



Journal of Advanced Guidance and Counseling

Vol. 4 No. 1 (2023), 49-62

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21580/jagc.2023.4.1.17365>

[Journal Homepage](#)

Types of bullies at workplace in Malaysia

Thivya Khalidass¹, Saralah Devi Mariamdaran Chethiyar²,
Muhammad Ali Equatora³

^{1,2}Psychology & Counselling Program, School of Applied Psychology,
Social Work and Policy, College of Arts and Sciences, Universiti Utara
Malaysia, Malaysia

³Department of Community Guidance, Politeknik Ilmu Pemasarakatan,
Indonesia

Email: thivyakhalidass@ymail.com

Article Information:

Received:

3 August 2023

Revised:

18 August 2023

Accepted:

18 October 2023

Keywords:

Bully, crime, deviant,
social security
organization, perception.

Abstract

Purpose - The purpose of this study was to examine the type of bully's perception of workplace in Malaysia. This study can reveal the type of bullies that happens at work because most employees are not aware or know that they are being bullied at work.

Method - The population of this study is employees of Sungai Petani Social Security Organization. This selection of samples in this study using purposive sampling method and selected 45 persons. Research data was obtained through the distribution of a set of questionnaires. The instrument used in this study is the Revised Malaysian Bullying Questionnaire (R-MBQ).

Result - The results showed that that the perception of bullying among employees of the Sungai Petani Society is at a low level.

Implication - This method suggests prevailing bullying behavior in public or private sector at Malaysia through the types of bullying behavior such as bullying in the form of personal attacks, bullying by looking down, work-related bullying and bullying by physical violence.

Originality - This research is the first study that used intervening variable regarding types of bullying among employees.

For citation: Khalidas, T., Chethiyar, S., & Equatora, M. (2023). Types of bullies at workplace in Malaysia. *Journal of Advanced Guidance and Counseling*. 4(1). 49-62. <https://doi.org/10.21580/jagc.2023.4.1.17365>.

***Corresponding author:** Thivya Khalidass, (thivyakhalidass@ymail.com), Psychology & Counselling Program, School of Applied Psychology, Social Work and Policy, College of Arts and Sciences, Universiti Utara Malaysia, Kedah Darul Aman, Malaysia 06010.

Keywords:

Penindasan, kejahatan, penyimpangan, organisasi jaminan sosial, persepsi.

Abstrak

Tujuan - Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui jenis persepsi pengganggu di tempat kerja di Malaysia. Penelitian ini dapat mengungkap jenis bully yang terjadi di tempat kerja karena sebagian besar karyawan tidak menyadari atau mengetahui bahwa mereka sedang diintimidasi di tempat kerja.

Metode - Populasi dari penelitian ini adalah karyawan Organisasi Jaminan Sosial Sungai Petani. Pemilihan sampel dalam penelitian ini menggunakan metode purposive sampling dan terpilih sebanyak 45 orang. Data penelitian diperoleh melalui penyebaran seperangkat kuesioner. Instrumen yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah Revised Malaysian Bullying Questionnaire (R-MBQ).

Hasil - Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa persepsi perundungan di kalangan karyawan Masyarakat Sungai Petani berada pada tingkat rendah.

Implikasi - Metode ini menunjukkan perilaku bullying yang berlaku di sektor publik atau swasta di Malaysia melalui jenis-jenis perilaku bullying seperti bullying dalam bentuk serangan pribadi, bullying dengan meremehkan, bullying yang berhubungan dengan pekerjaan, dan bullying dengan kekerasan fisik.

Orisinalitas - Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian pertama yang menggunakan variabel intervening mengenai jenis-jenis perundungan di kalangan karyawan.

Introduction

Bullying encompasses a variety of negative and potentially harmful behaviors including actual and attempted harm to others, including physical aggression, peer exclusion and verbal abuse (Smith et al., 2002). Bullying can also be understood as aggressive behavior that consists of six forms, namely physical, verbal, sexual, stealing and the like, psychological and indirect (Ireland, 2005). Bullying is also said to have an impact on physical and emotional injuries.

