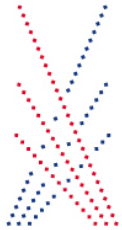

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The Pattern and Prevalence of Bullying in New Zealand Organisations – Insights from the New Zealand Diversity Survey

Associate Professor Jo Cullinane,
Professor Stephen Croucher,
Beth Tootell,
Dr Doug Ashwell
Massy Business School
Massey University, New Zealand

Contact:
Associate Professor Jo Cullinane
Deputy Pro Vice-Chancellor
Massey Business School, Te Kura Whai Pakihi
Massey University
Private Bag 11222,
Palmerston North 4442
New Zealand
j.cullinane@massey.ac.nz

Abstract

There is no universal definition of bullying, but it is increasingly pervasive and is recognised as a 'psychosocial hazard' with associated wellbeing and organisational dysfunctions. Literature identifies antecedents associated with bullying, including leadership style, role autonomy, etc, but some overarching characteristics may also add to understanding of the organisational profiles which give rise to bullying, e.g. organisational size, public/ private, industry, predominant gender and diversity etc. These are worthy of consideration because they may help identify where risk of bullying is likely to be greatest. To aid in understanding this under-researched area, this paper uses the New Zealand Diversity Survey to look at bullying through themes of perceived importance, policy implementation, organisational size and sector. The aim of this paper is exploratory: it establishes a preliminary understanding of the relationship between organisational characteristics and bullying prevalence to identify areas for further research in the next phase of the investigation.

Word count: 5885

Introduction:
Workplace bullying is increasingly a matter of concern for employers, workers and government. Although there is no universally accepted definition of workplace bullying, it is clear that both reported instances of bullying and the significant felt effects of bullying are both increasing. It is becoming a pervasive and is now recognised as a serious 'psychosocial hazard' with associated health, well-being and organisational dysfunction. Research literature recognises a number of antecedents associated with bullying including leadership style, role autonomy, pressured work environments and issues with social support structures, but a theme of the research also looks at organisational culture or role characteristics that may cause bullying.

However, some organisational characteristics may add to our understanding of the profile of situations which give rise to bullying. For example, organisational size, or sector, or industry. These factors are somewhat under-researched and yet they may help to identify 'hotspots' in bullying prevalence and therefore the areas where systematic responses might be most needed. To aid in the development of understanding of this under-researched area, this paper uses long range data from the New Zealand Diversity Survey to look at perceived importance, application of policy, organisational size and sector of organisations. The New Zealand Diversity Survey has asked about bullying policy and prevalence for a number of years but the survey itself has a different purpose, and so while it is instructive for exploratory purposes, it is not a sufficiently robust data source to draw firm conclusions. Therefore the aim of this paper is exploratory: it establishes a preliminary understanding of the relationship between organisational characteristics and organisational bullying prevalence so as to identify areas for further research in the next phase of the investigation.

The paper is structured into three main themes: first, it starts by contextualising bullying as a concept and phenomenon, and profiling the relevant literature and research in the area, including an exploration of the impacts on individuals, organisations and society, of bullying. The literature evaluated here also highlights the areas of antecedents and the characteristics which have been linked to the bullying phenomenon. This portion of the literature, is relatively well-explored and mature in its development. Second, the paper also explores the less well-developed research literature about the prevalence of bullying, and it seeks to draw some relationships between the relevant 'antecedent' literature and the related characteristics in the 'prevalence' literature. Third, the view that organisational characteristics such as sector, size etc, may give insight into the prevalence literature is then explored by using a portion of the long-range data collected as a theme in the New Zealand Diversity Survey. The paper draws some preliminary conclusions as a consequence of this data. For example, among the findings from the New Zealand Diversity Survey are two headlines that may be counter to expectation: first, this research highlights that workers in smaller organisations are less likely to experience (or report) bullying than those in medium and larger organisations. Secondly, private sector workers are less likely to experience (or report) bullying, than those in the public sector. The importance for organisations and government of such findings might be that as bullying has major negative impacts on organisations and national well-being, a risk-focused approach to addressing bullying through greater intervention in medium and large organisations and in the public sector might be worthwhile.

