

**The moderating role of perceived organisational support in the
relationship between workplace bullying and turnover intention
across sectors in South Africa**

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COMMENTS

The reader is reminded of the following:

- The Publication Manual (6th edition) of the American Psychological Association (APA) prescribe the format of both the editorial style as well as the references of the mini-dissertation. These guidelines are in line with the policy of the Programme in Industrial Psychology of the North-West University (Potchefstroom) to use APA style in all scientific documents as from January 1999.
- The South African Journal of Industrial Psychology, which agrees mainly with the APA style, was used specifically for the editorial style, but the APA guidelines were followed in constructing tables. The mini-dissertation is submitted in the form of a research article.

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ABSTRACT

Title:

The moderating role of perceived organisational support in the relationship between workplace bullying and turnover intention across sectors in South Africa

Key terms:

Superiors; colleagues; role clarity; job information; participation in decision-making; supervisory relationships; and colleague support.

There is currently no legislation counteracting the impact of workplace bullying on South African employees, consequently generating an open invitation for all perpetrators in the organisation. The significance of bullying by superiors and bullying by colleagues is explored in this regard. Workplace bullying refers to behaviour which harasses, offends, excludes and affects the employees' work tasks. This behaviour occurs repeatedly, frequently and over a period of time. As a result, the impact of bullying on employees has massive consequences on the absenteeism, profitability, turnover intention and the compensation claims of the organisation. The most common solution of workplace bullying results in resignation. Thus, this study also explores perceived organisational support (POS), acting as a moderator, to counteract workplace bullying in this regard. POS is defined by employees experiencing: role clarity, participation in decision-making, colleagues' support, having sufficient job information and good supervisory relationships. This will not necessarily put an end to this phenomenon but creates awareness in the South African context. Many international researchers focused on defining bullying, exploring different perpetrators and identifying characteristics associated with targets of bullying. Nationally, research is still in its infancy, hence, this research explores workplace bullying in general, by focusing on different sectors across South Africa. This research addresses the main perpetrators, the impact on turnover intention and explores POS acting as a moderator in the relationship between workplace bullying and turnover intention.

The objectives of this research was 1) to determine how workplace bullying, perceived organisational support and turnover intention are conceptualised according to the literature; 2) to determine the relationships between workplace bullying by superiors/colleagues, the sub-facets of perceived organisational support (role clarity, job information, participation in decision-making,

colleague support and supervisory relationships) and turnover intention; 3) to determine the moderating role of the sub-facets of perceived organisational support (role clarity, job information, participation in decision-making, colleague support and supervisory relationships) in the relationship between workplace bullying (superiors and colleagues) and turnover intention. An availability sample of $N = 13911$ participants were gathered over a spectrum of 9 provinces and 5 sectors. Hierarchical regression analyses was conducted in order to determine if POS acts as a moderator in the relationship between workplace bullying (either by superiors or by colleagues) and turnover intention.

Results highlighted the prevalence of workplace bullying in the South African context. The statistical analysis revealed that workplace bullying by superiors and by colleagues has a negative relationship with all the sub-facets of POS. This implies that when bullying by superiors or colleagues increases, the sub-facets of POS will decrease. The intention to leave the organisation correlated negatively with the sub-facets of POS. This suggests that when POS exists in organisations employees will be retained. There is a positive relationship between both bullying by superiors and bullying by colleagues and the propensity to leave the organisation. In practice, this implies that when bullying increases (by either superiors or colleagues) more targets of bullying will be inclined to leave the organisation. According to the empirical results, POS, role clarity, participation in decision-making and supervisory relationships, was the only facets which acted as moderators in the relationship between workplace bullying by superiors and turnover intention, whereas no moderation was found with bullying by colleagues. Recommendations were made for the organisation and future research.

OPSOMMING

Titel:

Die modererende rol van waargenome organisasie ondersteuning in die verhouding tussen werksplekafknouing en die intensie om die werk te verlaat regoor sektore in Suid-Afrika

Sleutelterm:

Toesighouers; kollegas; rolduidelikheid; posinformasie; deelname in besluitneming; verhouding met toesighouers; en ondersteuning van kollegas.

Daar is huidig geen wetgewing in Suid-Afrika wat die impak van werksplekafknouing teenwerk nie, gevolglik genereer dit 'n oop uitnodiging vir alle afknouers in die organisasie. Die belangrikheid van afknouing deur toesighouers en afknouing deur kollegas is verken in hierdie opsig. Werksplekafknouing verwys na gedrag wat teister, beledig, uitsluit en werknemers se take ontwig. Hierdie gedrag manifesteer herhalend, gereeld en oor 'n bepaalde periode. Gevolglik beïnvloed afknouing werknemers t.o.v afwesigheid, winsgewendheid, die intensie om die werk te verlaat en die kompensasië-eise van die organisasie. Die mees algemene oplossing vir werksplekafknouing lei tot bedankings. Dus, verken die studie ook waargenome organisasie ondersteuning, wat optree as 'n modereerder om werksplekafknouing in die opsig teen te werk. Waargenome organisasie ondersteuning word gedefinieer deur die ervaring van: rol duidelikheid, deelname in besluitneming, ondersteuning van kollegas, genoegsame posinformasie tesame met goeie verhoudings met toesighouers. Hierdie sal nie noodwendig die probleem oplos nie, alhoewel dit 'n bewusmaking in Suid-Afrika teweeg bring. Menigte internasionale navorsers het hul studie gefokus op die definiëring van afknouing, verkenning van verskeie aandoeners en die identifisering van karaktereenskappe wat geassosieer word met slagoffers van afknouing. Nasionaal is navorsing rakende afknouing steeds in die aanvangsperiode, derhalwe, verken die navorsing afknouing in die algemeen deur verskeie sektore in Suid-Afrika te bestudeer. Hierdie navorsing spreek die hoofsaaklike afknouers, die impak van werknemers om die organisasie te verlaat en die waargenome organisasie ondersteuning, wat optree as modereerder, in die verhouding tussen werksplekafknouery en die intensie om die werk te verlaat, aan.

Die doelstellings van hierdie studie was 1) om werksplekafknouing, waargenome organisasie ondersteuning en die intensie om die werk te verlaat volgens literatuur te konsepsualiseer; 2) om die

verhouding tussen werksplekafknouing deur toesighouers/kollegas, die subfasette van waargenome organisasie ondersteuning (rolduidelikheid, posinformatie, deelname in besluitneming, ondersteuning van kollegas en verhoudings met toesighouers) en die intensie om die werk te verlaat te bepaal; en 3) om die modererende rol van waargenome organisasie ondersteuning se subfasette (rolduidelikheid, posinformatie, deelname in besluitneming, ondersteuning van kollegas en verhoudings met toesighouers) in die verhouding tussen werksplekafknouing (toesighouers of kollegas) en die intensie om die werk te verlaat te bepaal. Die beskikbaarheidsteekproef van $N = 13911$ deelnemers was ingesamel oor 'n spektrum van 9 provinsies en 5 sektore. Hiërargiese regressiewe analise was uitgevoer om te bepaal of waargenome organisasie ondersteuning die verhouding tussen werksplekafknouing (toesighouers of kollegas) en die intensie om die werk te verlaat, modereer.

Bevindinge van hierdie studie beklemtoon die belangrikheid van werksplekafknouing in die Suid-Afrikaanse konteks. Die statistiese analise toon aan dat werksplekafknouing deur beide toesighouers en kollegas 'n negatiewe verhouding het, met die subfasette van waargenome organisasie ondersteuning. Dit behels dat met die toename van afknouing deur toesighouers en kollegas, sal die subfasette van waargenome organisasie ondersteuning verminder. Die intensie om die organisasie te verlaat korreleer negatief met die subfasette van waargenome organisasie ondersteuning. Dit stel voor dat wanneer waargenome organisasie ondersteuning teenwoordig is, meer werknemers in diens sal bly. Daar is 'n positiewe verhouding tussen werksplekafknouing en die intensie om die werk te verlaat. In praktyk, wanneer die afknouing toeneem, deur toesighouers of kollegas, sal meer werknemers geneig wees om die werk te verlaat. Na verwysing van die empiriese resultate sal die subfasette van waargenome organisasie ondersteuning, rolduidelikheid, deelname in besluitneming en verhouding met toesighouers optree as modereerders in die verhouding tussen werksplekafknouing en die intensie om die werk te verlaat. Daar was geen moderering met afknouing deur kollegas nie. Aanbevelings is gemaak vir die organisasie en vir verdere studies.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This study explores the impact of bullying on South African employees. It focuses specifically on different perpetrators (superiors and colleagues respectively) of workplace bullying. Moreover, the study explores the impact of workplace bullying on turnover intention and, finally, investigates whether perceived organisational support (POS) (role clarity, job information, participation in decision-making, colleague support and supervisory relationships) acts as a moderator in this regard.

This chapter provides a discussion of the main problem of the research article, presenting the research objectives and hypotheses of the problem statement. The research design is outlined and an overview of chapters is provided.

1.1 PROBLEM STATEMENT

During Workplace Bullying Awareness month in Australia (May, 2010), it was reported that 16,6% of participants claimed that they had known of, or worked with, an employee who, after being targeted by a perpetrator, later committed suicide. Workplace bullying has proved to be four times more prevalent than illegal forms of harassment (Namie, 2007) such as gender discrimination, sexual, racial harassment (Daniel, 2006; Dunn, 2000; Lewis, 1999) and verbal abuse (Daniel, 2006). Such bullying is known as a universal phenomenon (Cusack, 2000) and there is emerging acknowledgment that it occurs across organisations in South Africa (Kirsten, Rossouw & Viljoen, 2005). Wright (2008) notes that Human Resource professionals have focused markedly increased attention on the occurrence of workplace bullying in the South African context.

Workplace bullying is a problem prevalent in contemporary working life, with devastating effects on both the targets (Rayner & Keashly, 2005) and the profitability of organisations (Needham, 2003). This can be substantiated by a survey of nearly 8 000 American employees (Namie, 2007), where 37% of employees were bullied (54 million workers) and 40% of employees took no action whatsoever, whether formal or informal, against any form of

workplace bullying. When employees do take action against the perpetrator, 62% of employers neglect to address the problem by not confronting the bully. Twenty two percent of employees might even decrease their work effort, while 46% will consider resigning (Peyton, 2003) and 77% will actually resign (Namie, 2007). This indicates that the effects of workplace bullying, whether the phenomenon is known or unknown to employers, will influence organisations.

The destructive phenomenon of workplace bullying necessitates the establishment of certain supportive structures in order to ensure that this manipulative culture can be dealt with. D'Cruz and Noronha (2010) argue that a critical determinant of coping with workplace bullying is the role that the organisation fulfils. According to Zapf and Gross (2001), third party interventions, for example interventions initiated by organisations, lead to successful coping with workplace bullying. These interventions might not necessarily restore the pre-bullying situation, but detach both the bully and the target from the bullying culture. According to Baillien, Neyens and De Witte (2004), less bullying was reported in organisations with a supportive climate.

Subsequently, workplace bullying, with its associated consequences, increases the intention to leave of targets in the organisation (Djurkovic, McCormick & Casimir, 2004). Furthermore, turnover intention has been found to be a significant predictor of turnover (Begley, 1998), which has substantial cost implications for the organisation (Waldman, Kelly, Arora & Smith, 2004) such as a high staff turnover, sickness absence, workers compensation and reduced productivity (Hoel, Einarsen & Cooper, 2003).

As very little research explores workplace bullying in South Africa in general, or its relationships with POS and turnover intention, it is essential to establish that these relationships do indeed exist in the South African context. From an organisational perspective, turnover intention and, ultimately, employee turnover, incurs great costs for the organisation. If evidence proves that an individual who experiences organisational support will demonstrate a lower intention to leave the organisation, despite the fact that he/she is bullied, it becomes clear that the organisation, by strengthening its support, will be able to retain more employees. This, however, does not suggest that the bullying behaviour should be ignored, especially considering the detrimental effects bullying has on individuals in the workplace.

Results of a study conducted by Quine (2001) suggest that various forms of POS moderate the relationship between workplace bullying and the propensity to leave the organisation. Thus, according to Baron and Kenny (1986, p. 1174), a moderator is “*a variable that partitions a focal independent variable into subgroups that establish its domains of maximal effectiveness in regard to a given dependent variable*”. In this context, a supportive work environment, through perceived support, may moderate the effects of work stressors such as workplace bullying, buffering the individual and the organisation from the destructive consequences, including turnover intention. The moderator effect is typically known as an interaction term in analysis of variance, in this case high/low workplace bullying by good/poor organisational support. Consequently, the relationships between the independent variable (workplace bullying), the moderator variable (POS) and the dependent variable (turnover intention) were explored.

In addition, it was expected that the experiences of individuals bullied by superiors would differ from those being bullied by colleagues. Branch and Murray (2008) confirmed this in a study, which suggested that employees who were bullied by superiors would experience a greater lack of trust in organisations than those bullied by colleagues. For that reason, this study aims to determine differences in the relationships between bullying by superiors and bullying by colleagues respectively, and POS and turnover intention.

