

Experiences of Workplace Bullying in Women Worker

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Abstract. This qualitative study aims to describe the experiences of Workplace Bullying in women worker. Workplace Bullying is an act of violence in the work environment, which involves verbal abuse, threats, ostracism, insults, isolation, eliminating opportunities, insinuating, giving harsh criticism, and interfering in other people's personal affairs. Workplace Bullying cause psychologically and physiologically problems. In this study, the subjects were 3 women who were still actively working at PT X. The interview technique used semi-structured using interview guidelines. The result of this study finds several themes and units of analysis, including factors that cause workplace bullying, who are the bullies, forms of workplace bullying, impacts that received by participants, the reasons why participants persist, the support they received, and about their hopes. It is hoped that this research can become a reference for policy makers to take preventive actions that can minimize the occurrence of workplace bullying.

Keywords: *workplace, bullying, women, worker*

Introduction

Bullying that occurs in the workplace is one of the phenomena that has received a lot of attention from various groups today, both from researchers, educators, protection organizations, and community leaders (Rudi, 2010). Bullying behavior in the workplace is often termed Workplace Bullying, which often occurs in new employees and junior employees (Dita, 2014). Workplace Bullying can have an impact on organizational performance and culture, even for the wider social environment, it can raise new social problems related to legal consequences (Samnani, 2012). Based on a survey conducted by the Workplace Bullying Institute (2017), it shows that 19% of Americans experience workplace bullying, another 19% have witnessed workplace bullying, and 63% are aware of workplace bullying.

The phenomenon of workplace bullying also occurs in Indonesia. Research conducted by Gunawan, Prihanto, and Yuwanto (2009) on the existence of workplace violence against 123 workers in Surabaya, found that as many as 49% of research subjects were eyewitnesses to workplace bullying and experienced psychological impacts and

defensive attitudes. Victims who experienced psychological impacts felt angry with themselves, lost their self-confidence, felt isolated, and frustrated at work. As for the defensive attitude, the victim lost commitment to work, and the urge to quit the company. However, there are some victims who adopt a passive attitude and simply ignore the workplace bullying they experience. The helplessness expressed by victims is a form of power imbalance as seen from the organisational hierarchy and also has an impact on emotional exhaustion (Branch in Lilik, 2016).

According to Vartia (2001), the psychological condition of people who experience bullying will usually experience stress, and if it happens continuously it can cause sleep problems. Ingram (McDonald, Brown, and Smith, 2015), said that sometimes this condition can affect the state of the heart, stroke, rupture of blood vessels, cancer, arthritis, diabetes in victims of bullying. A number of literatures that mention the impact of workplace bullying both physically and psychologically make the topic necessary to be researched in order to find a more in-depth picture. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, a phenomenological study on the description of workplace bullying among female employees in Indonesia has never been found.

Workplace bullying is defined as bad behavior in the work environment that is carried out persistently over a long period of time and aims to harm other parties physically or psychologically (Lilik, 2016). Silviandari and Helmi (2018) stated that workplace bullying is a phenomenon in companies that can be likened to an iceberg, where a lot happens but is rarely publicized because victims and witnesses choose to remain silent. The tendency of workplace bullying makes it a violent behavior in the work environment which includes verbal violence, threats, exclusion, humiliation, giving harsh criticism, eliminating opportunities, insinuating, being mean, covering up information, and interfering with personal interests (Shangar, Yazdanifard, & Rupini, 2014). The behavior of mocking, cursing, insulting, accusing, and spreading gossip for some people is often considered a normal thing or just a joke, even though such behavior is actually included in the category of verbal bullying (Sukarti, Kurniawan, Mulawarman, 2018).

A study conducted by The Workplace Bullying Institute in 2021 estimated that 79.3 million people have been bullied at work, with 67% of perpetrators being male employees and the remaining 33% being female employees. The target victims of 42% of male

perpetrators are female employees, and the target victims of 65% of female perpetrators are also female employees. It can be concluded that bullying in the workplace mainly affects women, who are often seen as weak and powerless. The findings of this study are in line with the results of interviews conducted by Putri (2018), which shows that women who have just entered work at a printing company are victims of bullying from their coworkers in the form of delegating work that should be the responsibility of their coworkers to the subject.