Bullying contextualised:
Bullying in the workplace is becoming increasingly pervasive. Although there is no universally accepted definition of workplace bullying, with differing schools of thought on some key aspects, the characteristics of the definition that tend to be agreed upon include,

"…harassing, offending, socially excluding someone or negatively affecting someone's work tasks…" (Einarsen 2000). Lewis, Megicks and Jones (2017, pp.117-118) identify that "…two defining characteristics of bullying include, first, its persistency where individual negative experiences endure for considerable periods of time… and second, an inability to defend oneself…". Whereas Zapf et al. (1996) define it as a persistent and systematic mistreatment of individuals contributing to those individuals experiencing psychological, psychosomatic and social problems.

Although the definition is still debated, what is clear is that there have been dramatic increases in incidents of bullying, or at the least, in the reporting of bullying recently (Bentley et al. 2012). Bullying, and particularly workplace bullying is now recognised as a serious 'psychosocial hazard' which has deleterious economic, social, individual, and health impacts (Bentley et al. 2012; Copeland, Wolke, Angold & Costello 2013; David-Ferdon & Hertz 2009). Cooper, Hoel and Faragher (2010) reported that "…75.6% of currently bullied individuals reported that their health was negatively affected by their experience…" (p. 367) but the impacts are not felt by recipients alone "…only 16% of witnesses claimed to be unaffected by their experience" (p. 370). One of the impacts of witnessing bullying is particularly felt where the worker is a work-friend of the bullied colleague. D'Cruz and Noronha (2011) observing the phenomenon of friends of bullied workers who offer them support, frequently become a 'bystander victim'. And on occasion, the bystander victim's fear of organisational retribution may result in them abandoning their friendships. Similarly, Lutgen-Sandvik et al. (2007) posited a view that bystanders may experience reduced job satisfaction and increased levels of stress because they develop "non-intervention strategies".

Individuals who directly experience bullying are reported to experience work related stress (Vartia 2001), and several studies highlight statistically significant differences between victims of bullying and non-victims in terms of general stress and psychological well-being, particularly in the areas of mental illness, depression, helplessness, anxiety disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder, social isolation, stigmatisation, compulsiveness and despair, suicide ideation, and other psychosomatic complaints (Cooper, Hoel & Faragher 2010; Kivimäki et al. 2003; Meek 2004; Mikkelsen & Einarsen 2002; Moayed, Daraiseh, Shell & Salem 2006). Research has also identified significant impacts of experiencing bullying on worker's physical health, including musculoskeletal complaints, heightened risk of cardiovascular disease, headaches, nausea, ulcers, sleeplessness, skin rashes, high blood pressure (Carter et al. 2013; Kivimäki et al. 2003; Moayed, Daraiseh, Shell & Salem 2006; Nielsen & Einarsen 2018).

Research by Kivimäki et al. (2003) and Kivimäki et al. (2000) also showed that direct recipients of workplace bullying are more likely to suffer a range of chronic diseases such as asthma, rheumatoid arthritis, osteoarthritis, sciatica, diabetes, and/or cardiovascular disease (although the direction of causality was not explored). The recipients of bullying also often exhibit workplace dysfunctions including self-doubt, low mood/ self-confidence, emotional control loss, low self-esteem, and relatively more negative emotions (O'Driscoll et al. 2011; Mikkelsen & Einarsen 2002; Moayed, Daraiseh, Shell & Salem 2006; Quine 2003; Vartia 2001). But the impact types may vary with personal characteristics e.g. gender, education levels, ethnicity/ race and age. For example, Vartia and Hyyti (2002, p. 166) highlighted that "…among highly educated men, bullying and harassment have been found to be negatively associated with self-rated work ability, whereas, among women, bullying and harassment were negatively associated with job satisfaction". And Gardner et al. (2013, p. 123) reported

that "despite reporting higher levels of bullying than New Zealand Europeans, Pacific Island and Asian/Indian respondents reported lower levels of psychological strain."

A finding that is of particular note is that the impacts of bullying are not just felt by the recipient, Carter (2013) highlighting that in a survey of the NHS in the United Kingdom, "…43% reported having witnessed bullying in the last 6 months…", but importantly, both "…bullying and *witnessing bullying* were associated with lower levels of psychological health and job satisfaction, and higher levels of intention to leave work (Carter, 2013, p. 1, emphasis added).