Workplace bullying can be described as a ‘silent epidemic’ (McAvoy & Murtagh, 2003) given that a study in the United Kingdom indicated that 95% of the workers were afraid to report workplace bullying (Wornham, 2003). Although workplace bullying is recognised as an epidemic, Sweden and Norway are the only two countries with legislation specifically related to prevent workplace bullying (Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf & Cooper, 2003). This calls into question the seriousness of the counteraction of workplace bullying in most countries, especially South Africa.

There is no generally acceptable definition of workplace bullying. However, workplace bullying can be recognised by the following terms: ‘the intentionality of harassment’; ‘the frequency and extent of bullying behaviours’; ‘the reactions of the target’; a discrepancy and misuse of power’; ‘lack of support’; and ‘inability of the target to defend himself or herself’ (Ege, 2004; Lutgen-Sandvik, Tracy & Alberts, 2004; Lynch & Moore, 2004; Matthiesen & Einarsen, 2004; Walden & Höel, 2004). Workplace bullying can be regarded as an element of

aggressive behaviour that manifests in interpersonal work relationships between two individuals or between an individual and a group (Zapf & Einarsen, 2001). Rothmann and Rothmann (2006, p. 14) define bullying as *“harassing, offending, and socially excluding someone at work to such a level that these actions negatively affect a person’s work tasks”*. Thus, the label of the bully can be applied when a particular activity, interaction or process has occurred repeatedly, frequently and over a period of time (Wood, 2008).

Bullying, which can be seen as an indicator of social and interpersonal strain, seems to increase when inadequate supporting relationships exist (Lim, 1996). Bullying behaviour creates feelings of vulnerability in the targets (Cleary, Hunt, Walter & Robertson, 2009) which then leads to the victim being extensively demoralised (Longo & Sherman, 2007) and results in employees losing their dignity within the current context (Longo & Sherman, 2007). According to Watkins (2007), a person who experiences persistent intimidation might learn to expect bullying behaviour from others and develop a pattern of compliance with the unfair demands of those the target perceives as stronger. Finally, the target may identify with the bully and become a perpetrator himself.

Furthermore, Baillien, Neyens, De Witte and De Cuyper (2009) recommend that future research should focus on the distinction between the different perpetrators of bullying in the organisation, such as superiors and colleagues.

Superiors are more likely to be perceived as perpetrators of workplace bullying (Garcia, Hue, Opdebeeck & Van Looy, 2002). Both Rayner and Keashly (2005) and Zapf and Einarsen (2005) ascertained that, with the exception of Scandinavian studies (Einarsen, 2000; Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996; Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2001;), most studies have consistently found superiors to be involved in 50-70% of all bullying cases (Cowie et al., 2000; Hoel, Cooper & Faragher, 2001).

Bullying behaviours also exist because of a ‘white wall of silence’, where the superior often defends the perpetrator (Murray, 2007). Consequently, the superior can be the bully or even be the second-degree perpetrator in a bullying situation where he defends the bully. According to the Institute of Management and Administration (IOMA, 2008), witnesses to workplace bullying believed that in 43% of cases the perpetrator of bullying had the support of one or more senior manager when harassing a target. Similarly, Longo and Sherman

(2007) suggest that superiors manipulate behaviour and often protect the bully instead of the victims. According to Namie and Namie (2003), 82% of employees who had been bullied left their workplaces, 38% for health reasons and 44% because they were victims of a low performance appraisal manipulated by a bullying superior to show them as incompetent. This can also be associated with tyrannical supervision.

According to Jacoby (2004), direct personal supervision remains a common control strategy in the workplace, leaving superiors with few motivational tools besides threats and abuse. In a survey conducted in March 2007, which included extensive interviews with 534 full-time or part-time workers, 1 000 adults in American workplaces confirmed that nearly 45% of the respondents reported working for an abusive boss (Workplace Bullying Institute, 2007). Autocratic leadership (Einarsen, Aaslan & Skogstad, 2007) and abusive supervision (Tepper, 2000) represents a form of workplace bullying. However, bullying is not restricted to autocratic types of leadership behaviours; it can also occur among colleagues at the same hierarchical level.

While superiors are the most common perpetrators of workplace bullying (Garcia et al., 2002), bullying can involve co-workers ‘mobbing’ other co-workers (Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf & Cooper, 2003). Scandinavian studies suggest that bullying by colleagues was more commonly reported than bullying by superiors (Einarsen, 2000; Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996; Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2001).

Conflict can easily be the source of bullying between colleagues, and potentially escalates into bullying, when the behaviour becomes deliberate and purposeful (Strandmark & Hallberg, 2007). New or younger workers in the organisation are considered particularly vulnerable, as are ethnic minorities, owing to a lack of knowledge regarding their rights and the regulations of the workplace (Westhuses, 2004). Intimidation and blame in the organisation create mutually held fears among employees about future job security (Vaez, Ekberg & LaFlamme, 2003). Job insecurity creates a climate of rivalry when employees see their colleagues as potential rivals for jobs. This may cause feelings of competition and suspicion, factors that are known to be associated with workplace bullying (Björkvist, Österman & Hjelt-Bäck, 1994).

The Workplace Bullying Institute (WBI) 2008 Labour Day Survey indicates that among witnesses of targets being bullied, 46% were aware of the incidents, 15% became actively aggressive towards the bullies and that in less than 1% of all situations did a team gang together to confront the bully in an effort to stop the offensive treatment of their colleagues. In 55% of all cases, colleagues agreed that they were afraid of the bully, again substantiating the notion of a silent epidemic.

Employees humanise organisations in accordance with the way in which organisations treat them (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Other researchers (Neyens, Baillien, Notelaers & De Witte, 2007; Zapf, Knorz & Kulla, 1996), also suggests that social support have been negatively related to targets' reports of workplace bullying. According to Rothmann and Rothmann (2006, p. 14), POS entails "*not only the availability of the supervisor to the employee but also the perceived relationship between the superiors and the employee as well as the level of perceived appreciation for the employee from the supervisor*".

According to Einarsen, Raknes and Matthiesen (1994), various job characteristics such as a lack of role clarity can lead to inadequate support in coping with workplace bullying in the organisation. Bakker, Hakanen, Demerouti and Xanthopoulou, (2007) argues that role conflict drains employee's energy, leading to no resistance against negative workplaces. Similarly, Vartia (1996) argues that job ambiguity reflects a sense of doubt about what truly is expected of employees because of a lack of trust and communication within relationships in the organisation. Therefore, workplaces with negative work environments caused by role ambiguity invite bullying behaviour (Hoel & Salin, 2003). Rothmann and Rothmann (2006, p. 21) define role clarity as "*requiring updated job descriptions, job specifications and satisfactory performance appraisals*".

Employees can experience social isolation which manifests in acts such as withholding information, not returning phone calls or e-mails and ignoring an employee, which are all forms of workplace bullying (Moayed, Daraishen, Shell & Salem, 2006; Quine, 2001; Zapf & Einarsen, 2005). Therefore, another sub-facet of support in the organisation is job information. *Job Information requires clarity regarding the work purpose or goal and its achievement, along with performance management in which feedback can be given so that incentives can be rewarded* (Rothmann & Rothmann, 2006, p. 21). Therefore, when

information is withheld from employees in the organisation, workplace bullying might increase because of a lack of support.

A further obstructive characteristic is that employees do not want to be forced or bullied into a co-operative climate. The employees would rather be motivated by an engaged work climate where open relationships can be maintained (Zapf, Knorz & Kulla, 1996). With interaction and open communication channels, the decision-making process will be executed democratically, leading to participation in decisions concerning the nature of their work, decisions in the department, and being able to discuss concerns with their superiors (Rothmann & Rothmann, 2006). When discouraging participation in the above-mentioned decisions, the superior will use an autocratic leadership style, which again invites bullying into the workplace, as employees are not engaged.

Workplace bullying has been linked to a lack of social support from colleagues (Notelaers & De Witte, 2003), rivalry between colleagues (Seigne, 1998) and task-oriented, autocratic and laissez-faire leadership styles (Hubert, Furda & Steensma, 2001). When an autocratic leadership style prevails, colleague support will be a hindrance to bullying, as contact with and energy drawn from others is supportive. Therefore, bullying can be confronted by teamwork and social support from colleagues (Notelaers & De Witte, 2003). Colleague support can be defined as *“the degree to which the colleagues make available resources (physical, intellectual, technical, financial and social) relevant to the demands made upon the system/person/group”* (Payne, 1979, p. 86).

Targets of workplace bullying might also be subjected to an unreasonable workload, unrealistic deadlines and excessive monitoring of his or her work (Quine, 2001; Yildirim & Yildirim, 2007). Superiors are often considered by employees to be acting on behalf of the organisation and are seen to be closely associated with senior management. Employees generally rely heavily on their superiors' orientation towards them as an indicator of organisational support (Eisenberger, Stinglhamber, Vandenberghe, Sucharski & Rhoades, 2002). Therefore, supervisory relationships entail maintaining the balance between a task-versus employee-oriented focus such as a supportive culture and people- and task-oriented leadership styles (Baillien et al., 2009). Consequently, constructive superior relationships will buffer bullying in the workplace.

The organisation plays the role of the third party when it comes to workplace bullying and therefore it is expected of the organisation to ensure transformation regarding workplace bullying so that the necessary coping strategies can be implemented (Zapf & Gross, 2001). Researchers have focused significant attention on the concept of POS as a key predictor of turnover intention (Maertz, Griffeth, Campbell & Allen, 2007). POS is expected to create feelings of obligation/commitment to organisational goals, and therefore it is anticipated that high POS will lead to lower turnover intention (Eisenberger, Fasolo & Davis-LaMastro, 1990; Wayne, Shore & Liden, 1997).

Various researchers have demonstrated a consistent relationship between role ambiguity/conflict and high levels of job dissatisfaction, psychological strain and turnover intentions (Acker, 2004; O'Driscoll & Beehr, 2000). Similar findings were reported by Bowling and Beehr (2006) who found workplace harassment to predict incremental variance in turnover intention after controlling for the effects of role ambiguity and role conflict. Role ambiguity/conflict, which leads to emotional strain owing to the insecurity of certain aspects of the work environment, generates a lack of job satisfaction, where job dissatisfaction again leads to the intention to quit (O'Driscoll & Beehr, 1994). There is, therefore, a clear relationship between uncertainty regarding expected perceived support from the organisation and personal outcomes such as turnover intention.

Another aspect leading to intention to leave is the social networks maintained through diverse relationships as well as patterns of communication with other employees in the organisation (Feeley & Barnett, 1997). Similarly, individuals who receive inaccurate and insufficient information are more likely to leave their organisations (Johnson & Rea, 2009).

When employees experience POS, they tend to be committed to the organisation and consequently assist the organisation to succeed through citizenship behaviour and increased co-operation (Rhoades, 2002). According to Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002), participation in decision-making is founded on the assumption that employees form opinions regarding the extent to which an organisation values their contributions, encourages relationships and cares about their well-being. These perceptions are based on how readily the organisation rewards their job performance and meets their socio-emotional needs (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). In a study of state government employees opportunities for worker input and participation in decision-making resulted in greater turnover intention since employees did not believe they

could successfully contribute; therefore, they tended to withdraw from the situation (Elias, 2009).

An additional psychosocial factor that has been consistently linked to turnover intention is colleague support (Alexander, Lichtenstein, Oh & Ullman, 1998). Colleagues that provide support for other employees make them feel appreciated, assist them to obtain new skills, support the mobilizing of resources (Cohen & Wills, 1985) and provide opportunities for new perspectives on work-related issues (Kahn, Schneider, Jenkins-Henkelman & Moyle, 2006). These relationships reduce apprehension regarding new jobs that often carry high levels of insecurity and stress (Saks, Uggerslev & Fassina, 2007). Colleagues might even provide the necessary affirmation of abilities, an opportunity to express and discuss work-related issues and exchange key information (Feldman & Brett, 1983).

In addition, when social support, in this case the superior relationship, initiates structure, sets goals, assists with problem solving, provides social and material support, and gives feedback on job performance, subordinates will experience lower ambiguity and more job satisfaction (O'Driscoll & Beehr, 1994). Effective superior support assists employees in meeting their personal needs regarding their self-development and growth (London & Smither, 1999), which leads to affective commitment (Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch & Topolnysky, 2002) and can be associated with reduced voluntary turnover.

Employees who have a high level of affective commitment experience a more productive environment as they become more engaged. Organisations that encourage POS towards employees are thought to have a competitive financial advantage over other organisations (Pfeffer, 2005). However, the lack of POS facilitates the onset of an intention to leave in the current working environment (Pfeffer, 2005). Therefore, evidence proves that POS correlates negatively with absenteeism (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison & Sowa, 1986) and withdrawal (Allen, Shore & Griffeth, 2003).

