

DEFINING AND ADDRESSING WORKPLACE BULLYING-IN SEARCH OF A
CLEARER DEFINITION - A MIXED DELPHI STUDY

by

Christi Monk

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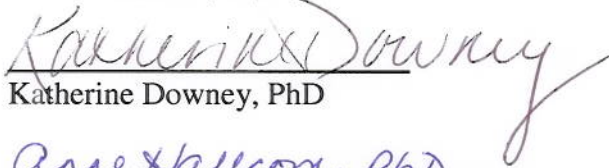
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Abstract

The purpose of this mixed Delphi study was to add to the body of knowledge by providing human resource professionals and organizational leaders with clearer definitions of workplace bullying that can be used to develop and enforce more effectively written workplace bullying policies regardless of industry. This mixed Delphi study examined how workplace bullying is defined in organizations and how human resource professionals interpret the existing policies to address claims of workplace bullying. The lack of a clear term results in inconsistent anti-bullying practices that impede organizations from addressing bullying in a manner that minimizes costs, reduces attrition, improves employee morale, and creates a safe workplace for employees. The sample population consisted of 20 human resource managers and directors and 131 non-human resource managers and frontline employees. The data analysis revealed that organizations do not have policies that clearly identify workplace bullying. The data analysis also revealed there was consensus among the sample participants relative to the development of three new definitions that improved the definition of the term workplace bullying.

Dedication

I dedicate my work to my parents and family for their continued support and encouragement. I also dedicate my work to my dear friends who continued to push me when I wanted to give up. My greatest dedication is to God who continues to provide sound guidance and direction for my life daily. Without hearing from God, I would not have invoked on this educational journey. I am thankful for the bosses who taught me about the topic of bullying which allowed me to further research the topic by developing clearer definitions to help organizations and their employees understand the impact of the negative behavior.

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Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

Workplace bullying is a social behavior that occurs in organizations, but has recently become a topic of interest for researchers (Soylu, 2010). An inability to understand what workplace bullying means inhibits individuals from reporting claims, organizations from effectively addressing claims, and organizations from developing and consistently implementing anti-bullying policies to address bullying in the workplace (Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, & Cooper, 2003; Hoel & Beale, 2006; Namie & Namie, 2011; Salin, 2003). Bullying is perceived as harassment (Namie & Namie, 2011). Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, and Cooper (2003) defined bullying as a form of harassment that is offensive and socially excludes another person. Bullying in the workplace often goes unreported because of the varying definitions. Bullying is specifically defined as a repetitive behavior that is overt or covert causing psychological damage to another person (Namie & Namie, 2011; Salin, 2003).

Gaetano (2010) contended bullying occurs as obvious, subtle, or covert behaviors. Gaetano asserted obvious bullying is reflective of open criticism that belittles the target. Gaetano added subtle bullying can include intended isolation from social gatherings or normal work functions. Gaetano noted covert behaviors can include giving a person too much or too little work while others work within their normal capacity. Hoel and Beale (2006) arguably noted there is no unanimous consensus relative to defining working place bullying.

Bullying is often an acceptable operational strategy that can contribute to managers' dismissing claims of bullying (Namie, Namie, & Lutgen-Sandvick, 2009). Namie and Namie (2011) categorized bullies in three ways: the constant critic, the two-

headed snake, and the gatekeeper. Namie and Namie believed from a managerial perspective, the constant critic is consistent in criticizing the target but does not criticize the target openly. Namie and Namie also noted the two-headed snake seeks to control the target by damaging his or her reputation. Namie and Namie described managers who are considered gatekeepers as micro-managers because they tend to control others, to deny the target resources that are necessary to complete his or her job, and seek to isolate workers. Human Resources and employment attorneys often defend the bully's actions based on managerial prerogative (Namie & Namie, 2011; Workplace Bullying Institute, 2008).

Managers oftentimes dismiss the claims of bullying and fail to take corrective action because it is viewed as an operational strategy (Namie & Lutgen-Sandvick, 2009). In a self-reported study conducted by Zogby (2007), 72% of managers were labeled as bullies. Namie and Lutgen-Sandvick (2009) further posited a lack of addressing the issue of bullying is simply an act of acceptance by the organization. This mixed Delphi study described the impact of unreported cases of bullying to examine the need for more clarity of definition for the term *bullying*, and to demonstrate the urgency for developing consistent policies against workplace bullying.

Background

Leymann (1996) defined workplace bullying as *mobbing*. Mobbing is described as a hostile and unethical communication toward an individual (Leymann, 1996, p. 169). Leymann, a Swedish doctor, developed the term mobbing to address the psychological impact experienced by health patients (Namie, 2003). Andrea Adams reintroduced the term, mobbing, in 1983 (Namie, 2003). The Workplace Bullying Institute (2010) defined

workplace bullying as a repeated act of harassment that lowers the target audience's self-esteem. Bow (2007) contended workplace bullying is not easily identifiable. According to Fast and Chen (2009), aggression is a behavior that is often aligned with workplace bullying and typically appears in those having positions of authority or power.

Being able to distinguish between harassment and bullying and the destructive leadership styles that support bullying are essential to the outcomes from this mixed Delphi study. According to the U.S. Equal Opportunity Commission (2010), acts of harassment are viewed as unwanted or offensive acts of behavior such as sexual or racial harassment, which are protected by law. In the United States, workplace bullying is not a protected category under the harassment law (Wells, 2006).

According to the EEOC (2010), retaliation can be viewed as a byproduct of any type of harassment being reported. Retaliation violates Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. In regard to reported harassment cases, 73.3% of litigated harassment cases rule in favor of the employer (LaVan & Martin, 2008).

According to the NIOSH (2008), workplace bullying is a major health concern. Organizations are at risk of exposure to workplace bullying claims, hostile work environments, and increased health care costs (Namie & Namie, 2011). When workplace bullying is addressed, costs associated with health issues such as post-traumatic stress syndrome, high blood pressure, suicide, and anxiety will be reduced (Bond, Tuckey, & Dollard, 2010; Ozann-Smith & Routley, 2010; Sunley, 2008). Yamada (2004) proposed a Healthy Workplace Bill that seeks to reprimand bullies and the organizations that support bullying. Mack (2005) noted the United States currently lacks statutes governing

workplace bullying. According to Namie (2012), there are 13 states with healthy workplace bills that address workplace bullying.

Statement of the Problem

The general problem is that the impact of not addressing claims of bullying can decrease employee morale, lower productivity, increase attrition, and increase health care because of emotional stress. Costs associated with attrition and health care lawsuits can be minimized (Einersan, Hoel, Zapf, & Cooper, 2003) when bullying is adequately addressed in the work place. A 2010 survey revealed 13.7 million out of 153 million Americans believed they had been bullied (Workplace Bullying Institute, 2010). In another survey, 26% believed they had been bullied before but are no longer being bullied (Namie & Namie, 2011). According to the Workplace Bullying Institute (2010), 62% of bullies are male and 32% are women. Workplace bullying is a silent epidemic with 62% of employers ignoring the problem (Namie & Namie, 2011). According to the Center for Disease Control (2006), employers often hesitate to address workplace violence because of the increased risk of exposure that can affect the company's image. Addressing workplace violence issues may also create awareness for employees, which in turn may increase claims of workplace bullying.

In a national study conducted by the Workplace Bullying Institute (2010), 36.9% of the employees who responded to the survey were unsure about how engaged their employers were relative to addressing workplace bullying. To further expound on the online survey conducted by the Workplace Bullying Institute (2010), participants of the study believed employers were not addressing workplace bullying and typically were resistant to addressing claims of bullying. In a recent study conducted by the Workplace

Bullying Institute (2012) which involved self-selected participants, 12% of the participants contended employers did not possess the skill to stop bullying and 31% believed employers simply chose not to stop workplace bullying. The findings create a disparity regarding how employers address the phenomenon. Bruce and Nowlin (2011) asserted a workplace violence policy can only be as effective as those who enforce it.

The specific problem is the lack of organizations and their employees being able to clearly define, identify, and understand the term workplace bullying. This will result in inconsistent anti-bullying practices that impede organizations from addressing bullying in a manner that minimizes costs, reduces attrition, improves employee morale, and create a safe workplace for employees. Implementation of workplace bullying policies should be simple, consistently implemented, and easy to assess (Stagg & Sheridan, 2010).

The population to be surveyed as part of the mixed Delphi study consisted of an expert panel of 20 human resource professionals for the study who were chosen by posting an interest email on LinkedIn, which is a professional social networking community. Understanding how employees interpret the term workplace bullying is equally important for the study.

The top three definitions identified from the three rounds were sent out as a quantitative survey to 175 human resources manager, directors, non-human resource managers, and frontline employees who did not have any direct subordinates using the LinkedIn network and personal contacts. Each participant was asked to rate the top three definitions using a five-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree) to measure their level of agreement regarding the top three definitions descriptions of

workplace bullying and to determine if their level of agreement is related to their demographic characteristics.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this mixed Delphi study was to add to the body of knowledge by providing human resource professionals and organizational leaders with clearer definitions of workplace bullying that could be used to develop and enforce more effectively written workplace bullying policies regardless of industry. Through the investigation and synthesis of information provided by the panel of experts, the study also sought to increase the awareness of the importance of organizations maintaining consistent practices of developing and implementing anti-awareness policies.

The mixed Delphi study consisted of one round of open-ended questions using an online survey to ask how bullying was addressed in each panelists workplace. Each panelist was also asked to provide his or her personal definition of the term workplace bullying. Delphi research was appropriate for the study because the facilitated group communication process was geared toward gaining consensus to solving problems through an iterative process (Hartman, Krahn, & Skulmoski, 2007). Hartman, Krahn, and Skulmoski further contended the Delphi technique was an appropriate design for the study because this approach is facilitated through the use of questionnaires, which relies on the experiences of expert practitioners to develop insight for the development of new programs or policy implementation. The Delphi technique was appropriate because it avoids expert confrontation and allows expert knowledge to be used as a problem-solving tool (Okoli & Pawlowski, 2004).

The central phenomenon is workplace bullying. Bullying occurs in many forms that often are unreported (Namie & Namie, 2011). Organizational, corporate, and institutional bullying are types of bullying that exist as part of an organization's culture (Clayton, 2012). When organizations support bullying, whether intentionally or unintentionally, it becomes increasingly difficult for employees to be willing to make claims regarding alleged bullying (Hauge, Skogstad, & Einarsen, 2007). By exploring the number of bullying definitions provided by the expert group, the exploration of clearer definitions that may be needed to identify bullies and provide preventative methods was conducted.

Significance of the Problem

Significance of the study. Previous research indicated the lack of a clear definition of workplace bullying can lead to economic, financial, and health issues (Bow, 2007; Hoel & Beale, 2006). Arnold (2008) contended although organizations may implement anti-bullying or harassment policies, they are still prone to fail to implement the policies. Arnold further asserted organizations are at greater risk of incurring legal issues when anti-harassment policies are not implemented. The nonexistence or lack of fully implementing these policies can increase the risk of claims of bullying (LaVan & Martin, 2008; Stagg & Sheridan, 2010). Leaders have a responsibility to develop anti-bullying policies and awareness for all employees. The inability to identify workplace bullying has a higher cost associated with not addressing the behavior than with addressing the actual behavior (Namie & Namie, 2011).

Significance of the study to leadership. This mixed Delphi study was significant because additional research is necessary to address inconsistent behaviors of

managers and human resource professionals relative to employee claims of workplace bullying. This study adds to the body of knowledge by offering clearer and consensus-derived definitions of workplace bullying and by providing an increased awareness of the impact on organizations when they fail to address reported claims of harassment, including bullying. Information derived from this research may provide human resource professionals and leaders additional insight on how to identify and address bullying behaviors within the workplace. While legislation regarding workplace bullying does not exist, organizations do have a legal responsibility to protect the physical and healthy being of their employees.

Nature of the Study

The Delphi method is an iterative approach to understanding incomplete information relative to a phenomenon (Hartman, Krahn, & Skulmoski, 2007). By revealing the impact of workplace bullying and the risks associated with the dismissal of claims by employees the study creates an importance for addressing workplace bullying in a more effective manner. Cowan (2011) asserted future research should be conducted to understand the number of workplace bullying policies that currently exist in organizations. By understanding how these policies were implemented and enforced, guidance was offered for organizations on how to address the issue of workplace bullying.