Smith and Brain (2000) stated that bullying is the oppression of less powerful people by more powerful people. This distinction is important because the effects of being repeatedly attacked or threatened by a more powerful person or group tend to be different from the effects of being threatened or attacked by people who have the same power (Rigby, 2003).

For Ireland (2005), a single incident of assault can be considered oppression if the victim believes that he has been persecuted. An incident can be considered bullying when the power imbalance between the bully and the victim is implicit and not immediately proven (Ireland, 2002). Based on some of the explanations

above, bullying can include direct and indirect forms of attack. Direct bullying is overt behavior that includes physical, verbal, sexual psychological forms.

In Malaysia, workplace violence has not reached an alarming level. However, we cannot deny that it has happened in workplace organizations based on the number of government and private agencies that are directly involved in this kind of incident and behavior (Thivya & Saralah Devi, 2022). Government agencies such as the Ministry of Human Resources play a role in recording and documenting all reports made by employers and employees regarding bullying or violence in the workplace.

In Malaysia, cases of bullying in the workplace receive very little attention and focus more on bullying at school. Although the case of workplace bullying has not reached the same level of concern as it does at school, this matter cannot be taken lightly by the government. So far, studies on the perception of bullying at work have not been done either in the public or private service sector. A study by Hershcovis has found that workplace bullying is worse and more dangerous than sexual harassment at work (Rita, 2008). In the same study, researchers have stated that it is more difficult for victims of bullying because they do not know what to do and there is no policy or law that can protect them compared to victims of sexual harassment. Most of them will feel more stressed and less committed to work and prefer to quit work. Therefore, the government must take the initiative to deal with the problem of bullying in the workplace. The increase in reports of research results in workplace bullying has been identified internationally as a serious problem in the work environment, showing that bullying will cause something bad for job satisfaction (Einarsen, S. & Raknes, B. 1997). Among the impacts of bullying behavior on the organization is an increase in the number of employees who do not attend work, an increase in the number of employees who want to quit or leave the organization, an increase in the number of employee replacements (turnover) and the number of employees who quit early (Leymann, 1996; Rayner, 1997). The occurrence of bullying and being bullied in a safe environment such as school is a problem that is difficult to curb. A total of 53.4% of bullying cases occurred in 2020 in Malaysia (Utusan Malaysia, 2020). The case of Sea Cadet of the National Defense University of Malaysia (UPNM), Zulfarhan Osman Zulkarnain in

2020 opened the eyes of various parties on the issue of bullying and it shows that the issue of bullying is increasingly worrying the community in Malaysia (Utusan Malaysia, 2020). Some previous studies such as Bender et al., (2010) and Sekol and Farrington (2010) stated that the incidence of bullying in safe environments is high and almost half of them have been involved in bullying or being bullied. According to the statement in the study of Geffner et al., (2014), involvement in bullying incidents, especially bullied people, can increase the risk of abnormal behavior as well as an increase in chronic psychological health problems. This statement is supported by Blaauw et al., (2001) who stated that bullying can lead to suicidal behavior and even suicide.

The objectives to be achieved in the study of bullying among employees of the Sungai Petani SOCSO: i) to identify personal attacks bullying behavior towards the perception of Sungai Petani SOCSO employees; ii) to identify work-related bullying behavior towards the perception of Sungai Petani SOCSO employees; iii) to identify physical violence bullying behavior towards the perception of Sungai Petani SOCSO employees.

This study can also determine the type of bullying behavior in the workplace that is the highest and most critical among employees and then propose an appropriate action plan to deal with or reduce bullying behavior in the workplace based on the dimensions of bullying behavior which are personal attacks, work-related and physical violence. This study can also be used as a source of information about bullying behavior in the workplace to draw up an action plan that is appropriate to the current situation as well as be used as a reference source for studies on bullying behavior in the workplace in the future.

Bullying is defined as a negative act that is repeated in a prolonged period by a person or a group against the victim. A negative action involving actions or attempts that result in injury or discomfort to others (Olweus, 1993). Some of these acts are a behavior done on purpose with the aim of showing the status of strength or power possessed by the bully.