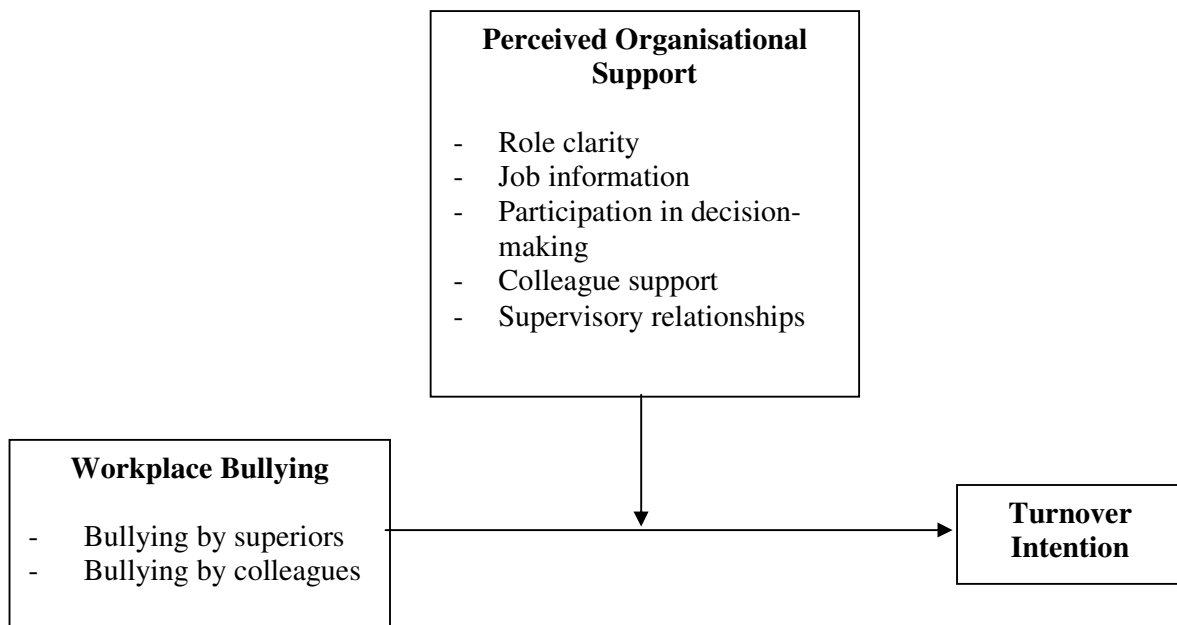
According to Peyton (2003), workplace bullying is recognised as a matter of concern in the world of work as it leads to behaviour that imitates misplaced productivity, profit and good character. Turnover intention is defined as '*a conscious and deliberate willfulness to leave the organisation*' (Tett & Meyer, 1993, p. 262). Turnover intention has been measured with reference to a specific interval, and has been described as the last in a progression of

withdrawal cognitions where the employee will quit and search for alternative employment. Various researchers have identified relationships between workplace bullying and job dissatisfaction, absenteeism, and high staff turnover (Meyers, 2007; Simons, 2008).

Not only does the humanitarian element of relationships and perceived organisational support suffer because of bullying, but the economic consequences can be massive (Waldman, Kelly, Arora & Smith, 2004). Inevitably, certain employees are dependent on their jobs and therefore choose to stay in the organisation regardless of workplace bullying, which leads to increased absenteeism because of sickness (Cleary et al., 2009). This can ultimately lead to the destruction of the production line because bullying causes distress in the work environment and can even increase employees' risk of illness (Meyers, 2007). Studies in America have revealed that medical issues relating to workplace bullying cost organisations from \$3 billion to \$36 billion annually (Turney, 2003). Workplace bullying simply drives away capable employees, both targets and witnesses, and leads to high absenteeism (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2006). This can easily be prevented by sufficient organisational support.

In light of the above-mentioned discussion, the relationships between workplace bullying, POS and turnover intention were explored in this study. It is imperative to understand the significance of workplace bullying, but also to explore the relationship between workplace bullying and turnover intention when an elevating factor such as POS influences the first relationship. The following conceptual models represent the different relationships and sub-facets of these relationships that were explored.

Figure 1: Conceptual model: Bullying by superiors and colleagues



Based on the above-mentioned problem statement, the following research questions emerged:

- How is workplace bullying, perceived organisational support and turnover intention conceptualised according to the literature?
- What are the relationships between workplace bullying by superiors/colleagues, the sub-facets of perceived organisational support (role clarity, job information, participation in decision-making and supervisory relationships) and turnover intention?
- Does perceived organisational support (role clarity, job information, participation in decision-making, colleague support and supervisory relationships) moderate the relationship between workplace bullying (superiors and colleagues) and turnover intention?
- What recommendations can be made for the organisation and future research?

Expected contribution of the study

Individual

- This study will lead to increased understanding of the issue of workplace bullying with specific reference to the dimensions of perceived organisational support and its effects on the intention to leave of the employees in the organisation.

Organisation

- This study attempts to establish the moderating role of perceived organisational support in the relationship between workplace bullying and turnover intention. This would create a need for organisations to recognise the importance of organisational support towards their employees.

Literature

- The prevalence of workplace bullying in South African organisations is unknown. This study attempts to address this gap in the literature.
- An awareness of the detrimental effects of workplace bullying would allow South African organisations to intervene when workplace bullying is suspected. For instance, workplace bullying has a significant impact on the turnover intention of the employees in the organisation and consequently leads to a loss in profitability of the organisation.

1.2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The research objectives were divided into a general objective and several specific objectives.

1.2.1 General objective

The general objective of this research is to explore the moderating role of perceived organisational support in the relationship between workplace bullying and turnover intention.

1.2.2 Specific objectives

The specific objectives of this research are:

- To determine how workplace bullying, perceived organisational support and turnover intention are conceptualised according to the literature.
- To determine the relationships between workplace bullying by superiors/colleagues, the sub-facets of perceived organisational support (role clarity, job information, participation in decision-making, colleague support and supervisory relationships) and turnover intention.
- To determine the moderating role of the sub-facets of perceived organisational support (role clarity, job information, participation in decision-making, colleague support and supervisory relationships) in the relationship between workplace bullying (superiors and colleagues) and turnover intention.
- To make recommendations for the organisation and future research.

1.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

1.3.1 Research approach

A quantitative research design was used to achieve the research objectives. The research was cross-sectional in nature, implying that the data collection took place at a single point in time (Trochim & Donnelly, 2008). Cross-sectional research can be descriptive or explanatory, but it is most consistent with a descriptive approach to research (Neuman, 1997).

1.3.2 Research method

The research method consists of a literature review and an empirical study. The results are presented in the form of a research article.

1.3.3 Literature review

The literature review focused on prior research relating to workplace bullying, POS and turnover intention. Relevant articles published between 1980 and 2011 were identified, due to a lack of contemporary sources where there are appropriate correlations between the sub-facets of POS and workplace bullying, using article databases such as *EBSCOHOST*,

Emerald, Science Direct, SAePublications, Proquest, and Metacrawler. The following terms were used as search terms: bullying, mobbing, victimisation, perpetrator, bully, role clarity, job information, participation, decision-making, supervisory relationships, colleague relationships, superiors, subordinates, productivity, turnover intention and absenteeism. The following journals were used because of their relevance to the current topic: South African Journal of Industrial Psychology, South African Journal of Human Resource Management, Journal of Applied Psychology, Journal of Organizational Behavior, Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology, Journal of Applied Psychology and European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology.

1.3.4 Research participants

Because bullying is still not recognised as an immensely significant factor in the world of work, the target population was made up of individuals from different sectors across South Africa. Data collected between 2007 and 2010 were utilised, comprising of a convenience sample ($N = 13\,911$) of employees in the following sectors: education ($n = 209$), finance ($n = 4\,673$), government ($n = 263$) manufacturing ($n = 3\,355$), mining ($n = 5\,197$) and other ($n = 117$). The study was conducted across all nine provinces and both genders were approached to participate in the study. The participants differed in marital status, and age varied between 20 and 60 years. Different racial groups such as African, White, Coloured and Indian, as well as participants from all 11 official language groups in South Africa, were included. Furthermore, the population consisted of individuals with different levels of education, which included primary, secondary and tertiary education. No distinction was made between job levels, as different organisations use different criteria in determining different job levels and many organisations were approached.

1.3.5 Measuring instruments

The South African Employee Health and Wellness Survey (SAEHWS) was administered to collect the data. The SAEHWS is a self-report instrument based on the dual-process model of work-related well-being (Rothmann, 2008) and is rooted in the assumption that employees' perceptions and experiences represent imperative information regarding the wellness climate in the organisation. The validity of the factor structures of the SAEHWS is equivalent for different ethnic groups and organisations and is therefore culturally sensitive with no bias

against any cultural group (Rothmann & Rothmann, 2006). The below alpha coefficients should be higher than the guideline of $\alpha > 0,70$ (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

Workplace bullying was measured in terms of bullying by superiors and bullying by colleagues. The scale for workplace bullying by superiors consisted of a 1-4 ('never' to 'always') Likert scale range, with twelve items asking questions such as: *"How often do you experience unpleasant personal remarks from your superiors?"*. The scale for workplace bullying by colleagues was also determined by a 1-4 Likert scale ('never' to 'always'), where responses to 12 items could be evaluated, with items such as: *"How often do you feel that your colleagues are spreading unfair rumours about you"*.

In order to measure perceived organisational support accurately, *POS* was measured by utilising the sub-facets of the stated definition (role clarity, job information, participation in decision-making, and colleague support and supervisory relationships). Therefore, questions were representative of each sub-facet. All sub-facets were measured on a Likert scale 1-4 ('never' to 'always') range with three items, including questions relating to the various sub-facets, such as role clarity: *"Do you know exactly what your responsibilities are?"*; job information: *"Do you receive sufficient information on the results of your work?"*; participation in decision-making: *"Can you participate in decisions about the nature of your work?"*; colleague support: *"If necessary, can you ask your colleagues for help?"* and supervisory relationships: *"Do you get on well with your direct supervisor?"*.

The *turnover intention* was rated on a 1-6 Likert scale ('strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree') where five items, including questions like: *"I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career in this organisation"*, were used.

1.3.6 Research procedure

The data were gathered from all nine provinces and specified sectors over a period of four years from 2007 to 2010. Participants were requested to follow a link on an e-mail and complete a computerised questionnaire. All participants completed a letter of informed consent. Confidentiality was maintained throughout this process.

1.3.7 Statistical analysis

The statistical analysis was carried out by means of the SPSS-program (SPSS Inc., 2009). Descriptive statistics (e.g. means, standard deviations, skewness and kurtosis) were used to analyse the data. Cronbach Alpha coefficients were used to assess the internal consistency, homogeneity and unidimensionality of the measuring instruments (Clark & Watson, 1995). The Eigen values and Scree plot were studied to determine the number of factors. A principal components analysis with a direct Oblimin rotation was conducted in the cases where factors were related ($r \geq 0,30$). A principal component analysis with a Varimax rotation was used if obtained factors were not related (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001).

Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were used to specify the relationship between the variables. In terms of statistical significance, it was decided to set the value at a 95% confidence interval level ($p \leq 0,05$). Effect sizes (Steyn, 1999) were used to decide on the practical significance of the findings. The practical significance of correlation coefficients was set with a medium effect ($p \geq 0,30$) and a large effect ($p \geq 0,50$).

Logistical regression analysis was conducted to determine the proportion of variance in the dependent variable (turnover intention) that was predicted by the independent variable (workplace bullying). Hierarchical regression analyses, as recommended by Aiken and West (1991), were performed in order to determine the moderating effect of the moderator variable (POS) on the relationship between the independent variable (workplace bullying) and the dependent variable (turnover intention). To provide a clearly interpretable interaction term and to reduce multicollinearity, the variables were standardised. In Step 1, the independent variable (workplace bullying) was regressed with the dependent variable (turnover intention). In the following steps, the dimensions of the moderator variable (POS, i.e. role clarity, job information, participation in decision-making, supervisory relationships and colleague support) were entered. The order of entering these variables depended on the strength of the correlations between the dimensions of the moderator variable (perceived organisational support) and the dependent variable (turnover intention). In the final step, the interaction term (workplace bullying $\times$ moderator) was added, and a moderating effect was confirmed if the interaction term was statistically significant and if explained variance (R^2) was significantly increased ($p \leq 0.05$).

1.3.8 Ethical considerations

Fair and ethical research is imperative in ensuring the success of this project. The questionnaires were anonymous and confidential. Furthermore, the research proposal was submitted for review to the North-West University's Ethical Faculty.

1.4 OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

Chapter 2 explores the set research objectives, which are discussed in the form of a research article. The conclusion, limitations and recommendations of this research article is presented in chapter 3.

1.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

Chapter 1 discussed the problem statement and the research questions. An overview of the research design and method was given, and the measuring instrument was described.

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CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH ARTICLE

The moderating role of perceived organisational support in the relationship between workplace bullying and turnover intention across sectors in South Africa

ABSTRACT

Orientation: Because workplace bullying has detrimental consequences on the profitability, work quality and turnover intention of organisations, this phenomenon should be addressed. Perceived Organisational Support (POS) will be explored since factors such as role clarity, job information, participation in decision-making, colleague support and supervisory relationships might act as buffers against workplace bullying, subsequently influencing the turnover intention of the organisation.

Research purpose: To investigate the role of POS as moderator in the relationship between workplace bullying and turnover intention across sectors in South Africa.

Motivation for the study: This study attempts to establish the moderating role of perceived organisational support in the relationship between workplace bullying (by superiors and colleagues) and turnover intention to create awareness in South African organisations.

Research design, approach and method: A cross-sectional survey approach with a quantitative research design was used ($N=13\,911$). The South African Employee Health and Wellness Survey (SAEHWS) was administered to explore the experiences of bullying behaviour, POS and turnover intention.