Research method overview. According to Ataku (2012), the Delphi technique was developed in the 1950's to forecast the future through product development tests and to determine how technology would affect the market. The Delphi design for the study included quantitative and qualitative data (Iqbal & Popin-Young, 2009). The qualitative

aspect of the study served as the discovery process seeking to understand the causes and consequences regarding addressing workplace bullying from a leadership perspective (Johnson-Blake, 2010). According to Borrego, Douglas, and Amelink (2009), quantitative research aids the researcher in projecting his or her findings onto a larger population through an objective process (p. 54).

Design appropriateness. The three round mixed Delphi method was appropriate because it employs a need for group consensus to address the problem of bullying from a descriptive perspective (Hartman, Krahn, & Skulmoski, 2007). Hartman, Krahn, & Skulmoski contended for clear definitions to be explored, developed, and policies to be shared by the panel of experts, anonymity of current definitions and the release of policies across a variety of industries are necessary “when there is incomplete knowledge about a problem or phenomenon” (Hartman, Krahn, & Skulmoski, 2007, p. 1).

By understanding how human resource professionals and organizational leaders currently define workplace bullying within their respective industries, clearer definitions can be explored and developed and shared as a form of sharing best practices among organizations regardless of the industry by using the three round Delphi process. The iterative process of the three-round method was feasible for the study to develop a consensus for determining how the term workplace bullying could be defined and methods for consistent policy implementation for anti-bullying awareness through the use of an expert panel (Heyman, 2010). Delphi technique is used when consensus among experts is considered as a means for addressing a complex issue (Donohoe & Needham, 2009).

Research Question

The main question this mixed Delphi study answered was consensus reached on clearer definitions that could be incorporated into workplace harassment policies to better define the term workplace bullying. Through the identification of the answers from a panel of experts and a diverse group of 131 human resources manager, directors, non-human resource managers, and non-managerial employees it would be determined if the definitions provided a clearer description of workplace bullying and if improved methods for developing consistent anti-bullying programs could be recommended. A correlational analysis was conducted in the third round to determine if there are any similarities among the demographic themes identified. The mixed Delphi method was appropriate to the study because consensus regarding how to define bullying is important to developing programs that provide consistent implementation of workplace bullying policies. The research question formulated for the purposes of the study is:

- RQ 1. Was consensus reached on clearer definitions that could be incorporated into workplace harassment policies to define more effectively the term workplace bullying?

Theoretical Framework

This mixed Delphi study examined how workplace bullying is defined in organizations and how human resource professionals interpret the existing policies to address claims of workplace bullying. In addition to understanding the current definitions, the assessment of the influence that culture and ethical leadership behaviors had on policy implementation and claims of workplace bullying were reviewed. This study used the framework that includes social and leadership theories. Bullying is an

aggressive behavior that can have a negative impact on a person's health, job performance, and wellbeing. Workplace bullies negatively impact the organization and are costly to the organization (Namie & Namie, 2003; Prentice, 2005).

Perceived Organizational Support Theory. Organizational culture is created based on the value, norms, and beliefs of those within an organization. Schein (2010) defined culture as a pattern of shared tacit assumptions that was learned by a group as it solved problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems (p. 4).

Perceived organizational support (POS) focuses on how employees perceive their organization's commitment to their employees (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986). If perceived organizational support is high, employees are more committed to their organization. Erdogan and Enders (2007) described perceived organizational support as the perceived value and support an organization has for their employees. Perceived organizational support, as noted by Muse and Stamper (2007) asserted POS is divided into two components; POS-J and POS-R. Muse and Stamper noted perceived organizational support-job performance (POS-J) refers to the organization's value on an employee's work performance outcomes. Muse and Stamper further asserted perceived organizational support-relationship orientation (POS-R) refers to the value that an organization has on an employee's wellbeing. Workplace bullying research has identified when bullying claims are not addressed, those who are considered targets, leave the organization because of the lack of support from their organization (Djurkovic, McCormack, & Casimir, 2008).

Kopelman, Brief, and Guzzo (1990) asserted perceived organizational support refers to the work history of the employees and is representative of the perceived commitment that the organization has on them. Kopelman, Brief, and Guzzo posited this factor alone can support the overarching need for organizations to create a culture that allows employees to feel safe. If policies and programs are implemented effectively, claims of workplace bullying can be reduced. Leaders are the main actors for creating a safe culture (Kopelman, Brief, & Guzzo, 1990).

Social Learning Theory. The social learning theory suggested ethical leaders act as role models relative to fair and equitable treatment of others (Rodriquez-Munoz et al., 2009). Followers often mimic the behaviors of their leaders. This is important to mitigating workplace bullying so that it does not become a part of the cultural norm (Schaubroeck, Hannah, Avolio, Kozlowski, Lord, Trevinno & Peng, 2012). For the purpose of this mixed Delphi study, ethical leadership is not specific to managers with subordinates. Ethical leadership should be a characteristic of anyone who can influence how employees perceive their organization.

Definition of Terms

Bully - A bully is a person who uses aggressive behaviors such as criticism or social exclusion against the target (Namie & Namie, 2011). A bully is also known as a perpetrator (Namie & Namie, 2011). The aggressive behavior can cause the target to experience low self-esteem or work-related stress, which can lead to job abandonment.

Climate - The observed actions of leadership by employees related to procedures, policies, and leadership styles (Bond, Tuckey, & Dollard, 2010).

Culture - A powerful, tacit, and often unconscious set of forces that determine both individual and collective behavior, ways of perceiving, thought patterns, and values (Schein, 2010, p. 4).

Ethics - A group of moral principles or set of values (Carden & Boyd, 2010).

Harassment - Advances made by towards an individual that are unwelcomed relative to a disability, age, ethnicity, religion, race, and color (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2012).

Leadership - Persons who are responsible for leading, motivating, and inspiring others through ethical actions, and making organizational decisions for the betterment of the organization and its employees (Carden & Boyd, 2010; Kouzes & Posner, 2007).

Mobbing - Mobbing is similar to bullying. The difference is that mobbing occurs by more than one person. Mobbing is typically peer-to-peer isolation or criticism. Mobbing is described as unethical and hostile communication toward an individual (Leymann, 1996).

Policy - A final development of action to be followed by a group, individuals, government, or organizations from selected options to guide and establish present and future decisions (Titmuss, 1974).

Target - A target is a person whom the aggressive behaviors are imposed on. Targets often viewed as a threat to the bully because of the target's ethical beliefs, social status, and independence (Workplace Bullying Institute, 2012).

Assumptions

The first assumption was the results of the surveys submitted to human resource professionals and organizational leaders may lead to the development of clearer

definitions of workplace bullying and ultimately help to identify ways to develop, implement, and enforce anti-bullying policies. This assumption was supported by studying responses to the survey questions submitted to 20 human resource professionals and the diverse group of 131 participants.

Another assumption was the survey participants would respond to the questionnaires truthfully and participate in each round. Hsu and Sanford (2007) noted, “Since developing the instrument, collecting the data, and amending the questionnaire are interconnected between iterations, by not ensuring that participants respond timely can negatively impact the analysis of the data and the distribution of future questionnaires timely” (p. 4). The results from the survey may increase awareness of the leadership behaviors that can help create a positive culture that does not tolerate harassing behaviors to include workplace bullying. The survey results should be beneficial to the role of human resources, organizational leadership, and employees by providing them with new insight relative to defining and identifying bullying as well as how to minimize its impact to the entire organization.

Scope and Limitations

The scope of the study was limited to human resource professionals who have at least five years managing in a human resource manager or director role. Limitations can have a positive impact on the findings of this mixed Delphi study. A limitation to this study was time constraints and the participation of the panel of experts. A larger number of participants would require a longer wait time for responses and a larger amount of data to be analyzed.

Delimitations

The mixed Delphi study focused on human resource managers and human resource director level professionals. The scope was narrowed after the panels of experts were identified. A delimitation of this mixed Delphi study was the small sample of experts involved in the topic of defining workplace bullying within their organization. The intent of this study was to explore how (and whether) organizations define workplace bullying, and understand current policies.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 1 provided an overview of the background of workplace bullying, the background of the problem, the purpose of the study, the nature of the study, the significance to leadership, a definition of terms, assumptions, and limitations to the study. The overview provided depicted the need for understanding how various organizations within the public and private sectors define workplace bullying and the policies they currently have that address workplace bullying. Human resource professionals were asked to participate in the mixed Delphi study.

Chapter 2 consisted of an overview of literature that was relative to the field of workplace bullying. A brief overview of instruments that were used to measure workplace bullying was discussed. Chapter 2 also reviewed terms used to describe workplace aggression. By understanding the similarities and differences of how workplace aggression was described served as a guide for understanding how the phenomenon was addressed within the public and private sectors. The literature review revealed the gaps in research that led to the specific problem identified in this mixed Delphi study.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Chapter 2 provided a theoretical framework starting with a literature review of workplace bullying. Workplace bullying is a phenomenon that has begun to spark the interest of researchers (Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, & Cooper, 2003; Soylu, 2010). Workplace bullying is typically defined in terms of aggressive, unwanted harassment that can cause self-esteem issues in the target, impact productivity, negatively impact retention, and cause health issue such as depression and post-traumatic stress syndrome (Birkeland & Einarsen, 2007; Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, & Cooper, 2003). Unlike other forms of harassment, workplace bullying is legal because it is not a part of protected classes under the Civil Rights Act (Namie & Namie, 2011).

The review of the literature included a comparison of terms that are often used to describe negative workplace acts. Chapter 2 also discussed instruments used to measure workplace bullying behaviors. Leadership behaviors and styles that can positively and negatively impact workplace bullying were also discussed.

Title Searches, Articles, Research Documents, and Journals

The focus of the literature review was retrieved from scholarly and peer reviewed journals. Word searches were conducted using EBSCOHost, ProQuest, and other online library resources. Reference listings from books, dissertations, and publications were used to assist with locating appropriate terms related to this study.

The keywords used in conducting this study included workplace bullying, bullying behaviors, leadership behaviors, aggression, incivility, harassment, leadership styles, human resource policies, and workplace aggression. The documents retrieved

consisted of books, dissertations, peer-reviewed journals, and periodicals. Table 1 is a synopsis of the literature review that supports the framework for this research.

Table 1

Literature Reviewed in Support of the Research

Type of Literature	Researched	Reviewed	Used
Books	30	30	22
Dissertations	15	15	4
Peer-Reviewed Journals	121	121	86
Periodicals	25	25	14

Historical Review

Workplace bullying. Workplace bullying has been defined in many terms, which often impedes the ability for bullying to be recognized within the workplace (Moayed, Daraiseh, Shell, & Salem, 2006; Rayner, 1997; Zapf, 1999). Namie and Namie (2011) described the bully as a person who is narcissistic and egocentric. Namie and Namie believed people with narcissistic behaviors think highly of themselves and feel they are superior to others. The authors also noted bullies are harmful to their organization and to others (Namie & Namie, 2011). Gaetano (2010) described bullying as obvious, subtle, or covert behaviors. Hoel, Zapf, and Cooper (2003) described bullying as a form of harassment that is offensive and socially excludes another person. The Workplace Bullying Institute (2010) defined workplace bullying as a repeated act of harassment that lowers the target’s self-esteem. Bullying has been defined as an

offensive or hostile act that can cause a person to feel devalued, degraded and is often coupled with low self-esteem issues or illness related to stress (Matthiesen & Einarsen, 2007). Saunders, Huynh, and Goodman-Delahunty (2007) contended the differing definitions for the term workplace bullying may be the cause of under-reported cases.

There are also disparities involving the timeframes for negative acts to be perceived as bullying (Moayed, Daraiseh, Shell, & Salem, 2006; Rayner, 1997; Zapf, 1999). By definition, in order for a target to claim that he or she has been bullied, the act typically occurs over a six-month period of time (Zapf, 1999). Rayner (1997) argued in order for a claim of bullying to be valid it has to occur over a one-year time span. Moayed, Daraiseh, Shell, and Salem (2006) contended bullying occurs over a period of two and a half years. The disparity in timeframes can also add to the lack of bullying claims being reported. Most research denoted a six-month time frame of at least two consistent negative acts is considered as bullying (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2007).

