Submission Number: 182
Date Received: 6/7/2012

UniSA | Centre for Applied Psychological Research

School of Psychology, Social Work & Social Policy

Magill Campus
St Bernards Road
Magill SA 5072

Ph. +681 8 8302 4262
Fax +681 8 8302 4242

ABN 37 191 313 308

Parliamentary inquiry submission on workplace bullying and harassment: Results from the Australian Workplace Barometer

Prepared for

The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia

Prepared by

Professor Maureen Dollard, Dr Michelle Tuckey, Tessa Bailey, Dr Sarven McLinton

University of South Australia

Centre for Applied Psychological Research

Date of issue

6 July 2012

Table of Contents

Table of Contents 2

Introduction 6

Prevalence of workplace bullying in Australia 7

Causes of workplace bullying in Australia 11

Prevention and intervention methods 17

Conclusion 20

References 21

Appendix A 23

Appendix B 24

About the authors

Maureen Dollard PhD is Professor of Work and Organisational Psychology and Director of the Centre for Applied Psychological Research and the Work & Stress Research Group at the University of South Australia. She is well known nationally and internationally in the area of occupational stress and has published 2 books and over 100 book chapters and peer reviewed journal articles in the area. She has extensive experience with industry partners nationally, and has won over $2m in grants awarded by the Australian Research Council. Maureen is on Editorial Boards for the international journals Work and Stress (Taylor & Francis), Journal of Organisational Behavior, and the European Journal of Work & Organisational Psychology. She is Co-chair of the International Commission on Occupational Health Scientific Committee Work Organisation and Psychosocial Factors and is the Chair for the next ICOH-WOPS conference to be held Adelaide in 2014. Her ground breaking research is focuses on psychosocial safety climate for psychological health in organisations.

Dr Michelle Tuckey leads novel research into workplace bullying, occupational stress, and psychological injury, which has been published in leading scientific journals. She is a highly productive researcher whose research is held in high esteem by the national and international scientific community. Dr Tuckey tackles important workforce issues in novel ways, using advanced research and statistical methods. Her research has built a picture of different contributing factors across different organisational layers to advance understanding of the causes of bullying and stress at work. She has won research funding of over $0.5 million including an ARC Linkage Grant, given plenary addresses at national conferences, presented in invited symposia at leading international conferences and serves on the editorial boards of the International Journal of Stress Management and Stress and Health. More importantly, Dr Tuckey's research has been translated into policies and practices that protect the psychological health of workers, nationally and internationally, as evidenced by changes within the Norwegian national surveillance system for psychosocial risks at work, South Australian Fire and Emergency Services Commission, SA Country Fire Service, SA State Emergency Service, and NSW Police Force.

Tessa Bailey has completed her Masters in Work and Organisational Psychology and is a registered psychologist. She has worked in the areas of human resource management, injury preventions and injury management within government and the private sector. Tessa's interests in psychosocial safety climate and worker psychological injury prevention have led to her current appointment as a Research Assistant for the Centre for Applied Psychological Research and Manager of the Australian Workplace Barometer project. She is an author of a highly cited paper titled 'National Surveillance of Psychosocial Risk Factors in the Workplace: An International Overview' which examined psychosocial surveillance systems from around the world. Her work on the AWB project has resulted in a number of journal articles, reports and book chapter publications currently in review including co-editor of a book about the Australian Workplace Barometer to be published by Federation Press early in 2013.

Dr Sarven McLinton is a research assistant at the Centre for Applied Psychological Research in the Work & Stress Research Group. His early research consisted of an investigation into the nature of anger at work in both Australia and Japan, and he has promoted interest in cross-cultural research via living and collecting data at an international level. Sarven's expertise lies in research methodology and statistical analysis, earning a First Class honours and an APA scholarship for his PhD entitled 'Interpersonal anger: The theory and measurement of a new psychological construct'. His work has been published and his contributions to the Australian Workplace Barometer project have results in numerous journal articles, book chapters, and reports currently under review.

Executive summary

There is a lack of prevalence data on rates of bullying at work in Australia. Surveillance of working conditions, such as psychosocial risk factors like bullying and harassment, can assist with:

- Gauging the frequency and impact of the issue
- Identifying groups at risk
- Better understanding of casual factors that can direct policy development
- Evaluating effectiveness of prevention and intervention strategies

Prevalence

A precise definition of bullying was used, which required repeated offensive behaviour to the participant over a period of time. Results from a subset of Australian Workplace Barometer data including 3153 participants found:

- 6.8% of respondents experienced bullying in the last six months
- 3.5% experienced bullying for longer than a 6 month period
- Females reported significantly higher levels of bullying
- Females also report experiencing bullying for significantly longer periods of time

These rates are high based on international comparisons that show when the aforementioned definition of bullying is provided it tends to result in rates between 1 to 4%. Hence, Australian workers may be at greater risk of workplace bullying than workers in other countries.

Causes

It is generally recognised that a complex interaction of external, organisational, environmental and individual factors exist in any bullying situation. Results from research conducted by members of the Centre for Applied Psychological Research have found that rates of bullying can be influenced by the following factors:

- Material resources available to workers to do their jobs (Tuckey, Dollard, & Chrisopoulos, 2012)
- Job design factors such as highly demanding work environments where either job control or job support is low (Tuckey, Dollard, Hosking, & Winefield, 2009)
- Psychosocial safety climate, being the shared employee perception of how their organisation values worker mental health, is a leading indicator for occurrence of workplace bullying and acts as a buffer to reduce the impact of bullying on wellbeing (Bond, Tuckey & Dollard, 2010; Law, Dollard, Tuckey & Dormann 2011)

Further analysis of underlying factors also found bullying compensation claims arise from a range of workplace elements, not just bullying behaviour. The results show that we can predict within the next 12

months industry bullying compensation rates by knowing about industry psychosocial risks such as bullying behaviour, gender, harassment, and emotional demands, along with emotional exhaustion levels.

Prevention

Conducting psychosocial risk assessments to determine levels of work stress is quickly being recognised as an essential part of the process in addressing psychosocial hazards at work such as workplace bullying. This is evident in surveillance methods being incorporated into government policy and organisational practice around the world (Leka, Cox, & Zwetsloot, 2008; Leka, Jain, Cox, & Kortum, 2011).

Regular working population surveillance on psychosocial factors provides a range of benefits such as:

- identifying groups at risk (industry, occupation, age, gender, state)
- detecting patterns and trends over time
- examining predictors and leading indicators that significantly influence changes in levels of risk (such as bullying and harassment) as well as health and productivity outcomes
- baseline measures to evaluate the effectiveness of any interventions

Intervention

Researchers at the Centre for Applied Psychological Research have also developed a psychosocial safety climate hierarchy of control as a practical means for organisations to address psychosocial risks and hazards such as bullying and harassment. This model prioritises organisational workplace policy and procedure as the basis for intervention where implementation methods for injury prevention and management are described in detail. An example of utilising this for bullying and harassment in specific is provided in Appendix B. The importance of leadership, job design and organisational communication is also addressed within this hierarchy.

