

**THE ANTECEDENTS AND IMPLICATIONS OF WORKPLACE BULLYING: A
BOUNDED EMOTIONALITY ANALYSIS**

Michael Sheehan
Lecturer
School of Management
Griffith University
Nathan, Queensland, 4111
Australia

Telephone number: 61 7 3875 7456
Facsimile number: 61 7 3875 3887

And

Peter J. Jordan
Lecturer
School of Management
Griffith University
Nathan, Queensland, 4111
Australia

Telephone number: 61 7 3875 3717
Facsimile number: 61 7 3875 3887

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Abstract

In recent years many organizations have undertaken organizational restructuring, embracing a range of strategies including downsizing and delayering in order to meet the challenge of change. While the rhetoric of change includes the need to be more globally competitive and to meet changing market requirements, the reality for many people working in organisations is often quite different. Their reality is often increasing levels of stress, and a realisation that they have been bullied during the change process. Such a process results in costs not only to the individual, but also to the organisation. Furthermore, many studies that have identified the problem of workplace bullying suggest that it is managers in organisations who are the main perpetrators of workplace bullying. This article argues that one of the reasons for managers acting in this way is that they do not have the appropriate emotional responses to deal with the demands of an ever-changing workplace. It is suggested that the concept of bounded emotionality may be an organisational variable worthy of further exploration in order to address the problem of workplace bullying. Bounded emotionality proposes that human decision-making stems in large measure from inter-subjective limitations and relational feeling rules. We offer a set of propositions that outline the antecedents of bullying by managers and identify potential methods of ameliorating these antecedents. We also discuss the implications of bullying for human resource professionals.

Keywords: organisational change; workplace bullying; bounded emotionality; human resource managers; empathy.

Introduction

Organisations within developed countries are facing pressures such as global competition, consumer demand, technological change, changing labour expectations, environmental awareness, and economic recession (French & Bell, 1995; Halal, 1986; Limerick & Cunnington, 1993). These pressures increasingly demand organisational change that is producing uncertainty at all levels of organizations (Argyris & Schon, 1996; Burgoyne, Pedler & Boydell, 1996). Corporate strategies to address this uncertainty have incorporated a number of practices including emphasising employee and organizational flexibility, market orientation, flattening structures, managerial excellence, productivity, quality, retraining, participation, and creativity (Hilmer & Donaldson, 1996; Pascale, 1990). Together these terms signify the emergence of a ‘discourse of restructuring’ (McCarthy, Sheehan & Kearns, 1995) which is affecting organisations and the people that work within them.

In reaction to economic uncertainty, many organisations have undertaken restructuring processes that include a reduction or change in the size of their workforce. Such processes include downsizing (Cascio, 1993) and/or delayering (Littler, Bramble & McDonald, 1994). Moreover, downsizing and delayering have become an accepted method of enhancing corporate earnings which is reflected in share market responses to corporate decisions regarding restructuring with research findings indicating that stock markets favour companies that downsize (Di Maggio & Powell 1983; Greengard 1993).

The implications of downsizing and delayering have been increasing levels of stress in the workplace (Catalano, Rook, & Dooley, 1986; Hartley, Jacobson, Klandermans & Van Vuuren, 1991; O’Driscoll & Cooper 1996). Kuhnert, Sims, & Lahey (1989), for example, found that the job insecurity produced by regular rounds of downsizing is negatively related to employee physical health and well-being. Research into the effects of downsizing in the workplace has also had negative attitudinal implications impacting on commitment and satisfaction (Ashford, Lee & Bobko, 1989; Dekker & Schaufeli, 1995; Hartley et. al., 1991; Kanter, 1989; Kreckler, 1994; Van Dyne & Ang, 1998). Whereas previous research has focused on the cognitive aspects of downsizing, we argue that the emotional effects may be just as important or more important in determining a worker’s response to downsizing. This approach is consistent with Ashforth and Humphrey’s (1995) call for the incorporation of emotional variables in organizational research.