Mobbing. Mobbing was a term that Leymann (1996) described as a hostile means of communication toward another person by more than one. Leymann created the Leymann Inventory of Psychological Terrorization to measure mobbing (Leymann, 1990). Saraiva and Pinto (2011) described mobbing as a psychosocial behavior that affects a worker physically and mentally. Similar to workplace bullying, mobbing is based on unsolicited harassment that can be characterized by public criticism and social exclusion. The difference between mobbing and workplace bullying is mobbing occurs by more than one person (Davenport, Schwartz, & Elliott, 2005). The main characteristic of mobbing is manipulation (Leymann, 1990). Leymann posited mobbing defames the victim's character. Leymann denoted often communication is withheld from the victim

or there is a lack of communication with the victim, which leaves the victim feeling socially isolated from the group. The victim's workload can be reduced or increased with mundane tasks, and there are threatening or violent inferences made toward the victim (Leymann, 1990). Tomic (2012) noted mobbing victims are often younger employees who are new in their career, older employees who are nearing retirement, employees who are perceived as innovative, minorities, and new employees.

Workplace harassment. Workplace harassment can be defined as hostile, degrading, aggressive, and intimidating behaviors that are not covered by the legally protected classes of harassment which are related to age, gender, race, and ethnicity (Bowling & Beeher, 2006; Rospenda, Richman, Ehmke, & Zlatoper, 2005). This type of behavior can go unnoticed within an organization because it may be seen as a means for accomplishing tasks especially in environments where competition is a means for accomplishing goals (Hobson, Roscigno, & Lopez, 2006).

Negative working relationships can have a negative impact on job satisfaction which can lead to attrition, lost productivity, and increased healthcare costs (Harkreader, 2008). Raver and Rishii (2010) asserted the motives of harassers could go undetected causing targets to question why they are being harassed. Rospenda and Richman (2004) contended covert behaviors are the most common form of harassment that is followed by verbal abuse, manipulation, and physical harm.

Incivility. Incivility is another term that is used synonymously with workplace harassment and is described as rude and disrespectful behaviors (Farkas & Johnson, 2002). Frakas and Johnson further asserted incivility can exist where there are unfavorable and stressful working conditions, absence of effective leadership, and social

isolation of employees (Farkas & Johnson, 2002). Incivility within the workplace can have a negative impact on the organization when leadership fails to address uncivil behavior or is not aware that it exists (Pearson, Anderson, & Porath, 2000).

Workplace violence. Workplace violence can include threats, verbal abuse, and physical harm (Bruce & Nowlin, 2011). Workplace violence is defined as threats or verbal abuse that causes harm to another person (National Institute for Occupational Safety & Health, 2011). Workplace violence is a more severe response to workplace bullying, mobbing, and harassment. Neumann and Barron (1997) described workplace violence as an active or passive behavior in which active behavior can include death, defamation of character, or threats toward the victim. As noted in a survey conducted by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2006), 70% of organizations do not have formal policies to address workplace violence.

Douglas, Kiewitz, Martinko, Harvey, Younhee, and Jae (2008) noted in their research triggers toward the perception of workplace violence can be processed in three stages. Douglas, Kiewitz, Martinko, Harvey, Younhee, and Jae posited cognition-initiated processing occurs when a target's emotions are influenced by attitudes. This is the highest level for perceiving an event that can trigger premeditated behaviors. Douglas et al. believed attitude initiated processing is the lower level in which attitudes influence emotions. Douglas et al. further noted affect initiated processing is the fastest method for processing triggers. In this stage, triggered events influence the affects, then attributes, then attitudes.

According to Namie and Namie (2007), 54 million people reported being bullied in the workplace. Lutgen-Sandvik (2007) noted approximately 30% of workers within

the United States experienced some form of negative behavior on a consistent basis. One negative aspect that can be caused by not addressing workplace bullying is post-traumatic stress disorder (Bond, Tuckey, & Dollard, 2010). When post-traumatic stress is present, the safety of all employees can be at risk. If the climate of an organization creates negative emotions for employees, employees may attempt to address their frustration through aggressive behaviors that could result in deadly outcomes such as suicide and murder (Bond, Tuckey & Dollard, 2010; Workplace Bullying Institute, 2012).

Another negative consequence to workplace bullying is the possible threat of employees leaving the organization. Organizations may risk losing high performing employees when bullying exists. Another negative consequence to workplace bullying is the possible threat of employees leaving the organization. Organizations may risk losing high performing employees when bullying exists. Bulutlar and Oz (2009) asserted workplace bullying could have a negative impact on an employee's emotional connection (affective commitment), perceived long-term value (continuance commitment), and organizational obligation (normative commitment). Allen and Meyer (1996) described organizational commitment as an emotional link between employees and the organization, which lessens the chance of the employee voluntarily leaving the organization.

Bullying is mainly psychological (Baillien, Neyens, De Witte, & De Cuyper, 2009). Baillien et al. (2009) asserted workplace bullying could be a result of personality differences or conflicts. When the dynamics of workplace bullying are not clearly addressed and understood by organizations, the lack of clarity and understanding can impede the development of a cohesive workplace, which in turn can increase health care

cost due to stress, negatively impact performance, and increase attrition (Namie & Namie, 2011). The lack of consensus relative to clearly defining workplace bullying and implementing consistent practices to address these claims can lead to difficulty in organizations addressing claims of workplace bullying more effectively (Workplace Bullying Institute, 2010).

Research indicates abusive and aggressive behaviors are characteristics of bullying (Borg, Guzman, Nielson, & Skakon, 2010; Forsyth, 2006; Mathisen, Einarsen, & Mykletun, 2011; NIOSH, 2004). Noble and Cronkleton (2005) noted physical abuse can be viewed as a direct result of workplace bullying when bullying is not addressed appropriately. Noble and Cronkleton described an incident regarding a worker at ConAgra Food, Inc. who killed five co-workers, wounded others, and then committed suicide. Based on the feedback from his colleagues, the employee had been teased and harassed continuously (Noble & Cronkleton, 2005). In 2010, the Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries (CFOI) 270 cases of workplace suicides were reported. Hoel and Beale (2006) argued there is not enough evidence to clearly define the characteristics of workplace bullying. Rodrigues-Carballeira, Escartin, Visauta, Porrúa, and Martín-Pena (2010) contended in order for research regarding workplace bullying to be successful, all components of workplace bullying must be clearly understood.

As outlined in the historical overview of workplace bullying, workplace mobbing, workplace harassment, and workplace violence, organizations need to understand the implications of each negative act because of their similarities of characteristics and how they are written into policy (Bruce & Nowlin, 2011; Bulutlar & Oz, 2009; Leyman, 1990; Moayed, Daraiseh, Shell, & Salem, 2006; Rayner, 1997; Rishii, 2010; Rodrigues-

Carballeira et al., 2010; Saraiva & Pinto, 2011). Leaders should strive to develop and implement the appropriate policies to address the various forms of negative acts (Kirk & Franklin, 2003). Because of the varying definitions for the term *workplace bullying* organizations may not have a clear policy to address the consequences for the negative behavior (Kelloway, Barling, & Hurrell, 2006).

Cultural Influences

Workplace violence should be a concern for organizations as they assess the importance to understanding workplace bullying and its impact to the organization (Harvey, Heames, Richey, & Leonard (2006). Bruce and Nowlin (2011) asserted many factors contribute to workplace violence such as socioeconomic conditions, job-related stress, issues at home, and substance abuse. Organizations must have measures in place to protect employees from workplace violence (Harvey, Heames, Richey, & Leonard, 2006). The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (2004) defined workplace violence as verbal abuse, threatening actions, and physical abuse which are synonymous terms of workplace bullying.

Basic consideration should be given by organizations and their leaders relative to defining the attributes of workplace bullying, identifying characteristics of bullies, implementing policies to address the negative behaviors, and providing training to employees at each level of the organization (Cowan, 2011). Current research denoted that those in leadership roles often are viewed as bullies (Namie & Namie, 2010; Workplace Bullying Institute, 2010). If those in management positions are considered to bully more often, there also needs to be a focus on leadership styles that impact bullying (Mathisen, Einarsen, & Mykletun, 2011). Organizations often blame the target for the

negative act of bullying (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2006). Workplace bullying is defined in different ways, which impedes the process for effectively identifying the characteristics and behaviors that can be written as part of policy language so that workplace bullying can be easier to identify and assess (Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, & Cooper, 2003; Hoel & Beale, 2006; Namie & Namie, 2011).

Workplace bullying is a negative act and can have a negative impact on the overall organization (Namie & Namie, 2003; Prentice, 2005). Workplace bullying is comprised of many different behaviors focusing on the target's work or personality traits (Djurkovic, McCormack, & Casimir 2008). Einarsen and Raknes (1997) created the Negative Acts Questionnaire (NAQ), which was a tool created to measure workplace bullying. The Negative Acts Questionnaire is a 22-item scale that measures job satisfaction, psychological well being, and harassment experienced within the last six months (Einarsen, 1996). Hoel and Cooper (2000) revised the Negative Acts Questionnaire (NAQ-R). The NAQ-R focused on four categories, which were workplace harassment, personal harassment, organizational harassment, and intimidation. All of the categories can influence the culture of an organization.

Source of Power

Bullying behaviors are often associated with an imbalance of power between the leader and the subordinate in which the leader seeks to use force as a means of controlling subordinate behavior (Hoel, Glaso, Hetland, Cooper, & Einarsen, 2010). In cases such as these, subordinates may perceive the behavior of the leader as unreasonable. The use of force to reach organizational goals can be described as an autocratic leadership style (Hoel et al., 2010). This type of leadership style often poses

unwarranted stress on others because of the forceful management style. When employees perceive they are being punished for not reaching goals these abusive power can be perceived as bullying (Hoel et al., 2010).

Reward, coercive, legitimate, expert, and expert power are five behavioral powers leaders use that can affect workplace bullying (French & Rand, 1958). Reward power coincides with a person's ability to positively influence a desirable influence their organizations. Coercive power is described as a source of power that relies on fear or punishment as a form of management (French & Raven, 1959). Legitimate power involved some type of standards that are accepted by an individual through the influence and assertion of one's power (French & Rand, 1958). French and Rand (1959) further asserted referent power is based on a person's ability to identify with a person or group and will adapt to the norms of the individual or group, while expert power is defined as one's knowledge and education regarding a specific topic that can influence group dynamics (French & Raven, 1959). Researchers suggested organizations should gain a better perspective regarding how power structures can influence the culture of organizations (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2007; Salin, 2008). Understanding power influences can aid in the development of more effective workplace bullying policies (Stouten et al., 2010).

Leadership Behaviors

A review of the literature revealed little research has been done regarding leadership styles and how they can positively or negatively influence workplace bullying (Mathisen, Einarsen, & Mykletun, 2011; Hoel, Glaso, Hetland, Cooper & Einarsen, 2010). An organization's culture can typically depict the types of behaviors that are

inherent within the organization (Schein, 2010). By understanding leadership behaviors and how they impact workplace bullying, organizations can have an opportunity to identify bullying characteristics during their hiring process and acknowledge that certain leadership styles may encourage bullying (Mathisen et al., 2011). Research indicated managers have a higher probability for bullying because they hold a position of power or authority (Fast & Chen, 2009). In a study conducted by Mathisen et al. (2011) the social cognitive theory was used to explore the notion that the supervisor's behaviors can negatively or positively influence workplace behaviors.

Leadership behaviors perceived as destructive may impact the frequency by which workplace bullying is reported (Thoroughgood, Hunter, & Sawyer, 2011). Fast and Chen (2009) asserted aggressive behaviors can be present in those who are in positions of authority or feel threatened by their subordinates. When mental aggression is used as style of management, the behavior can become acceptable by managers who are perceived as bullies (Hoel et al., 2010). When supervisors are perceived as aggressive and abusive, others may accept this type of leadership behavior as a management strategy. Mathisen, Einarsen, and Mykletun (2011) noted followers often mimic the behaviors of their leaders, which can be detrimental to the organization as it relates to bullying being viewed as an organizational norm.

