplace bullying is a workplace risk factor and has adverse effects; therefore preventing it should be on managers' agenda. More specifically, our analysis showed that bullying has harmful consequences and can influence individuals' decision to engage in unethical behaviors. Unethical behaviors can cause huge economic losses to organizations. Thus, developing and adopting intervention strategies to curtail workplace bullying is not only in the interest of employees, but also in the interest of employers as it brings economic benefits to them. Organizations should express their full support and devote enough resources and effort to tackle bullying problem.

Several researchers suggested that bullying might go unnoticed and underreported in organizations where their culture tolerate and normalize such behavior (Rhod, Pullen, Vickers, Clegg, & Pitsis, 2010; Vickers, 2006; Hodson, Roscigno, & Lopez, 2006). Therefore, organizations should develop bullying prevention policies that communicate to employees that bullying is unacceptable and it will not be tolerated. Educating newcomers on these policies, continuous education and training is worthwhile. To deal with cases of bullying, organizations might need to establish an effective grievance and complaints system (Felblinger, 2011). Employees should know how to report cases of bullying without fear of repercussion (Pearson & Porath, 2005). Hutchinson, Wilkes, Jackson & Vickers (2010) noted that "bullying is more prevalent in environments where actors who engage in the behaviour do not receive effective sanctions and may, instead, be rewarded through perks, promotion or favourable treatment" (p. 177–178). Thus, organizations must enact and enforce policies that delineate bullying behaviors line in line with a discipline system. We know from previous studies (Leymann, 1992; Einarsen, 2000; Einarsen, Raknes, & Matthiesen, 1994) that social and work environment are important predictors of bullying, therefore, a credible intervention strategy to curtail bullying behavior is a training program directed toward improving the quality of social relationship.

The result that workplace bullying has indirect effect on employees' unethical behaviors is informative. This result suggests that managers should focus their efforts on addressing workplace bullying and psychological ownership simultaneously. Managers might put some effort to promote the sense of psychological ownership. Creating supportive and secure environment that contribute to creating safe environment (place) satisfy their social-emotional need and protect them from being humiliated (self-identity) and minimizing sense of power imbalance (control) would restore the sense of psychological ownership.

8. Limitations and Future Studies

It has been suggested and empirically found that different types of bullying instigate different types of responses (Bartlett & Bartlett, 2011; Vartia, 2001). In this study we elicited individuals' responses on the frequency of some negative acts without categorization. Thus, future research is recommended to examine the effect of different types (e.g., direct and indirect bullying) on individuals' tendency to commit unethical behaviors. This will enable us to identify which type of bullying impact most on unethical behavior. Such research is beneficial from practical point of view. It would help managers to identify the bullying acts lead to unethical behaviors; subsequently managers focus their efforts on the most influential acts.

Previous research has shown that when faced with bullying, male are more likely use active/ destructive coping strategies than female who usually tend to use passive/constructive or avoidance strategies (Olafsen & Viemero, 2000; Kristensen & Smith, 2003; Olafsson, 2003; Naylor, Cowie, & Del Rey, 2001; Skrzypiec, Slee, Murray-Harvey & Pereira, 2011). Moreover, extant literature indicates that girls are less likely than boys to

engage in crime and unethical behaviors (Mears, Ploeger & Warr, 1998; Ruegger & King, 1992, Weeks, Moore, McKinney & Longenecker, 1999). Taking together, these findings suggest that there might be gender-related differences in reaction to bullying. The current study did not examine such hypothesis. Thus, researchers are encouraged to test this plausible effect.

Earlier studies have reported that mistreatment in the form of bullying negatively impact both the targets and observers (Jennifer, Cowie, & Ananiadou, 2003; Vartia, 2001). This study has provided empirical evidence of the direct and indirect effect of bullying on the victims decision to engage in unethical behaviors. However, further research is needed to investigate whether these effects holds for bystanders as well.

The results of this study demonstrated that our proposed model is viable one to explain and predict unethical behavior. However, in the future it is useful to extend the current model by incorporating additional variables. For example, it is possible that workplace bullying–unethical behaviors relationship is moderated by individual variables such as need for revenge. Such extension, we argue, would enhance the model predictive and explanatory power.

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