Bullying has also been shown to adversely impact organisational performance, including diminished individual job performance and morale; and increases in absenteeism, work-related stress and medically certified sick leave, plus employee turnover, decreased job satisfaction and productivity issues (Bentley et al. 2012; Carter et al. 2013; Duffy & Yamada 2018; Kivimäki et al. 2000; Quine 2003; Vartia 2001). Through the combination of direct and indirect costs, it is estimated that the impact of bullying on workplaces is significant, for example, one study in 2008 estimated that the annual cost of bullying to organisations in the United Kingdom was £13.75 billion (Giga, Hoel & Lewis 2008). In addition, bullying issues within organisations may increasingly influence the decisions made by potential customers, employment applicants and recruits.

Workplace bullying is often defined as a situation where a person feels they have repeatedly or severely experienced actions or acts of omission from one or more people (Einarsen, Raknes & Matthiesen 1994). While such acts may include overt threats or hostile acts, these acts are also comprised of more subtle behaviours such as altering a person's tasks, removing or withholding resources, criticising, cynicism, social isolation, un-welcome comments on a person's private life, verbal aggression, and spreading rumours about a person (Rayner & Cooper 2006). Acts of omission associated with bullying frequently centre around: social exclusion, ignoring colleagues, with-holding information and/or praise, and failing to highlight opportunities for involvement or advancement (Bentley et al. 2009; Rayner & Cooper 2006).

Bullying Antecedents and Characteristics

Research highlights that the main workplace culture and other antecedents associated with bullying include:

- *Leadership style* - particularly cultures where punishment or autocratic leadership styles are common-place (Hoel et al. 2010). Additionally, situations where leadership styles are non-participative, authoritarian, rule-based and inflexible or are laissez-faire leadership, or autocratic (Nielsen, Matthiesen & Einarsen 2005).
- *A feeling of betrayed expectations* - bullying is more likely to be experienced in workplaces where workers feel they have been betrayed or let down (Hoel et al. 2010).
- *Role and/or goal ambiguity* - workplaces where there is role and/ or goal ambiguity, have been associated with a greater propensity towards bullying incidents (Zapf 1999).
- *High-pressure, or stressful work environments* – such may more often elicit aggressive behaviour and therefore be more likely to evoke bullying behaviours (Zapf 1999).
- *Low time autonomy* - where workers feel they have a lack of control over work tasks, or self-organisation of time or workload; this environment is more likely to result in

reports of bullying in that workplace. Notelaers et al. (2012) observed, for example, that high-strain/high-demand jobs led to risks of employees being bullied and perhaps more importantly (because it is a matter seldom discussed in the literature), Baillien et al. (2011) reported that such situations increases the propensity for workers to become perpetrators of bullying themselves (also see Lewis, Megicks & Jones 2017)

- *Lack of social support* - workplaces that allow the development of internal cultures with limited socialisation are associated with more frequent reports of bullying and organisational dysfunction.
- *Acceptance of inappropriate conduct* – workplaces in which there are reports of previously experienced inappropriate conduct which were left unresolved/unmanaged, are significantly more likely to experience repeat instances of bullying (8 percent attributed cause), particularly where perpetrators are not held accountable (20 percent attributed cause) (WBI 2014).

(Also see Browning et al. 2007; Einarsen 2000; Ferris et al. 2007).

However, several organisational antecedents that might be expected to add to our understanding of contextual contributions to bullying are notably absent (or thinly covered), in the literature. For example, organisational size, sector, hierarchical layering, industry, predominant occupational group, predominant gender of employees, ownership structure, and profitability levels, longevity, and projected mission/brand values are all areas that would seem worth of consideration in terms of relationship with bullying prevalence.

Looking at the aspect of organisational size, for instance, Lewis, Megicks and Jones (2017) observe that research into bullying "…in SME contexts has been largely absent, except for one study by Baillien, et al. (2011b)". Baillien et al.'s (2011 p. 611) study was premised on the assumptions that large and smaller organisations may have different experiences with bullying because of three characteristics: *First,* differences in culture and climate: with SMEs usually having a more informal culture characterised by less formal rules and procedures. But which may, "…increase ambiguity for their employees and fuel stress, conflicts or bullying". *Second,* differences in organisational structures with SMEs often having flatter structures, which enable manager/ leadership accessibility, and facilitates direct communication and timelier problem-solving. *Third,* SME's usually more limited resources may result in shorter time horizons which may enable swifter responses to organisational difficulties. The Baillien et al. (2011 p. 619) study used a "Three Way Model" to explore these characteristics, and their "…study pointed at a lower bullying prevalence in SMEs with a people-oriented culture and a formal anti-bullying policy; whereas the prevalence was likely to increase in SMEs experiencing changes and in family businesses".