Conclusion

Our research has revealed that risk factors for bullying exist at many levels, and claims arise for numerous reasons, not just due to bullying behaviour. Psychosocial safety climate acts as a leading indicator and also buffers the impact of bullying on worker wellbeing. Ongoing surveillance allows for identifying groups at risk, which can guide policy at the state and federal levels, and can be used to examine the effectiveness of interventions. Ongoing data collection is essential to monitor changes and trends over time and to provide longitudinal data which will elucidate the existence of causal factors contributing to workplace bullying in Australia.

Introduction

Bullying in the workplace is increasingly receiving attention in Australia and around the world. Many different definitions of what actually constitutes bullying exist and a wide range of approaches have been developed to address this issue. Although there is variation in the conceptualization of bullying at work, the key elements are power imbalance, harm to the target, and repetition / continuation over time (see Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, & Cooper, 2003).

In Australia a variety of issues in addressing bullying at work have been identified such as problems with enforcing codes of practice, witness fear of victimization, issues with the law, and inadequate resources and training (Johnstone, Quinlan, & McNamara, 2011). There is also a notable lack of data on rates of workplace bullying in Australia due to there being limited methods to assess its prevalence such as compensation rates, which are a lag indicator and do not reflect the current status in the workplace. Collecting prevalence information is essential in the effort to reduce bullying in order to:

- Gauge frequency of incidents occurring and the impact on workers
- Provide baseline data against which interventions can be evaluated for effectiveness.
- Provide evidence based data for the development of policies and codes of practice
- Direct the focus of resources and prevention campaigns

The following report will provide information relevant to addressing the issue of workplace bullying in Australia through:

- Presentation of current prevalence data on bullying and harassment at work across Australia
- Exploration of workplace factors that contribute to bullying rates
- An overview of best practice prevention and intervention methods to address workplace bullying and harassment at the national, state, organisational and individual levels.

Prevalence of workplace bullying in Australia

Australian Workplace Barometer

Workplace bullying research has been fragmented within Australia, primarily consisting of a handful of single studies. There are few identifiable programs of research on this important psychosocial risk factor within Australia.

The **Australian Workplace Barometer (AWB)** was developed to provide science-driven evidence of Australian work conditions and their relationships to workplace health and productivity. The AWB is a surveillance system that monitors and benchmarks psychosocial risk factors, including job demands, control, support and resources as well as productivity and health outcomes in Australian workplaces.

The Australian Workplace Barometer tool is the result of jointly funded projects supported by:

- Australian Research Council (ARC) Discovery Grant: Working wounded or engaged? Australian work conditions and consequences through the lens of the Job Demands-Resources Model.
- ARC Linkage Grant: State, organisational, and team interventions to build psychosocial safety climate using the Australian Workplace Barometer and the StressCafé
- SafeWork SA
- Safe Work Australia

The project also involves the collaboration of industry experts and academics from across Australia and international institutions as follows:

- Professor Maureen Dollard (Lead CI) & Professor Anthony Winefield from Centre for Applied Psychological Research, University of South Australia, Australia
- Associate Professor Tony LaMontagne from University of Melbourne, Australia
- Associate Professor Anne Taylor & Dr Tiffany Gill from Adelaide University, Australia
- Professor Arnold Bakker from Erasmus University Rotterdam, The Netherlands
- Cameron Mustard & Peter Smith from Institute for Work and Health, Toronto, Canada
- Professor Christian Dormann from Mainz University, Germany

The Australian Workplace Barometer is unique in being able to provide representative national data for Australian workers regarding workplace bullying and other psychosocial factors at work. The beauty of the AWB data set is that data is collected at the population level. In this way access is gained to all Australian workers. Research on very sensitive issues like bullying is often thwarted by organisational hierarchies too concerned about the impact of the research for their reputation; as well ethics committees require permission from organisations to interview members. Therefore there is a lot of gatekeeping of information at the organisational level. Public health approaches, involving interview representative samples of the public give a better more representative sample of the working population, than when data is collected via organisations. This is a particularly important consideration when considering prevalence of bullying, hotspots for bullying, and prevention targets.

Prevalence rates of workplace bullying in Australia

The Australian Workplace Barometer tool was developed at the Centre for Applied Psychological Research (CAPR) located at the University of South Australia (Dollard et al., 2009). A subset sample from the data collected representing a cross section from 2010 and 2011 of 3513 workers over the age of 18 across six Australian states and territories (NSW, SA, WA, TAS, ACT, and NT) was analysed for prevalence of bullying and harassment rates. This cross sectional cohort was selected to minimise differences is responses that could be due changes outside of the project such as global financial crisis.

In line with the core elements of bullying in the workplace, the definition of bullying was provided to participants as follows:

"To label something, as bullying, the offensive behaviour has to occur repeatedly over a period of time, and the person confronted has to experience difficulties defending him or herself. The behaviour is not bullying if two parties of approximate equal 'strength' are in conflict or the incident is an isolated event" (Dallner et al., 2000).

Based on this definition results from this cross-section subset of AWB data is as follows:

- 6.8% of respondents experienced bullying in the last six months
- 3.5% experienced bullying for longer than a 6 month period
- Females reported significantly higher levels of bullying
- Females also report experiencing bullying for significantly longer periods of time.

International comparisons

Due to the many varying definitions and methods for collecting prevalence data on bullying rates around the world making accurate comparisons can be problematic. In an overview of a range of international papers reporting bullying data Zapf, Einarson, Hoel, and Vartia (2003) found that when participants are presented with a precise definition, similar to that in the AWB, this tends to result in prevalence rates of 1 to 4% They also discovered that when studies ask more general questions such as 'have you been bullied during the last 6 months' without providing a precise definition it results in much higher rates between 10 to 25% of the sample population.

Since the results from the AWB found 6.8% or respondents stated that they had been bullying in the past six months based on a very specific definition it would suggest that prevalence rates in Australia are higher than the 1 to 4 % that is generally expected in studies when participants are provided with a precise definition.

Hence, Australian workers may be at greater risk of workplace bullying than workers in other countries.

Nature of bullying

In addition to responding to a definition of bullying, workers also provided information on the specific bullying behaviours they had been exposed to at work. This information is shown in Figure 1 below. While exposure to a single type of behavior may not constitute bullying, it is important to understand the nature of negative behavior to which Australian workers are exposed, which may inform precise aspects of prevention and intervention as well as legislation, policies, and codes of practice. As shown, the most frequent was being sworn or yelled at (33.8%) followed by being humiliated in front of others (22.8%) and experiencing discomfort due to sexual humour (19.12%).