A number of studies draw attention to the paradoxical rhetoric of restructuring, and the reality of the outcomes (Cascio, 1993; Littler, 1996; McCarthy, et al., 1995). The rhetoric of restructuring includes global competitiveness, multi-skilled staff, commitment, and excellence (McCarthy, et. al., 1995; Sheehan, 1998). The reality is quite different, with a number of outcomes identified. Outcomes include declining morale and decreased profits (American Management Association survey cited in Filipowski, 1993); decreased productivity and work intensification (McCarthy, et. al., 1995); and declining commitment, job satisfaction, and motivation (Littler, 1996).

In response to the pressures placed on organisations to respond to these initiatives, some organisations appear to have developed a culture whereby the achievement of organisational goals justifies the means. This focus on ends at the expense of means is seen in the increasing research done on ethics in organizations, such as that by Cludts (1999), Sims (1999), and Snow and Bloom (1996). D’Aveni (1995) notes that the emphasis on performance and return on investment in organizations has produced a cohort of managers who are only focussed on short term gain without any concern over the implications of their actions. In this culture, managers may perceive that they have a mandate to use whatever techniques or behaviour is deemed necessary in the deployment of their human resources, such as bullying.

Our intention in this article, therefore, is to argue that one of the reasons for managers acting in this way, that is, as a bully, is that they do not have the appropriate emotional responses to deal with the demands of an ever-changing workplace. Where appropriate, we include examples of the possible reactions of managers that may contribute to their bullying. We then turn to an exploration of the bounded emotionality literature to suggest that an understanding of concepts within this body of literature may help us to examine the issue of workplace bullying from a unique perspective. We suggest that the concept of bounded emotionality may be an organisational variable worthy of further exploration in order to address the problem of workplace bullying. Bounded emotionality proposes that human decision-making stems in large measure from inter-subjective limitations and relational feeling rules. We offer a set of propositions that outline the antecedents of bullying by

managers and identify potential methods of ameliorating these antecedents. We also discuss the implications of bullying for human resource professionals.

Bullying in the workplace

Before proceeding further, it is appropriate at this stage to define the term bullying. For the purposes of this article, bullying is defined as the "repeated less favourable treatment of a person by another or others in the workplace, which may be considered unreasonable or inappropriate workplace practice" (Division of Workplace Health & Safety (Queensland), 1998). Specific behaviours include sarcasm, threats, verbal abuse, intimidation, bad-mouthing, manipulation, duplicity, exclusion, isolation and the assignment of staff to unpleasant jobs (McCarthy, et al., 1995). Thus the definition bears some similarities to other terminologies used to describe similar problems, including mobbing (a Scandinavian concept similar to bullying) (Leymann, 1990, 1996), emotional abuse (Davenport, Schwartz & Elliott, 1999; Keashly, 1998), and occupational stress (Motowidlo, Packard, & Manning, 1986).

One of the first people to highlight the extent of bullying in the workplace was Adams (1992a, 1992b), who used a case study approach. The case study approach is seen to reflect one form of methodology used to research the problem. Reports from the targets of bullying feature in studies by Leymann (1990), Niedl (1996), and Vartia (1996). Another study identified the case of a manager of a medium-sized office, with a tyrannical approach to management. Demonstrating the ramifications of hostility at work being allowed to manifest, the study pointed to the legal implications if an organisation fails to recognise and deal with those problems (Bray, 1992).

The other approach used was incidence surveys, where a working population is surveyed, including both those deemed to have been bullied, and those seen as non-bullied. Studies have explored the characteristics exhibited by bullies, and the psychological, physical and work-related consequences of bullying (Leymann, 1996; McCarthy et. al., 1995; Savva, 1998); the characteristics of victims and bullies, typical actions of bullying, and initial and long-term effects of being bullied (Niedl, 1996; O'Moore, Seigne, McGuire & Smith, 1998).