However, overall "British studies reporting bullying by size of organisation… revealed no significant differences in rates of bullying and harassment by organisation size…" (Lewis, Megicks & Jones 2017, p. 118; also see Fevre et al. 2009). However, Lewis, Megicks and Jones (2017) also developed the insights offered by the Baillien et al. (2011) research by highlighting that in SMEs, settings where there is clarity of an employee's role are much less likely to have high incidences of bullying and relatedly, SMEs where there is a high time pressure in work are more likely to experience difficulties (with the assumption posited that that diminishes the capacity for individuals to address interpersonal issues as they develop).

An important dimension of bullying in many definitions is the relative imbalance of power among the individuals involved (Leymann 1996; Leymann 1990). Bentley et al. (2009 p.16) highlight that the imbalance is relevant to bullying because of the occurrence of situations

where the recipient "…is forced into a defenceless or helpless position against the bully…." They add that this "…is one of the key characteristics that demarcates bullying from conflict".

The perceived power imbalance is recognised both in theoretical definitions (e.g. Ariza-Montes, Muniz, Leal-Rodríguez & Leal-Millán 2014*),* and in employment relations practice; for instance, the Employment Relations Authority (2007) in New Zealand acknowledged that bullying is "…carried out with a desire to gain power or exert dominance…." However, it is important to note that power imbalances come in multiple forms and while bullying is most frequently associated with supervisors bullying workers (Salin 2003), it is possible for junior workers to (upwards) bully relatively more senior colleagues. This phenomenon hinges on the alternative power structures in organisations over and above hierarchically established power i.e. Coercive, Reward, Referent and Expert Power (French & Raven 1959). This perhaps explains a finding by the United Kingdom's Chartered Management Institute that revealed 39% of managers reported they had been bullied (Lewis, Sheehan & Davies 2008; Woodman & Cook 2005). A Danish study also found that bullying mainly involving subordinates constituted around 6 percent of all bullying instances (Ortega, Høgh & Pejtersen 2009).

Determining the prevalence of bullying

Power is also found to be an important explanation for differential rates of reporting of bullying (or establishing prevalence rates). A meta-analysis by Nielsen, Matthiesen and Einarsen (2010) on 86 independent research studies in a range of countries (but mainly European), found an overall rate of workplace bullying likely to be averaging around 14 percent. But it is notable that when participants were allowed to define bullying for themselves, the rates were greater (approximately 18 percent) compared with when bullying was defined as part of the study (approximately 11 percent) (Nielsen, Matthiesen & Einarsen 2010).

Other notable prevalence characteristics include:

- *Gender*: in a small number of studies women are found to be slightly more likely to be bullied than men (Quine 2003; Salin 2001; WBI 2014), and Moayed, Daraiseh, Shell and Salem (2006) note that this finding is not universally the case in related studies, with a number of studies finding no statistically significant difference in rates of bullying based on gender. However, an interesting aspect of these studies that may require further consideration is that women were more likely to be bullied by other women than by men, whereas men are equally likely to be bullied by both men and women (WBI 2014; WBI 2017). Vartia and Hyyti (2002, p. 113) observing for example, that "…the persons bullying female officers were usually co-workers, whereas men were bullied by co-workers and supervisors equally often".
- *Ethnicity/ Race:* in some studies ethnic and racial minority groups are more likely to perceive they experience more bullying than majority ethnic and racial groups. For example, the WBI (2014) survey of workers in the United States identified that 33 percent of Asian, 32.5 percent of Hispanic, and 33 percent of African American workers reported being directly bullied at some point, compared to 24.1 percent of White workers. Such findings correspond with research that shows recipients of bullying tend to identify that they had been bullied because they were 'different' and did not fit in with their work-groups (Strandmark & Hallberg 2007; Vartia 1996). But the significance of such findings is mediated by two further findings: *first*, while some research has found higher levels of bullying reported for minority groups those

respondent groups "…reported lower levels of psychological strain" associated with bullying. Second, a number of meta studies have failed to establish statistical significance in the differences found (e.g. Lewis & Gunn 2007; Moayed, Daraiseh, Shell & Salem 2006).