Main findings: Bullying by superiors is more prevalent than bullying by colleagues. A positive relationship exists between workplace bullying and turnover intention. Role clarity, participation in decision-making and supervisory relationship moderates the relationship between bullying by superiors and turnover intention.

Practical implications: This study will create an awareness of the prevalence of workplace bullying in the South African context so that sufficient counteraction can be encouraged.

Contribution: This study contributes to the limited research regarding workplace bullying in the South African context by quantifying the impact of workplace bullying on turnover intention.

Keywords: Superiors; colleagues; role clarity; job information; participation in decision-making; supervisory relationships; colleague support.

INTRODUCTION

Key focus

Despite the increasing demands of the global world, which constantly generates new technological aspirations, work relationships are still recognised as a central component of workplaces worldwide. Workplace bullying by either an individual (Sperry, 2009) or multiple perpetrators (Namie & Namie, 2009) is increasing in the workplace. Furthermore, bullying in the workplace is recognised internationally (Baillien, Neyens, De Witte & De Cuyper, 2009; Cleary, Hunt, Walter & Robertson, 2009; Einarsen, Hoel & Notelaers, 2009; Namie & Namie, 2009; Lutgen-Sandvik & Sypher, 2009; Ortega, Høgh, Pejtersen & Olsen, 2009) and nationally (Kirtsen, Rossouw & Viljoen, 2005; Marais-Steinmann, 1998; Pieterse, 2007; Wright, 2008) as a relevant and destructive phenomenon. This study will fill the gap on workplace bullying research in South Africa and would endeavour to show the impact of workplace bullying experiences on employee turnover intention.

Most international studies have focused on the development and measurement of workplace bullying (Baillien et al., 2009; Einarsen, Hoel & Notelaers, 2009; Namie & Namie, 2009), characteristics of workplace bullying (Ortega et al., 2009; Lutgen-Sandvik & Sypher, 2009) and the different sectors experiencing workplace bullying (Bilgel, Aytac & Bayram, 2006; Bloisi & Hoel, 2008; Mathiesen, Einarsen & Mykletun, 2008; Murry, 2008). This study will focus on two forms of workplace bullying, *viz.*, experiences of bullying behaviour from superiors and experiences of bullying behaviour from colleagues. Furthermore, the study will investigate whether perceived organisational support acts as a buffer against workplace bullying and will, in addition, endeavour to show the impact of workplace bullying on employee turnover intention.

Background of the study

In the context of Industrial Psychology, international research has shown a growing interest in workplace bullying (Agervold, 2007). Conversely, workplace bullying in South Africa is still in its infancy. This aggressive behaviour affects personal and professional relationships throughout an individual's lifespan (Lewis, Coursol & Wahl, 2002) and if not recognised by organisations as a workplace phenomenon, it will increase. According to Namie (2007) most countries'

legislation counteracts only sexual harassment and not workplace bullying. Workplace bullying occurs between superiors and their staff, and more recently, horizontally, which entails bullying among colleagues (Lewis & Sheehan, 2003). However, research has shown that abusive superiors have a more profound effect on employee commitment than experiencing abusive behaviour from colleagues (Koonin & Green, 2004; McCormick, Casimir, Djurkovic & Yang, 2006) as employees tend to associate the superior with the organisation.

Nevertheless, if an organisation acts in a professional manner by providing the necessary support to workplace bullying targets, these supportive measures may enable employee coping mechanisms to deal with abusive behaviour in a constructive manner (Quine, 1999). Similarly, many researchers report that the lack of support is central to the inability of workplace bullying targets to cope with this phenomenon (Lewis & Orford, 2005; Leymann & Gustafsson, 1996; Matthiesen, Aasen, Holst, Wie & Einarsen, 2003). Then again, workplace bullying is under-reported and becoming an increasingly silent epidemic because of the lack of perceived organisational support and the fear of retribution (Koonin & Green, 2004; Lewis, Coursol & Wahl, 2002; MacIntosh, 2005; Strandmark & Hallberg, 2007). Consequently, the responsibility to cope with and report workplace bullying experiences does not rest only with the employee, but it is also the responsibility of the organisation to protect employees against such actions in the workplace.

Namie (2000) acknowledges that 96% of co-workers are aware of the bullying target's situation, suggesting that bullying is not a workplace secret. Even if co-workers do not witness workplace bullying, 87% of targets tell co-workers about their experiences. However, instead of protesting the bullying behaviour, employees on the sidelines often rally in support of the perpetrator; this is usually done because of fear of punishment and as self-protection. Because of this bullying, targets are incapable to form supportive coalitions with colleagues (Namie, 2000).

Workplace bullying is linked to various physical (headache, anxiety, increased blood pressure, and heart disease) and psychological (diagnosis disorders and depression) costs for the target caused by stress due to fear of the perpetrator (Gholipour, Sanjari, Bod & Kozekanan, 2011). In 1996, Leymann and Gustafsson studies 64 victims of bullying who had referred to a psychology

clinic. The findings showed that 92% of them suffered from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (Leymann & Gustafsson, 1996). The financial expenses is the most tangible cost of bullying which for instance allocate annually 30,000 to 100,000 dollar for every bullying incident in any organisation (Meglic-Sespico, Faley, Knapp & Erdos, 2007). Consequences relating to the organisation include compensation for medical expenses (Bassman, 1992), and reduced productivity (Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf & Cooper, 2003) due to poor work performance. According to Einarsen et al. (2003), and Rayner and Keashly (2005), low-quality work, reduced productivity, high staff turnover and increased absenteeism are among the indirect costs to organisations. Targets contemplating strategies to cope with this destructive phenomenon found resignation to be an appropriate solution (Björkqvist, Österman & Hjelt-Bäck, 1994; Davenport, Schwartz & Elliott, 1999; Namie, 2000; Quine, 1999).

Research purpose

The objectives of this study were to 1) conceptualize workplace bullying, perceived organisational support and turnover intention according to the literature; 2) determine the relationships between workplace bullying by superiors/colleagues, perceived organisational support (role clarity, job information, participation in decision-making, colleague support and supervisory relationships) and turnover intention; 3) determine whether perceived organisational support (role clarity, job information, participation in decision-making, colleague support and supervisory relationships) moderate the relationship between workplace bullying (superiors and colleagues) and turnover intention; and 4) suggest recommendations for the organisation and future research.

Trends from the literature

Workplace bullying

The study of workplace bullying originated in Scandinavia in the 1980s with the work of Heinz Leymann, who used the term “mobbing” to describe the phenomenon (Duffy & Sperry, 2007; Einarsen et al., 2003; Leymann, 1996). Researchers worldwide use different labels to describe this form of antagonistic workplace behaviour. In countries such as France and Germany this behaviour is labelled as “mobbing” (Zapf, Knorz & Kulla, 1996) whereas “harassment” is the term preferred in Finland (Björkqvist, Österman & Hjelt-Bäck, 1994), while in the United States

of America it is described as “aggression” (Baron & Neuman, 1998) or “emotional abuse” (Keashly, 2001). The term “workplace bullying” is used primarily in Australia (Sheehan, 1999), the United Kingdom (Rayner, 1999) and Northern Europe (Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996). South African researchers delineate repetitive negative acts as “workplace bullying” (Pieterson, 2007).

Workplace bullying can be regarded as an element of aggressive behaviour that manifests in interpersonal work relationships between two individuals or between an individual and a group (Zapf & Einarsen, 2001). Rothmann and Rothmann (2006, p. 14) define bullying as “*harassing, offending and socially excluding someone at work to such a level that these actions negatively affect a person’s work tasks*”. Thus, the label of the bully can be applied when a particular activity, interaction, behaviour or process has occurred repeatedly, frequently and over a period of time (Wood, 2008). Bullying is an escalating process where the victim experiences systematic negative social acts that lead to inferiority (Einarsen et al., 2003).

The perpetrator might utilise the following methods of bullying: (1) make unreasonable demands with unfeasible deadlines, whilst expecting precision; (2) display a hyper-confident/arrogant attitude towards the victim, for example, by sitting at the desk with his feet up; (3) grooming while the victim is talking; (4) create uncomfortable environments by standing and hovering over the seated victim; (5) bombard the victim with meaningless information; (6) accept phone calls during conversations with the victim; (7) multitask while in the victim’s presence; and (8) harshly criticise the victim’s work or abilities (Namie & Namie, 2003; Needham, 2003). Consequently, hard evidence is not obtainable as the acts of bullying can be very subtle and varied.

According to Rayner (1997), different types of bullying can be categorised as follows: threat to professional status (belittling opinion, public professional humiliation, accusation regarding lack of effort); threat to personal reputation (name-calling, insults, intimidation, devaluing); isolation (preventing growth opportunities, physical or social isolation, withholding information); overwork (undue pressure, impossible deadlines, unnecessary disruptions); and destabilisation (failure to give recognition, assigning of meaningless tasks, removal of responsibility, repeated reminders of blunders, and setting the victim up to fail).

According to Namie and Namie (2003), 82% of employees who had been bullied left their workplaces, 38% for health reasons and 44% because they were victims of a low performance appraisal manipulated by a bullying superior to show them as incompetent. According to Watkins (2007), a person who experiences persistent intimidation might learn to expect bullying behaviour from others and develop a pattern of compliance with the unfair demands of those he or she perceives as stronger.

Furthermore, Baillien et al. (2009) advised that future research should focus on the distinction between different perpetrators of bullying in the organisation, such as superiors and colleagues.

Bullying by superiors

Superiors are perpetrators of workplace bullying in 60-80% of cases (Hoel & Cooper, 2000; Lutgen-Sandvik, Tracy & Alberts, 2007; Namie & Namie, 2003). Similarly, superiors are more likely to be perceived as perpetrators of workplace bullying (Garcia, Hue, Opdebeeck & Van Looy, 2002). Both Rayner and Keashly (2005) and Zapf and Einarsen (2005) ascertained that, with the exception of Scandinavian studies (Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2002; Einarsen, 2000; Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996), most studies have consistently found superiors to be involved in 50-70% of all bullying cases (Cowie et al., 2000; Hoel, Cooper & Faragher, 2001). In a nationally representative survey (Namie, 2007), 72% of reported bullies were managers, some of whom had the sponsorship and support of executives, managerial peers, or human resource professionals. Thus, it can be assumed that superiors are more likely than colleagues to act as the perpetrators.

Bullying behaviours also exist because of a white wall of silence, where the superior often defends the perpetrator (Murray, 2007). Consequently, the superior can be the bully or even be the second degree perpetrator in a bullying situation where he defends the bully. According to Institute of Management & Administration (IOMA) (July, 2008), witnesses to workplace bullying believed in 43% of cases that the perpetrator of bullying had the support of one or more senior managers when harassing a victim. Similarly, Longo and Sherman (2007) suggest that superiors manipulate behaviour and often protect the bully instead of the victims. As a result,

reporting bullying behaviour is often an unsatisfactory solution, especially since superiors are more likely to be associated with being the support from the organisation.

According to Leymann (1990), bullying exists in organisations characterised by deficiencies in work design, leadership and negative social climates. It is argued that where managers avoid taking charge or involving themselves with work and stress or interpersonal conflicts and tensions, there is a breeding ground for bullies (Leymann, 1996). Consequently, targets may feel powerless to make a formal complaint against superiors because the employee with the higher formal status may be supported (Rayner, Hoel & Cooper, 2002).

Without clear-cut procedures and constraints, managers rely more on subjective judgments of employee commitment and productivity (Moss & Tilly, 2001; Pager & Quillian, 2005). Such subjectivity also expands the potential for targeted rivalry and unacceptable treatment of minority and female employees (Roscigno, Garcia & Bobbitt-Zeher, 2007). This generates room for abusive behaviour. Autocratic leadership (Einarsen, Aaslan & Skogstad, 2007) and abusive supervision (Tepper, 2000) represent a form of bullying. However, bullying is not restricted to autocratic types of leadership styles; it can also occur among colleagues at the same hierarchical level.

Bullying by colleagues

While superiors are the most common perpetrators of workplace bullying (Garcia et al., 2002), bullying can involve co-workers “mobbing” other co-workers (Einarsen et al., 2003; Zapf & Einarsen, 2005). Scandinavian research suggests that bullying from colleagues was more commonly reported than bullying from superiors (Mikkelsen & Einarsen 2001; Einarsen 2000; Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996). Studies have shown that bullying among colleagues has a higher ratio than bullying by superiors. There is also evidence of interpersonal conflicts among colleagues, particularly in situations where teamwork and competition prevails.

In approximately a third of incidents, victims identified their colleagues or peer groups as the perpetrators, although bullying by colleagues is also interlinked with bullying by superiors. Conflict can easily be the origin of aggressive behaviour between colleagues, and potentially

escalates into bullying when the behaviour becomes deliberate and purposeful (Strandmark & Hallberg, 2007). New or younger employees in the organisation are considered to be particularly vulnerable, as are ethnic minorities, owing to a lack of knowledge regarding their rights and the regulations of the workplace (Westhuses, 2004). Intimidation and blame in the organisation creates mutually held fears about future job security among employees (Vaez, Ekberg & LaFlamme, 2003). Job insecurity creates a climate of rivalry when employees see their colleagues as potential rivals for jobs. This may cause feelings of competition and suspicion, factors that are known to be associated with workplace bullying (Bjorkqvist, Österman & Hjelt-Bäck, 1994).