Respondents to a United Kingdom survey reported that 83% of bullies were managers; 50% of the working population experienced bullying; 26% of victims leave their jobs as a result of being bullied; and approximately 11% of people are bullied as groups. Furthermore, 95% of respondents suggested that workers were too scared to report incidences of bullying, while 94% reported that bullying prevails because bullies 'know they can get away with it'. Additionally, respondents were asked what they believed was the cause of bullying (Rayner, 1997, 1998). The results of this study, and a study by Archer (1999), illustrate the type of organisational culture that may be seen to exist in some British workplaces. Within the organisations surveyed, bullying was not a surprise, but rather, was something people knew about and were dealing with at work.

Additionally, the process of delayering within organisations has grave consequences for management positions and careers. Delayering results in compression of managerial career structures because of changing spans of control and outsourcing of some functions. Although management jobs may be redesigned, many of the changes are unplanned and lead to greater workloads on managers (Littler et. al., 1994). Kanter (1989) and Kreyer (1994) discuss the attitudinal and emotional implications for managers who now have careers across several organisations rather than within a single organisation. The psychological contract that once ensured managers loyalty to organizations (Rousseau & Parkes, 1993) has now been replaced by a more utilitarian focus on personal advancement across organizations.

In an international context of organisational restructuring, downsizing and layoffs, companies have reported high turnover and general mistrust between managers and staff (Feldman, 1995; Rousseau & Parkes, 1993). In this context, there is seen to be increasing stress in the workplace (Tidwell, 1998). A consequence of the utilitarian methods adopted by some managers to gain compliance and the increasing stress they experience in the workplace contributes to some managers responding with bullying tactics. This type of control action in turn produces a stress reaction in the employees who are the subject of this behaviour. Bullying has been linked to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (Leymann, 1996), and has been seen as an extreme form of social stressor (Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996; Leymann, 1990; Zapf, Knorz & Kulla, 1996). It is also becoming more prevalent in

the workplace. For instance, a recent survey found that 30 percent of women who had responded to the survey had suffered stress because of bullying or intimidating behaviour (Charlesworth, 1996).

Such research alerts us to the impact of organisational change, including the cost to organisations in relation to workplace bullying. Costs may encompass productivity decreases, increased absenteeism, litigation (O'Moore, Seigne, McGuire & Smith, 1998), diminished job satisfaction, and health costs (Einarsen, Matthiesen & Skogstad, 1998).

Although there is substantial anecdotal evidence of bullying, empirical studies of bullying in the workplace are relatively limited (Keashly, 1998). Rather, the majority of research in the area tends to focus on antisocial behaviour (Giacalone & Greenberg, 1997), violence in the workplace (Baron & Neuman, 1996; Kappler, 1993), workplace abuse and/or harassment (Crabb, 1995), or the costs of managerialism (Rees & Rodley, 1995). In particular, little research into workplace bullying by managers has been conducted (Marano, 1995). It is contended, however, that workplace bullying is just as debilitating for many individuals as workplace aggression, violence, abuse, or harassment.

Studies revealing bullying have been conducted on school employees (NASUWT, 1996) and in further education and higher educational institutions (Lewis, 1999). This latter research found that workplace bullying was more prevalent than sex discrimination, sexual harassment and racial harassment. The perceived reasons for the bullying were linked to poor managerial training.

A study of part time students at a tertiary institution found that half had been bullied at some point in their short career. More than a quarter of the respondents had changed jobs as a consequence of being bullied. Results also revealed that men rarely reported being bullied by women while women were found to be bullied equally by men and women (Rayner, 1997). In contrast to Scandinavian research that found the incidence of bullying by one or more superiors is about 54 per cent (Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996), Rayner's (1997) study found that more than 70 percent of the bullying was carried out by line managers or senior line managers.