Destructive leadership behaviors. Destructive leadership behaviors need to be assessed as these types of behaviors impact recruiting, training, and the development of leaders with an organization (Ashland, Skogstad, Notelaers, Nielsen, & Einarsen, 2010). Ashland et al. defined destructive leadership behavior as repetitive systemic negative acts that do not align with the organization's goals, which may include abusive behaviors. In

a study on destructive leadership behaviors and how those behaviors affect organizational culture, Ashland et al. posited there were four forms of leadership behaviors that they believed destructive: a) laissez-faire, b) tyrannical, c) supportive-disloyal, and d) derailed leadership. Ashland et al. (2009) asserted destructive leadership encompasses different behaviors and cannot be categorized as a specific leadership behavior.

Destructive behaviors are counterproductive to the organization.

Counterproductive behaviors are behaviors that deviate from the organization's expectations of leaders regarding legal, legitimate, and ethical behaviors (Sackett & DeVore, 2001). Einarsen, Aasland, and Skogstad (2007) developed the destructive and constructive leadership (DCL) model, which outlined four destructive leadership behaviors that targeted subordinates or the organization. These leadership behaviors may encourage bullying or manipulate subordinates as well as impact absenteeism (Aasland, Skogstad, & Einarsen, 2008). As a result of the study conducted by Aasland et al. (2010), the authors discovered 83% of respondents felt they were exposed to some form of destructive behaviors from their superior.

Dark Leadership.

Dollard and Bakker (2010) believed in order for an organization to mitigate the risks associated with unaddressed concerns of workplace bullying a safe workplace environment must exist. Psychosocial Safety Climate (PSC) can be described as the psychological well-being of employees and is believed to be a critical aspect of how employees perceive their work environments, cultures, and the working conditions (Dollard & Bakker, 2010). A Psychosocial Safety Climate hinges on the commitment level poised by leaders with regards to implementing and enforcing policies and

procedures that protect the employees and promote a safe work environment (Dollard & King, 2007; Zohar & Luria, 2005). Workplace bullying is more likely to result in organizations that are low in PSC (Bond, Tuckey, & Dollard, 2010; Dollard & Bakker, 2010).

Dark side leadership traits can be correlated to traits that are present when leaders are not acting ethically (McIntosh & Rima, 2007). McIntosh and Rima (1997) believed compulsiveness, narcissism, paranoia, codependency, and passive-aggressiveness are specific behaviors associated with the dark side of leadership. McIntosh and Rima (2007) described the narcissistic leader as a person who has an overarching need to be admired and praised. McIntosh and Rima believed the paranoid leader is suspicious of others, jealous of others, and has self-esteem issues, while the codependent leader is the peacemaker who avoids conflicts and does not address problems. To further compare, McIntosh and Rima labeled the passive-aggressive leader as a person who is resistant to change and displays anger and bitterness toward others. When leaders are perceived as unstable, untrustworthy, or unpredictable this type of leader might sabotage the efforts of the subordinates without open conflict, creating a suspicious and paranoid climate (Hoel, Glaso, Hetland, Cooper, & Einarsen, 2009).

Bennis (1987) asserted one's leadership style has a direct influence on the organization's culture. Ames and Flynn (2007) posited leaders who display a high level of assertiveness may be skilled at achieving organizational goals but how the leader accomplishes those goals can be costly to the organization. In a study conducted by Duffy, Henle and Lambert (2006), the costs associated with abusive supervision is \$23.8 billion annually. Organizations use performance management to measure an individual's

contribution to helping the organization meet its goals (DeNisi & Sonesh, 2011). These measurements are important to leaders and may influence how they behave as it relates to how goals are achieved.

The dark side of leadership is a form of behavior that can be detrimental to the organization (McIntosh & Rima, 2007). The dark side of leadership may occur in stages that may involve one's basic needs, excessive debt, and bad personal or professional experiences (McIntosh & Rima, 1997). McIntosh and Rima further noted when these stages are combined they form the foundation of an individual's dark side. When obsessions and inner passions are not addressed, they can lead to the destruction of the leader and his or her need for personal gratification (McIntosh & Rima, 1997).

Leaders who focus solely on their own needs may disregard any previous values and belief systems that the leader had that would be deemed as ethical to achieve their personal goals (Boyd, 2007). Kets de Vries (2003) asserted dark leaders are often detached from their emotions and considered this type of leader as being emotionally illiterate. Kets de Vries added the dark leaders can be perceived as the model leader within an organization because of his or her composed and structured presence.

Hogan and Hogan (1997) developed the Hogan Developmental Survey, which is a self-reported survey consisting of 11 dimensions used to measure the personality traits of leaders that can be detrimental to the organization. Each of these dimensions can be categorized by Horney's (1950) model of flawed interpersonal characteristics, which are detaching from people, moving alongside people, and collaborating with people.

Horney (1950) identified volatile, mistrust, cautious, detached, and passive-aggressiveness as traits that correlate to a leader moving away from people. Horney

further asserted that arrogance, manipulation, dramatic, and eccentric traits can be categorized as moving against people. Horney concluded the perfectionist and dependent traits correlate to a leader moving toward people (Horney, 1950).

Abusive supervision can be described as a continual act of hostility, which does not include physical contact, but includes verbal and nonverbal acts (Tepper, 2000). Abusive supervision is known as a contributing factor to psychological distress, which is also an attributed associated with reports of workplace bullying (Restubog, Scott, & Zagenczyk, 2011). Tepper (2007) asserted abusive supervisor behaviors and workplace aggression are not the same. Followers may relate abusive behaviors as the need for goals to be accomplished and to cause harm whereas workplace aggression only seeks to cause harm to an individual.

Organizational Climate

Workplace bullying can have a negative impact on an organization's climate because it is a chronic form of stress (Bond, Tuckey, & Dollard, 2010). Stressors such as workplace bullying can be detrimental to how an organization functions. The climate of an organization should not be confused with organizational culture. Bond, Tuckey, and Dollard noted organizational climate refers to the observed actions related to procedures, policies, and leadership styles. Culture refers to the norms and values that govern the organizations (Schein, 2010). Workplace bullying has also been noted to cause depression, stress, and lead to more claims of psychological and physical health issue issues (Bulutlar & Oz, 2009).

Conger (1990) asserted a leader's strategic vision, communication style, and interpersonal management skills are factors that can contribute to negative organizational

outcomes. Conger believed when strategic visions fail it is attributed to the leader's personal aims not matching the needs of his or her constituents. Conger also asserted when a leader puts his or her personal goals ahead of organizational goals, the strategic vision becomes a liability to the organization. When bullying is used as a means for meeting organizational goals the act may be overlooked because of the leader's image within the organization (Agervold, 2009; Agervold & Mikkelsen, 2004; Hoel & Salin, 2003). Leaders may use their need to be personally recognized and visible to distort reality to edify them personally. Conger (1990) believed this to be true when others approve of the leader's image. Conger noted leaders may use biases to manipulate information in order to get others to support their strategic choices. This type of practice may influence how effective HR will be at implementing and enforcing workplace-bullying policies.

Ethical Leadership Behaviors

Ethical leaders can motivate ethical behavior among employees but are also concerned with how employees perform their jobs (Stouten, Baillen, Van de Broeck, Camps, De Witte, & Euwenma, 2010). Workplace bullying has been associated with attrition, decreased productivity, and increased health cost for organizations (Rodriguez-Munoz, Baillien, De Witte, Moreno-Jimenez, & Pastor, 2009), which are environmental factors that can positively influence workplace bullying. Improving the work environment can help mitigate claims of workplace bullying.

Workplace bullying can be minimized through improving the work environment by reducing stressful working conditions (Stouten et al., 2010). Stouten et al. (2010) asserted leaders "who create a positive work environment by communicating ethical

behaviors that are expected should be able to reduce workplace bullying” (p. 19). Ethical leadership is inherent to human resource professionals as they are tasked with an important role of addressing workplace bullying. Stouten et al. (2010) research on the impact of ethical leadership behaviors revealed ethical leadership should not merely focus on communicating ethical values but should also focus on the work environment and how it influences performance outcomes.

The Human Resource Perspective on Workplace Bullying

There is a gap in research relative to understanding the human resource professional’s perspective regarding workplace bullying (Cowan, 2011; Salin, 2008). Human resource professionals are important to mitigating workplace bullying because they are tasked with being involved in the investigation of workplace bullying claims and enforcement of workplace policies (Cowan, 2011).

Salin (2008) conducted what was known as the first research study regarding the existence of anti-bullying policies in 400 Finnish organizations. The study revealed the policies reviewed did not clearly address workplace bullying. Cowan (2011) noted it is important for human resource professionals to understand the impact of not having clear policy language for anti-bullying policies.

Cowan’s (2011) expanded on Salin’s research. Cowan’s (2011) research revealed two central themes regarding bullying policies from a human resource perspective. She identified bullying as not an illegal form of harassment and anti-bullying measures are not a priority for organizations (Cowan, 2011). The emphasis should not be placed on if the act of bullying is legal because this inference implies only those in protected classes are protected against harassment (Cowan, 2011).

The research conducted by Cowan (2011) identified a disparity in what human resource professionals perceived as sufficient policies addressing workplace bullying; however these policies did not clearly label the term of bullying (Cowan, 2011). This disparity can have a positive effect on how often bullying can be underreported and unaddressed. Cowan's research revealed human resource professionals felt that their organizations did not have anti-bullying policies. Five of the human resource professionals interviewed in Cowan's study were not clear whether or not their organization had policies to address bullying. While this number is relatively low, the reasons for the lack of policies should be investigated further to understand why human resource professionals are not knowledgeable of policies within their organization addressing bullying. Human resource professionals revealed it would be difficult to write a policy to address workplace bullying because the term is not clearly defined (Cowan, 2011). Cowan's research revealed only one human resource professional was able to produce a clearly written workplace bullying policy.

Most of the human resource professionals believed their organization's code of ethics addressed workplace bullying behaviors because they address the professional behavior that is expected from all employees (Cowan, 2011). In Cowan's findings, there was disparity between the policies written and how the human resource professional interpreted the policies. Cowan's study concluded that clear policies regarding workplace bullying should be written as clear policies would help human resource and others within the organization assess and address bullying. Communicating policy is often viewed as problematic (Cowan, 2011). The development and implementation of

anti-bullying awareness programs is paramount to workplace cohesion (Stagg & Sheridan, 2010).

Leadership Responsibility

Human resource and organizational leaders have the responsibility to identify, assess, monitor, control, and evaluate outcomes (Carden & Boyd, 2010). The leaders also have the responsibility to ensure that the organization creates an environment that develops, monitors, and enforces ethical policies (Carden & Boyd, 2010). Organizations use their code of ethics guidelines to address the consequences of negative behaviors, however, Carden and Boyd further asserted these policies have failed to specifically address workplace bullying. Policies should be written in a clear and more concise structure to address issues such as workplace bullying in a manner to mitigate bullying once reported.

Because workplace bullying can impact the well being of employees, human resource and organizational leaders should be actively involved in ensuring employee behaviors align with organization's ethical values (Carden & Boyd, 2010). The development of workplace bullying policies should include the consequences of workplace bullying infractions and how the negative act will be addressed (Carden & Boyd, 2010). Policies that address specific behaviors can provide HR and leadership with distinct guidance for handling issues such as workplace bullying (Bohlander & Snell, 2007)

Measurement Tools for Workplace Bullying

Researchers have used a variety of tools to measure workplace bullying. A review of the literature revealed several instruments are currently used to assess the

phenomenon. The instruments are: Negative Acts Questionnaire – NAQ (Einarsen, 1996), Negative Acts Questionnaire-R -NAQ-R (Einarsen, Hoel, & Notelaers, 2009), Leymann Inventory Psychological Terror –LIPT (Leymann, 1990), Workplace Relationships Questionnaire-WRQ (Jennifer, Cowie, & Ananiadou, 2003), and the Workplace Aggression Research Questionnaire-WAR-Q (Keashly & Nueman, 2004).