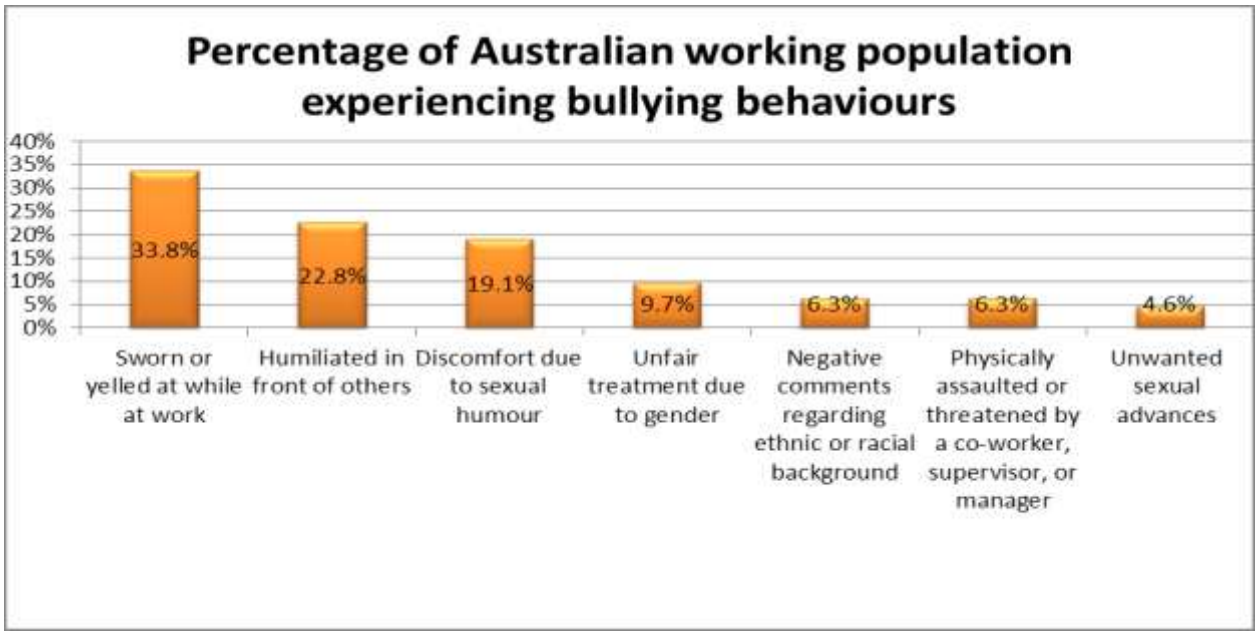


Figure 1.

Results also showed that females experience significantly more unwanted sexual advances, more humiliation, and more unfair treatment due to gender than men. Alternatively men significantly higher levels of physical violence or threats, and being yelled at and sworn at more frequently than women.

The prevalence of industry based workplace bullying in Australia

As well as prevalence data for the nation, the Australian Workplace Barometer tool provides data on the prevalence rates across different industries, as shown below in Table 1. The industries in which the highest rates of bullying were reported include Health and community service, Education and Transport and storage. In addition, there is variation within industries across the different states of Australia. Such variation is important to note and suggests that intervention needs to be targeted to risky industries identified at a state level. Stated based interventions should focus on reducing bullying in industries that show high risk only within that state. Whereas national campaigns could address bullying in industries the show high risk across multiple states and territories such as Health and community services, education and government administration/defence , three industries that display consistently high rates of bullying across states (as defined by minimum of 5% in every state and territory).

Table 1. *Rate of bullying victimisation by industry and state*

		Individual States					
	Australia (*N* = 4214)	NSW (*N* = 1074)	WA (*N* = 1156)	SA (*N* = 1143)	ACT (*N* = 255)	TAS (*N* = 416)	NT (*N* = 170)
Health and community services	13.9%	15.8%	12.5%	12.6%	7.1%	14.0%	31.3%
Education	10.7%	9.0%	13.2%	8.4%	5.9%	13.4%	15.8%
Transport and storage	8.6%	3.8%	13.5%	10.0%	0%	0%	12.5%
Government administration/defence	8.4%	5.5%	13.4%	6.8%	7.0%	12.2%	10.3%
Personal and other services	8.2%	10.1%	8.1%	6.4%	13.3%	0%	14.3%
Construction	7.7%	11.1%	7.2%	3.5%	0%	18.8%	11.1%
Electricity, gas and water supply	6.9%	13.8%	0%	8.3%	0%	0%	28.6%
Property and business services	6.7%	5.9%	5.9%	10.2%	0%	0%	0%
Cultural and recreational services	6.4%	7.1%	5.3%	0%	0%	11.1%	25.0%
Retail trade	5.6%	7.7%	5.9%	3.8%	5.9%	5.3%	0%
Finance and insurance	5.5%	6.3%	2.9%	6.7%	0%	7.1%	0%
Mining	5.3%	4.5%	6.1%	0%	0%	11.1%	0%
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	5.1%	2.5%	7.1%	3.2%	16.7%	0%	25.0%
Manufacturing	4.8%	6.3%	3.8%	5.2%	0%	3.3%	0%
Wholesale trade	3.2%	6.7%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Communications services	3.1%	2.5%	0%	2.6%	0%	14.3%	20.0%
Accommodation, cafes and restaurants	1.6%	0%	0%	0%	20.0%	7.1%	0%

Causes of workplace bullying in Australia

It is generally recognized that workplace bullying occurs as a result of a combination of external, organizational, environmental and individual factors. Research into each of these aspects has contributed to the understanding of some of the key factors that promote or prevent bullying at work.

At the Centre for Applied Psychological Research, our program of research on workplace bullying has concentrated on job design and work environment factors. These factors are modifiable and our research has revealed important insights into the origins of workplace bullying, at different layers within organisations. While we have discovered these causal factors in our research, in many cases their important role in has since been confirmed in overseas studies. This research has resulted in of a Psychosocial Safety Climate Hierarchy of control (See Figure 3 and Appendix B)to address psychosocial risks and hazards such as bullying and harassment that prioritises upstream aspects which have the largest impact on reducing risk.

The first layer of potential causes lies in the material resources available to workers to do their jobs. Survey data collected by Tuckey, Dollard, and Chrisopoulos (2012) showed that under-resourcing for particular role-specific tasks increased the likelihood that police Constables (N = 368) and Sergeants (N = 348) were exposed to harassment at work, irrespective of how demanding the task was perceived to be.

Second, our study with police officers also revealed important information on the link between stable job design factors and bullying – both individual exposure and that witnessed (Tuckey et al., 2009). The results showed that bullying was more likely to occur in a highly demanding work environment where either job control or job support is low, confirmed by individual targets of bullying and witnesses. See Appendix A for a graphic representation.

Finally, the organisational climate plays an important role, and functions as a leading indicator for the other two layers (job design and material resources, described above). Representative data from 220 employees across South Australia, from within the Australian Workplace Barometer database, was published by Law and colleagues (2011). The workers represented 30 different organisations, with a measure of climate derived at this organisational level. The quintessential climate of interest, psychosocial safety climate, which is a facet-specific component of organizational climate that supports the psychological well-being of workers was hypothesized as an antecedent to the development of psychologically safe work environments, work cultures, and working conditions (Dollard & Bakker, 2010). The theoretical model of PSC extends the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory (Demerouti, Nachreiner, Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2001), which builds on earlier work stress models such as the Demand-Control model (Karasek, 1979).