- *Seniority levels:* ordinary workers are more likely to experience bullying than supervisors and above (Niedhammer, David & Degioanni 2007; Salin 2001).
- *Occupation type:* professionals, clerks, and service workers were found in some studies more to experience bullying than white-collar workers (Niedhammer, David & Degioanni 2007).
- *Personality type:* individuals who lack social skills are more likely to be victims of workplace bullying (Coyne et al. 2000; Zapf 1999[1]) and rates of bullying may notably increase where bullying is asserted to be 'fair treatment' towards a difficult person, or where the recipient has 'brought some of this on themselves' (Einarsen et al. 2003; Leymann 1996; Leymann 1990). It is also noted that the WBI (2014) survey of workers in the USA sought to establish perceived cause of bullying as one of its themes by asking what was the single biggest cause of bullying, to which 13 percent of respondents attributed a primary causation to a "personality flaw of the target/ victim". Relatedly, in the same survey, when asked to describe the personality of the recipient of a bullying incidence witnessed, 21 percent of the recipients described in the survey were themselves defined as "aggressive" or "abusive" themselves.
- *Deficiency in skills held by the recipient:* the WBI (2014) survey in the USA identified that where bullying occurs, up to 7 percent of the attributed cause may be derived from shortfalls in skills held by recipients. As mentioned in the point above in this paper, bullying incidences sometimes relate to a (small) degree of causation by the recipient precipitating a bullying (over-)reaction.
- *Levels of individual resilience:* Mikkelsen and Einarsen (2001 p. 405), highlight a prevailing view among some researchers in this field that variations in prevalence rates may relate to "…many victims of bullying are either unaware of the fact that they are being bullied or will not admit that this is the case". This is an interesting concept, but perhaps risks sounding like 'false consciousness', when as Salin (2001) highlights, for the same causative instance, different people might meet the criterion of being defined as having been bullied (or not). A core matter at hand here is the perception, personality, expectations, experience, and resilience of the recipient. Quine (2001, p. 74) observes that "bullying exists when an individual is subjected to a range of intimidating behaviours which make him or her feel bullied or harassed. Thus it is subject to variations in personal perceptions…." But that "…personal dispositions such as hardiness, optimism or self-efficacy may also be able to protect people against bullying…" (Quine 2001, p.82). This pattern of individual perception and resilience may explain, in part, the potential for there to be a curvilinear relationship between bullying and job satisfaction in Italy (via a mediating step of cultural structures) (Giorgi, Leon-Perez & Arenas 2015). For example, Giorgi, Leon-Perez & Arenas (2015 emphasis added) highlighted that "…diverse negative acts might be interpreted as sacrifices needed for job stability or career growth, and consequently viewed as satisfactory" or at the least, 'acceptable'.

[1] Although the methodological shortcoming of these research reports are well discussed by Moayed, Daraiseh, Shell & Salem (2006) and the weight given to this aspect must be balanced.

(See also: Coyne, Seigne & Randall 2000; D'Aleo et al. 2007; Lewis & Gunn 2007; Niedhammer, David & Degioanni 2007; O'Moore 2000; Nielsen, Matthiesen & Einarsen 2010; Salin 2001).

Related to the characteristics associated with bullying is the question of who is being bullied by whom. By far the largest experience is of co-workers bullying each other, for example, Ortega, Høgh and Pejtersen's (2009) study highlighted that 71.5 percent of instances of bullying most often involved co-workers and 32.4 percent of instances of bullying most often involved supervisors/ managers as the perpetrators and 6 percent mainly involved hierarchical sub-ordinates upwards bullying.

A study by Carter et al (2013) in the NHS found that prevalence of reporting was altered based on the nature of the underlying incident. The greatest reporting rates occur in instances of '…having allegations made against you…' and equally for '…threats of violence or abuse…' (both 14.3 percent), then for '…being the target of spontaneous anger…' (12.9 percent). Whereas the reporting rates were lowest for '…being the subject of excessive teasing and sarcasm…' (3.2 percent); '…having your opinions ignored…' (3.1 percent); '…being ordered to do work below your level of competence…' (3 percent), and '…practical jokes carried out by people you do not get on with…' (2.7 percent). When the study (Carter et al. 2013) investigated why bullying was not being reported, 14.9 percent of participants said no report was made because '…nothing would change…', or they '…did not want to be labelled as a trouble-maker…' (13.9 percent), or the '…seniority of the bully would acted as a barrier to reporting…' (11.7 percent); or because they '…believed that management would not take action…' (11.3 percent).