From the results of an initial study conducted by researchers on female employees who were subjected to workplace bullying behaviour at PT X, they felt uncomfortable at work and some even decided to resign. There is also one who revealed that the workplace bullying behaviour she received made her feel depressed and cornered. However, her powerlessness in the group made her unable to do anything but just accept the treatment.

Based on this description, the researcher is interested in conducting research related to workplace bullying at PT X, because there is a phenomenon of bullying among several female employees in the company. This unconscious bullying behaviour at PT X caused one employee to decide to resign, and several other people who were still working also felt anxious and uncomfortable at work. Therefore, the researchers want to know more about how the description of the experience of bullying in the workplace differs from person to person, especially from women. This research was conducted qualitatively because previous research was still limited regarding the psychological description of victims of workplace bullying, and because the number of samples at PT X was also limited.

Method

This research uses a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach, which explores and understands the meaning of the main phenomena of the life experiences of individuals or groups from their own perspective (Creswell, 2009; Sugiyono, 2018). In this study, the researchers wanted to investigate the phenomenon of workplace bullying that occurred in PT X using phenomenological data mining to get a picture of the feelings and experiences from the victims' point of view. In this qualitative research, the participants consisted of 3 people who had criteria, namely female employees who had experienced workplace bullying, especially verbal bullying. The researchers used semi-structured

interviews accompanied by field notes. This research focuses on the experiences of PT X employees who have experienced bullying at work. In checking the validity of the data obtained in this study, the data were re-checked or re-examined with the same source at different times.

Result

This research began in September 2019. The participants in this study were three female employees who had received bullying treatment at PT X. The two participants in this study live in Bogor and one lives in Depok. The two participants in this study live in Bogor and one lives in Depok. Before the researcher conducted all the interview processes, the researcher explained the purpose and objectives of the study and questioned again the willingness to become a participant in the study. All three participants agreed, and the researcher provided informed consent. The interview process took quite a lot of time, because there were several difficulties in determining the time of the interview considering the existence of Work from Home (WFH) and one of the participants was in the process of giving birth.

Based on the results of the data collection, the following themes and units of analysis were identified:

a. Factors of Workplace *Bullying*

Being a junior: The participant stated that she was victimised because she was a junior in the office, she also mentioned that her status as a new employee allowed the seniors to treat her as they pleased.

So, it's not every day, it's just a lot of the time and it's true that people get treatment like that, because maybe because I was a junior, maybe in 2012, I think, 2012, there were the only juniors and the seniors were quite at the top, right? That's a factor. yeah, so yeah that's it. Indeed, from the start. (SM1:220420: 36-40).

Lower education background: Participant was also bullied because of her lower education compared to their colleagues.

Yes, that's right, because I'm a junior, they feel that I won't be offended by all their jokes and talk, they might think that's right, that's the new kid. That's it, apart from being a new

kid, I don't have the same level of education, most of them are seniors who have degrees, when I first started, I still finished educare. (SM1:220420: 412-415)

Unmarried status: Apart from the education factor and her status as a new employee, the participant also received workplace bullying because of her unmarried status.

Hehehe, in the past, bullying appeared because of my single status, but then there were various versions of bullying about me being single. So now why can I say that I am free, because in 2016 I got married and indirectly was free from bullying with the theme of that single. (FT1:151020: 159-162)

The results show several factors for the occurrence of workplace bullying, including being junior to the bully, both in terms of position and tenure, and having less education. In addition, the fact that the victim is unmarried is one of the factors triggering workplace bullying, where the bully's higher position allows him to act as he pleases.

b. Perpetrators of Workplace Bullying

Dominant person: According to the participants, the bully is usually a dominant person, who can lead others to follow him or her in bullying the subject.

Yes, always from that person. What I mean by that is there, yes or no, just like that, everyone is equally strong, you know, there is only leadership in things like that. So, it can influence people and invite people to be bullied. (SM1:220420: 169-171).

The senior: Specifically, another participant mentioned that the dominant figure who became a bully was her own supervisor.

Often one person is the boss, but sometimes after one person insults someone back, it's like there's someone supporting him, so the people around him support this perpetrator, there are those who support him, but there are also those who defend me, of course those who defend me are others. woman yes. (FT2:301220: 31-34).