Bullying behavior in the workplace is defined as an attack, intimidating behavior, rumors, insulting or insulting words, embarrassing behavior, and abuse of power that will try to bring down or frustrate an individual among workers who cause victims to suffer or stress (Unison, 1997).

Repeated acts of bullying show that bullying occurs through violent acts among individuals, especially directly. Sometimes the act of bullying happens indirectly where the bully does not show signs of wanting to do the act of bullying because wise bullies hide their actions and even deny their actions against the victim (Azizan, 2004).

Demographics are associated with differences in behavior from each other. Bullying is influenced by a variety of personal demographic factors, including age, gender, ethnicity, education, and marital status. Of all these factors, the factors that seem to play the most important role are age and gender. Age is one of the links with oppression among individuals. A large body of research consistently shows that young people are more likely than adults to engage in various types of delinquents, violent and bullying behavior (Haufle & Wolter, 2015).

Many individuals who enter the criminal justice system have higher psychological problems related to mental illness. Many reports have reported that prisoners have high rates of mental disorders compared to the general population, including psychosis, schizophrenia and depression (Fazel & Seewald, 2012). Specifically, women reported higher exposure to caregiver violence, witnessing violence, and intimate partner violence (DeHart et al., 2014). These experiences, associated with mental health illness, increase the risk of misconduct and incarceration. Indeed, incarceration can result in exposure to further traumatic experiences that lead to mental disorders.

Strain theory emerged from Merton's theoretical framework. The main idea of strain theory, in the context of this study is that frustration is an important factor in bullying or other misbehavior. The classical strain perspective predicts that the greater the gap between aspirations and expectations, the stronger the feeling of frustration or stress (Cohen, 1955). For Merton (1938), this socialized image of hope appears in the form of material wealth. Merton also adopted Durkheim's

structural theory framework, to explain class differences in delinquent behavior. He argues that the inability to achieve money success creates a lot of frustration and, therefore, individuals may seek to achieve their financial goals through illegitimate channels. General strain theory focuses specifically on negative experiences, including negative relationships with others that negatively affect one's behavior. This tension may be caused by the failure to achieve certain goals, the delivery of harmful stimuli or the elimination of positive stimuli in one's life. Agnew (1992) claims that tension may be caused by the inability to use legal methods to escape from these three types of painful situations, which can be found in all social classes, that is social, economic spectrum as well as in everyday life.

Review of past studies provided an understanding of the causative factors of bullying in a safe environment through a review from a theoretical perspective and empirical studies. Theoretical discussions and empirical studies are further expanded into the scope of aggressive behavior, violence, misbehavior, delinquency, rule violations and disciplinary violations in a safe environment.

Research Methods

In this study, the researcher has chosen a quantitative survey type research. The researcher chose quantitative research because the data of this study can be generalized and measure the perception of bullying among the employees of SOCSO Sungai Petani through questionnaires. The researcher conducted this study at the Social Security Organization (SOCSO) Sungai Petani Kedah. SOCSO is an organization under the Ministry of Human Resources. The researcher found it easy to carry out the study at SOCSO Sungai Petani, Kedah because the researcher works in the organization concerned. Random sampling techniques are easy to use. This technique provides a non-zero and equal chance for all selected employees. The population of this study is the employees of SOCSO Sungai Petani, Kedah. A population is a complete set of people with a specialized set of characteristics and a sample is a subset of the population. The study population is 50 employees, and the sample of this study is 45 employees from SOCSO Sungai Petani, Kedah. This section introduces the instruments used in this research. The instrument used in this study is the Revised Malaysian Bullying Questionnaire (R-

MBQ). Part A consists of several questions related to the respondent's demographics, namely gender, race, position level, age level and work experience. This demographic information will be categorized into groups to facilitate the researcher's analysis. Part B of the questionnaire consists of 20 items, collecting information about negative behavior in the workplace. Likert scale 1,2,3,4 and 5 each means 'Strongly Disagree', 'Disagree', 'Not Sure', 'Agree' and 'Strongly Agree' used to measure the frequency of respondents regarding negative behavior at work . In a survey study, data is obtained using a set of questionnaires and this involves numbers (closed questions) and words (open questions).