Several studies have also reported higher bullying prevalence rates within the public sector than the private sector, for example, Salin (2001 p. 438) highlighted that "…7.8% of the private sector employees and 13.2% of the public sector employees reported being bullied. Contrary to what had been hypothesised, employees in public organisations showed a somewhat higher prevalence rate…" (also see O'Moore 2000). D'Aleo et al. (2007, p.13) similarly found higher prevalence rates for reported bullying among public sector participants in their study: "…overall 25% (28% public, 10% private) of employees indicated they were always, often or sometimes bullied…". Explanations posited for this finding include "…factors such as low job mobility due to the relative security of public-sector employment…" "…a high degree of personal engagement…" which "tends to make people more vulnerable to attacks of a personal nature…" (Cooper, Hoel & Faragher 2010, p. 369).

Standard approaches to determining prevalence of bullying

Cooper, Hoel and Faragher (2010, p. 367) observed that "…although a growing consensus appears to be emerging with regard to the definition of the problem…" "…disagreement still exists about how bullying may best be operationalised and measured".

The methods most often used to determine the prevalence of bullying tend to fall into one or both of two approaches (Bentley et al. 2010). The approaches both start with seeking to estimate the levels of perceived victimisation, or exposure to, bullying behaviours, through use of a self-reporting questionnaire (Einarsen et al. 2003), but one method uses a *subjective* (or self-labelling) method, and the other uses an *operational* (classification) method. Meta-research on these two methods, highlights that rates of reported bullying tend to be lower when workers are invited to self-identify as having been recipients of bullying in the past. Whereas, where workers are asked to indicate whether they have experienced negative acts,

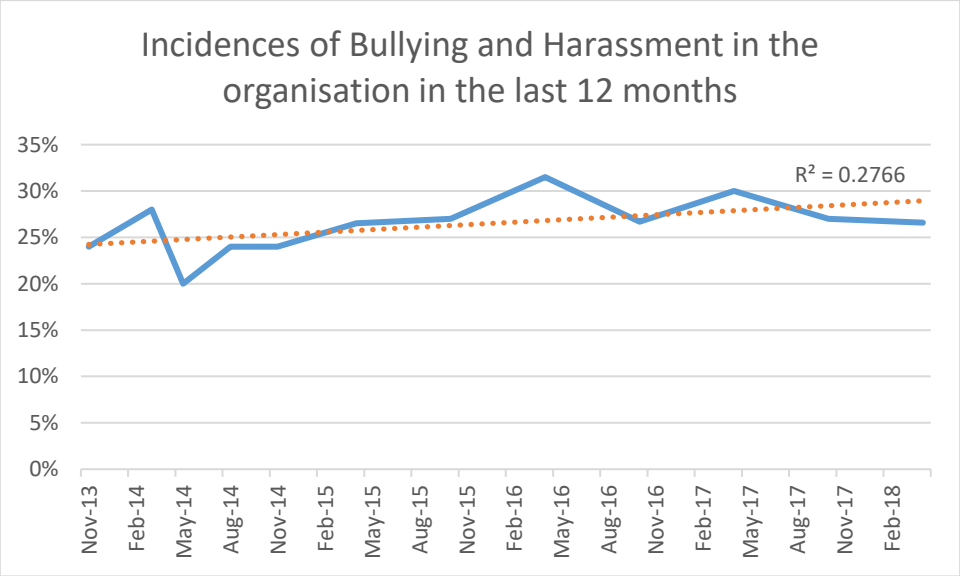
rates are higher (Gardner 2013; Lutgen-Sandvik, Tracy & Alberts 2007; Nielsen 2009; Rayner & Cooper 2006). Commentators speculate this is because some workers who have experienced acts that are pre-cursors to bullying are unwilling to characterise, or identify themselves, as having been bullied, or are unwilling to have other identify them as victims, or they may not view the pre-cursor behaviours as 'negative behaviours which amount to bullying' (Mikkelsen & Einarsen 2001; Way, Jimmieson, Bordia & Hepworth 2013).