Current responses to bullying

There appears to be little evidence in the literature of management's response to the problem of workplace bullying. While there is little evidence of managers dealing with the consequences of bullying in the workplace, there is substantial literature on coping with stress. Coping strategies are intended to ameliorate stress. Folkman and Lazarus (1984) refer to problem-focussed coping strategies, intended to address the source of the stress directly, and emotion-focussed coping strategies, intended to ameliorate the emotional ramifications of stress. These types of strategies, however, assume that there is equal power between the protagonists and rely on the stressed individual to respond. Such approaches suggest an inability or unwillingness to deal with the extent of the problem posed by bullying where there may be little recourse by the victim.

Research has also outlined health problems that manifest as a result of workplace bullying. Leymann and Gustafsson (1996) described a diagnostic process used to trace the history of the traumatic experiences of a victim of bullying. The results of this diagnosis were described as a Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Wilkie (1998) suggests strategies for medical practitioners for dealing with PTSD. Steps include recognising someone has been damaged, reworking painful memories, and returning the patient to the situation where the trauma occurred. He further argued that the process might require sophisticated psychological techniques. We argue that this trauma emerges from the victims' inability to reconcile the emotional responses they have experienced as a result of being bullied. This does not imply that it is the victim's lack of response that is the cause of the bullying. Rather it acknowledges that all humans have a fight or flight response when confronted. For some the natural reaction will be to confront the bully, while for others the appropriate response will be withdrawal or avoidance. We contend that both responses are reasonable and that the actions of the bully and not the victim need to be addressed. We further contend that actions to address the bully's behaviour needs to be supported at a workplace level by the adoption of strategies to address workplace bullying.

While changes to legislation are often sought (Overall, 1995), legislators have been slow to heed the call. Some would suggest that managers are ethically bound to ensure appropriate standards of conduct (Whitton, 1994). Clearly, both the anecdotal and empirical evidence of a growing and persistent problem suggests that

some managers abrogate this responsibility. While current legislation in relation to health and safety in the workplace ought to be sufficient to ensure bullying behaviours do not occur, the evidence suggests otherwise.

Recognising the shortcomings of legislative solutions, Gorman (1998) argues that a change of attitude is required from confrontational workplaces to co-operative workplaces. Such workplaces would treat all workers with respect and dignity. Respecting the dignity of an employee, and treating employees accordingly, is seen as an employer obligation (Boye and Jones, 1997; Folger, 1993). This conforms to Ashforth and Humphrey's (1995) call for the incorporation of a consideration of emotions into organizational behaviour to improve the working life of employees.

Potential costs

In the rush to globalisation and increased competition, there appears to be a failure to account for the wider implications of the organisational change process because change is looked at from a narrow perspective and short term solutions are sought for what are often complex problems (Sheehan, Barker & Rayner, 1999). Undoubtedly, as the research by, among others, Archer (1999), Lewis (1999) and Zapf (1999) demonstrates, people have experienced anxiety and conflict within organisational and social change process, suffering which suggests that the implications of workplace bullying ought not to be underestimated.

Previous studies highlight the link between workplace bullying and health problems. Problems include psychosomatic stress (Leymann, 1990), anxiety (McCarthy, et. al., 1995; Niedl, 1996) depression (O'Moore, Seigne, McGuire and Smith, 1998) and burnout (Einarsen, Matthiesen and Skogstad, 1998). Leymann (1990) suggests that the costs of sick leave as a result of some of these symptoms may be estimated at between 30,000 and 100,000 US dollars for each person subjected to mobbing (bullying). Included in the estimate are costs associated with the subsequent loss of productivity and the need for intervention by a variety of organisational members such as personnel officers and health workers. UK studies consistently show 25% of bullied workers leave their jobs as a result of their treatment (Rayner, 1999), thus suggesting costs associated with turnover. Clearly, should these costs be extrapolated across a working population in any of the countries mentioned, the final figure would suggest organisational costs that would far outweigh any of the perceived benefits of organisational restructuring and downsizing.