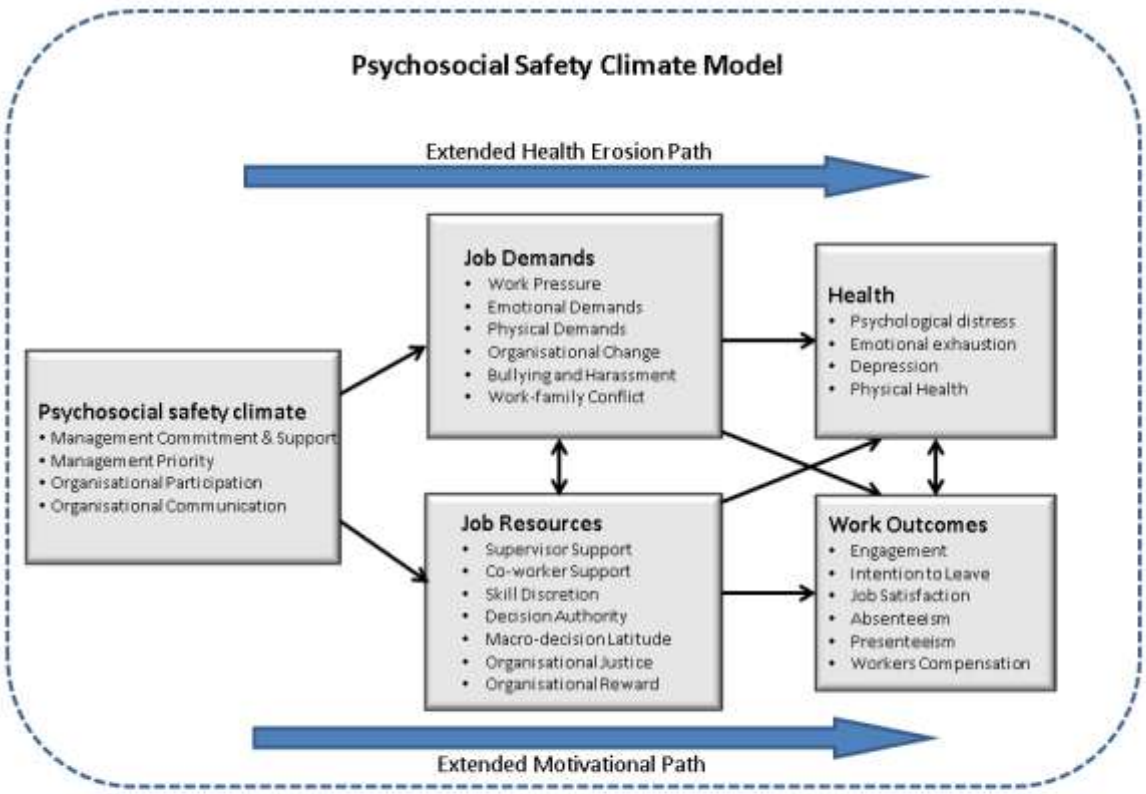


Figure 2.

Specifically, psychosocial safety climate assessed at the organisational level predicted levels of bullying faced by the workers, which flowed through to poor mental health outcomes (emotional exhaustion and psychological distress). As well, the results show that the relationship between bullying and harassment with poor health outcomes (exhaustion and distress) is significantly reduced when there are high levels of PSC. The researchers concluded that psychosocial safety climate was the leading indicator for workplace bullying. The PSC-12 tool to measure psychosocial safety climate has been recognised and published internationally

Similarly, Bond, Tuckey, and Dollard (2010) found that psychosocial safety climate assessed at the organizational level was related to the occurrence of workplace bullying (i.e., a prevention role) and also moderated the impact of bullying on posttraumatic stress symptoms (i.e., harm minimisation). It's important to note that in both of these studies, the results are independent of any one worker because the measure of psychosocial safety climate comes from many workers within each organisation (or team).

Hence, a climate that values psychological health and safety, with managers who are committed to prioritising employee health and wellbeing above productivity outcomes may be the best leading indicator, or determinant, of bullying at work. Essentially, a strong psychosocial safety climate in which workers feel supported and see that their psychological wellbeing is valued may:

- Prevent levels of bullying
- Better equip workers to cope with bullying when it does occur in the workplace

Overall, findings from the Centre for Applied Psychological Research suggest that bullying and harassment may have its genesis in a poor climate for psychosocial health and safety. The flow-on effects of such a climate are likely to be elevated demands in combination with lack of psychological resources (such as job control and social support) as well as a lack of material resources (i.e., budget, time, people, equipment, and training) at the micro level. Together, these findings highlight the importance of first addressing the organisational climate specifically in terms of psychological safety, as well as job demand and resource variables unique to different organizational settings.

Underlying factors in worker compensation claims for bullying and harassment

Much interest in bullying is driven by workers compensation claims. But these are lag indicators of the problem. A question for this report to determine is whether the workers compensation rates for bullying as recorded by Safework Australia could be predicted in advance by knowing about worker perceptions of bullying and other risks at work. Graph 1 shows that rates of bullying [1]within industries in 2009 as determined by the AWB data. Graph 2 shows the rates of workers compensation claims for bullying by industry as reported by Safework Australia. As can be seen from the graphs there is not a direct translation of bullying risk into bullying workers compensation claims. For example even though Government administration and defence have the highest levels of bullying compensation claims workers from that industry do not report the highest rates of bullying.

Nevertheless there is a correlation between risks identified by the AWB and compensation rates by industry. Table 2 shows the correlations[2] between self-reported work conditions, psychological health and engagement (AWB) assessed in 2009, with workers compensation claims for bullying rates by industry reported by Safework in the period 2009-2010. A positive relationship shows that as the factor increases so too does the compensation rates for the industry. As shown in Table 2 the relationship between bullying risk and claims is moderately strong (r = .42); that is about 18% of the variance in claims rates is due to bullying.

[1] The bullying rate is calculated by the number of individuals bullied divided by the number of people in that industry to create a percentage that tells us, for example, 14.5% of workers in accommodation, cafes and restaurants in the AWB data report being victims of bullying in the last six months

[2] We used a Spearman Correlation non-parametric test because of the small number of industries; we used a one tailed significance test since the proposed relationships are directional. Values may range from -1 to +1. A value of 1 signifies a 100% concordance.

Table 2. *Bivariate Correlations: Relationship between Self-reported Psychosocial Risks in AWB data aggregated to the Industry Level, and Bullying Claim Rates per industry recorded by Safework*

Psychosocial Risk Factors (AWB)	Bullying Claim Rates (Safework)
1. Emotional demands	.60**
2. Emotional Exhaustion	.54*
3. Senior management is committed to supporting stress prevention †	-.50*
4. Physical demands	-.48*
5. Macro-Decision Latitude	-.48*
6. Senior management acts decisively to aid concerns for an employee's psychological condition †	-.46*
7. Threats of Physical Assault (Harassment)	.45*
8. Senior management acts quickly to correct psychological health hazards †	-.44*
9. Depression	.42*

† Psychosocial Safety Climate (PSC): Subscale for Management Commitment (3 items)

Note: *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$. $N = 17$ industries. Data comes from latest Safework claim rates from 2009-2010 and Time One data from the AWB (commencing from 2009).

There are a number of other workplace risk factors that could account for the bullying claim rates. In particular we found a significant positive relationship between a range of factors assessed at the industry level and workers compensation claims rates within the industry. These risk factors are worker self-reports of bullying, harassment due to unwanted sexual advances, unfair treatment due to gender, emotional demands, and emotional exhaustion. Further bullying compensation is less likely to occur in industries characterised by physical demands, and where being sworn and yelled at is most frequent (these latter results seem a bit counterintuitive but may represent industry characteristics rather than causes).