The Negative Acts Questionnaire is a 22-item scale that measures job satisfaction, psychological well-being, and harassment experienced within the last six months (Einarsen, 1996). In 2009, the Negative Acts Questionnaire was revised and found to be an effective tool to measure workplace bullying (Einarsen, Hoel, & Notelaers). The Leymann Inventory Psychological Terror measures bullying using a 48-item scale to measure bullying in five classes (Leymann, 1990). The Workplace Aggression Research Questionnaire (WAR-Q) measures 60 behaviors that are categorized as nonviolent and violent that occurred within the last 12 months (Keashly & Neumann, 2004). The Workplace Relationship Questionnaire (WRQ) is a 54-item questionnaire that is self-administered that focuses on behaviors such as threats to profession and personal status, unrealistic job expectations, isolation, and unwanted physical interaction. These behaviors are assessed with the context of role conflict, role ambiguity scales, and environment scales (Jennifer, Cowie, & Ananiadou, 2003).

As the phenomenon continues to be addressed, additional instruments may be developed to address how workplace bullying can be effectively measured. For the purpose of the mixed Delphi study, the study focused on how workplace bullying was defined in various organizations and reviewed the policies that currently existed within those organizations. A more clear definition that can be incorporated in to policy

development and used to identify and address the behavior within organizations was sought after in this research study.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 3 discussed the research method and design for appropriateness. Chapter 3 also discussed the research question, the research population, the sampling method, instrumentation, data collection, data analysis, and the summary of Chapter 3. Chapter 3 included the method for gaining informed consent and ensuring confidentiality of the panel of experts.

Chapter 3: Method

The purpose of this mixed Delphi study was to add to the body of knowledge pertaining to workplace bullying. This study provided human resource professionals with clearer definitions of workplace bullying that could be used to develop and enforce more effectively written workplace bullying policies. For the purpose of this study human resource professional expert was defined as a person with at least five years experience working in the capacity of human resource management as a manager or director, who was responsible for creating anti-harassment awareness, who understood workplace laws, and was responsible for writing and enforcing workplace policies.

Round one consisted of qualitative open-ended questions to assess the current use and understanding of definitions of the term workplace bullying used across various industries (Appendix B). Rounds two and three of the study used a Likert scale for the participants to rate their responses and reach consensus regarding their feedback.

According to Hsu and Sandford (2007), consensus begins to form in round two. In round two, panelists were able to provide clarifications and make recommendations around the information provided (Hsu & Sandford, 2007). All three rounds of the survey were distributed using SurveyMonkey.com, which was an Internet-based survey tool. Survey Monkey.com was used to collect responses.

Research Method and Design Appropriateness

The purpose of this mixed Delphi study was to add to the body of knowledge pertaining to workplace bullying. A mixed method was appropriate because using both qualitative and quantitative methods provided a more complete depiction of the phenomenon than by using a single form of research (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). A mixed

method also allowed the researcher to collect narrative and numerical data to assess the comprehension of a current understanding relative to how workplace-bullying policies are defined, understood, and enforced. The study answered the following question:

RQ 1. Was consensus reached on clearer definitions that could be incorporated into workplace harassment policies to define more effectively the term workplace bullying?

To gain consensus, a three-round Delphi method was used. The three-round-mixed Delphi method employed a need for group consensus at all levels within the organization to address the problem of bullying from a descriptive perspective (Skulmoski et al., 2007). Skulmoski et al. (2007) noted for a clear definition to be explored, developed, and policies to be shared by the panel of experts, anonymity of current definitions and the release of policies across a variety of industries are necessary “when there is incomplete knowledge about a problem or phenomenon” (p. 1).

Research design appropriateness. According to Ataku (2012), the Delphi technique was developed in the 1950’s to forecast the future through product development tests and to determine how technology would affect the market. The Delphi design for the study included quantitative and qualitative data (Iqbal & Popin-Young, 2009). The qualitative aspect of the study served as the discovery process seeking to understand the causes and consequences regarding addressing workplace bullying from a leadership perspective (Johnson-Blake, 2010). According to Borrego, Douglas, and Amelink (2009), quantitative research aided the researcher in projecting his or her findings onto a larger population through an objective process (p. 54). Creswell (2005)

posited a mixed method design in which quantitative and qualitative data is used to collect and analyze data acts as means for understanding a research problem.

A qualitative method was not appropriate for this study because the data cannot be quantified in order to identify and gain the consensus of the panel of experts. The case study was not appropriate because case studies do not allow the researcher to determine the results when compared to other populations (Leedy & Ormord, 2010). Leedy and Ormord (2010) asserted a phenomenological design focuses on understanding the lived experiences of others. The phenomenological design would hinder the researcher's ability to identify and quantify the participant's responses in order to effectively participate in the research. The ethnography design required research to be conducted for an extended length of time (Leedy & Ormord, 2010). This mixed Delphi study did not occur over a long period.

The purpose of the first round was to gain insight from the participants by using open-ended questions. The primary themes from round one were summarized in to definitions. This qualitative data was collected and used for the second round. In rounds two and three quantitative results were obtained. In round two, respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with those definitions using a five-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree). The definitions with the highest mean scores along with the lowest standard deviations were retained as the final definitions. According to Hsu and Sandford (2007), consensus begins to form in round two.

In the third round, participants were asked to rate the top three definitions using a five-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree) to determine if their level of agreement is related to their demographic characteristics. In round three,

panelists are able to provide clarifications around the information provided (Hsu & Sandford, 2007). The Spearman Rank Order Correlation was utilized instead of the more Pearson Product Moment correlation due to the ordinal nature of the ratings.

By understanding how human resource professionals currently define workplace bullying within their respective industries, clearer definitions can be developed among organizations regardless of the industry by using the three round Delphi process. The iterative process of the three round-method is feasible for the study to develop a consensus for defining the term workplace bullying and methods for consistent policy implementation for anti-bullying awareness through the use of an expert panel (Heyman, 2010). Delphi technique is appropriate when consensus among experts is considered as a means for addressing a complex issue (Donohoe & Needham, 2009). According to Hsu and Sandford (2007), “three iterations are often sufficient to collect the needed information and reach a consensus in most cases” (p. 2).

Research Question

The intent of this study is to gain an understanding of how organizations currently define workplace bullying and to review current written policies that address the negative behavior to determine if consensus can be reached in regards to developing clearer definitions that can be used across industries. By understanding how various public and private sector organizations address the issue, this study aided in gaining consensus from human resource professionals, organizational leaders, and hourly employees for developing clearer definitions for the term workplace bullying and to explore policies and share best practice policies that currently exist within various organizations. By gaining a consensus on how to improve the definition of the term workplace bullying, policies can

be clearly written as well as provide a level of consistency for addressing the issue across organizations and industries.

Population

The sample population was chosen using LinkedIn, which is an online social network community. Ludwig (1997) asserted a majority of Delphi studies consist of 15 to 20 participants. The survey questions for round one was sent to 20 human resource professionals. The panel of experts were asked to provide their answers to the survey based on their experience and current role relative to writing, developing, and enforcing harassment laws.

The Delphi study consisted of at least three rounds of surveys. The surveys were sent using SurveyMonkey.com, which is an Internet based tool. As noted by Hsu and Sanford (2007), the results of previous rounds regarding specific responses can be changed or amended by individual participants in later rounds based on the ability to review and analyze responses provided by other Delphi participants. A correlational analysis was conducted in the third round to determine if the respondents' perception is related to their demographic characteristics. The Delphi technique was used to achieve an objective by determining "the extent of agreement over a given issue consensus measurement" (Vernon, 2009, p. 70).

Sampling Frame

Sampling allows the researcher to assess the ability of the participants understanding of the questions and the participant's ability to complete the survey (Creswell, 2005). Once the researcher obtained the feedback from the pilot survey, the

researcher was not required amend the open-ended questions before sending the survey to participants of the research.

Pilot Survey. A pilot study was conducted to ensure that the survey addressed the research question and for validation purposes of the chosen instrument, which was a questionnaire developed by the researcher. The requests for volunteers for the pilot survey were solicited using the LinkedIn social network. An introductory letter was provided to each volunteer explaining the purpose of the study. The volunteers were required to sign an informed consent form (Appendix B).

In the pilot study the proposed questions (Appendix B) was given to five human resources managers or directors who had at least five years' experience in human resource management, who was responsible for developing anti-awareness programs, who understood workplace laws, and was responsible for writing and enforcing workplace policies. Volunteers were selected based on the qualifying criteria. The experts were asked to determine if the questions were suitable questions to be asked in round one of the study.

Delphi Panel. A panel of 20 human resource professionals were chosen by posting an interest email on LinkedIn, which was a professional social networking community. The participants from the pilot study were not able to participate in the study. Human resource experts were qualified based on their professional experience of at least five years of working as a human resource manager or human resource director, who was responsible for creating anti-harassment awareness, understood workplace laws, and was responsible for writing and enforcing workplace policies. Anonymity was guaranteed for all participants, even among themselves. The survey questions for round

one were sent to 20 human professionals who are selected based on the established expert criteria. All participants had access to the Internet.

Informed Consent

One important aspect of this study was to ensure that the participants were not coerced to volunteer for the study. Permission was obtained from each participant to agree to participate in the study. They were made aware of their rights as participants in the study (Carpenter, 2008). This allowed the participants to make an informed decision regarding their participation in the study (Skulmoski et al., 2007). The participants were asked to sign a written agreement to participate in the study should they agree with the research procedures (Skulmoski et al., 2007). See Appendix A.

To ensure compliance with this requirement, an email was sent to potential participants describing the study, any risks involved with the study, and time commitments for participating within the study. The email included the consent form, which must be signed by the participant agreeing to participate in the study. Once the email was received back by the researcher from the participant, the email served as their agreement to participate in the study.

Withdrawal from the study. If a participant decided he or she did not wish to participate in the study, he or she could withdraw at any time by submitting an email to the researcher stating that he or she would like to withdraw from the study. The participant would not be required to provide a reason for withdrawing. Once the participant wished to withdraw from the study his or her information would not be included as part of the study. The researcher would send confirmation back to the

participant advising the request for withdrawal from the study has been received and the participant has been removed. There were no requests to withdraw from the study.

Confidentiality

For the purpose of this study, the privacy of all the participants was guaranteed (Carpenter, 2008). Because the study required human resource professionals to share their current workplace policies regarding workplace bullying, any policy referencing the organization's name was removed from the policy to protect the identity of the human resource professional and the organization. The researcher was the only person who had access to the survey data. The data will be archived for three years on a thumb drive and will be destroyed after three years. The thumb drive will be stored in a fireproof safe in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's office. The thumb drive will be shredded using a standard shredder. All data, including electronic versions and back-up files, will also be deleted from the computer.

Geographic Location

The geographical location was limited to the human resource professionals, organizational leaders, and hourly employees within the United States. The survey was conducted using SurveyMonkey, which is an Internet based survey tool (www.surveymonkey.com).

Data Collection

The first round of the mixed Delphi method included developing the survey questions, designing the research, selecting the panel of experts, developing the questionnaire for the first round, analyzing the results, and developing the questions for round three (Skulmoski et al., 2007). Utilizing a three-round mixed Delphi study allowed

selected participants to share their understanding of the term workplace bullying and the policy definitions currently used within their organizations to address the negative act.

One negative aspect of the Delphi technique was consensus cannot be defined at the beginning of the study (Powell, 2003), but usually after three iterations, enough information is received for consensus to be achieved (Hsu & Sandford, 2007).

Calculations of consensus included ranking items in order to establish preliminary themes among the items. The results from round two identified areas of disagreement and consensus (Hsu & Sandford, 2007).

According to Duboff (2007), when a variety of experts are used in a Delphi study, sharing different perspectives yields quality results. The purpose of the questions in the first round generated a list of possible definitions. The primary themes were summarized in to definitions. In round two, respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with those definitions using a five-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree). The definitions with the highest mean scores along with the lowest standard deviations were retained as the final definitions. In the third round, those final definitions were given to a separate group to measure their level of agreement and to determine if their level of agreement is related to their demographic characteristics.

The Delphi technique was appropriate for collecting the opinion of others within a group (Skulmoski et al., 2007). By using SurveyMonkey.com, which is an Internet based survey tool, the participants had complete anonymity by allowing the participants to see the responses of other participants without knowing who submitted the response. After the results had been received the researcher and an assistant reviewed the data and separate the data by themes.