Manipulative and inappropriate behaviour from colleagues has led one in five to quit their jobs, creating a substantial staff retention problem for employers. A further 23% of employed people have raised complaints of bullying in the workplace but in two out of three cases, issues remain unresolved or the complaints have failed to affect the bullying campaigns at all (Mason, 2010). The Labour Day Survey of the Workplace Bullying Institute (2008) indicates that among witnesses of victims being bullied, 46% were aware of the incidents, 15% became actively aggressive towards the bullies and in less than 1% of all situations did a team gang together to confront the bully in an effort to prevent the offensive treatment of their colleagues. In 55% of all cases, colleagues agreed that they were afraid of the bully.

Bullying and POS

According to Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002), POS is founded on the assumption that employees form opinions regarding the extent to which an organisation values their contributions and cares about their well-being; moreover, less workplace bullying has been reported in organisations with a supportive (accommodating, trustworthy and caring) climate (Baillien, Neyens & De Witte, 2004).

Dimensions of POS have been established as follows: role clarity (Eisenberger, Rhoades & Cameron, 1999, Zapf, Knorz & Kulla, 1996), job information (Schat & Kelloway, 2003), participation in decision-making (Allen, Shore & Griffeth, 2003), support from co-workers (Djurkovic, McCormick & Casimir, 2004), supervisory support (Settoon, Bennett & Liden,

1996), which leads to increased job satisfaction (Eisenberger, Cummings, Armeli & Lynch, 1997), performance (Shanock & Eisenberger, 2006), commitment (Hochwarter, Kacmar, Perrewe & Johnson, 2003), and reduced turnover (Allen, Shore & Griffeth, 2003; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002).

Targets as well as observers of workplace bullying suffer from an ill-conditioned work environment (Sheehan, Ramsay & Patrick, 2000). Ill-conditioned work environments with autocratic leadership styles, low job control, role conflict, lack of participation in decision-making processes, and lack of support from superiors emancipate a bullying culture (Quine, 2001).

Role conflict/ambiguity manifests in work environments where bullying exists. Einarsen, Raknes and Matthiesen (1994) highlight the fact that employees who are uncertain about their job expectations will experience a lack of support from the organisation. Moreover, targets of bullying rated the work environment more negatively, particularly with respect to the experience of role ambiguity (Vartia, 1996; Zapf, 1999). Therefore, role clarity can buffer the impact of workplace bullying through providing a sense of perceived support from the organisation.

Furthermore, clear evidence indicates that negative acts by superiors and colleagues, such as imposing demeaning tasks, excessive monitoring, excessive criticism, withholding of information and exclusion thereof, represent workplace bullying (Lewis & Gunn, 2007). On the other hand, factors shown to buffer the manifestation of workplace bullying can be justified by the following: supportive management structures (Cummings & Worley, 1997), reward systems analysis (Wilson, 1997) and worker involvement and participation in decision-making (Marchington, 1995).

In addition, studies conducted in the UK and Scandinavia have shown that many employees from both public and private sector organisations are frequently subjected to physical and verbal abuse by their colleagues and/or superiors (Adams, 1992; Leymann, 1990; Randall, 1997; Wilson, 1991). Lack of social support from colleagues in the work environment places targets in a more

vulnerable position and so they become an easier target for bullies (Sheehan, Ramsay & Patrick, 2000).

Ineffective management from superiors can include unprofessional and aggressive behaviour, autocratic management style, a lack of encouragement, acknowledgment and feedback, a lack of listening, support and understanding and a lack of clear directions (Martin & Jones, 2000). Without a supportive culture in the organisation, workplace bullying will lead, directly or indirectly, to an increased intention to leave of targets in the organisation (Djurkovic, McCormick & Casimir, 2004; Keashly, 2001; Quine, 2001).

Bullying and turnover intention

Turnover has traditionally been predicted in terms of employees' 'intent to leave' the organisation (Hopkins, Cohen-Callow, Kim and Hwang, 2010). It is estimated that 'leavers' display a series of withdrawal behaviors, in this case due to workplace bullying, that can culminate into leaving the organisation (Griffeth, Hom & Gaertner, 2000). This behaviour incurs substantial costs for the organisation (Waldman, Kelly, Arora & Smith, 2004). Workplace bullying has widespread negative effects on organisations because it affects not only the targets but also those who witness bullying behaviour. Bullying adversely affects organisational performance in terms of output, creativity and innovation (Rayner, Hoel & Cooper, 2002). Because of employers' costs associated with bullying, such as: productivity loss, costs regarding interventions by third parties, turnover, increased sick-leave, workers' compensation and disability claims and legal liability - employers should logically be motivated to stop workplace bullying (Hoel & Einarsen, 2010).

POS and turnover intention

Researchers have focused significant attention on the concept of POS as a key predictor of turnover intention (Maertz, Griffeth, Campbell & Allen, 2007). Hui, Teo and Lee (2007), examined both turnover intention and POS and concluded that POS was negatively related to thoughts of leaving the organisation. Joseph and his colleagues, (Joseph, Ng, Koh, & Ang, 2007) found that turnover intention is influenced by multiple factors such as rewards, social support, role behaviors, role stressors and human capital. Conversely, POS was also positively

related to staying with the organisation. POS was negatively related to thoughts about quitting a job as a result of negative acts in the workplace. Similarly, Kinnunen, Feldt and Makikangas (2008) found that POS was negatively related to the likelihood of leaving an organisation and the frequency of thoughts about leaving the organisation.

Accordingly, *“a social network and social support are valuable resources that not only enable individuals to cope with a wide variety of extant stressors but may also facilitate proactive coping efforts”* (Aspinwall & Taylor, 1997, p. 421). In a longitudinal study of manufacturing workers, Moore, Grunberg and Greenberg (2004) found that greater role clarity was significantly associated with less turnover intention. Moreover, role clarity creates a sense of purpose for employees, leading to the retention of employees by the organisation (Canan Sumer & Van Den Ven, 2008). In addition, a variety of abusive supervisory behaviours (Zellars, Tepper & Duffy, 2002) and a lack of participation in decision-making (Allen, Shore & Griffeth, 2003) have been identified as situations where the only solution lies in targets quitting their jobs.

Thus, Eisenberger and co-workers (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison & Sowa, 1986) argue that targets who perceive greater support from their employing organisation would be more likely to feel obligated to ‘repay’ the organisation (Shore & Wayne, 1993).

To this end, the goal of this study is to add to the research on the existence of workplace bullying in the South African context and how targets of bullying perceive support from the organisation where such a culture prevails. The impact of this phenomenon on turnover intention in organisations should create encouragement to generate transformation.

Contribution

Avoidance by employers and employees to acknowledge the problem of workplace bullying hinders the awareness of the detrimental effects of such bullying on the world of work. By understanding the impact of bullying, organisations might be stimulated to buffer workplace bullying with sufficient support, such as role clarity, sufficient job information, joint decision-making and support from both the supervisors and colleagues of the targets.

International research (Baillien et al., 2009; Cleary et al., 2009; Einarsen, Hoel & Notelaers, 2009; Lutgen-Sandvik & Sypher, 2009; Namie & Namie, 2009; Ortega et al., 2009) has established the significance of workplace bullying worldwide. Consequently, this phenomenon cannot be ignored in the South African context. South Africa is still in the exploration phase of how workplace bullying affects a diverse third world country (Marais-Steinmann, 1998; Kirtsen, Rossouw & Viljoen, 2005; Pieterse, 2007; Wright, 2008). Hence, this study will not only contribute to a better understanding of workplace bullying trends in South Africa and the impact thereof on employee turnover intention, but it would also provide for preventive measures to minimise the risk of bullying behaviour in South African workplaces.

Contemporary research is essential in determining the impact of workplace bullying on the intention to leave the organisation. However, greater emphasis on the impact of workplace bullying creates more awareness so that organisations and employees can counteract its occurrence. Thus, organisations can be alert and prepared to target workplace bullying through interventions, policies and, as this study may reveal, perceived organisational support, in order to counteract this issue.

The following hypotheses will be tested:

H₁: Workplace bullying by superiors will be more prevalent in organisations than workplace bullying by colleagues.

H₂: A negative relationship exists between workplace bullying by superiors and perceived organisational support (role clarity, job information, participation in decision-making, colleague support and supervisory relationships).

H₃: A negative relationship exists between workplace bullying by colleagues and perceived organisational support (role clarity, job information, participation in decision-making, colleague support and supervisory relationships).

H₄: A negative relationship exists between perceived organisational support (role clarity, job information, participation in decision-making, colleague support and supervisory relationships) and turnover intention.

H₅: A positive relationship exists between workplace bullying by superiors and turnover intention.

H₆: A positive relationship exists between workplace bullying by colleagues and turnover intention.

H₇: Perceived organisational support (role clarity, job information, participation in decision-making, colleague support and supervisory relationships) plays a moderating role in the relationship between workplace bullying (superiors and colleagues) and turnover intention.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Research approach

This article follows a quantitative research approach with a cross-sectional field survey. This approach is conducted by means of questionnaires to measure workplace bullying, turnover intention and POS at a single point in time (Trochim & Donnelly, 2008).

Research method

Research participants

The sample group is represented by an availability sample of 13 911 participants gathered over a spectrum of 9 provinces and 5 sectors. The first table presents the biographical characteristics of the participants.

Table 1

Characteristics of the participants (N = 13 911)

Item	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	9158	65,8
	Female	4753	34,2
Age	< 20	3	0,0
	>60	637	4,6
	20-30	2233	16,1
	30-40	4180	30,0
	40-50	4052	29,1
	50-60	2806	20,2
Race	Black	3659	26,3
	White	5128	36,9
	Coloured	212	1,5
	Indian	236	1,7
	Other	11	0,1

Language	Afrikaans	5486	39,4
	English	4089	29,4
	Sepedi	420	3,0
	Sesotho	1080	7,8
	Setswana	735	5,3
	siSwati	164	1,2
	Tshivenda	88	0,6
	isiZulu	838	6,0
	isiNdebele	81	0,6
	isiXhosa	642	4,6
	isiNdebele	175	1,3
	isiXhosa	112	0,8
	Xitsonga	5486	39,4
	Other	4089	29,4
Marital status	Single	3827	27,5
	Engaged	276	2,0
	Married	8826	63,4
	Divorced	848	6,1
	Widow	93	0,7
	Widower	41	0,3
Education	Grade 8	1989	14,3
	Grade 9	114	0,8
	Grade 10	657	4,7
	Grade 11	263	1,9
	Grade 12	6702	48,2
	3-Year Degree/Diploma	2382	17,1
	4-Year Degree/Diploma	1069	7,7
	5- to 7-Year Degree	214	1,5
	Master's Degree	448	3,2
	Doctoral Degree	70	0,5
Provinces	Gauteng	6820	49,0
	Mpumalanga	2177	15,6
	North West Province	3081	22,1
	Limpopo	40	0,3
	Free State	748	5,4
	Northern Cape	23	0,2
	Western Cape	451	3,2
	Eastern Cape	144	1,0
	KwaZulu-Natal	386	2,8
Sectors	Academic	209	1,5
	Financial	4673	33,6
	Government	263	1,9
	Manufacturing	3355	24,1

Mining	5197	37,4
Other	117	0,8

The sample ($N = 13\,911$) embodies a variety of sectors in the South African industry (academic, financial, government, manufacturing, mining and other), in which the mining industry is represented by 5 197 (37,4% of the total sample) participants and the academic environment has the lowest representation, with 209 (1,5%) participants. Afrikaans-speaking (5 486) and Xitsonga-speaking (5 486) participants make up most of the sample group with 78,8%, while 81 isiNdebele participants (0,6%) make up the smallest proportion of the language category. There are almost twice as many males, with 9 158 (65,8%) participants, as females. Married people, represented by 8 826 (63,4%) participants, those with tertiary education, represented by 4 183 (30%) participants, and 4 180 (30%) participants between the ages of 30 and 40 years old, make up most of the sample in each category respectively, while 41 (0,3%) widowers, and 3 (0,0%) participants younger than 20 years old, make up the least of each category respectively. In order from the least to the most participants per race group are: Coloured, 212 (1,5%), Indian, 236 (1,7%), Black, 3 659 (26,3%) and White, 5 128 (36,9%). Most participants, 6 820 (49%), come from the Gauteng area while the Northern Cape, with 23 participants (0,2%), is least represented.

Measuring instruments

A *biographical questionnaire* was administered in order to document the socio-demographic differences of the participants. Characteristics on this questionnaire included gender, age, race, language, marital status, educational level, geographical distribution and industry.

The *South African Employee Health and Wellness Survey* (SAEHWS) was administered to collect the data. The SAEHWS are founded on the assumption of the dual-process model of work related well-being. Nelson and Simmons (2003) holistic model of well-being indicates that demands and resources in an organisation might lead to distress (burnout) or eustress (engagement). In addition, the dual-process model (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004), job demands and resources might affect physical health, psychological wellbeing and organisational commitment through certain mediating factors such as burnout and work engagement. Hence, job demands and resources could be regarded as important causes of well-being at work (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner & Schaufeli, 2001; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). The SAEHWS is a self-report

instrument based on the dual-process model of work-related well-being (Rothmann & Rothmann, 2006), developed by Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner and Schaufeli (2001), and is rooted in the assumption that employees' perceptions and experiences represent imperative information regarding the wellness climate in the organisation. The validity of the factor structures of the SAEHWS is equivalent for different ethnic groups and organisations and is therefore culturally sensitive with no bias against any cultural group (Rothmann & Rothmann, 2006). South African norms were also developed and Rothmann and Rothmann (2006) reported that the reliability of the SAEHWS was satisfactory, with Chronbach's Alpha coefficient above 0,70.