There are a number of factors that are not significant but show sizable positive effects i.e. if the industry numbers were greater a significant relation would probably be seen. Industries characterised with higher levels of self-reported physical threat, work pressure, more serious bullying, greater levels of engagement (dedication and absorption) and rewards, show higher the rates of bullying workers compensation claims.

In sum, bullying compensation claims arise from a number of workplace factors, not just bullying. An important point about these results is that we can predict within the next 12 months, industry bullying compensation rates by knowing about industry psychosocial risks such as bullying, gender harassment, and emotional demands, along with emotional exhaustion levels, assessed by reports from workers.

The following two graphs (Figure 1 and Figure 2) indicate the rates of bullying in the AWB data compared with the rate of claims from Safework data. It is evident that the industry patterns between the two do not map exactly, indicating that bullying and harassment claims may not be made simply based on whether a worker is bullied or not. Other variables may be operational for determining claims for bullying and harassment.

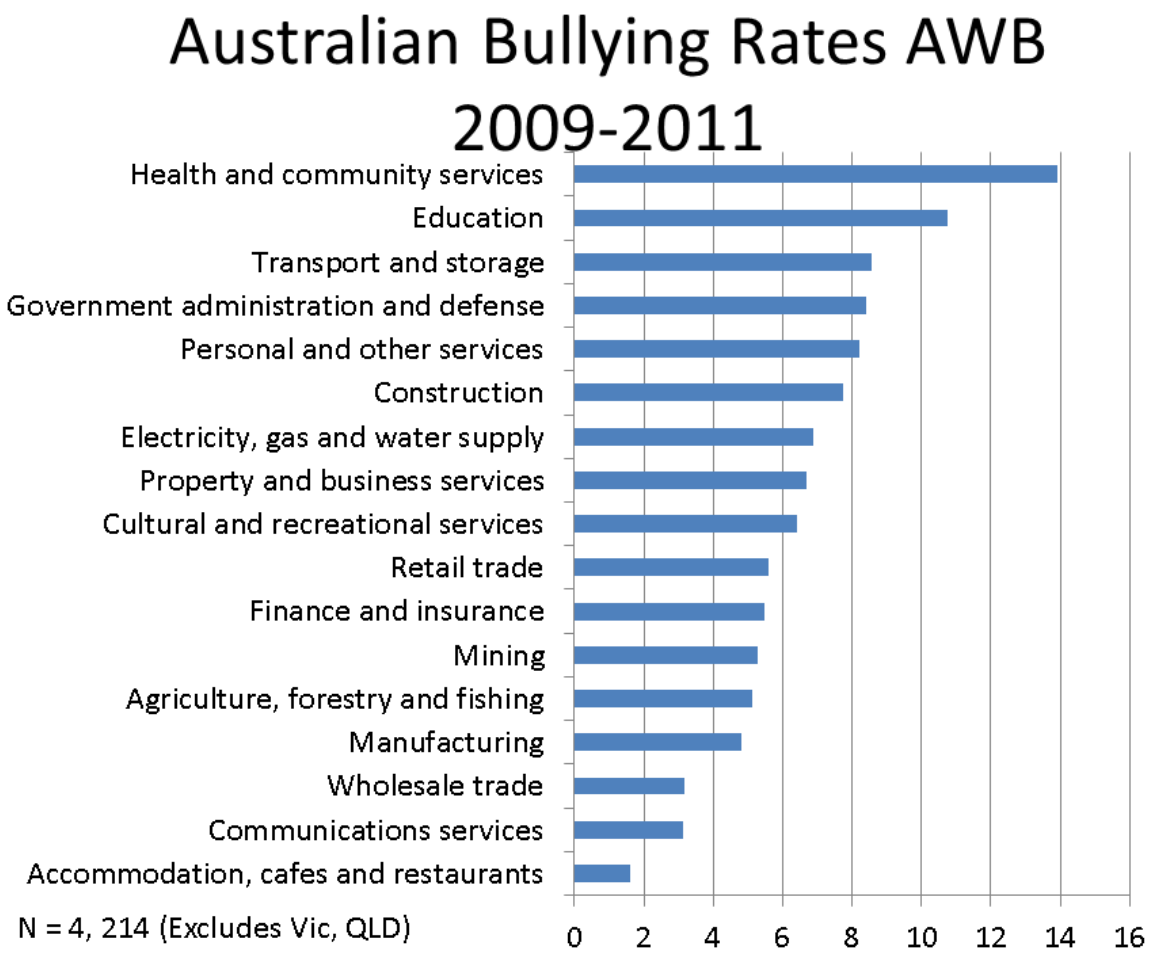


Figure 3.