The criteria for perpetrators of workplace bullying that appear is that they are dominant enough and able to invite others to participate in bullying the victim, more specifically they are the victim's supervisors or seniors.

c. Forms of Workplace Bullying

Delegating work by the perpetrators: The bully spreads false news about the participant, throws paperwork, and hands over the participant's work to someone else so that the participant cannot do her job.

Well then, those people know that the one who's lying is me, you know, especially because he's already reported to the public here that I'm the one who's a liar, don't know how to thanks, and basically, he's disappointed with me. In fact, if I think about it, where did I go wrong? That's my personal problem, who do I want to go with, whatever I want to do, and I still know my boundaries, where I can't do anything like that, how come? He was so angry that he really didn't treat me as an employee. Up to this point, when the paper was ordered to be put down, it was loud like this, and he didn't give it to me, but he gave it to someone else in front of me! That's for 3 months. (SM1:220420: 321-330).

Participant was given work by the bully that was not her responsibility.

Treatment... oh yes, there was one employee who, in my opinion, felt that he was a senior. Then it seemed like he was giving everything to me for work, to the point that he forgot that it was his responsibility. Well, apart from him, he often says that there's a problem, it's like saying I'm single and he likes to promote me to people like that, right? In my opinion, he's irresponsible at work and I'm in charge of all that. There was a time when it made me really uncomfortable, and I remember it until now. So, his boss asked him what he was doing, where was this job, where was it, like that, right? Then he said, "It still at RA," he said, even though I haven't received anything, that really made me feel bad, to the point where I was cursed at there by the boss. (RA1:010520: 63-72)

Verbal abuse: Another form of workplace bullying that participant received was verbal abuse.

Yes, I ever, what does he mean? Once I was told what to do, and I made a mistake, miscalculated or something I forgot, and he said something like, "So hurry up and get married, if you're already married, you'll focus, you know, because you're not married yet, that's why your thoughts are going everywhere and you're not focused." like that, right? I got stuck there when I was doing something wrong, maybe because I was single and not married, my mind couldn't focus, it was going anywhere, that's why my work could go wrong. But in my opinion, that's not a factor, it has nothing to do with it. (FT2:301220: 61-67)

According to the participant, she experienced bullying behaviour when she first started working. The bullying behaviour she received was verbal. The participant argued that the bully might feel that what was done was just a joke.

When the first time I entry. Erm, early entry yes. But what I mean is that I don't receive bullying every day, it only starts when I know everyone in that environment, in that room, then maybe I get to know each other, so people think that this is a familiar person, you know, so you can, ee, what can you do? letting out all the jokes or whatever that might think I'm just normal, like that. (SM1:220420: 32-36).

Excessive teasing: Based on the participant's statement, she felt that she was always the target of bullying in the office, that her presence at an activity would always be the target of bullying by her colleagues.

Ee, how do you know, so on every occasion, under any circumstances, it's already clear that people say eee, for example, there's a gathering and then I say I can't join and then someone says: "Oh no, sis, there's no place to be bullied." I see, so someone made that statement in front of a lot of people, so automatically people who didn't think about it would say "oh yeah, yeah", so it's like that, it's getting more and more like that. So yes, that person already knows his target, this (me), if he is there, this is that. So, the more people know because it is considered a normal thing, the more it is done like that. (SM2: 231120: 32-39).

Overall, the types of workplaces bullying experienced by the respondents varied, ranging from verbal abuse, excessive teasing, to delegating work by the perpetrator.

d. The participants' feelings about being bullied

Angry: Based on the participants' statement, she felt angry because she was being targeted, but she could not express her anger because it would increase the perpetrator's treatment of the participant.

Even if I'm angry, even if I'm offended, keep quiet, they know that if I'm angry, they know for sure, keep quiet. In the end, it will definitely be turned around again: "haha, that's all I'm excited about, you angry just because of that" like that. So, yeah, I don't want it to be continued. (SM1:220420: 63-72).

Sad: Participants were also sad because the perpetrators did not take their feelings into account when bullying them.

Sad, sad, disappointed. How come there are people who are without considering the hearts of those who are being bullied like that, how come they speak out loud like that? Even though the person being bullied has a heart, why doesn't he think about what other's heart would be like if he said something like that. (FT1:151020: 140-143)

Uncomfortable: Participants also feel uncomfortable if they want to meet with bullies or when they want to gather.