For the purpose of this study the following sections from the SAEHWS were used:

Workplace bullying was measured in terms of bullying by superiors and bullying by colleagues to determine the main culprits. The scale for workplace bullying by superiors consisted of a 1-4 ('never' to 'always') Likert scale range with twelve items asking questions such as: "*How often do you experience unpleasant personal remarks from your superiors?*" The scale for workplace bullying by colleagues is also determined by a 1-4 Likert scale ('never' to 'always') where responses to 12 items can be evaluated, with questions such as: "*How often do you feel that your colleagues are spreading unfair rumours about you?*"

To determine the role of *POS* in this study, it was measured, for the sake of accuracy, by utilising the sub-facets of the stated definition (role clarity, job information, participation in decision-making, colleague support and supervisory relationships). Therefore, questions will be representative of each sub-facet. All sub-facets will be measured on a Likert scale 1-4 ('never' to 'always') range with three items, including questions relating to the various sub-facets, such as role clarity: "*Do you know exactly what your responsibilities are?*"; job information: "*Do you receive sufficient information on the results of your work?*"; participation in decision-making: "*Can you participate in decisions about the nature of your work?*"; colleague support: "*If necessary, can you ask your colleagues for help?*" and supervisory relationships: "*Do you get on well with your direct supervisor?*".

Furthermore, turnover intention was explored. The turnover intention was rated on a 1-6 Likert scale ('strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree') with five items, where questions like: "*I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career in this organisation*" were asked.

Research procedure

The data were gathered in collaboration with AfriForte (Pty) Ltd. over a period of four years from 2007 to 2010. The data were collected from all nine provinces and specified sectors. Participants were requested to follow a link received via e-mail and to complete the computerised questionnaire online. A letter of informed consent was completed by all participants and confidentiality was maintained throughout the research process.

Statistical analysis

The statistical analysis was carried out by means of the SPSS-programme (SPSS Inc., 2009). Descriptive statistics (e.g. means, standard deviations, skewness and kurtosis) were used to analyse the data. Cronbach Alpha coefficients were used to assess the internal consistency, homogeneity and unidimensionality of the measuring instruments (Clark & Watson, 1995). The Eigenvalues and Scree plot were studied to determine the number of extracted factors. A principal components analysis with a direct Oblimin rotation was conducted in the case where factors were related ($r > 0,30$). A principal component analysis with a Varimax rotation was used if obtained factors were not related (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001).

To specify the relationship between the variables, Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were used in the case of normal distribution, and Spearman product-moment correlation coefficients for skew distributions. In terms of statistical significance, it was decided to set the value at a 95% confidence interval level ($p \leq 0,05$). Effect sizes (Steyn, 1999) were used to decide on the practical significance of the findings. The practical significance of correlation coefficients was set with a medium effect ($p \geq 0,30$) and a large effect ($p \geq 0,50$).

Logistic regression analysis was conducted to determine the proportion of variance in the dependent variable (turnover intention) that is predicted by the independent variable (workplace bullying). A hierarchical regression analysis, as recommended by Aiken and West (1991), was

performed in order to determine the moderating effect of the moderator variable (POS) on the relationship between the independent variable (workplace bullying) and the dependent variable (turnover intention). To provide a clearly interpretable interaction term and to reduce multicollinearity, the variables were standardised. In Step 1, the independent variable (workplace bullying) was regressed with the dependent variable (turnover intention). In the following steps, the dimensions of the moderator variable (POS, i.e. role clarity, job information, participation in decision-making, colleague support and supervisory relationship) were entered. The order of entering these variables depended on the strength of the correlations between the dimensions of the moderator variable (perceived organisational support) and the dependent variable (turnover intention). In the final step, the interaction term (workplace bullying $\times$ moderator) was added, and a moderating effect was confirmed if the interaction term was statistically significant and if explained variance (R^2) was significantly increased ($p \leq 0.05$).

RESULTS

Descriptive statistics and internal consistencies

Table 2 provides the descriptive statistics and internal consistencies (Cronbach alpha coefficients) between workplace bullying, POS (role clarity, job information, participation in decision-making, colleague support and supervisory relationships) and turnover intention.

Table 2

Descriptive statistics and Cronbach alpha coefficients of the SAEHWS

Item	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	α
Bullying by superiors	17,54	6,34	1,71*	3,30*	0,87
Bullying by colleagues	15,86	5,18	1,99*	5,24*	0,86
Role clarity	9,49	2,04	-0,63	-1,88*	0,85
Job information	8,60	2,46	8,60*	-0,79	0,82
Participation in decision-making	8,69	2,32	-0,37	-0,63	0,82
Colleague support	9,56	2,03	-0,46	-0,65	0,84
Supervisory relationships	9,49	2,37	-0,71	-0,41	0,84
Turnover intention	5,92	4,00	0,84	0,75	0,86

*High skewness and/or kurtosis

Table 2 represents the satisfactory Cronbach alpha coefficients obtained for all the scales which were higher than the guideline of $\alpha > 0,70$ (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). All the items are normally distributed except for bullying by superiors and colleagues, role clarity and job information. Therefore, for these constructs the Spearman product-moment correlations will apply. Pearson product-moment correlations were used for all the other scales.

Table 3

Correlation coefficients between workplace bullying (superiors and colleagues), POS and turnover intention (N = 13 911).

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Bullying by superiors	1,00	-	-	-	-	-	-
2. Bullying by colleagues	0,57 ⁺⁺	1,00	-	-	-	-	-
3. Role clarity	-0,35 ^{*+}	-0,26 [*]	1,00	-	-	-	-
4. Job information	-0,40 ^{*+}	-0,26 [*]	0,68 ⁺⁺	1,00	-	-	-
5. Participation in decision-making	-0,41 ^{*+}	-0,24 [*]	0,56 ⁺⁺	0,62 ⁺⁺	1,00	-	-
6. Colleague support	-0,29 [*]	-0,33 ^{*+}	0,37 ^{*+}	0,38 ^{*+}	0,39 ^{*+}	1,00	-
7. Supervisory relationships	-0,52 ⁺⁺	-0,30 ^{*+}	0,57 ⁺⁺	0,64 ⁺⁺	0,64 ⁺⁺	0,48 ^{*+}	1,00
8. Turnover intention	+0,28 [*]	+0,21 [*]	-0,32 ⁺⁺	-0,31 ^{*+}	-0,37 ^{*+}	-0,26 [*]	-0,32 ^{*+}

* Correlation is statistically significant at the 0,01 level

+ Correlation is practically significant, $r > 0,30$ (medium effect)

++ Correlation is practically significant, $r > 0,50$ (large effect)

Table 3 indicates that bullying by superiors shows a positive statistically and practically significant correlation (with a large effect) with bullying by colleagues, and a negative statistically and practically significant correlation (with a large effect) with supervisory relationships. Also, negative statistically and practically significant correlations were found (with a medium effect) between bullying by superiors and work role clarity, job information and participation in decision-making. A positive statistically significant correlation was found between bullying by superiors and turnover intention.

Bullying by colleagues is negatively correlated with all constructs with a statistically significant relationship; however, practical significant correlations with a medium effect were found with colleague support and supervisory relationships. A positive statistically significant correlation was found between bullying by colleagues and turnover intention.

Role clarity shows a positive statistical significance with all constructs and a practical significance (with a large effect) with job information, supervisory relationships and participation in decision-making. A practical significance (with a medium effect) was found between Role clarity and Colleague support, whereas a negative practical significant correlation was shown for turnover intention. Job information shows a positive statistically and practically significant correlation with all constructs: supervisory relationships and participation in decision-making (large effect) and colleague support and a negative statistically and practically significant correlation with turnover intention (medium effect).

To address the last objective of this research study, a hierarchical regression analysis was conducted in order to determine if POS acts as a moderator in the relationship between workplace bullying (either by superiors or by colleagues) and turnover intention.

Table 4

Hierarchical regression analysis (role clarity) with turnover intention as dependent variable

Model	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	t	P	F	R	R ²	Δ R ²
	Beta (β)	SE	Beta (β)						
1 Constant	11,83	0,15		77,11	0,00*	1552,01	0,32	0,10	0,10
Role clarity	-0,62	0,02	-0,32	-39,4	0,00*				
2 Constant	8,68	0,21		41,73	0,00*	481,23	0,36	0,13	0,03
Role clarity	-0,51	0,02	-0,26	-30,7	0,00*				
Bullying by superiors	0,12	0,01	0,18	21,94	0,00*				
3 Constant	8,69	0,21		41,79	0,00*	13,42	0,36	0,13	0,00
Role clarity	-0,51	0,02	-0,26	-31,0	0,00*				
Bullying by superiors	0,12	0,01	0,19	22,14	0,00*				
Role clarity x Bullying by superiors	0,10	0,03	0,03	3,66	0,00*				

* $p \leq 0,05$

In step one of the hierarchical regression role clarity was regressed on turnover intention ($\beta = -0,32$, $p = 0,00$) producing a significant model. The entering of bullying by superiors in step two produced a significant model ($\beta = 0,18$, $p = 0,00$). In the third step the interaction term was entered, producing a significant model ($\beta = 0,03$, $p = 0,00$). Thus, role clarity, as one of the defined sub-facets of POS, proves to play a significant role in the relationship between workplace bullying by superiors and the tendency to leave the organisation. A target who has clarity on his or her role might consider staying in the organisation, despite workplace bullying which would usually be serious enough to lead to resignation.

Figure 2

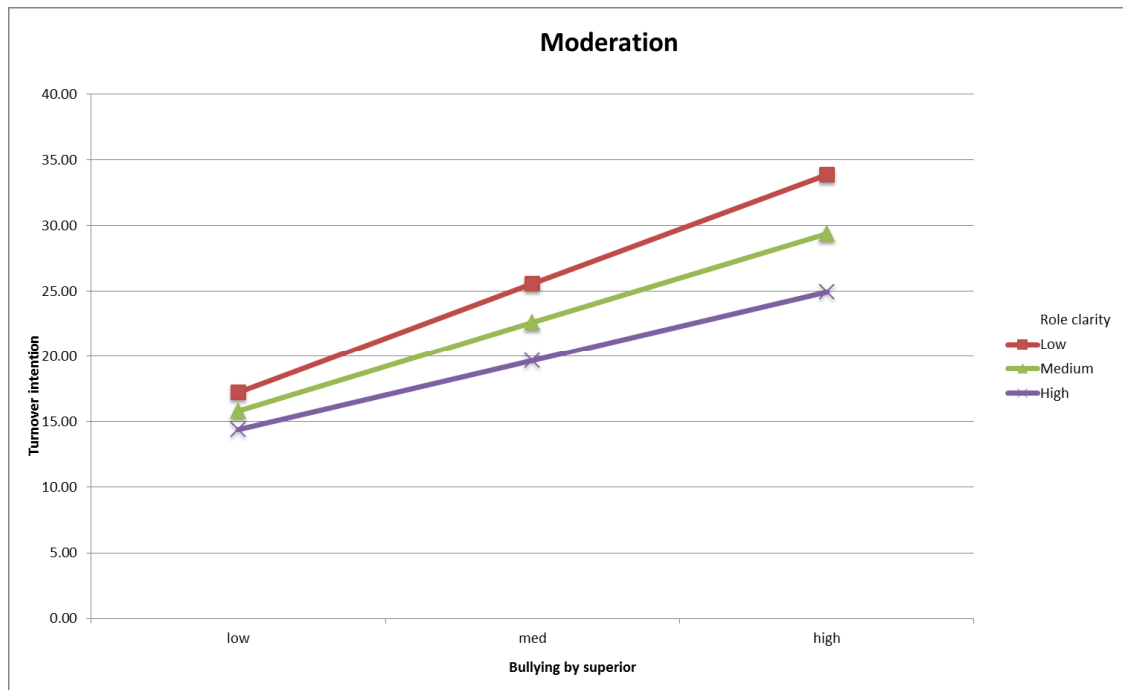


Figure 2 shows that when bullying by superiors manifests, targets who perceive less support from their organisations (in experiencing role ambiguity) have a much higher tendency to leave the organisation. However, it can also be seen that when targets' experience of role clarity increases, those targets being bullied by their superiors will, in comparison with those employees who experience low levels of support, be more inclined to stay in the organisations despite the bullying culture.