Round One. The analysis from the first round included coding the definitions and collecting responses developed from the first questionnaire into themes to prepare the second round of definitions to be sent to the panel of experts. The data for rounds two and were analyzed using Microsoft Excel's analysis software.

Round Two. In round two, respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with the definitions using a five-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree). The definitions with the highest mean scores along with the lowest standard deviations were retained as the final definitions. The panel had the option to amend their answers and make recommendations.

Round Three. In the third round, the final survey was emailed using Survey Monkey.com to a diverse group of 131 human resources managers, directors, non-human resource managers, and non-managerial employees to using the LinkedIn network and persona contacts. Each participant was asked to rate the top three definitions using a five-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree) to measure their level of agreement regarding the top three definitions descriptions of workplace bullying and to determine if their level of agreement is related to their demographic characteristics. As noted by Hsu and Sanford (2007), the results of previous rounds regarding specific responses could be changed or amended by individual participants in later rounds based on the ability to review and analyze responses provided by other Delphi participants.

Instrumentation

The first round of the Delphi study was a qualitative design focused on establishing expert opinion relative to defining workplace bullying and understanding definitions that are currently available within various organizations (Mead & Moseley,

2001; Thompson, 2009). The questionnaires for this mixed Delphi study were sent to the panel of experts and participants using the electronic survey tool, SurveyMonkey.com, to explore the participants' understanding of workplace bullying and the organizational impacts of workplace bullying. The survey tool was located on the Internet at www.SurveyMonkey.com and is low cost allowing the data to be collected using a central repository (www.surveymonkey.com).

One advantage to using an online survey tool was the ability to provide a quicker way for the researcher to collect data and the participants could respond at any time of the day (Creswell, 2008). Online tools also offered the researcher the ability to collect multiple surveys at one time. One concern was that the panel of experts may not have received the survey because of spam filters. Each panelist was sent an email link to the online survey and given one week to respond to all three rounds respectively.

Validity and Reliability

Validity allowed the researcher to draw conclusions based on the outcomes from scores about a sample or population (Creswell, 2008). Creswell further noted factors such as unclear questions and poor research design could impact the validity of the results. Validity refers to the accuracy of the research instrument relative to measuring the outcomes (Nardi, 2003). Nardi asserted that an effective way to measure validity was through criterion validity and construct validity.

Criterion validity helped the researcher identify if the results from an item or set of measures “were similar to some external standards or criteria” (Nardi, 2003, p. 50). Nardi asserted if the new measures being used at the same time that the other criteria are available concurrent validity has been established. Nardi noted predictive validity was another way to measuring criterion validity. Nardi explained predictive validity measured how accurately measures predict a future outcome as opposed to a current outcome

Reliability focused on the consistency of the results and the ability to reproduce results with the assumption that what was being measured did not change (Nardi, 2003; Neuman, 2003). Nardi asserted one way to measure the reliability of questionnaire items was through parallel form and inter-item reliability. Nardi believed inter-item reliability was achieved when responses were compared to similar items within a questionnaire and it is determined there was consistency in the parallel measurements. Hardy et al. (2004) asserted that participant motivation, the make-up of the group, the phenomenon, determining consensus, and feedback are reliability concerns with the Delphi technique. To improve reliability for this mix methods Delphi study, the researcher ensured each participant understands the purpose of the study, how to withdraw from the study, that anonymity would be given to each participant, and that the participants could ask questions at any time during the study.

Data Analysis

Creswell (2005) asserted the qualitative aspect of data analysis included coding data, assessing themes, and correlating the themes. Coding was used to discover themes through segmenting and labeling text (Creswell, 2005). The analysis from the first round included the list of definitions developed from the first questionnaire to prepare the

second round of definitions to be sent to the panel of experts. The responses collected from rounds one and two were categorized by general themes using excel to rank the themes.

The primary themes from round one were summarized in to definitions. In round two, respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with those definitions using a five-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree). The definitions with the highest mean scores along with the lowest standard deviations were retained as the final definitions.

For the second round, the panel had the option to amend their answers and make recommendations. As noted by Hsu and Sanford (2007), the results of the previous rounds regarding specific responses could be changed or amended by individual participants in later rounds based on the ability to review and analyze responses provided by other Delphi participants. In the third round, the top three definitions were given to a separate group to measure their level of agreement and to determine if their level of agreement is related to their demographic characteristics. To measure the level of relationship between the ratings for the definitions and the demographic characteristics (gender, industry, and level within the organization) Spearman Rank Order Correlation was utilized. Spearman Rank Order Correlation was utilized instead of the more Pearson Product Moment correlation due to the ordinal nature of the ratings.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 3 discussed the research method and design for appropriateness that was used for this study. Chapter 3 also included an overview of the research question, the research population, the sampling method, instrumentation, data collection, data analysis,

information on how informed consents was obtained, and how confidentiality would be ensured. Chapter 4 includes an overview of the findings of the data collected, which included the statistical analysis to support the findings.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results

Workplace bullying is a prevalent negative act that goes unreported in the workplace because the term is often associated with harassment. However, the term is not clearly defined in words that describe the behavior and its impact on targets. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the three rounds of surveys derived from the expert panelist and participants. The purpose of this mixed Delphi study was to add to the body of knowledge by providing human resource professionals and organizational leaders with clearer definitions of workplace bullying that could be used to develop and enforce more effectively written workplace bullying policies regardless of the industry.

Research Design

The modified mixed Delphi design was selected because the design allows the researcher to use surveys to gather data in an iterative process to establish consensus (Hartman, Krahn, & Skulmoski, 2007). Prior to the study informed consent (see Appendix A) was obtained from the participants. The survey questions were formulated to answer the following research question:

RQ 1. Was consensus reached on clearer definitions that could be incorporated into workplace harassment policies to define more effectively the term workplace bullying?

The sample population for rounds one and two consisted of 20 human resource managers and directors from various industries who had at least five years' experience working in their current roles, had a responsibility for creating anti-awareness, understood workplace laws, and had a responsibility for writing and enforcing workplace policies. For the third round, the survey was sent to 175 participants who were non-

human resource managers and frontline employees in various organizations. There were 131 participants who responded to the third round of the survey.

Delphi studies typically consist of 15 to 20 participants (Ludwig, 1997). Round one consisted of qualitative open-ended questions to establish an understanding of how various organizations currently addressed workplace bullying through written policy. SurveyMonkey.com was used as the research tool to collect and analyze the data from all three rounds. Each participant's response was kept confidential. A five-point Likert scale where 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree, and 5=strongly agree were used for rounds two and three. Each round allowed participants to provide additional comments.

Pilot Study

A pilot study allowed the researcher to test the effectiveness of a research instrument (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). The pilot study was completed using five human resource managers who were not allowed to participate in the final study. LinkedIn, a professional networking website, was used to solicit the participants for the pilot. Consent was obtained from each participant prior to the study. The purpose of the pilot was to determine the suitability of the questions to be asked in round one of the study. The participant responses did not yield any responses that required changes to the open-ended questions for round one.

Round 1 Analysis

The first round of the survey allowed the selected participants to share their organization's policy definition for addressing workplace bullying and to provide their own personal definition of the term workplace bullying. The first round consisted of 20

human resource managers and directors who shared their organization's workplace bullying harassment policy verbatim and their personal views on how to define workplace bullying.

In round one there were 20 respondents who participated in the first round. Nine out of the 20 respondents provided their organization's policy definition that they felt covered workplace bullying. The primary themes identified from the first round were summarized into definitions. The most common definitions and themes were established by looking at keyword and descriptions that were similar. Based on the keywords and themes that were analyzed, five definitions were developed by the research that was thought to more effectively describe the act of workplace bullying. The definitions with the highest rate of agreeability on a scale of one to five were selected as the top five definitions for round two. The organizational definitions were as follows:

1. Any employee who experiences violent, threatening, harassing, intimidating or other disruptive behavior.
2. Workplace bullying is defined as acts that are intentional or unintentional. The effect of the behavior upon the individual is important. Bullying includes acts that are verbal, gestures, or exclusions.
3. (Company name redacted) strongly believes that every employee has a right to a workplace that is free of violence, threats, intimidation and harassment. Each individual has the right to work in a safe environment which promotes equal opportunity and prohibits unlawful discriminatory practices, including harassment based on any protected characteristic. (Company name redacted) also believes that each employee or business associate has the right to be free from harassment

because of race, color, ancestry, place of origin, political belief, religion, marital status, family status, physical or mental disability, gender, sexual orientation, age or other grounds enumerated under relevant human rights legislation. (Company name redacted) will not tolerate any form of violence or harassment, and employees who feel that they are not being treated appropriately should report the incident(s) to their immediate supervisor, any member of management or the Human Resources Department and/or avail themselves of the Open-Door *Complaint Procedure*.

Workplace violence will not be tolerated by (Company name redacted) and those who participate in violent behavior will be subject to discipline up to and including termination of employment.

Definition of Workplace Violence

Violence in the workplace is any behavior that compromises the safety or well-being of an individual. It can be a single occurrence or a continuous behavior. Workplace violence can victimize both men and women, and may be directed by or towards (Company name redacted) employees, visitors and members of the public. Violent behavior in the workplace can cause several problems including but not limited to a reduction in employee morale and productivity, an increase in fear and can generally become detrimental to workplace harmony.

Examples of Workplace Violence

There are three different types of workplace violence:

- Non-physical Violence
- Physical Violence

- Aggravated Physical Violence

Violent acts may include (but are not limited to):

- Verbal abuse, threats, and intimidation including invasions of personal space intended to threaten or intimidate.
 - Malicious Mischief - The wanton or reckless destruction of property, failure to respect Company and/or personal property and the willful injury to a person, i.e. wrestling, throwing things, shoving, pushing, practical jokes or other disorderly conduct including horseplay.
 - Unsolicited and unwanted physical contact or abuse
 - A physical attack or an attempted physical attack intended to do harm
 - Property damage, vandalism, wanton disregard for the safety of others
 - Acts of sabotage
 - Possessing guns or other weapons on (Company name redacted) property
4. Any other perceived behavior that makes an individual feel unsafe or threatened prohibits verbal or physical conduct that offends, abuses, intimidates, torments, degrades, or threatens a person on the basis of his or her race, ethnicity, religion, color, sex, national origin, age, United States military veteran's status, ancestry, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, marital status, family structure, genetic information, or mental or physical disability.
 5. Either passive or actively aggressive behavior towards another that results in another employee feeling uncomfortable or provides the perception of discomfort to others.

6. Conduct which interferes with an employee's reasonable expectation to perform assigned work.
7. Any action that scares a person or impedes their work.
8. (Company name redacted) is committed to a work environment in which all individuals are treated with respect and dignity. Each individual has the right to work in a professional atmosphere that promotes equal employment opportunities and prohibits unlawful discriminatory practices, including harassment. Therefore, (Company name redacted) expects that all relationships among persons in the office will be business-like and free of bias, prejudice and harassment. It is the policy of (Company name redacted) to ensure equal employment opportunity without discrimination or harassment on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, marital status, amnesty or status as a covered veteran. (Company name redacted) prohibits any such discrimination or harassment. (Company name redacted) encourages reporting of all perceived incidents of discrimination or harassment. It is the policy of the Company to promptly and thoroughly investigate such reports. (Company name redacted) prohibits retaliation against any individual who reports discrimination or harassment or who participates in an investigation of such reports.
9. (Company name redacted) is committed to a work environment in which all individuals are treated with respect and dignity. Each individual has the right to work in a professional atmosphere that promotes equal employment opportunities and prohibits unlawful discriminatory practices, including harassment. Therefore,

(Company name redacted) expects that all relationships among persons in the office will be business-like and free of bias, prejudice and harassment. It is the policy of (Company name redacted) to ensure equal employment opportunity without discrimination or harassment on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, marital status, amnesty or status as a covered veteran. (Company name redacted) prohibits any such discrimination or harassment. (Company name redacted) encourages reporting of all perceived incidents of discrimination or harassment. It is the policy of the Company to promptly and thoroughly investigate such reports. (Company name redacted) prohibits retaliation against any individual who reports discrimination or harassment or who participates in an investigation of such reports.