Table 1 Definition operational variables

No	Definition operational variables
1.	Types of bullies: In this study, the types of bullying can be felt by the SOCSO employees. Each type of bullying has a different impact.
2.	Bully: In this study, bullying refers to negative behaviour or actions physically, verbally, and psychologically done by someone who is more capable against someone who is disabled or disabled repeatedly.
3.	Perception: Perception is the organization, identification, and interpretation of sensory information in order to represent and understand the presented information or environment.
4.	SOCSO: SOCSO refers to the Social Security Organization. SOCSO at Sungai Petani in this study refers to where the study was conducted. There are three main units in this organization, namely the Benefits and Claims Unit, the Employment Insurance System Unit, and the Enforcement Unit.

The statistical tests used in this study include frequency analysis, descriptive analysis, independent -Samples T-Test and One-Way ANOVA. Frequency analysis is used to predict how often certain values of a variable phenomenon may occur and to assess the reliability of the prediction. Descriptive statistics can provide basic information about variables in a dataset and potential relationships between variables. The independent samples t-test is used to compare two sample means from *unrelated* groups. This means that there are different people providing scores for each group. The purpose of this test is to determine if the samples are different from each other. The one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) is used to determine whether there are any statistically significant differences between the means of three or more independent (unrelated) groups.

Results and Discussion

Results

Types of bullying behavior towards the perception of Sungai Petani SOCSO employees

Table 2 Personal attack

Type of bullies	Mean
Someone always supervises employees or employees' work when that is not necessary	2.33
Gossip or rumors about employees are spread or accusations are made against members	1.82
Opinions and views of employees are not considered	1.78
Being treated unfairly compared to other employees in the workplace	1.69
Being scolded or someone venting anger	1.53
Signals from other staff members to resign	1.47
Total	1.77

The first type of bullying is a personal attack. Based on the descriptive statistics bullying against personal attacks, someone always supervises an employee or employees work when it is unnecessary is the highest felt by respondents with a mean of 2.33. The second highest personal attacks is that gossip or rumors about employees are spread or accusations are made against employees recording a mean of 1.82. The opinions and views of employees are not considered by respondents who have a mean of 1.78. The next type is being treated unfairly

compared to other employees at the employees' workplace recorded a mean of 1.69. Being scolded or someone venting anger on an employee recorded a mean of 1.53. The least perceived type of bullies is the signal from other employees to resign with a mean value of 1.47. The mean overall score for type of bullying related to personal attacks was 1.77.

Table 3 Work-related

Type of bullies	Mean
Given an unmanageable workload or an unreasonable deadline	2.42
Pressure on employees from someone not to make any demands when they are entitled to them (for example, sick leave)	2.24
Someone hides information that causes a employee's performance to suffer	1.8
Work or performance is criticized endlessly and surely that is not fair	1.62
Feeling threatened in any way while at work	1.36
Total	1.89

For the perception of work-related bullying, that is, employees are given an unmanageable workload, or an unreasonable assignment date shows the highest mean value result, which is 2.42. The second highest is the pressure on employees from someone not to make any demands when entitled to them for an example, sick leave, which is 2.24. A person's perception of hiding information that causes an employee performance to suffer recorded a mean value of 1.80. Next, the employees' perception of work or performance is criticized endlessly and surely that is unfair showing a mean value of 1.62. The perception of feeling threatened in any way while at work had the least mean value, which was 1.36. The overall mean for work related bullying was 1.89.

The perception of teasing, mocking, sarcasm, or humor that goes beyond the limit shows the highest mean value, which is 1.62. The second highest perception by employees is humiliating or making fun in relation to work where the mean value shows 1.60. The employee's perception of being insulted or having abusive words thrown at him or her showed a mean value of 1.38. Next, employees treated in a rude or abusive manner recorded a mean of 1.33. Threatening behavior by

other employees at work recorded a mean value of 1.31. The employee's perception of being affected in many ways as a result of violence or aggressive actions in the workplace has a mean value of 1.11. The least recorded mean value was physical violence at work, which was 1.07. The overall mean for physical violence bully was 1.35.