Yes, I feel uncomfortable like that, it's uncomfortable every time there's a gathering or casual conversation in the room, there's definitely a tendency to knock. So it makes my mood "what the heck". (FT2:301220: 27-29)

Embarrassed and low self esteem: As well as feeling sad, angry and uncomfortable, participants were also embarrassed and felt that their self-esteem had been undermined in front of their colleagues.

Actually, there is a feeling of shame, to be honest, I'm embarrassed to be digitized like that in front of people, especially in front of juniors, you know. I mean, I don't have much self-esteem, my God, really lowered my level at that time, I was told, "Wow, how come you lost to that guy, it's like this, while you're still like that." Ahh, what does that mean? Yes, I was afraid of that too, so that's fine. Because I'm sure that one day everything will change, the results of my defense so far will definitely have results, it can't just be like that. (SM1:220420: 157- 164)

More productive when they work from home: When the participant worked from home (WFH), she said she was given an important role that made her feel more productive and did not deserve to be bullied again.

So it's like I have a role during this time of WFH, I have a role, what is it, which is good enough to elevate my status. I mean, those people can't bully me anymore, you know. So, gradually people will see that I'm someone who doesn't deserve to be bullied like that. (SM2: 231120: 456-459).

Participants had mixed feelings about being bullied at work, such as feeling angry, sad, uncomfortable, and disgusted with the perpetrator. They also felt embarrassed and that they did not deserve to be treated in this way. Meanwhile, in terms of work, they feel more productive with WFH because they are no longer being bullied by the perpetrator.

e. Participants' reasons for surviving with their work

Belief can get through the process: According to the participant, she has survived so far because she sees the treatment she has received as a test that she can still pass.

What still keeps me going is because I think this test is nothing and can still be passed, because the test was given to His servant, which means I can do it and I can pass it. God

gave me this, which means I can definitely do it. Why not go to my other friends like that? Even though I have a lot of friends here, why don't I go to them? Even though they are the same, for example whether they are single or not, their condition is the same as mine. Yes, that means there must be a way. Then there is a lot of kindness here that can be felt, so the bully is inferior to this dominant (kindness) that I can get everything like that. Both from the environment, and my friends here, so what, I got a lot of things that I can get but can't express here. (SM1:220420: 181-190).

Don't want to upset parents: Not wanting to upset their parents was another strong reason for participants to stay in their jobs.

Oh... the motivation is actually. It's more like parents, right? Because in my opinion, if parents are not happy, we will not be happy, in my opinion. So, what I mean, I'll suddenly cry hehe. (RA2:231120: 54-56)

Economic necessity: Another reason why participants stayed in their jobs despite unfavourable treatment was economic necessity.

Yes, it happened to be the first child to work and at that time I just had installments, if I'm not mistake, when I took a motorbike, so I have to survive either. (FT1:151020: 120-121).

In the end, participants stayed in their jobs despite being bullied at work for a variety of reasons, including not wanting to upset their parents, economic needs and the belief that participants could get through the process.

f. Reaction of the participant's family and close friends

Support to fight back and protect herself: Based on the participant's statement, some of her colleagues gave advice and asked the participant to fight back.

Defending me, defending me but telling me to fight back, "Fight back, what are you doing? You can say that I don't like being treated like this, like you said earlier, right, just say that to them, right? Yes, I tell them, I tell the stories to close friends, some of which respond eeee, what, there are those who entertain you like that, that means they love you; they don't have a topic to talk about, the term for happiness is that the source is bullying people like that. So, you can laugh, satisfaction is happiness, that's where you are, so you are the source of happiness. Yes, but it's not like that either, blablablablaa, I said, but he can always, uh, assure me that it will be fine and there will be times when it won't be like that, yes, that's a close friend. Then there are also those who say, "How is that possible, don't fight, say, oh, I

feel like I want to join that room to represent your feelings like that," like that. Then there are those who told me to be patient, "be patient" like that, hehe. (SM1:220420: 222-233).

Hid the facts from the family: In fact, the participant really wanted to tell her parents about her experiences at work, especially her mother. However, the participant did not want to add to the burden on her parents, so she always tried to look happy in front of her parents.