Eleven of the respondents noted their workplace did not specifically call out workplace bullying. Therefore, no policy definition was provided. The common themes derived from the shared definitions provided by nine of the respondents were violence, harassment, intimidation, abuse of power, passive or aggressive behaviors that impact an individual's ability to perform his or her job. The participants were also asked to share their personal definition of workplace bullying. Eight respondents provided their personal definitions as follows:

1. Workplace Bullying is repeated, health-harming mistreatment of one or more persons (the targets) by one or more perpetrators that takes one or more of the following forms: Verbal abuse,; offensive conduct/behaviors (including

nonverbal) which are threatening, humiliating, or intimidating; work interference — sabotage — which prevents work from getting done.

2. Imposing one's will on another in a negative manner with the intentional desire to intimidate, control or exact fear. It is any action or behavior that would prevent another employee from having the benefit and privilege to work in an environment free from harassment.
3. Verbal abuse, inappropriate conduct or behavior (intimidation, harassment, humiliation) toward another employee.
4. Repeated, health-harming mistreatment of one or more persons that can take any of the following forms: Verbal abuse; or Offensive conduct and behaviors – including nonverbal – which are threatening, humiliating or intimidating; or Work interference or sabotage that prevents work from getting done.
5. Repeated acts of mistreatment towards another employee. The mistreatment can occur in a variety of forms verbal, non-verbal, physical abuse.
6. Anything that makes a person perceive they are not welcomed in their current position. Using unprofessional language or making a person feel less than no matter what position they are currently in.
7. My personal definition is similar to the above, and encompasses acts of leaders that do not fairly resolve conflict. For example, positions of authority could impact evaluations. Hence, employee performances may not be fairly gauged because of scope of authority and level of autonomy given to leaders of certain levels.

8. Behavior displayed by an employee that is perceived as threatening and intimidating in nature whereas the aggressor knows their actions are such and that they expect little resistance due to the employee they are displaying such behavior to.

The analysis from this question described specific themes such as repeated, health-harming mistreatment, imposing one's will with the intentional desire to intimidate control, or fear, repeated actions of mistreatment, making a personal feel unwelcomed in their current position, using unprofessional language to demean a person, and abuse of power by leaders. The researcher developed definitions based on the shared organization definitions and the personal definitions shared by the human resource experts.

Round 2 Analysis

Round two was open from February 5, 2014 through March 6, 2014. The same 20 participants from round one were given a deadline of March 6, 2014 to complete the second round. Only eight participants completed the survey for the second round. The researcher collected the most common definitions and themes from round one to develop five definitions to have the 20 panelists rate the definitions using a five-point Likert scale the second round. The rating of the definitions was to determine if there was agreement that the definitions provided a clearer definition of the term workplace bullying. The definitions with the highest rate of agreeability on a scale of one to five were selected as the top three definitions. The definitions that were derived from the first round analysis were:

1. Any negative verbal or physical act made against an employee that involves perceived claims of mental or physical violence, threats, misuse of power, intimidation, exclusion, or any disruptive behavior that demeans an employee and fosters an unsafe or hostile working environment.
2. Perceived claim of verbal or physical mistreatment for any period of time that compromises the safety or well-being of an individual.
3. Perceived aggressive behavior towards an individual that results in an individual being made to feel uncomfortable through words or actions by others.
4. A perceived negative act that involves verbal or non-verbal abuse or the mental mistreatment of a person by an individual. Acts include, but are not limited to threats, public or private humiliation, personal attacks against one's character or work capabilities, or defamation of character.
5. An unwanted and aggressive behavior that involves a real or perceived imbalance of power. The negative act can include but is not limited to threats, spreading rumors, personal attacks, public or private humiliation, unwarranted defamation of character, physical or verbal abuse, or purposeful exclusion from groups.

The top three definitions identified in round two were:

1. A perceived negative act that involves verbal or non-verbal abuse or the mental mistreatment of a person by an individual. Acts include, but are not limited to threats, public or private humiliation, personal attacks against one's character or work capabilities, or defamation of character. The abbreviated definition is *a perceived negative act* (see Table 2).

2. An unwanted and aggressive behavior that involves a real or perceived imbalance of power. The negative act can include but is not limited to threats, spreading rumors, personal attacks, public or private humiliation, unwarranted defamation of character, physical or verbal abuse, or purposeful exclusion from groups. The abbreviated definition is *unwanted/aggressive behavior* (see Table 2).
3. Any negative verbal or physical act made against an employee that involves perceived claims of mental or physical violence, threats, misuse of power, intimidation, exclusion, or any disruptive behavior that demeans an employee and fosters an unsafe or hostile working environment. The abbreviated definition is *perceived claims of mental/physical violence* (see Table 2).

The top three definitions identified for the third survey was sent to a group of 175 managerial and non-managerial participants for round three using LinkedIn and personal contacts. There were 131 respondents for the third round.

Round 3 Analysis

The participants for round three were sent the third survey using SurveyMonkey.com. Each participant was provided the informed consent prior to participating in the survey. All responses were anonymous and confidential. Out of 175 participants who were solicited there were 131 respondents. The 131 participants in round three were asked to rate the top three definitions based on relevance to clearly define the act of workplace bullying using a five-point Likert scale where 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree, and 5=strongly agree. Table 2 displays the frequency counts for selected variables gathered during the third round of the analyses. For the 131 respondents who answered the survey, the most common position was either

manager (not HR) (31.1%) or front-line employee (38.2%). Almost all the respondents (90.8%) were female. The most common industries were *government* (25.2%) and *education* (25.2%). Over half the respondents lived in Texas (51.1%) with the next state being Maryland (8.4%) (Table 2).

Table 2

Frequency Counts for Selected Variable (N = 131)

Variable	Category	n	%
Position			
	Manager (Not HR)	42	32.1
	HR Manager/Director	5	3.8
	Teacher	26	19.8
	Front-line employee	50	38.2
	Secretary	8	6.1
Gender			
	Female	119	90.8
	Male	12	9.2
Industry			
	Non-profit	14	10.7
	Government	33	25.2
	Education	33	25.2
	Healthcare	18	13.7
	Banking	14	10.7
	Retail	19	14.5
State Name			
	District of Columbia	5	3.8
	Kansas	10	7.6
	Maryland	11	8.4
	Texas	67	51.1

Virginia	9	6.9
Other state	29	22.1

Table 3 displays the ratings for the three definition variables. These variables were rated on a 5-point metric (1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 5 = *Strongly Agree*). The lowest rated was the *perceived negative act* definition ($M = 4.34$). The highest rated was *perceived claims of mental/physical violence* ($M=4.47$). The three opinion variables were aggregated into a total score which had a Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient of $\alpha = .84$. This suggested that the scale had an adequate level of internal reliability (Salkind, 2003). (Table 3).

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics for Opinion Variable (N=131)

Opinion Variable	M	SD	Low	High
Unwanted/aggressive behavior	4.40	0.90	1.00	5.00
Perceived claims of mental/physical violence	4.47	0.95	1.00	5.00
A perceived negative act	4.34	0.97	1.00	5.00
Total Score				

Chapter Summary

In summary, this mixed Delphi study added to the body of knowledge by providing human resource professionals and organizational leaders with clearer definitions of workplace bullying that could be used to develop and enforce more

effectively written workplace bullying policies regardless of industry. Several key findings from this study were there was agreement with the top three definitions relative to workplace bullying is not being effectively addressed across the states identified from the study and mostly women responded to the study. In the final chapter, these findings were compared to the literature, conclusions and implications were drawn, and a series of recommendations were suggested.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

The purpose of this mixed Delphi study was to add to the body of knowledge by providing human source professionals and organizational leaders with clearer definitions of the term workplace bullying. This study sought to develop definitions that could be used to enforce more effectively written policies regarding workplace bullying. The synthesis of information provided by the panel of experts allowed the researcher to develop definitions, which can improve how workplace bullying is identified as well as improve the implementation of anti-awareness policies and programs.

A mixed Delphi study was used to obtain input from a group of panel of experts that consisted of human resource system managers and directors. The mixed Delphi study was appropriate because it allowed the researcher to conduct facilitated group communication using an online survey method called surveymonkey.com towards gaining consensus to solving the problem regarding how workplace bullying is defined in the workplace (Hartman, Krahn, & Skulmoski, 2007). Experts were required to have at least five years of experience working as a human resource manager or director, responsible for creating anti-harassment awareness, had an understanding of workplace laws and was responsible for writing and enforcing workplace policy. Chapter 5 consists of a comparison of the literature in conjunction with the findings, conclusions, implications, recommendations, and a summary.

Statement of the Problem

The specific problem is the lack of organizations and their employees being able to clearly define, identify, and understand the term workplace bullying. The lack of a clear term results in inconsistent anti-bullying practices that impede organizations from

addressing bullying in a manner that minimizes costs, reduces attrition, improves employee morale, and creates a safe workplace for employees. According to Namie and Namie (2011), workplace bullying is a silent epidemic in which 62% of employees ignore the negative act. Additionally employers fail to report workplace violence because it often tarnishes the organization's image (Center for Disease Control, 2006).

Analysis and Findings

The three-round modified mixed Delphi study was appropriate for determining if consensus could be reached among the panel of experts and participants. The research sought to answer the following question:

RQ 1. Was consensus reached on clearer definitions that could be incorporated into workplace harassment policies to define more effectively the term workplace bullying?

The analysis for Chapter 4 allowed the researcher to understand how workplace bullying was currently being addressed in organizations across various industries and states. At the start of the research, the researcher was able to collect responses from 20 human resource experts that met the established criteria for participation. Round one allowed the researcher to establish themes to develop the definitions for round two.

Based on the analysis those policies shared by the human resource experts did not specifically address workplace bullying. However, those policies addressed how harassment was defined based on Title VII requirements. The common themes derived from the policies provided by the 20 experts were violence, harassment, intimidation, abuse of power, passive or aggressive behaviors that impact an individual's ability to perform his or her job.

The panelists were also asked to share their personal definition of the term workplace bullying. The common themes derived from the survey question were specific themes such as repeated, health-harming mistreatment, imposing one's will with the intentional desire to intimidate control, or fear, repeated actions of mistreatment, making a personal feel unwelcomed in their current position, using unprofessional language to demean a person, and abuse of power by leaders.

Synthesis of the Literature

Definitions. Past literature denoted the difficulty in defining the term workplace bullying. The Workplace Bullying Institute described workplace bullying as a repeated act of harassment that lowers the target's self-esteem (2010). Matthiesen and Einarsen (2007) described workplace bullying as an offensive or hostile act that causes a person to feel devalued and degraded. The most common form of harassment is covert behaviors, which are followed by manipulation, verbal abuses, and physical harm (Rospenda & Richman, 2004). The survey demonstrated there were consensus among human resource professionals and the participant group regarding the behaviors that are associated with workplace bullying from a definitive perspective. It is clear that bullying is an act that is demeaning and degrading to the target.

Timeframes. From the definitions collected there was not any clear correlation to specific time frames for which workplace bullying is thought to occur as noted in the literature. Zapf (1999) noted bullying is valid if it occurs for at least six-months. Rayner (1997) argued bullying has to occur over a period of a one-year span to be valid. Moayed, Daraiseh, Shell, and Salem (2006) contended an effective claim of bullying has to occur over at least a two and a half year timeframe. However, most literature

highlighted that workplace bullying has to occur over a six-month period with at least two consistent negative acts (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2007). The results from the survey denoted bullying can occur only once but it is based on the perception of the one who feels he or she is being bullied.

Synonymous Terms

Synonymous terms such as mobbing, incivility, and workplace violence are often confused with the term workplace bullying. Because there are other forms of harassment that are synonymous to the behaviors associated with bullying, it is difficult to specifically identify bullying because it is entwined with other forms of harassment. Therefore the policies shared revealed the term workplace bullying is not specifically mentioned in any of the policies and definitions provided. Conversely, bullying behaviors are merely associated with the workplace harassment under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act.

Human Resource Perspective

The findings from this survey clearly indicate there is still disparity relative to how workplace bullying is defined workplace policies. Organizations have not seen the benefit for writing their policies to specifically call out the term workplace bullying. Human resource has their hands tied with regard to how policies are addressed and enforced. The study indicated that there was a clear difference in how organizations describe workplace bullying and how human resource professionals describe the term from their personal perspective. If human resource and manager ethical beliefs differ from the policies they are required to enforce, how can employees feel their organizations have their best interest in mind?