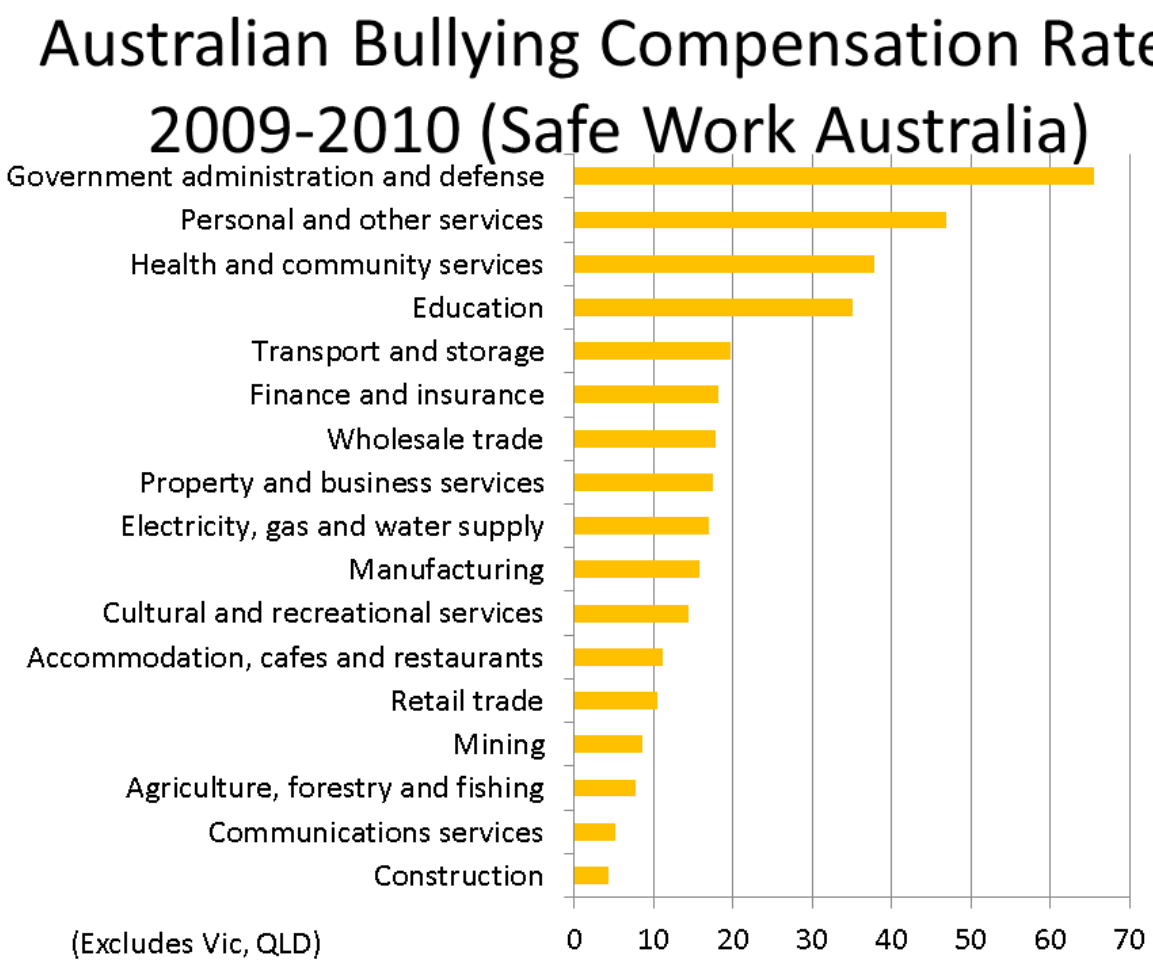

Australian Bullying Compensation Rates 2009-2010 (Safe Work Australia)
Government administration and defense
Personal and other services
Health and community services
Education
Transport and storage
Finance and insurance
Wholesale trade
Property and business services
Electricity, gas and water supply
Manufacturing
Cultural and recreational services
Accommodation, cafes and restaurants
Retail trade
Mining
Agriculture, forestry and fishing
Communications services
Construction
(Excludes Vic, QLD)
0
10
20
30
40
50
60
70

Figure 4.

Prevention and intervention methods

Conducting psychosocial risk assessments to determine levels of work stress is a relatively new concept, particularly in Australia, that is quickly being recognised as an essential part of the process in addressing psychosocial risks and hazards at work such as workplace bullying. This is evident in surveillance methods being incorporated into government policy and organisational practice around the world (Leka et al., 2008; Leka et al., 2011).

Regular working population surveillance on psychosocial factors provides a range of benefits such as:

- identifying groups at risk (industry, occupation, age, gender, state)
- detecting patterns and trends over time
- examining predictors and leading indicators that significantly influence changes in levels of risk (such as bullying and harassment) as well as health and productivity outcomes
- baseline measures to evaluate the effectiveness of any interventions.

An essential component of any prevention or intervention process requires management and organisation commitment. A range of Australian based research exists to support the important role of leaders in the workplace when implementing methods that promote employee health and wellbeing (Cotton, 2008). In a review conducted by LaMontagne, Keegel, Louie, Ostry and Landsbergis (2007) covering over 90 published journals on the effectiveness of job stress interventions, it was revealed that whole system approaches, which included both individual and organisational level interventions, were the most effective in reducing employee stress symptoms (LaMontagne et al., 2007)

In order to provide a practical means for employers to address psychosocial risks and hazards Bailey, Richards, and Dollard (2012) developed a PSC hierarchy of controls for psychosocial risks in the workplace to guide the development of prevention and intervention strategies. This hierarchy of controls is centred around psychosocial safety climate, introduced earlier.

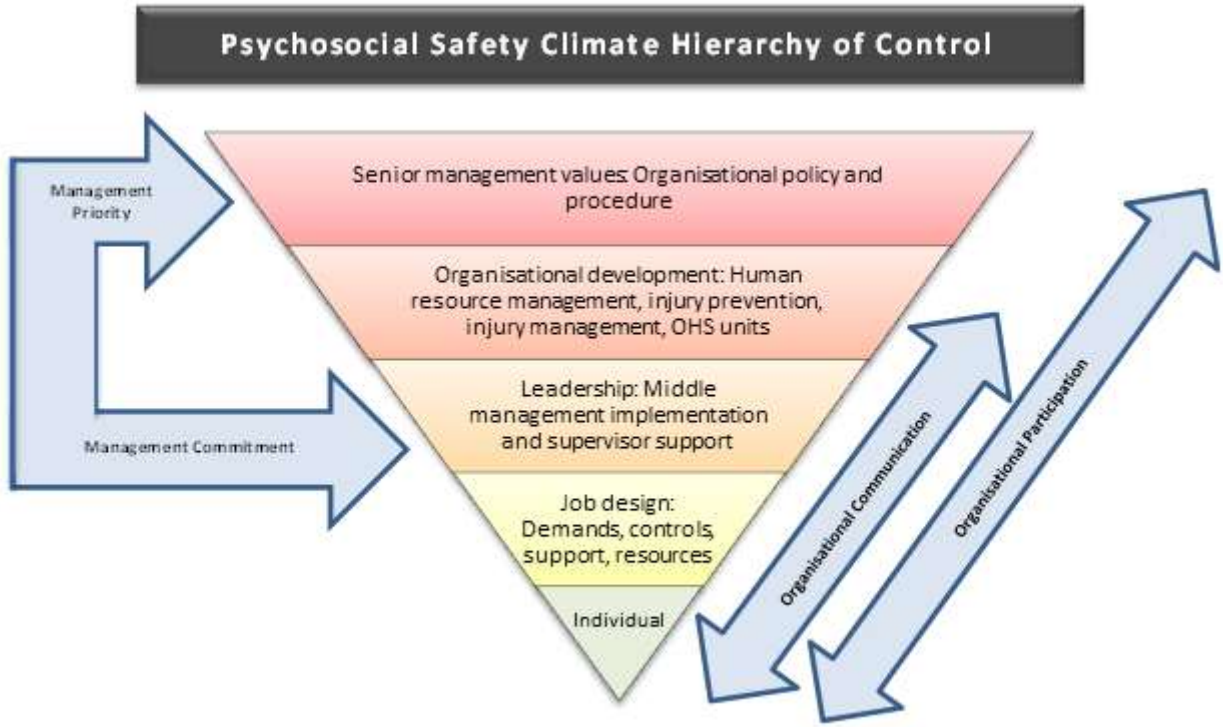


Figure 3. PSC Hiearchy of Control (from Bailey, Richards and Dollard, 2012)

Level 1, (organisational workplace policy and procedure) involves the development of policies and procedures that specifically and clearly incorporate best practice principles to promote worker physical and psychological wellbeing. This would include systems for prevention, risk assessment, and risk management for psychosocial factors. It would also include best practice principles for injury management and return to work processes.

Level 2, (implementation of procedures by human resource management, injury preventions, injury management, organisational development, and OHS units) stipulates that specific divisions within an organisation are responsible for enacting organisational policies and procedures to promote worker psychological safety and wellbeing. Further, representatives within these roles should be encouraged to act as change ambassadors and to include practices to prevent psychological harm and promote wellbeing such as psychosocial risk assessments, incident reports and actions, injury prevention interventions, health and wellbeing programs, OHS committees, and OHS representatives. Awareness of OHS practices such as seminars and training provided on psychosocial topics, support programs for injured workers, and return to work processes should also be promoted throughout all levels of the organisation.