Suggested remedies

A number of strategies and remedies for dealing with the problem of workplace bullying and victimisation are also identified in the literature. Strategies range from legislative change (Overall, 1995; Personnel Management, 1992) to job redesign (AFS: 17, 1993), and corporate health programs (Helmer, Dunn, Eaton, Macadonio and Lubritz, 1995). Other strategies include confronting the perpetrator (Adams, 1992a; 1992b; Field, 1996); taking a community approach to the problem (Byrne, 1994); training and accrediting staff to deal with the problem (Crabb, 1995); humanitarian management including the empowerment of employees during change processes (Pontoni, 1996); and legal redress because of psychiatric damage (Mullany and Handford, 1993). Rayner and Hoel (1997) suggest that those identified as "bullies" also need to be heard. Significantly, all of these responses are reactive rather than proactive. That is they seek to address the bullying following a critical incident. We argue instead that a proactive response that identifies and addresses the antecedents of bullying may be a more productive strategy.

If we accept that bullying is behaviour which is easily recognised as a phenomenon in working culture (Archer, 1999), then it is imperative to understand the processes of 'making sense' of bullying within the working population at large. To help address the problem from a sense making perspective, a broader range of methodologies beyond the interview and questionnaire will be required. These are starting to emerge with recent studies including the use of focus groups (IRS, 1999), the Critical Incident Technique (Liefoghe and Olafsson, 1999), and the use of vignettes (Keashly, Trott and MacLean, 1994). Liefoghe and Olafsson (1999) have pointed to a new direction by focussing on individuals who are not bullied in order to explore the phenomena from their perspective. In this article, we want to explicate the antecedents of bullying with a framework of bounded emotionality (Putnam & Mumby, 1993).

Bounded emotionality

The application of a bounded emotionality perspective to the phenomenon of bullying will allow the emotional antecedents and consequences of bullying to be explored within a framework that acknowledges the importance of emotions in the workplace. We argue that the regulation of some of those emotions that may contribute to bullying may result in a reduction in the incidence and severity of bullying. The use of the bounded emotionality framework will allow us to provide some strategies to guide human resource professionals in dealing with the problem.

A central tenet of the present article is that the process of bullying can best be understood by consideration of the underlying emotional dimensions. From an individual perspective, Goleman (1995) has argued that personal behaviour is more of a function of emotional intelligence than of rational, cognitive processes. Ashforth and Humphrey (1995) have offered a similar view at the organisational level, arguing that work life is intrinsically emotional and value-based, and that ostensibly rational organisational behaviour reflects the extent to which organisational members are able to reconcile emotional issues in the workplace. That is, organisational members are able to resolve the needs of the organisation and their own individual preferences, values, attitudes and behaviours.

Mumby and Putnam (1992) introduced the notion of 'bounded emotionality' specifically as a foil to Simon's (1976) notion of 'bounded rationality'. The concept of 'bounded emotionality' is predicated on the idea that emotional variables underlie organisational behaviour. This approach is consistent with Ashforth and Humphrey's (1995) call for the incorporation of emotional variables in organisational research. While bounded rationality is essentially a modification of the rational approach, based on consideration of human and organisational constraints on decision-making, bounded emotionality encompasses a recognition that human decision-making stems in large measure from inter-subjective limitations and relational feeling rules (see also Ghoshal & Moran, 1996; Smirchich & Stubbart, 1985). Putnam and Mumby (1993) argue that rationality is not an objective and immutable state; rather, it is socially constructed and only one aspect of organisational life which should be embedded in the larger context of community inter-relatedness.