Table 4 Physical violence

Type of bullies	Mean
Teasing, mocking, sarcasm, or humor that goes beyond the limits	1.62
Humiliating or making fun of in relation to work	1.6
Being insulted or abusive words thrown at him	1.38
Treated in a rude or abusive manner	1.33
Threatening behavior by other staff at work	1.31
Affected in many ways by violence or aggressive actions at work	1.11
Physical violence in the workplace	1.07
Total	1.35

Discussions

Overall, the mean for work related bullying was 1.89 which was highest than personal attack and physical violence. For the perception of work-related bullying whereby employees are given an unmanageable workload, or an unreasonable assignment date shows the highest mean value result, which is 2.42. The least perception is feeling threatened in any way while at work recorded mean value as 1.36. Personal attack bully shows the second highest mean, 1.77. Based on the descriptive statistics bullying against personal attacks, someone always supervises an employee or employees work when it is unnecessary is the highest felt by respondents with a mean of 2.33. The least perceived type of bullies is the signal from other employees to resign with a mean value of 1.47. The least mean is related to physical violence at workplace, whereas the mean is 1.35. Teasing,

mocking, sarcasm, or humor that goes beyond the limit shows the highest mean value, which is 1.62. And the least recorded mean value was physical violence at work among employees, which was 1.07.

The study explores the perception of bully at workplace in Malaysia. Like the study conducted by Azizan (2004). Sometimes the act of bullying happens indirectly where the bully does not show signs of wanting to do the act of bullying because wise bullies hide their actions and even deny their actions against the victim. It can be stated that this kind of bully happening indirectly at workplace. It was found that the mean for perception of bullying against personal attacks, women is highest than men. An incident can be considered bullying when the power imbalance between the bully and the victim is implicit and not immediately proven by Ireland (2002). Bullying in a condescending manner based on the result shows that female staffs experiencing more compared to male staffs.

Sekol (2013) looks at bullying in safe environments and situations, where bullying is recognized as part of assault, peer abuse and violence. It was found that the age group between 21 o 30 shows the highest mean for personal attacks bully. The pressure from colleagues so that he or she do work below their qualification level and the colleagues, or a group of staffs exclude he or she from their groups. A single incident of assault can be considered oppression if the victim believes that he or she has been persecuted (Ireland, 2005). The result shows that staff between 21 to 30 age group recorded the highest bullying related to condescending manner. This shows that one staff can feel pressure from other colleagues to do work below their level of self-qualification and at the same time being left aside by other colleagues.

Bullying encompasses negative and potentially harmful behaviors including actual and attempted harm to others, including peer exclusion and verbal abuse (Smith et al., 2002). Gossip or rumors about one are spread or accusations are made against him or she and opinions and views of he or she are not considered. Staff who have been working less than a year experienced this personal attack bully at their workplace. In addition, staff who have been working less than a year too can face the pressure from seniors' staff to perform work below their level of self-qualification and at the same time being left aside.

Conclusion

It is hoped that this study will have a long-term positive impact on bullying issues at workplace in this country. Based on this study as well, each staff's opinion is important and must be disclosed to all the other staff at workplace because each one of them has the right to work in safe conditions and environment too. There are a few staff who only consider bullying behavior to be physical contact as it happens in school. So, this situation must be changed so that every staff knows that workplace bullying may happen in their workplace or in other workplaces too. Apart from that, through this study, it is hoped that the knowledge of bullying at workplace can be expanded well, and this will help the government to formulate effective policies and policies to curb crime involving bullying at workplace in the country. From the aspect of the method, this study only involves quantitative methods through questionnaire of respondents to know the main things in depth. Next, the findings and discussions in this study revolve around the information or data obtained from the results of questionnaire with staffs at same workplace selected as respondents for this study. Therefore, there are some future research proposals to be implemented to combat bully at workplace in the country in the future. Among the studies that can be implemented is a study on the effectiveness of the implementation of laws related to bully at workplace that can serve as an example to our country to introduce new laws and policies related to bully at workplace crimes in our country. Studies like this will help the society of our country understand the crime of bully at workplace and the effectiveness of the law if tightened in the surrounding countries. Studies may need to be conducted to look at public understanding of the field of bully. In this regard, we need to acknowledge that studies from the field level also need to be emphasized to look at the importance of bully education from the point of view of the public.