Table 5

Hierarchical regression analyses (participation in decision-making) with turnover intention as dependent variable

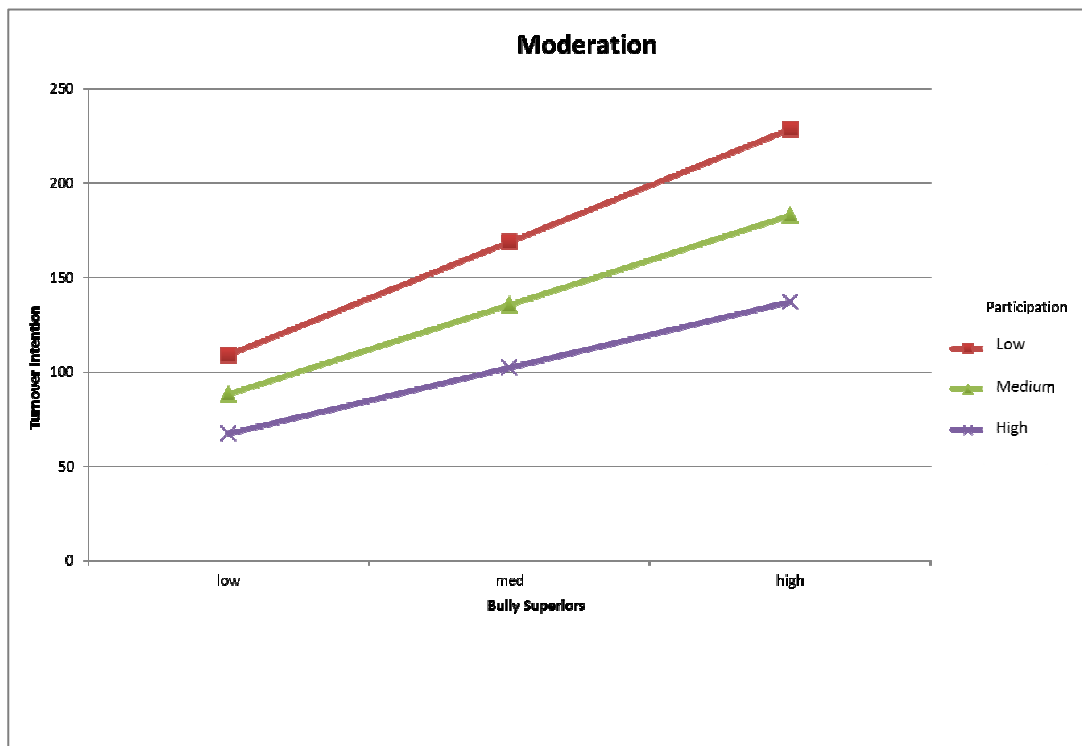
Model	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	t	P	F	R	R ²	Δ R ²
	Beta (β)	SE	Beta (β)						
1 Constant	11,49	0,12		94,1	0,00*	2230,92	0,37	0,14	0,14
Participation in decision-making	-0,64	0,01	-0,37	-47,23	0,00*				
2 Constant	9,10	0,19		47,99	0,00*	269,34	0,39	0,12	0,02
Bullying by supervisors	0,09	0,01	+0,14	16,41	0,00*				
Participation in decision-making	-0,54	0,02	-0,32	-37,02	0,00*				
3 Constant	9,05	0,19		47,61	0,00*	9,35	0,39	0,16	0,00
Bullying by supervisors	0,10	0,01	0,15	16,42	0,00*				
Participation in decision-making x Bullying by supervisors	0,09	0,03	0,03	3,06	0,00*				

* $p \leq 0,05$

In step one of the hierarchical regression participation in decision-making was entered and a significant model was produced ($\beta = -0,37$, $p = 0,00$). Bullying by superiors was entered in step two which produced a significant model ($\beta = 0,14$, $p = 0,00$). In the third step the interaction term was entered, producing a significant model ($\beta = 0,03$, $p = 0,00$). This indicates that participation in decision-making, as one of the defined sub-facets of POS, plays a significant role in the relationship between workplace bullying by superiors and the tendency to leave the organisation. If the targets of bullying by superiors feel that they can participate in the decision-making processes of the organisation, this indicates that their perceived support from the

organisation is intact. When these targets are bullied by their superiors, having perceived support in the form of participation means that they do not leave the organisation, despite being bullied. On the other hand, when experiencing bullying from the superior while also not being informed or included in the decision-making processes, the target's final counteraction towards the bullying culture will be to leave the organisation.

Figure 3



Interaction of bullying by superiors with participation in decision-making in relation to turnover intention.

Figure 2 shows that when targets of bullying by superiors experience POS through participation in decision-making, their tendency to leave the organisation will be minimized. However, it can also be seen that when targets experience exclusion from decision-making processes together with being bullied by their superiors, they will be more inclined to leave the organisation because of a lack of support from the organisation.

Table 6

Hierarchical regression analysis (supervisory relationship) with turnover intention as dependent variable

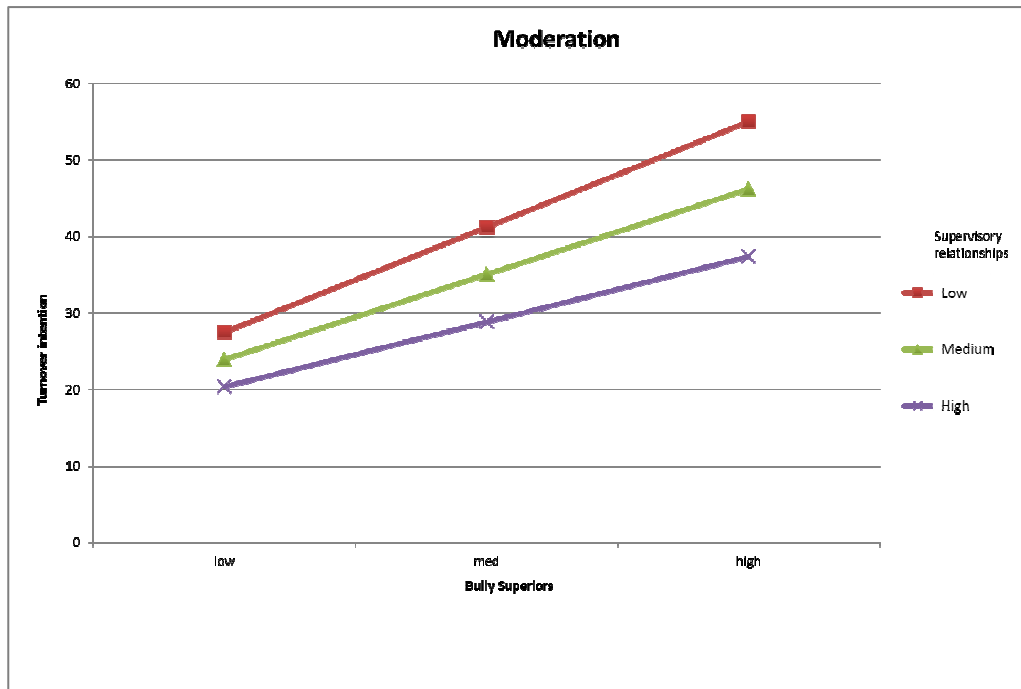
Model	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	t	p	F	R	R ²	Δ R ²
	Beta (β)	SE	Beta (β)						
1 Constant	11,12	0,13		83,66	0,00*	1623,00	0,32	0,12	0,12
Supervisory relationship	-0,55	0,01	-0,32	-40,30	0,00*				
2 Constant	8,46	0,22		38,02	0,00*	218,84	0,34	0,12	0,01
Bullying by supervisors	0,08	0,01	+0,14	14,79	0,00*				
Supervisory relationship	-0,43	0,02	-0,25	-27,27	0,00*				
3 Constant	8,45	0,22		38,02	0,00*	41,60	0,35	0,12	0,00
Bullying by supervisors	0,10	0,01	0,16	16,14	0,00*				
Supervisory relationship	-0,44	0,02	-0,26	-27,99	0,00*				
Supervisory relationship x Bullying by supervisors	0,17	0,03	0,06	6,45	0,00*				

* $p \leq 0,05$

Supervisory relationship was entered in step one of the hierarchical regression and a significant model was produced ($\beta = -0,32$, $p = 0,00$). Bullying by superiors was entered in step two which produced a significant model ($\beta = 0,14$, $p = 0,00$). In the third step the interaction term was entered, producing a significant model ($\beta = 0,06$, $p = 0,00$). This implies that relationships with the superiors play a significant role in the relationship between bullying by superiors and turnover intention. When the targets experience healthy relationships with their superiors they will feel supported by their superiors and, therefore, by the organisation. When bullying by superiors manifests but the perceived support through supervisory relationships exists, the targets of the bullying phenomenon will not be inclined to leave the organisation. However, when the

employees have poor working relationships with their superiors while also experiencing bullying from them, the targets will be much more driven to resign than to fight an overwhelming battle.

Figure 4



Interaction of bullying by superiors with supervisory relationships in relation to turnover intention.

Figure 4 indicates that when employees have insufficient support from their organisations due to unhealthy relationships with their superiors, workplace bullying by superiors can easily emerge. Conversely, when employees' POS exists with the focus on healthy relationships with their superiors, being bullied by their superiors will not be enough to drive the targets of bullying by superiors to find their solution in absenteeism leading to resignation.

The above-mentioned hierarchical regression analysis reveals that when employees are bullied by superiors, role clarity, participation in decision-making and supervisory relationships (sub-facets of POS) will moderate the relationship between superior bullying and turnover intention. There seem to be no moderating relationships when being bullied by colleagues.

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DISCUSSION

The main purpose of this study was to explore bullying (by superiors and colleagues), perceived support by employees in the organisation and the influence of workplace bullying on the turnover intention. Therefore, POS (role clarity, job information, participation in decision-making, colleague support and supervisory relationships) was investigated as a possible moderator in the relationship between workplace bullying, either by superiors or colleagues, and the intention to leave the organisation. As mentioned in the literature review, little research has been done in the South African context concerning the perpetrators of bullying, the relationship between workplace bullying and turnover intention, and the buffering effect of POS on this relationship.

The internal consistency reported that all the constructs were reliable, with a coefficient above 0,7. The reliability coefficients varied from 0,82 and 0,87. All the items were normally distributed except for bullying by superiors and colleagues, role clarity and job information.

When interpreting the results, the first hypothesis, that bullying by superiors is more important than bullying by colleagues, can be confirmed. This has previously been substantiated by the research of Hoel and Cooper (2000), Lutgen-Sandvik, Tracy and Alberts (2007) and Namie and Namie (2003). Bullying by superiors has a greater influence than bullying by colleagues on the targets intending to leave the organisation.

The significance of the correlations confirmed hypotheses three and four, namely that workplace bullying by superiors or colleagues has negative relationships with all the sub-facets of POS (role clarity, job information, participation in decision-making, colleague support and supervisory relationships). This implies that when bullying increases, POS will decrease. Also, when the perceived support increases, workplace bullying might decrease. These findings are consistent

with recent studies suggesting that the employees affected by bullying in the workplace experience a lack of role clarity (Agervold, 2009; Hauge, Skogstad & Einarsen, 2010), important information will be kept from them on purpose (Johnson & Rea, 2009), they will have less control over decisions being made in the organisation (Notelaers, De Witte & Einarsen, 2010; Quine, 2001), they will experience less support from colleagues and supervisors (Notelaers & De Witte, 2003; Tsuno, Kawakami, Inoue & Abe, 2010) will be evident. Supervisory relationships correlated with a large effect in comparison with the other sub-facets, which indicates the importance of poor supervisory relationships in a bullying culture as found in previous research.

Both bullying by superiors and bullying by colleagues correlated positively with turnover intention (providing support for hypotheses four and five), indicating that when the bullying by either superiors or colleagues increases, the target's intention to leave the organisation will also increase. This confirms the results of several previous studies that bullying increases an individual's intention to leave the organisation (Berthelsen, Skogstad, Lau & Einarsen, 2011; Djurkovic, McCormack, & Casimir, 2004; Hoel & Cooper, 2000). Bullying by superiors had a slightly higher correlation with turnover intention than bullying by colleagues, indicating that the influence of bullying by superiors on the intention to leave the organisation is greater than the influence of bullying by colleagues.

The POS in the organisation established its significance in the relationship with turnover intention, with a negative association, confirming hypothesis six. This implies that in the presence of the sub-facets of POS (role clarity, job information, participation in decision-making, colleague support and supervisory relationships) the turnover intention in the organisation will decrease, leading to targets not considering leaving the organisation. This result confirms the results of previous studies suggesting that turnover intention is influenced by the extent to which employees experience role clarity (Bhuan, Menguc & Borsboom, 2005; Hwang & Chang, 2009), have sufficient job information (Lambert, 2006), participate in the decision-making process (Knudsen, Ducharme & Roman, 2009), and is supported by their colleagues (Brough & Frame, 2004; Kim & Stoner, 2008) and supervisor (Lambert, 2006; Maertz, Griffeth, Campbell & Allen, 2007).

Hypothesis seven stated that POS (role clarity, job information, participation in decision-making, colleague support and supervisory relationships) plays a moderating role in the relationship between workplace bullying and turnover intention. This hypothesis is partially confirmed. According to the results, POS (role clarity, participation in decision-making and supervisory relationships) acted as moderator in the relationship between workplace bullying by superiors and turnover intention. However, the results indicate that the POS variables job information and colleague support did not moderate the relationship between workplace bullying and turnover intention. Similarly, no moderation was found with bullying by colleagues. A study by Djurkovic et al. (2004) yielded similar findings of the moderating role of POS in the relationship between bullying and turnover intention, however, in this study the definition used to define POS differed slightly from the definition used in this study.