So far in this paper we have argued that the existing literature does little to explain how individuals make sense of their experience of being bullied. Primarily, the focus of existing research is based on general themes associated with defining the actions and activities of the bully, and the consequences for the target or victim. Yet the very nature of being bullied suggests that a social and constructivist conception of the bullying experience is required. Moreover, unitary and normative approaches were seen as failing to address core aspects about an individual's bullying experience. Consistent with our argument to date we contend that there is a need to explore the interpersonal and intrapersonal understandings that individuals hold of his or her bullying experiences. Examining bullying from within the bounded emotionality framework therefore is presented as one way of addressing this oversight.

Traditional bureaucratic processes emphasise control by separating the rules that direct individuals within organisations from the emotional aspects of implementing those rules. But this is not the case in practice. For instance, emotions that are often raised in competitive situations, such as anger and fear, are in some organisations accepted or even encouraged if they are deemed to be useful in achieving the organisation's objectives. Within a bounded emotionality framework however, employees are encouraged to limit and control emotional expression to enhance interpersonal relationships. In other words, using a bounded emotionality approach, the bully in the organisation should be able to control their aggression and focus on interacting with their potential victims to enhance, rather than endanger, the relationship (following Feeney and Wilcocks, 1998).

To examine the lived experience of participants who have been bullied, it is seen as important to take account of the subjective meanings that participants attribute to their bullying experience (following Hopkins, 1993). The significance of an employee's perception is highlighted by Lazarus (1966; see also Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), who posited that the anticipation of harm can have as much effect on behavior as the experience of actual harm.

The present article will specifically examine the antecedents of bullying from a perspective of "bounded emotionality" (Mumby & Putnam, 1992). In Figure 1 we present a model of workplace bullying in which there are organisational and individual antecedents that render a manager susceptible to using bullying tactics.

(Figure 1 about here)

A model of workplace bullying

At the organisational level in Figure 1, we argue that the existence of a culture in which short term gains are valued over the means used to achieve those gains will enhance the climate for bullying. Bullying will also be prevalent in organizations where confrontation is discouraged. This may be a result of an authoritarian leadership style or an organisational culture where there is a high power distance between managers and employees. A workplace that does not encourage collaboration or egalitarian values may also have low constructive conflict and is therefore open to the use of coercion as a tactic for gaining compliance.

At the individual level, Figure 1 proposes that increasing levels of stress, poor social skills or low empathy will increase the likelihood of managers responding with bullying tactics. Our model presents a number of emotional variables that emerge as a result of bullying, including fear and confusion. Fear incorporates feeling threatened, feeling anxious, nervous, intimidated or tense, while confusion covers feelings such as frustration, disillusionment or suspicion.

As noted in our model, the initial reaction of a manager who is under pressure to achieve results may be to react with either fear or confusion. This reaction, if not controlled, may result in the adoption of bullying tactics to achieve the expected outcomes. Certainly in a fearful situation, there is a tendency for individuals to adopt either a fight or flight behaviour. In this instance, as escape would be an unlikely short-term reaction, the manager could react by directing their aggression onto their employee(s). The manager's fear may well manifest itself in terms of physical threats or verbal abuse directed at their employee(s), or at a less serious level as sarcasm or ignoring of their employee(s). Each of these reactions may emerge initially as a result of the manager being unable to control the emotions they experience while working in the organisation. Even if the manager does not directly translate the anxiety they feel into aggression, there may be the desire to relieve tension through inappropriate practical jokes or personal jokes. Any or all of these actions may result in the employee perceiving that they are being bullied.

In our model (Figure 1), we contend that if bounded emotionality is active upon the feelings of fear and confusion experienced by the manager, then there is the potential for the bullying tactics adopted by some managers to be circumvented. That is, if the manager does not feel threatened, there will be less tendency for the manager to adopt fight or flight behaviour and more tendency to produce a flow that provides a co-operative relationship between managers and employees.

Propositions

A model of the antecedents of workplace bullying is presented in Figure 2. This model is developed as a set of propositions as follows.