Level 3, (manager, supervisor, team leader actions, and support) relates to a leadership culture that values employee health and wellbeing equal to, or above, productivity. Leaders play a direct role in creating a psychologically safe and positive working environment. Action at this level would include promoting and role modelling appropriate workplace behaviour (e.g. no bullying/harassment), early identification of psychosocial risk, and addressing issues in an appropriate and timely manner. Leaders also need to provide a clear pathway for feedback from workers so that employees feel they can communicate their concerns

regarding psychological health and wellbeing where their concerns are taken seriously and they are free from repercussions.

Level 4*, (job design: demands, controls, resources, support)* involves the promotion of worker psychological health and employee wellbeing when setting workloads by providing adequate resources including consideration of work pace, flexible working hours where possible, appropriate skill discretion, ability to be included in decision making processes where possible, as well as opportunities for learning, training and career development. Forms of support can include team building, opportunity for debriefing, positive and constructive criticism, and supportive social interactions.

Level 5, (individual factors) involves addressing the specific characteristics of each individual worker, such as personality factors, adverse emotional reactions to work (depression, anxiety), self-care, resilience, and coping strategies. Methods for addressing such factors may include career matching, resilience training, and increased accessibility to, and awareness of, Employee Assistance Programs.

To effectively use the organisational PSC hierarchy of control as part of a comprehensive prevention and/or intervention program, it is important to address each risk at all levels of the hierarchy, starting at the top and working down. For an example of the PSC hierarchy of control being applied if bullying has been identified as a high risk based on a psychosocial risk assessment see Appendix B.

PSC theory also states that it essential to address high risk levels for PSC before any other interventions are implemented as research shows that psychosocial risk interventions are more likely to succeed in organisations where levels of PSC are higher (Dollard, 2012).

Conclusion

Workplace bullying is a severe psychosocial hazard at work. Data from the Australian Workplace Barometer, generated by the Centre for Psychological Research, UniSA, reveals that Australian workers may be at greater risk of exposure to this hazard compared with workers in other countries. It is imperative therefore that effort is made to eliminate, control, and manage it.

Our research has revealed that risk factors for bullying exist at many layers, such as the material resources given to workers to undertake their work roles, stable job design factors (job demands and control and support resources) and, most importantly, the psychosocial safety climate.

In terms of direct costs, bullying compensation claims arise from a number of workplace factors (harassment, work pressure), not just bullying. There may also be other factors that moderate a perfect relationship between bullying risk and claims (e.g. stigma, fear, stoicism). The results show that costly workers compensation claims could be prevented by using national surveillance tools like the Australian Workplace Barometer to assess upstream or leading indicators of psychosocial risk factors for bullying, to give every possibility for prevention. Targeting these risk factors within the identified high risk industries should reduce the rate of workers compensation claims.

The AWB data contains information that could further be analysed to illuminate bullying hot spots (by occupation, state, work type—e.g. job security, part-time, casual etc). Further data collection from all Australian states (currently excludes Vic and QLD) is required to ensure truly national representation, and to provide timely information regarding Australian working conditions. Ongoing data collection is required to monitor changes and improvement s overtime in the national data set.

References

Bailey, T. S., Richards, P. M., & Dollard, M. F. (2012). *National standards for Psychosocial Safety Climate (PSC): Benchmarking a lead indicator of employee job strain and new depression for practical OHS tool development.* World Health Organisation (WHO), in review.

Bond, S. A., Tuckey, M. R., & Dollard, M. F. (2010). Psychosocial safety climate, workplace bullying, and symptoms of posttraumatic stress. *Organization Development Journal, 28,* 37-56.

Cotton, P., & Hart, P. M. (2003). Occupational wellbeing and performance: A review of organizational health research. *Australian Psychologist*, *38*, 118–27.

Dallner, M., Elo, A. L., Gamberale, F., Hottinen, V., Knardahl, S., Skogstad, A., . . . Lindström, K. (2000). *Validation of the General Nordic Questionnaire (QPSNordic) for psychological and social factors at work.* Copenhagen: Nordic Council of Ministers.

Demerouti, E., Nachreiner, F., Bakker, A. B., & Schaufeli, W. B. (2001). The Job Demands-Resources model of burnout. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 86,* 499-512.

Dollard, M. F. (2012). Psychosocial safety climate: A lead indicator of work conditions, workplace psychological health and engagement and precursor to intervention success. In C. Biron, M. Karanika-Murray, & C. L. Cooper (Eds.), *Managing psychosocial risks in the workplace: The role of process issues* (in Press). Psychology Press.

Dollard, M. F., & Bakker, A. B. (2010). Psychosocial safety climate as a precursor to conducive work environments, psychological health problems, and employee engagement. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology, 83,* 579-599.

Dollard, M. F., Hall, G., LaMontagne, A. D., Taylor, A. W., Winefield, A. H., & Smith, P. (2009). *Australian Workplace Barometer (AWBQ2009).* Adelaide, Australia: University of South Australia, Centre for Applied Psychological Research.

Einarsen, S., Hoel, H., Zapf D., & Cooper, C.L. (2003). The concept of bullying at work: The European tradition. In S. Einarsen, H. Hoel, D. Zapf, & C. L. Cooper (Eds.), *Bullying and emotional abuse in the workplace* (pp. 3-30). London: Taylor & Francis.

Johnstone, R., Quinlan, M., & McNamara, M. (2011). OHS inspectors and psychosocial risk factors: Evidence from Australia. *Safety Science, 49,* 547-557.

Karasek, R. A. (1979). Job demands, job decision latitude, and mental strain: Implications for job redesign. *Administration Science Quarterly, 224*, 285-307.

LaMontagne, A. D., Keegel, T., Louie, A. M., Ostry, A., & Landsbergis, P. A. (2007). A systematic review of the job-stress intervention evaluation literature, 1990-2005. *International Journal of Environmental Health, 13*(3), 268–280.

Law, R., Dollard, M. F., Tuckey, M. R., & Dormann, C. (2011). Psychosocial safety climate as a lead indicator of workplace bullying and harassment, job resources, psychological health and employee engagement. *Accident Analysis and Prevention, 43*(5), 1782-1793.

Leka, S., Cox, T., & Zwetsloot, G. (2008). The European framework for psychosocial risk management (PRIMA-EF). In S. Leka, & T. Cox (Eds), *The European Framework for Psychosocial Risk Management* (pp. 1-16). Nottingham: I-WHO.