Insight into bullying prevalence derived from the New Zealand Diversity Survey

In New Zealand, a small but long-standing survey of employers centred on equal employment opportunity and diversity at work has been running biennially since November 2013 in the form of the New Zealand Diversity Survey. This survey has, throughout its 12 iterations to date, included organisational reporting on bullying and harassment as one of its sub-themes[2].

One of the consistently reported themes of the New Zealand Diversity Survey has been the organisational reporting rates of bullying and harassment over the organisations' last 12 months. As is shown in Figure One, the incidence reporting rates of incidences of bullying range from a low of 20 percent to a high of 31 percent of organisations (with an average over the whole period of 26 percent of organisations reporting a bullying or harassment incident or incidents).

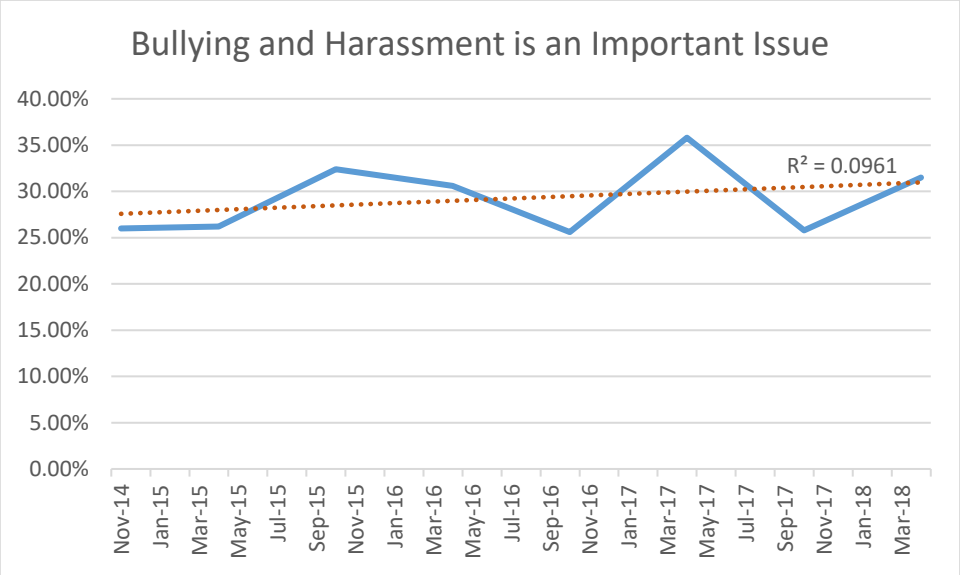
Figure One



Interestingly, Figure One shows that even with the variations from period to period, the prevailing trend-line on the bullying incidences is increasing over the five years of the survey's duration.

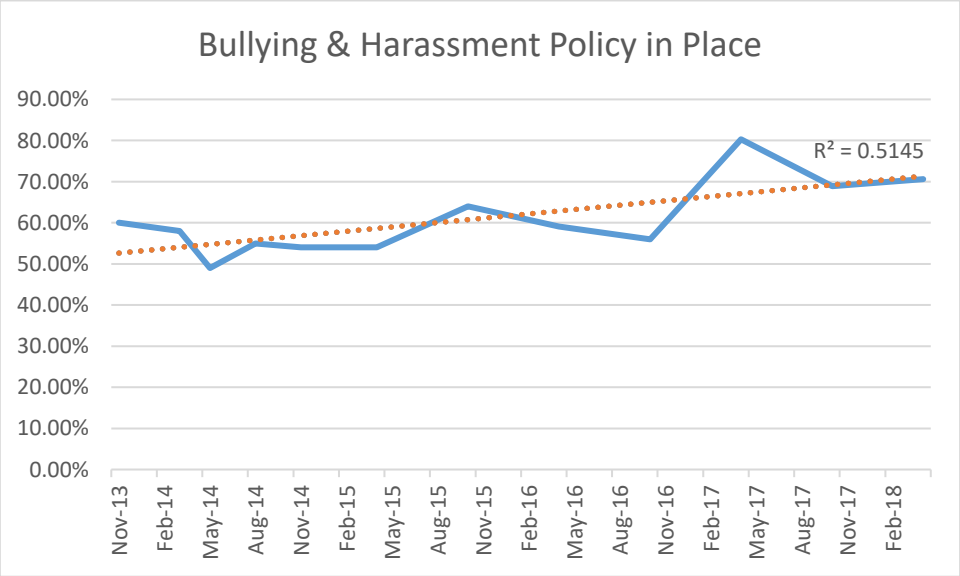
[2] Although some of the analytical reporting strands within the broad theme have been unreported in the formal reports and the primary data is not made available.