(Figure 2 about here)

Organizational Level

From our review of literature, bullying is enhanced in an organisational climate where the conflict is not dealt with, but rather avoided. An organisational culture where the primary coping mechanisms are withdrawal and avoidance will therefore enhance the power of the bully. Following this argument:

P1 Organizations that support constructive confrontation in the workplace are less likely to experience bullying.

We discussed earlier the tendency of stock market investors to value organizations that focus on short-term rewards. Similarly, D'Aveni (1995) notes the emerging trend for managers to value short-term rewards over long-term outcomes. These trends suggest that some organizations focus on the achievement of goals at the expense of the method by which these goals are attained. A concurrent outcome of this type of behavior would be for the utility of a tactic such as bullying to be seen as appropriate in circumstances where encouragement

and inducement may not achieve similar outcomes. Managers who value the final goal over the method of achieving that goal may therefore deem bullying as an acceptable method of obtaining their stated goals. Thus:

P2 Organizations that focus on process and the means by which goals are achieved are more likely to have a low incidence of bullying in the workplace than those organizations that only focus on the goal.

Individual Level

At the individual level in organizations, we note that there is an increasing level of stress being experienced as a result of constant change in the workplace. Research into coping strategies by Catalano, Rook and Dooley (1986) suggests that employees under stress are more likely to attempt to deal with their situation by the adoption of negative coping strategies. Similarly, Mobley, Griffeth, Hand, & Meglino, (1979) concluded in a theoretical review, that higher job-related tension leads to withdrawal strategies. These data suggest that a natural first reaction to stress and job insecurity is a defensive, rather than a proactive, position. As noted earlier, stress has also been associated with lower performance in cognitive tasks (Fiedler, 1986). We contend that this is a consequence of the employee lacking control as a result of the threat of constant change and a fight response being produced resulting in behaviors that are protective rather than proactive. Following this line of argument:

P3 An amelioration of stress in the workplace will result in a reduction of bullying in the workplace.

Our next proposition is based on the premise that managers with a greater range of personal skills will choose to maintain working relationships, rather than jeopardize them. This is not an altruistic move on their part, but is supported by the current move in organizations to utilize the power of teams and the performance benefits they can accrue (Beyerlein, Johnson, & Beyerlein, 1997). Co-operation provides greater commitment than compliance and therefore will produce better performance (Borisoff & Victor, 1998). Consequently, managers who use coercive means to achieve tasks are risking lower performance from their workers. Given that managers generally desire better performance from their workers, it follows that there must be a lack of skills on the part of the manager who uses coercion or bullying as a motivator. Our fourth proposition is therefore:

P4 The better social skills a manager has the less likely they are to resort to bullying.

Finally, we argue that those managers who bully will generally be low in empathy. If managers were aware of the implications of their actions on others and were able to empathize with them, then they may be less likely to use bullying as a tactic. It follows then that:

P5 The more empathy a manager has the less likely they are to resort to bullying.

Implications, Limitations and Future Directions

Remaining Strategic

From the preceding discussion the importance of understanding the dynamics of organisational restructuring is highlighted. This period of organisational change is characterised by intense political maneuvering and "getting on in the new organisation by playing a political game" (Cartwright & Cooper, 1993:342). Resources are being redistributed; employees are demoted, promoted or dispensed with; and decision making is often *ad hoc* and reactive to the current situation. Considerations for human resource managers include the need to identify those at risk, maintain a supporting role, promote effective communication during the change program, and to articulate cost/benefit arguments during the change process. A human resource manager therefore needs to work at a strategic level, and to ensure that his or her work team operates in a similar manner.

Strategic issues directly related to human resource management include staffing or outsourcing of activities involved in the change program; job flexibility; maintenance of natural supports (such as work group design); and provision of job readiness (work hardening) activities. Strategic decisions may include proposed training programs, performance appraisal techniques, consideration of occupational health and safety issues, and the use of casual and contract labour. In the case of the bullied worker, there is a need for early intervention.