References

- Agnew, R. (1992). Foundation for a general strain theory of crime and delinquency: *Criminology*, 30(1), 47-88.
- Azizan, N. (2004). Buli dan hubungannya dengan prestasi akademik di sekolah berasrama penuh di Kedah. *Unpublish master dissertation*, Universiti Utara Malaysia, Malaysia.

- Blaauw, E., Winkel, F. W., & Kerkhof, A. J. (2001). Bullying and suicidal behavior in jails. *Criminal Justice & Behavior*, 28(3), 279-299.
- Cohen, A. K. (1955). Delinquent boys: *The culture of the gang*.
- DeHart, D. D. (2008). Pathways to prison: Impact of victimization in the lives of incarcerated women. *Violence against Women*, 14, 1362–1381.
- Einarsen, S., & Raknes, B. (1997). Harassment in the workplace and the victimization of men. *Violence and Victims*, 12, 247–263.
- Fazel, S. & Seewald, K. (2012). Severe mental illness in 33,588 prisoners worldwide: systematic review and meta-regression analysis. *The British Journal of Psychiatry*, 200(5), 364-373.
- Geffner, R., Griffin, D., & Lewis, J. (2014). Children exposed to violence: Current issues, interventions and research. In R. Geffner, D. Griffin, & J. Lewis III, (Eds.), *Children exposed to violence: Current issues, interventions and research*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.
- Haufle, J. & Wolter, D. (2015). The interrelation between victimization and bullying inside young offender institutions. *Aggressive Behavior*, 41(4), 335-345.
- Ireland, J. L. & Archer, J. (2002). The perceived consequences of responding to bullying with aggression: *a study of male and female adult prisoners*. *Aggressive Behavior*, 28(4), 257-272.
- Ireland, J. L. (2005). Bullying among prisoners: the need for innovation. In J. L. Ireland (Ed.), *Bullying among prisoners: innovations in theory and research*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Thivya & Saralah Devi. (2022). *Exploring Perception Of Bullying at The Work Place: A Case Study Of SOCSO Sungai Petani, Kedah*. SARJANA. Retrieved <https://ejournal.um.edu.my/index.php/SARJANA/article/view/40434/15123>
- Leymann, H. (1996). The content and development of mobbing at work. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 5(2), 165–184.
- Merton, R. K. (1938). Social structure and Anomie. *American Sociological Review*, 3, 672–682.
- Olweus, D. (1993). *Bullying at school: what we know and what we can do*. Oxford, England: Blackwell.
- Rigby, K. (2003). Consequences of bullying in schools. *The Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*, 48(9), 583-590.

Khalidas, T., Chetiyar, S., & Equatora, M

Rita, Z. (2008). Bullying Worse Than Sexual Harassment? *HR Magazine*. Alexandria. Vol. 53, Iss. 5; pg. 28, 1 pgs

Sekol, I. & Farrington, D. P. (2010). The overlap between bullying and victimization in adolescent residential care: are bully/victims a special category? *Children & Youth Services Review*, 32(12), 1758–1769.

JAGC | 62

Smith, P. K. & Brain, P. (2000). Bullying in schools: lessons from two. *Aggressive Behavior*, 26, 1-9.

Smith, Peter K., Helen Cowie, Ragnar F. Olafsson, and Andy P.D. Liefhoghe. 2002. "Definitions of Bullying: A Comparison of Terms Used, and Age and Gender Differences, in a FourteenCountry International Comparison." *Child Development* 73(4): 1119–33.

Unison. *Bullying Report*, 1997: UNISON, London.

Utusan Malaysia (2020). Kes buli Kadet. Dimuat turun pada 20 Oktober 2021 di <https://www.utusanmalaysia.com.my/utusan/nasional/2019/03/591204/kes-buli-kadet-di-buli-malaysia>