From the bottom of my heart, yes, yes, but I'm more thinking about what, for example. If I tell you I'm like this at work, make sure my parents think of it. Never mind things like that, sometimes parents will think about small things. So I always have this principle, it's okay, I'm just tired, what am I, if it's like walking on thorns until I bleed, then I've done it. My parents know that I just walk straight. (RA2:231120: 164-169)

The reaction of the family or close people basically supported the participant morally, for example to fight back and protect herself. However, others did not know that the participant was a victim of bullying at work because the participant hid it from her family.

g. Impact of Workplace Bullying Treatment on participants

Stress, sleep disturbances, headaches, lazy to go work: Based on the participants' statements, they felt the impacts of the bullying treatment they faced, such as stress, sleep disturbances, headaches and laziness to go to the office.

It does happen, from my psychological side, eee I thought about that, you know. So people say that they think until the next day, the next day, the next day. So people say, for example, that's not really me, that's why they keep remembering it and thinking about it becomes stressful, so it's hard to get rid of it. So, I really want to be able to do it, so I'm afraid of revenge, I'm afraid of revenge, it's not allowed, it's not allowed to be like this. But when I think about it, I think about that person all the time, until I can't sleep until my head really hurts, that's when I experienced this. (SM1:220420: 268-274).

The desire to quit or move to other departments: The participants felt uncomfortable working in their current position. They wanted to move to another department or even quit.

If I'm down, I'm tired and the people who work forward only get annoyed at us, to the point that I've ever thought "ah, I just want to resign if I'm like this, why am I just being used here?" I have ever had thoughts like that. (RA1:010520: 99-102).

I do, yes, I really wanted to move to other divisions, from the past until now. (RA2:231120: 332)

Workplace bullying has a disruptive impact on participants, in this case physical symptoms such as sleep problems, headaches, and psychological symptoms such as stress and demotivation at work, and even the desire to quit.

h. Participants' Expectations

The perpetrators stop the bully: Based on the participant's confession, she hopes that the perpetrators will change and make her happy, so that the working environment becomes pleasant.

Yes, there is... I would rather hope that you are an adult, you already have a family. Have you ever thought about how you would feel if your family received the same treatment as me, who was treated like that by you? It's more like praying, right? I hope you change like that. Even though it does take a long time. Actually. (RA2:231120: 371- 375).

Based on the results of the above description, it can be concluded that the participants who are victims of workplace bullying are junior or new employees compared to the perpetrators. They are also less educated than the perpetrators and single. With a higher position and the ability to persuade others to follow their behaviour, the perpetrators are free to perpetrate workplace bullying on the participants. The form of workplace bullying experienced by the participants varies, the most dominant being verbal bullying.

Being a victim of workplace bullying at work has many effects, such as feeling embarrassed, uncomfortable, sad, angry, disgusted with the perpetrator and having your self-esteem undermined, but most do not dare to fight back. Other major effects include eating and sleeping problems, stress, headaches, decreased motivation to work, and even difficulty gaining weight. Despite feeling uncomfortable, participants stayed in their jobs for a variety of reasons, including economic factors, not wanting to upset their parents, and believing that they would get through it. Finally, the participants still hope that the perpetrators will change their behaviour and stop bullying them at work.

Discussion

The participant RA was subjected to bullying treatment by her supervisors and colleagues in the room, which was witnessed by other colleagues. Bullying treatment can

occur in several places such as school environment, workplace, home, playground and various other places (Fithria, 2016). Participant FT experienced bullying treatment from the beginning of her employment when she met her colleagues. The participants said that the supervisors were the main perpetrators who started the bullying behaviour and were then followed by the employees. This makes the victims of bullying feel scared, confused and unable to do their job properly (Frieda, 2012). They can only accept the treatment given to them.