Comcare Australia data points to substantial economic savings through early intervention as part of a strategy for workplace rehabilitation (Hayton, 1995:183), and such data could be extrapolated to address the problems of the bullied worker. Hayton indicates that "the average claim cost for a stress case will double if not assessed for rehabilitation within four weeks and triple if not assessed for twelve weeks from \$11,000 to \$37,000" (1995:182).

The qualitative benefits of early intervention should not be ignored. Early intervention sends a cultural signal to other employees indicating that they are a valuable resource to the company and will be supported in similar circumstances (Kearns, McCarthy and Sheehan, 1997). Such a signal will significantly impact upon morale and loyalty, the maintenance of which provides immeasurable benefits to any organisation.

For employees of organisations undergoing restructuring, and experiencing workplace bullying as a result, we can note three categories of interest to further address the problem. In a study of organisational restructuring, Kets de Vries and Balazs (1997) categorised people involved in organisational change processes as *executioners*, *victims*, and *survivors*, noting the range of poorly understood emotional reactions to this phenomenon. Here we use the terms bully, victims and survivors.

Bully

While managerial bullying during organisational restructuring is deplorable, we can note the possible reasons for such behaviour and the effects of organisational restructuring on management (Kearns, McCarthy and Sheehan, 1997). Such an understanding provides another avenue for exploration and solving of the problem. Kets de Vries and Balazs (1997) focused on the coping strategies of the executioners and argued that perhaps managerial coercive, disassociative, or abrasive behaviour was a coping strategy of managers during organisational restructuring. In two studies on manager well-being resulting from mergers, however, Cartwright and Cooper (1993) found a significant negative effect on middle managers in a UK building society while an Australian study could not correlate organisational change with any adverse effect on the manager's psychological well-being (Crouch & Worth, 1991).

Victims

Nelson, Cooper and Jackson (1995) reviewed studies relating to life events and employee health and well-being, concluding that "relatively little interest has been paid to the consequences for individual well-being of large scale organisational changes" (p. 58). They proceeded to study the impact of privatisation on 397 employees of a regional water authority in the UK and found that during the restructuring, levels of job satisfaction, and mental and physical health seemed to decline significantly.

The restructuring program does not always lead to redundancies but it often marginalises some groups within the organisation. Outcomes from McCarthy et al's (1995) research included evidence that some employees are marginalised during the restructure or find it difficult to maintain meaningful roles in the organisation. Marginalisation can be an active strategy by management to push employees out of the organisation during organisational change. In McCarthy et al's (1995) study it was noted that five percent of respondents took an early retirement package; six percent took a redundancy package; and twenty-two percent took time off work in response to bullying incidents. Older workers may be at risk in this process. These workers may be actively encouraged to take early retirement. In a study of the older labour market in Canada, it was noted that there was older workers were subjected to intense pressure to vacate their position (David, 1993, cited in Remenyi, 1995).

Survivors

While a human resource manager ought to be aware of marginalised employees, those who exit the organisation, and changed managerial behaviour, it is the survivors who will need to be dealt with empathetically. Survivor 'sickness' and survivor 'guilt' (Kets de Vries & Balazs, 1997), combined with increased workload as a result of downsizing, and the impact of workplace bullying, may result in an upsurge in requirements for workplace counselling. Survivors often broke their 'psychological contract' (Kets de Vries & Balazs, 1997) with the organisation and pursued an intent to voluntarily leave the organisation (Tombaugh & White, 1990).

Finally, consideration also needs to be given to the social context within which events occur. That context may include the nature and extent of the bullying experience, the workplace social setting in which the bullying occurred, and other significant settings, such as family or social groups where the target or victim may turn for support. Future research needs to be directed to understanding and interpreting these meanings and the intentions of participants in their interactions with others (Checkland and Scholes, 1990; Denzin, 1989; and Polanyi, 1958).

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