As a result, when superiors bully their subordinates, and the targets have a clear understanding of what their roles in the organisation are, then these victims will be more inclined to consider not leaving the organisation. Similarly, when they have a say in the decisions of the organisation the targets will also remain. Furthermore, when employees are bullied by superiors, but have excellent relationships with other superiors, then this will also counteract the effects of workplace bullying on the intention to leave the organisation. There were no sub-facets of POS acting as moderators in the relationship between bullying by colleagues and turnover intention.

To conclude, the primary objective was to determine whether POS moderates the relationship between workplace bullying and turnover intention. The results of this study confirms this moderating effect, suggesting that when bullied by supervisors, a lack of POS (more specifically role clarity, participation in decision-making and supportive supervisory relationships) will increase bullying victims' propensity to leave the organisation. This intensifies the need for organisations to provide a supportive environment for their employees, especially those being targeted by bullies.

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CHAPTER 3

CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter 3 comprises a summary of the research done on workplace bullying in the South African context. The summary addresses the outcomes of the general and the specific objectives as well as limitations in this regard. Finally, it concludes with recommendations for future research in relation to workplace bullying, POS and turnover intention and the implementation of interventions in South African organisations.

3.1 CONCLUSION

The general and specific objectives were addressed, based on the empirical results detailed in chapter 2.

The general objective of this research study was to explore the moderating role of perceived organisational support in the relationship between workplace bullying and turnover intention. Results of a study conducted by Quine (2001) suggested that various forms of POS moderate the relationship between workplace bullying and the propensity to leave the organisation. Thus, according to Baron and Kenny (1986, p. 1174), a moderator is *“a variable that partitions a focal independent variable into subgroups that establish its domains of maximal effectiveness in regard to a given dependent variable”*.

The first specific objective was to determine how workplace bullying, perceived organisational support (POS) and turnover intention was conceptualised according to the literature. The term Workplace Bullying can be defined, according to Rothmann and Rothmann (2006, p. 14), as *“harassing, offending, and socially excluding someone at work to such a level that these actions negatively affect a person’s work tasks”*. According to Wood (2008), the label of a bully can be applied in the presence of a particular event/activity, interaction or process, which has occurred repeatedly, frequently, and over a specific. Workplace bullying can be regarded as an element of aggressive behaviour that manifests in interpersonal work relationships between two individuals or between an individual and a group (Zapf & Einarsen, 2001).

D'Cruz and Noronha (2010) argue that a critical determinant of coping with workplace bullying is the role that the organisation fulfils. Employees humanise the organisations according to how the organisations treat them (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). According to Rothmann and Rothmann (2006, p. 21), POS entails *“not only the availability of the supervisor to the employee but also the perceived relationship between the supervisor and the employee as well as the level of perceived appreciation for the employee from the supervisor”*. According to Baillien, Neyens, and De Witte (2004), less bullying was reported in organisations with a supportive climate.

In this research article, we identified five work characteristics of POS, which can be defined as follows: Role clarity can be defined as *“updated job descriptions, job specifications and satisfactory performance appraisals”* (Rothmann & Rothmann, 2006, p. 21). Job Information requires *“clarity regarding the work purpose or goal and achievements, along with performance management, in which feedback can be given so that incentive can be rewarded”* (Rothmann & Rothmann, 2006).

According to Rothmann and Rothmann (2006, p.21), participation in decision-making can be described as *“a democratic decision-making process with interaction and open communication channels, leading to participation in decisions concerning the nature of their work, decisions in the department and being able to discuss concerns with their supervisors”*. Colleague support can be defined as *“the degree to which the colleagues make available resources (physical, intellectual, technical, financial and socially relevant to the demands made upon the system/person/group)”* (Payne, 1979, p. 86). Supervisory relationships entail *“the balance between a task- versus an employee-oriented focus, such as a supportive culture and people- and task-oriented leadership styles”* (Baillien, Neyens, De Witte & De Cuyper, 2009).

Not only does the humanitarian element of relationships and perceived organisational support suffer as a result of bullying, but the economic consequences can be massive (Waldman, Kelly, Arora & Smith, 2004). Turnover intention is defined as *‘a conscious and deliberate willfulness to leave the organisation’* (Tett & Meyer, 1993, p. 262). Lutgen-Sandvik (2006), substantiates the finding that workplace bullying simply drives away capable employees, both targets and witnesses, and leads to high absenteeism.

The second objective focused on the relationships between workplace bullying by superiors and the various sub-facets of POS (role clarity, job information, participation in decision-making, colleague support, supervisory relationships).

The statistical analysis revealed that workplace bullying by superiors has a negative relationship with all the sub-facets of POS. This implies that when bullying by superiors increases, the sub-facets of POS will decrease, meaning that role conflict will surface and the target will be unfamiliar with what is expected of him in his current job. Similarly, when bullying by superior's emerges, the tendency to withhold important information will increase. The same occurs with participation in decision-making. The decision-making process will take on a more autocratic style rather than granting participation in the decision-making process. Colleague support will decrease because of witnesses being afraid of the bully, thus intensifying the silent epidemic syndrome. Moreover, less support will be expected from superiors with regard to superiors bullying their sub-ordinates. Supervisory relationships revealed the largest effect in comparison with the other characteristics in this regard.

The third objective addressed the relationships between workplace bullying by colleagues and the sub-facets of POS (role clarity, job information, participation in decision-making, colleague support, supervisory relationships).

Bullying by colleagues also revealed a negative relationship with the all the sub-facets of POS. The flip side of the coin will be interpreted as to when bullying by colleagues decreases as a result of sufficient support from the organisations. The following outcomes can be expected when bullying by colleagues decreases: employees in the organisations will have clarity regarding their roles in the organisation, sufficient job information will be made available to achieve set results, employees will have a say in the decision-making processes, employees will receive adequate support from colleagues and support can also be expected from superiors and the organisation. The most significant work characteristics were colleague support when being bullied by colleagues and, secondly, healthy supervisory relationships.

The fourth objective was to determine the relationships between the sub-facets of POS (role clarity, job information, participation in decision-making, colleague support, supervisory relationships) and turnover intention. The intention to leave the organisation correlated negatively with the sub-facets of POS. This suggests that when POS exists in organisations

employees will be retained. However, when role conflict, insufficient job information, limited participation in decision-making processes, a lack of colleague support and poor supervisory relationships emerge, the work environment invites bullying and will lead to employees resigning. Participation in decision-making showed the highest correlation with turnover intention, highlighting the importance of democratic decision-making in organisations.

Fifthly, the relationship between workplace bullying by superiors/colleagues and turnover intention was explored. There is a positive relationship between both bullying by superiors and bullying by colleagues and the propensity to leave the organisation. In practice, this implies that when bullying increases (by either superiors or colleagues) then more targets of bullying will be inclined to leave the organisation. On the other hand, when bullying decreases or when sufficient support is provided by the organisation, then the targets will choose to stay in the organisation.

The sixth objective focused on the determination of the moderating role of POS (role clarity, job information, participation in decision-making, colleague support, supervisory relationships) in the relationship between workplace bullying and turnover intention. The moderator effect is typically known as an interaction term in analysis of variance, in this case high/low workplace bullying by good/poor organisational support. Consequently, the relationships between the independent variable (workplace bullying), the moderator variable (POS) and the dependent variable (turnover intention) were explored.

According to the empirical results, POS (role clarity, participation in decision-making and supervisory relationships) was the only sub-facets, which acted as the moderator in the relationship between workplace bullying by superiors and turnover intention, whereas colleagues found no moderation with bullying. This implies that when targets are being bullied by a supervisor but are comfortable with their work role, are included in decision-making processes and are supported by superiors in the organisation (acting as moderators), then they will consider remaining in the organisation, in spite of the bullying culture. Without these supportive structures in place, the only outcome considered by the target will be turnover.

This study serves to highlight the experience of workplace bullying among South African employees. It creates an awareness of the dilemma employees struggle with concerning

workplace bullying across sectors in South Africa. Secondly, it explores the support needed to counteract this phenomenon, which has destructive consequences on the profitability of organisations because of high levels of turnover intention. This study also confirms the significance of role clarity, participation in decision-making and supervisory relationships as characteristics of POS counteracting bullying in South African organisations.

3.2 LIMITATIONS OF THIS RESEARCH

The following limitations have been noted with regard to this study. These restrictions should be addressed to improve the quality of future research on workplace bullying.

Firstly, this study was conducted on the principle of a cross-sectional research design. This implies that the research was completed at a single point in time, limiting the inevitable impact of cause and effect. The cross-sectional design does not allow inferences to be drawn about the causal relationships between bullying, POS and the intention to leave. In contrast, a longitudinal design measures results over a specific period in order to strengthen the validity and reliability of the study by providing the reader with a prior, current and future knowledge of the specific topic. Therefore, in-depth comparisons can be drawn due to the sequence of time. Longitudinal studies can provide more knowledge about workplace bullying, though this design can be costly.

The second limitation highlights the fact that only self-report questionnaires were used to obtain data. Self-report questionnaires can provide meaningful information through practical and cost-effective methods; however, self-report measures sample an individual's perceptions about the constructs and not necessarily the constructs themselves. This could lead to 'method variance' or 'nuisance' (Schaufeli, Enzmann & Girault, 1993) and limits our ability to draw conclusions about the causal nature of the relationships. However, Semmer, Zapf and Grief (1996) noted that, with interactions found, this limitation poses no threat to the research.

The third limitation is that this study focused on many sectors, which makes the counteraction strategies less specific to any particular sector.

Another limitation of this study is that it considered only one dependent variable (i.e. intention to leave). It would be useful for further work to be conducted on the joint effects of bullying and POS with regard to other variables, such as organisational commitment, in-role job performance or engagement, which are important to organisations. Furthermore, in this study, only one moderator variable was considered, and it would be worthwhile to examine the effects of other potential moderators, such as the personal characteristics of victims, on the relationship between bullying and various outcomes.

Another setback was that there was no satisfactory evidence to prove that POS can act as a moderator in the case of bullying by colleagues, and this could still be an important element in South African research.

Another limitation is the exclusion of ‘upwards’ bullying, or bullying from the bottom up. It is possible that the role of POS as a moderating variable could differ depending on whether the main perpetrator is a colleague or superior (addressed in the current study) or even a subordinate. It would therefore be useful for future studies to examine this issue.

3.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Despite the limitations mentioned above, the current study has important implications for organisations and future research.

3.3.1. Recommendations for organisations

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between two types of perpetrators of workplace bullying, perceived support of employees in the organisation and turnover intention across sectors in the South African context. The research focused specifically on the moderating role of POS in this regard. It is very clear from the research that workplace bullying affects the profitability in the organisation through sickness-absenteeism and even resignation of competent employees.

The consequences of bullying reflect directly on the organisation in that fear of the bully, witnessing the incident, lack of role clarity, insufficient job information, autocratic decision-making styles, lack of colleague support and poor supervisory relationships detach employees

and lead to a loss in productivity. In some cases, compensation claims related to the psychological and physical damage caused by the bully can be costly.

The recommendations inferred from this research encourage even greater awareness for the employer and employee regarding the impact of workplace bullying within the South African context. Organisations are urged to create awareness regarding the impact of workplace bullying and also to implement interventions through training and workshops to prevent these situations from degenerating. It is the organisation's responsibility to ensure that health and safety are enforced even when it comes to being safe from other employees. Organisations should offer assistance in the case of unforeseen cases of workplace bullying through open door policies, confidentiality, addressing the problem, counselling and other support, if required. If there is a supportive culture of well-being, employees will be willing to surrender the perpetrators without experiencing fear of revenge.

Furthermore, in identifying the main perpetrators and the most important characteristics of POS buffering the effects of workplace bullying, organisations can implement counteraction. As research in South Africa is still in its infancy, it is important to start now, as nothing is currently done in this regard. Organisations are becoming increasingly aware of the well-being of their employees and it will be beneficial to research other constructs to buffer workplace bullying in the South African context. Although organisations will never be free of harassment, they should not underestimate the importance of POS, which has been demonstrated in this research article.

3.3.2. Recommendations for future research

Regardless of certain limitations previously mentioned this study contributes to the field of Organisational and Industrial Psychology and has significant implications for future research. Recommendations for future research on workplace bullying include the use of a longitudinal design where the impact of cause and effect can be measured, for instance, how bullying develops over time. Further suggestions include research into the different types of bullying found in South Africa, the bottom-up perpetrators and other constructs, which might counteract the effects of workplace bullying on both the individual and the organisation. A greater understanding is needed of different sub-facets of POS and how these will moderate the relationship between workplace bullying and turnover intention.

More in-depth investigation is required of the psychological reasons for bullying by perpetrators. Therefore, bullying behaviours should also be researched from the perspective of the alleged bully. This will allow a researcher to determine why perpetrators engage in these types of negative acts (Pietersen, 2007). Another significant prospective study would be to explore how race influences bullying behaviour in the South African context, especially with the legacy of Apartheid.

Another valuable area for future research lies in determining the characteristics of those who are bullied (Monks, Smith, Naylor, Barter, Ireland & Coyne, 2009) in the South African context. This has been researched internationally. This should further our understanding and provide a stronger knowledge base from which to develop interventions and preventative measures to counteract workplace bullying in the South African context.

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