Significance to Leadership

Workplace bullying is a growing epidemic that requires immediate attention by organizations. Because of factors such as organizational climate, leadership behaviors, varying definitions, and human resource constraints, organizational leaders should begin to focus on factors such as these to improve their organizational culture. When the culture of an organization breeds a positive climate and creates a safe work environment, employee engagement can increase and claims of harassment in its varying forms can decrease. Until organizations understand the impact of negative behaviors from their leaders and the impact of unclear workplace policies there will continue to be an influx of medical claims for stressors related to the workplace environment.

While personality differences can be a factor in one's perception of being harassed or mistreated, personality differences must be taken into account. Because managers have a source of power over their subordinates, it is easier for managers to get away with the mistreatment of employees. Literature supported that aggressive behaviors are considered characteristics of bullying behaviors.

Recommendations for Human Resource Professionals

The start of developing clearer policies starts with human resource but should be done in conjunction with the insight from employees at all levels within the organization. Based on the results from the survey, employee insight is valuable to ensure the term workplace bullying is understood holistically within the organization. When employees have a clearer understanding of the behaviors that are considered bullying behaviors, claims of bullying will increase and managers can be held more accountable to ensuring a safe and healthy workplace exists. Accordingly to the literature, claims of bullying are

low because organizations use Title VII definitions to cover bullying. However, it is noted that workplace bullying is not considered illegal and is not writing as part of Title VI protected classes.

One recommendation would be to conduct a focus group with employees to determine how to define the term workplace bullying. Until all employees understand what the term means to them and share those definitions with their organizational leaders, there will continue to be a gap relative to addressing bullying in the workplace. Another recommendation would be to explore the reason why most women are prone to report workplace bullying than men. Based on the survey results 90% of the respondents were women. The survey was mailed to 175 male and female participants, but the majority of the respondents were female.

Future Research

As noted through this research, leadership behaviors can influence bullying behaviors that are acceptable by organizations through their management practice and leadership styles used over subordinates. Those in leadership roles are more susceptible to bullying because of their position within the organization (Namie & Namie, 2010). Another recommendation would be to compare workplace bullying to school level bullying. It would be important to explore why it is easier to identify bullying in school-aged children but not in the workplace.

Dark side of leadership. Research indicates there has been little research focused on leadership behaviors or styles and how they influence workplace bullying (Mathisen, Einarsen, & Mykletun, 2011; Hoel, Glaso, Hetland, Cooper & Einarsen, 2010). Research denoted managers have a higher probability of bullying because of the

power they have over their subordinates (Fast & Chen, 2009). Aggressive or abusive behaviors may be perceived as an acceptable management style (Hoel et al., 2010; Tepper, 2007). Future research can be done on leadership behaviors that are thought to be associated with the mistreatment of employees.

Based on the definitions shared by the human resource experts and supported research from the literature, people who have authority over others are more prone to bullying. By understanding the unethical and negative behaviors, human resource can develop more effective training programs geared toward building safer and supportive work environments thus increasing employee engagement and longevity. Bullying occurs because of an imbalance of power (Hoel, Glaso, Hetland, Cooper, & Einarsen, 2010).

Research denoted bullying is all about perception (Workplace Bullying Institute, 2010). If this is the case, it should be further researched to understand why the perception of being bullying is not taken in to account when claims of bullying are made to human resource or to managers. One's perception is one's reality. Claims of bullying must be taken seriously.

Policy Recommendations

As a start to writing more effective policies regarding identifying workplace bullying, organizations can begin with the top three definitions that were derived out of this study. Additionally, organizations should also construct their policies to include the consequences for the negative act and how workplace bullying will be addressed (Carden & Boyd, 2010). One expert provided the following information regarding the harassment complaint procedure used in his or her organization.

Complaint Procedure: Individuals who believe they have been the victims of conduct prohibited by this policy statement or who believe they have witnessed such conduct should discuss their concerns with their immediate supervisor, Human Resources or any member of management. When possible, (Company name redacted) encourages individuals who believe they are being subjected to such conduct to promptly advise the offender that his or her behavior is unwelcome and request that it be discontinued. Often this action alone will resolve the problem. The Company recognizes, however, that an individual may prefer to pursue the matter through complaint procedures. (Company name redacted) encourages the prompt reporting of complaints or concerns so that rapid and constructive action can be taken before relationships become irreparably strained. Therefore, although no fixed reporting period has been established, early reporting and intervention have proven to be the most effective method of resolving actual or perceived incidents of harassment. Any reported allegations of harassment, discrimination or retaliation will be investigated promptly. Confidentiality will be maintained throughout the investigatory process to the extent consistent with adequate investigation and appropriate corrective action. Retaliation against an individual for reporting harassment or discrimination or for participating in an investigation of a claim of harassment or discrimination is a serious violation of this policy and, like harassment or discrimination itself, will be subject to disciplinary action. Acts of retaliation should be reported immediately and will be promptly investigated and addressed. Misconduct constituting harassment, discrimination or retaliation will be dealt with appropriately. False and malicious complaints of harassment, discrimination or retaliation may be the subject of appropriate disciplinary action.

Having clearly documented procedures for reporting workplace bullying and the consequences for the behavior, the organizational climate will improve because policies and procedures are clear. When policies are clearly understood at all levels within the organization, a safer workplace can be fostered and the perception of bullying can be dispelled as a strategy for meeting organizational goals.

Conclusion and Implications

The researcher sought to address the disparity of the definition of workplace bullying and how leadership behaviors can influence workplace bullying. The researcher is passionate about this topic because of first-hand experience of being bullied. Both acts of bullying experienced by the researcher occurred two years apart. Little was known by the researcher about the topic or the elements associated with the negative behavior. Like the researcher, most targets are removed from the organization or tend to leave because it is not worth reporting the negative act. The researcher never received a negative performance appraisal, but believed her removal was due to personality differences between her and her managers.

As the researcher reflects on both dismissals from previous jobs, those dismissals were due to her holding her managers accountable to providing the guidance and direction required for her to do her job. It is imperative that all managers receive at least bi-annual training on managing personality differences. It is equally imperative that human resource incorporate behavioral testing as part of their on-boarding practices. By understanding the behaviors associated with an individual before he or she is on-boarded the organization can determine if the behaviors associated with the individual match the core values of the organization. This practice can also help reduce claims of harassment

in all forms. Every employee has the right to work in a safe environment. Mistreatment of employees should no longer take precedence over accomplishing organizational goals and personal agendas.

Summary

Workplace bullying is a growing epidemic that is not being addressed by organizational leaders. There is a lack of clear definition. The lack of the term workplace bullying not having a concise meaning by which employees at all levels of the organization can identify and understand impacts how often claims of bullying are addressed. It has been demonstrated through this study that human resource leaders are aware there is a need for policies to contain definitions that clearly identify workplace bullying aside from Title VII protected criteria. However, they continue to support poorly written harassment policies. This means that organizations are failing to create safe and healthy work environments for their employees.

In conclusion, at a minimum, the top three definitions identified in this study can be a central starting point for addressing how workplace bullying can be addressed within organizations. There should be more partnerships between organizational leaders and its employees to help write and enforce more effective policies geared toward addressing workplace bullying similar to how school systems do for children. Workplace bullying is a form of harassment that is legal. However, it is not protected under the Civil Rights Act (Bowling & Beeher, 2006; Namie & Namie, 2011; Rospenda, Richman, Ehmke, & Zlatoper, 2005). For this reason, it is imperative workplace bullying is specifically identified and written in to harassment policies as a separate harassment element in terms that can be easily identified based on the action itself.

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Appendix A: Informed Consent Letter 18 Years or Older

Dear:

My name is Christi Monk. I am a doctoral candidate in the School of Advanced Studies in the Organizational Leadership Studies program at the University of Phoenix. I am working on my doctoral dissertation entitled “Defining and Addressing Workplace Bullying In Search of a Clearer Definition”.

As part of the dissertation process, I will be conducting research to gain a clearer understanding of how leadership behaviors influence workplace bullying and to determine how effective HR is at writing, implementing, and enforcing policies that specifically address workplace bullying. I am interested in conducting this research because I am passionate about helping organizations succeed through effective identification of leadership deficiencies that could hinder the success of their organization.

Your participation will consist of two rounds of questionnaires. The survey will be completed via email. The survey should not take any longer than 10 minutes. The first round of questionnaire will consist of a combination of 10 open and closed ended questions. The second survey will be developed based on the top three responses from each of the 10 questions from the first questionnaire.

This study will benefit human resource professionals, organizational leaders, and employees effectively enforce more by providing a clearer definition of workplace bullying and paving the way for clearly written policies including consequences for leaders or employees who engage in bullying behaviors. In this research, this is no foreseeable risk to you.

1. Your participation in the study is voluntary.
2. You may withdraw from the study at anytime without penalty.
3. Your name and the name of your organization will remain confidential at all times since the results of the survey may be published.
4. If interviews are done, they may be recorded. If they are recorded, you must give permission for the researcher, Christi Monk, to record the interviews. You understand that the information from the recorded interviews may be transcribed. The researcher will develop a way to code the data to assure that your name is protected.
5. Christi Monk, the researcher, has fully explained the nature of the research study and has answered all of your questions and concerns
6. Data will be kept in a secure and locked area. The data will be kept for three years and then destroyed.
7. The results of the research may be published.

By signing this form, you agree that you understand the nature of the study, the possible risks to you as a participant, and how your identity will be kept confidential.

When you sign this form, this means that you are 18 years old or older and that you give your permission to volunteer as a participant in the study that is described here.

I accept the above terms. **I do not accept the above terms.** **(CHECK ONE)**

Signature of the interviewee _____ Date _____

Signature of the researcher _____ Date _____

Appendix B: Pilot Survey Instrument

Please answer the below questions in their entirety.

1. What is title within your organization?
2. Is workplace bullying covered in any of your workplace bullying policies? If so, which one?
3. How does your organization define workplace bullying?
4. What is your role regarding policy development and implementation within your organization? (Check all that apply)
 - a. Develop and write policy
 - b. Advise employers and managerial staff
 - c. Communicate policy
 - d. Implement and enforce policy
 - e. Conduct training on policy
5. What method does your organization use to communicate its workplace bullying policy to employees?
6. Does your organization provide anti-bullying training? If yes, how often?
7. Does your organization clearly explain how to report workplace bullying claim?
8. How would you respond to a person who brings a bullying claim to your attention?

Appendix C: Demographic Questions

1. Are you at least 18 years of age? Yes No
2. Do you have at least 5 years of management experience (for managers)?
 Yes No
3. Are you considered a member of management in your current organization?
 Yes No
4. Have you been with your employers for at least 90-days (hourly employees)?
 Yes No
5. What type of organization do you work for? Government Private
Sector Non-Profit
6. Gender: Male Female

Appendix D: Premises, Recruitment and Name (PRN) Use Permission



PREMISES, RECRUITMENT AND NAME (PRN) USE PERMISSION

Linked Group – Delta Sigma Theta/Omega Psi Phi Business Networking

Name of Facility, Organization, University, Institution, or Association

Please complete the following by check marking any permissions listed here that you approve, and please provide your signature, title, date, and organizational information below. If you have any questions or concerns about this research study, please contact the University of Phoenix Institutional Review Board via email at IRB@phoenix.edu.

I hereby authorize _____, a student of University of Phoenix, to use the premises (facility identified below) to conduct a study entitled (insert title of research study or a brief description of research study)

I hereby authorize Christi Monk, a student of University of Phoenix, to recruit subjects for participation in a conduct a study entitled "Defining and Addressing Workplace Bullying-In Search of a Clearer Definition-A Modified Delphi Study".

I hereby authorize _____, a student of University of Phoenix, to use the name of the facility, organization, university, institution, or association identified above when publishing results from the study entitled (insert title of research study or a brief description of research study).

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Susie Johnson", written over a horizontal line.

Signature

11/06/ 2013

Date

Susie Johnson

Name

Administrator, LinkedIn Delta Sigma Theta/Omega Psi Phi Business Networking

Group

Title

Address of Facility

LinkedIn Social Networking Site