Shaw et al (2013) describe five forms of bullying: verbal, threatening, relational and social. All participants have their own characteristics in terms of the bullying treatments they experience. Participant SM received several bullying treatments, including verbal bullying, such as the subject's personal domain, which is often the subject of public discussion, threatening bullying, where the subject felt intimidated, which resulted in her becoming a place to be bullied, relational bullying, where the subject was excluded in terms of her work, where the subject was ignored by her superiors and her work was given to someone else, and social bullying, where the subject felt harmed by the accusations of false news that her superiors made to everyone about the subject. Participants RA and FT show similarities in the forms of bullying they experienced, namely verbal and social. The verbal bullying experienced by the participants included insults about their status, which at the time was single. A person's marital status is also a factor that influences the occurrence of workplace bullying (Hoel, Zapf, & Cooper, 2003). In the case of social bullying, participants received accusations of false reports from their supervisors. Participant RA received accusations of lies from her supervisors about work that was hindered because the subject had not done the work. Participant FT was accused of lying by her superiors about the products she sold being counterfeit.

The participants could not do much because the perpetrators would treat them even more unpleasantly. The helplessness expressed by the participants as victims is the effect of the power imbalance seen from the organisational hierarchy and also the different treatment experienced by the participants, which naturally disturbs their feelings. Gunawan, Prihanto, & Yuwanto (2009) stated that a sense of disappointment, anger, and annoyance is a form of characteristic of bullying felt by victims. In line with this, the participants felt disappointed, sad, hurt, anxious and humiliated when they were bullied.

Duncan (in Aluedse, 2006) stated that victims of bullying have low self-esteem, low self-confidence, high levels of depression, anxiety and feel unsafe in their environment. This was evident in the three participants who felt anxious and worried when they met with their colleagues when organising an event.

Although the participants are always bullied, they prefer to stay in the company with different factors that influence them. Noviana (2016) in her research stated that victims can survive so far because of the support from family, friends, teachers and believing in themselves to survive, besides they claim they want to make their parents happy, do not want to disappoint their parents or family, so it grows from within them to improve their behaviour, trying to survive. Participant SM sees all the behaviour she is experiencing as a test for her and believes that everything will get better, even if it takes a long time. Participant RA is the backbone of her family and wants to make her parents happy. Participant FT is the first child and also the backbone of her family, and at the time she had a car payment.

The three participants' views of themselves as victims of bullying are similar. According to Brooks (in Rakhmat, 2007), self-concept is a view of an individual's physical and psychological self, where the view comes from experience and interaction with others. In this study, all three participants felt that they did not deserve to be bullied at work.

Yeow (2010) classified the effects of workplace bullying as psychological and physiological. Participants experienced psychological problems because they were constantly reminded of the perpetrator's words, which caused stress, sleep problems and lack of enthusiasm for work, and even thoughts of quitting. Participants had doubts about marrying their partners, felt uncomfortable, lacked confidence, had mood problems and appetite problems. In terms of physiological symptoms, participants had difficulty gaining weight. Participants chose to work from home (WFH) when the opportunity arose, and for them, the opportunity made them more productive and calmer because they did not meet the perpetrators of workplace bullying.

The findings of this study provide a fairly detailed picture of what workplace bullying looks like, what causes it and the impact it has on victims. Overall, the results of this study can be used as a reference for policyholders to implement preventative measures against workplace bullying in order to minimise the negative effects experienced by female

employees in the workplace.

Conclusion

Based on the data analysis of this study, several themes and units of analysis were obtained, including the factors of workplace bullying, there are being a junior employee, lower education background, and unmarried status. Then the perpetrator of workplace bullying is a dominant person and seniors. Forms of workplace bullying include verbal abuse, excessive teasing, and delegation of work that is not their responsibility.

The feelings when getting Workplace Bullying are angry, sad, uncomfortable, embarrassment, and low self esteem. They became more productive when they work from home. The reasons for staying in their jobs are economic needs, not wanting to make their parents sad, and belief that they can go through it. The response of the participants' family and close friends was that friends provided support to fight back, but also hid the situation from the family.

The effects felt by the participants included sleep problems, eating problems, stress, headaches, reduced motivation to go to work, mood problems and some even had difficulty gaining weight. There is also a desire quit or move to other departments. It is hoped that the perpetrators will change their attitudes (stop bullying to make the working environment more pleasant.

Suggestion

The description of the workplace bullying experiences of the three participants in this study can be used as a guide in developing rules and regulations for employees. The company, especially the human resources department, is expected to organise a campaign or socialisation related to the dangers of workplace bullying for the victims and the company.

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