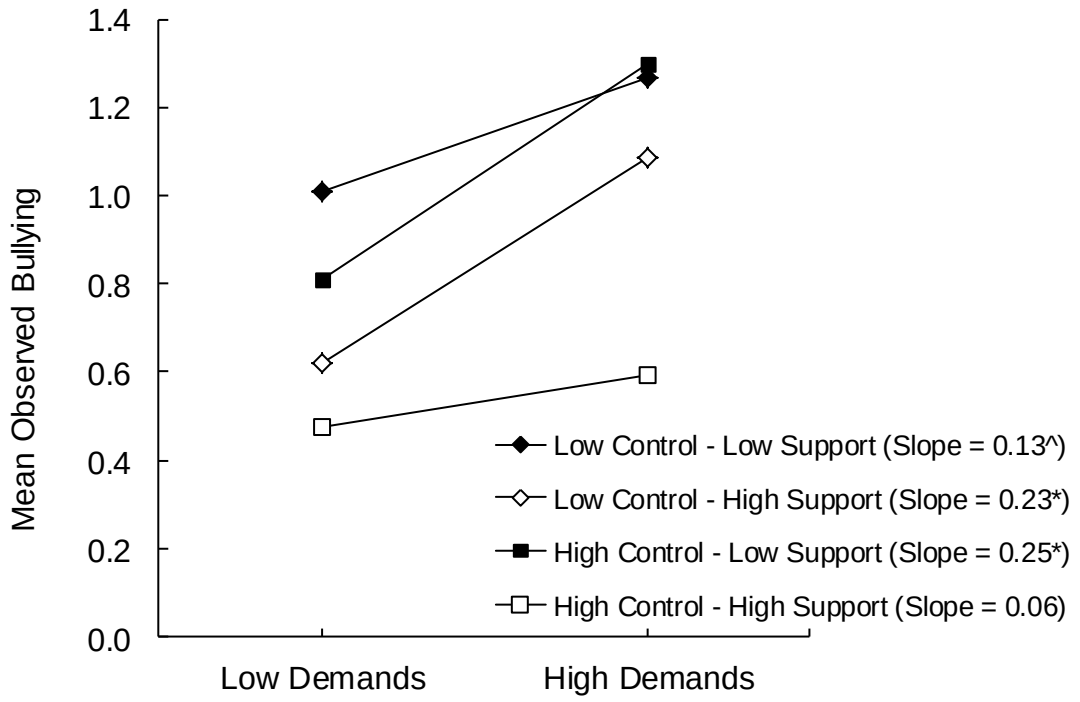
Leka, S., Jain, A., Cox, T., & Kortum, E. (2011). The development of the European framework for psychosocial risk management: PRIMA-EF. *Journal of Occupational Health, 53,* 137-143.

Tuckey, M. R., Dollard, M. F., & Chrisopoulos, S. (2012). Job demands, resource deficiencies, and workplace harassment: Evidence for micro level effects. *International Journal of Stress Management,* in Press.

Tuckey, M. R., Dollard, M. F., Hosking, P. J., & Winefield, A. H. (2009). Workplace bullying: The role of psychosocial work environment factors. *International Journal of Stress Management, 16,* 215-232.

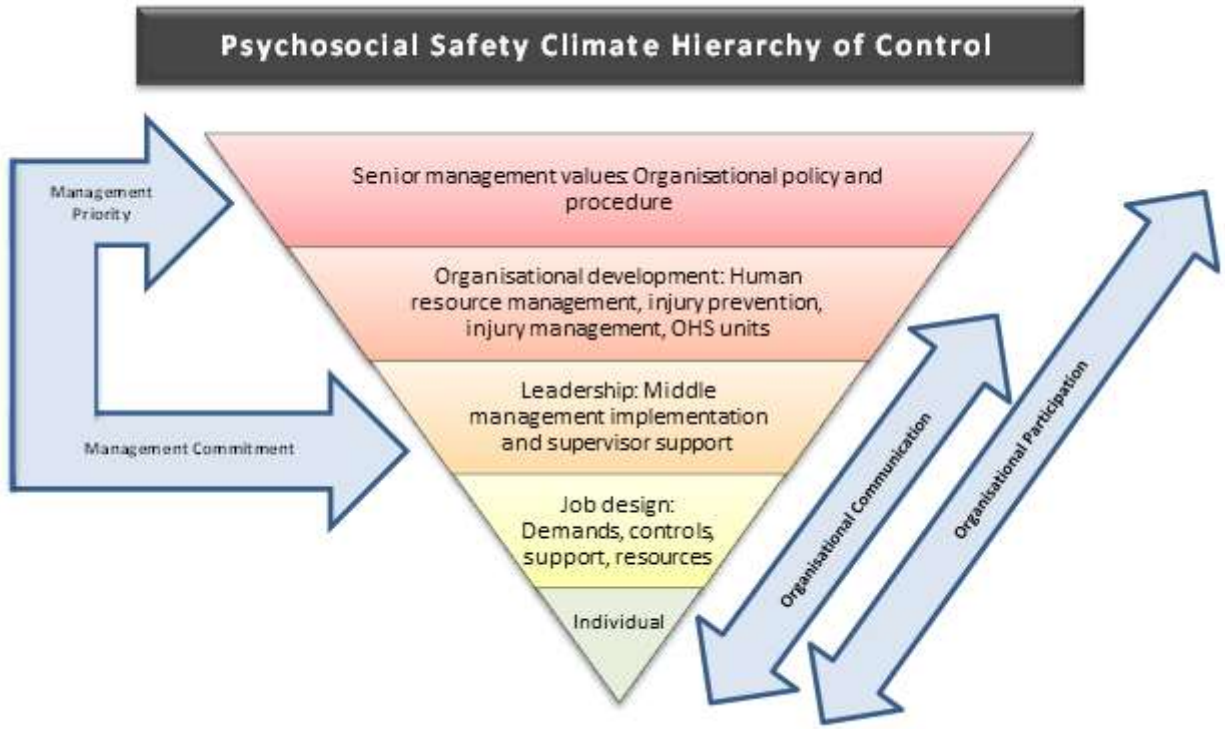
Zapf, D., Einarsen, S., Hoel, H., & Vartia, M. (2003). Empirical findings on bullying in the workplace. In S. Einarsen, H. Hoel, D. Zapf, & C. L. Cooper (Eds.), *Bullying and emotional abuse in the workplace: International perspectives in research and practice* (pp. 103–126). London: Taylor & Francis.

Appendix A



Source: Tuckey, M.R., Dollard, M.F., Hosking, P.J., & Winefield, A.H. (2009). Workplace bullying: The role of psychosocial work environment factors. *International Journal of Stress Management, 16*, 215-232.

Appendix B



The following demonstrates use of the PSC Hierarchy of control to address high risk bullying and harassment in a workplace.

Level 1:

- Do existing organisational policies promote work environment free from bullying and harassment?
- Are there clear procedures for identifying and managing bullying?
- Are there clear procedures for implementing policy and communicating it to employees?
- Is it clear that bullying behaviour will not be tolerated, and action will be swift if it occurs?

Level 2:

- Are appropriate workplace behaviours made clear at induction?
- Are all employees fully aware of organisational bullying and harassment policies?
- What methods are used to determine that each employee understands the policy and procedure requirements?
- Would employees benefit from further awareness training or campaigns?
- Is there a system to identify bullying such as an employee survey?
- Are there clear methods for employees to report bullying and are these reports appropriately managed?

Level 3

- Are the leaders promoting and supporting positive working relationships?
- Are leaders role modelling appropriate behaviours?
- Are leaders appropriately trained in identifying and managing bullying and harassment?

Level 4

- Is job design contributing to creating an environment that fosters bullying and harassment?
- Do the reward systems encourage negative workplace behaviours?
- Are there excessive levels of job strain (high demand, low control), which have been linked to bullying and harassment in the workplace?

Level 5

- Are individuals aware of and/or utilising available support services such as EAP?
- Are individuals using the appropriate processes to report harassment and bullying behaviours?
- Are individuals behaving appropriately at work?