Figure Two



Although quirks in the data reporting from the New Zealand Diversity Survey mean there is a lesser timeframe to consider on this dataset, Figure Two highlights that a relatively similar number of organisations report that their organisation viewed bullying and harassment as important organisational issues, as there were reports of incidences. Again, Figure Two reveals that over time, organisations completing the survey have tended to have an increasing regard for the importance of bullying and harassment. However, the range of 26 percent to 36 percent and an average of 29 percent of organisations, identifying bullying and harassment as an important organisational issue is rather modest. But the rates of adoption of the view that bullying and harassment is an important issue to their organisation is increasing over the four years reported in the New Zealand Diversity Survey Reports.

Figure Three

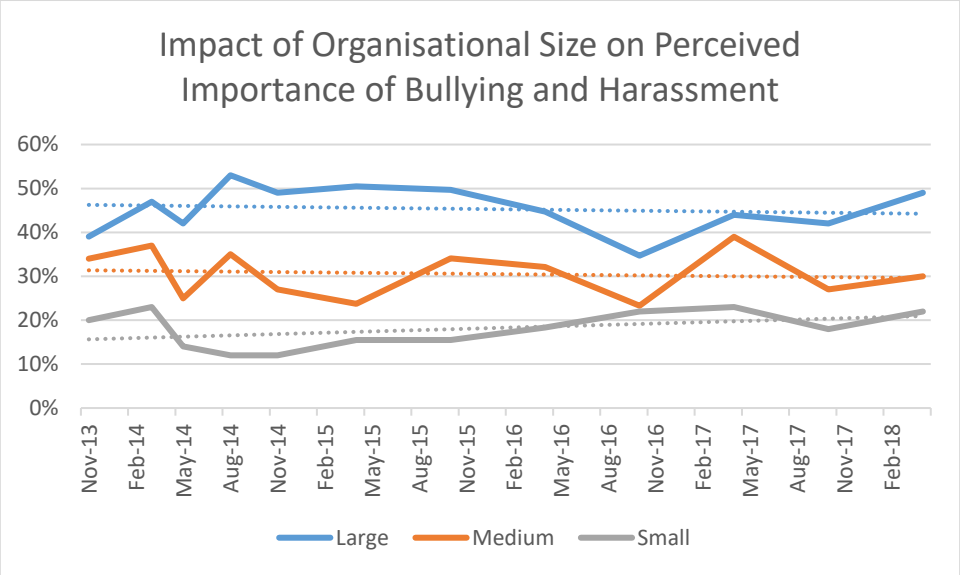


Interestingly, although it is not a strict legal requirement in New Zealand, Figure Three highlights that around 70 percent of organisations in New Zealand are likely to have implemented a Bullying and Harassment Policy. This is notable in light of the findings

highlighted in Figure Two where only around 29 percent of organisations in New Zealand are likely to identify bullying and harassment as important issues for their organisation.

As is the case in many other small nations, New Zealand has disproportionately large numbers of workers either based in very small or relatively large organisations (with a thin proportion of medium sized organisations. In respect to what the New Zealand Diversity Survey reveals on the relationship between organisational size on bullying and harassment, at one level, the results (see Figure Four) are somewhat unsurprising.

Figure Four



Namely, throughout the period of the survey, larger organisations (defined as 200+ employees) have always remained more willing to identify the importance of bullying and harassment than either medium-sized (defined as 20-199 employees) or small-sized organisations (defined as up to 19 employees). However, when the trend-lines for the three groups of organisations are over-laid over the period of the survey, it is notable to see declining evaluations of the importance of bullying for both large- and medium-sized organisations. Whereas, the trend-line for the perceived importance of bullying and harassment issues to smaller organisations has been consistently positive.

Figure Five

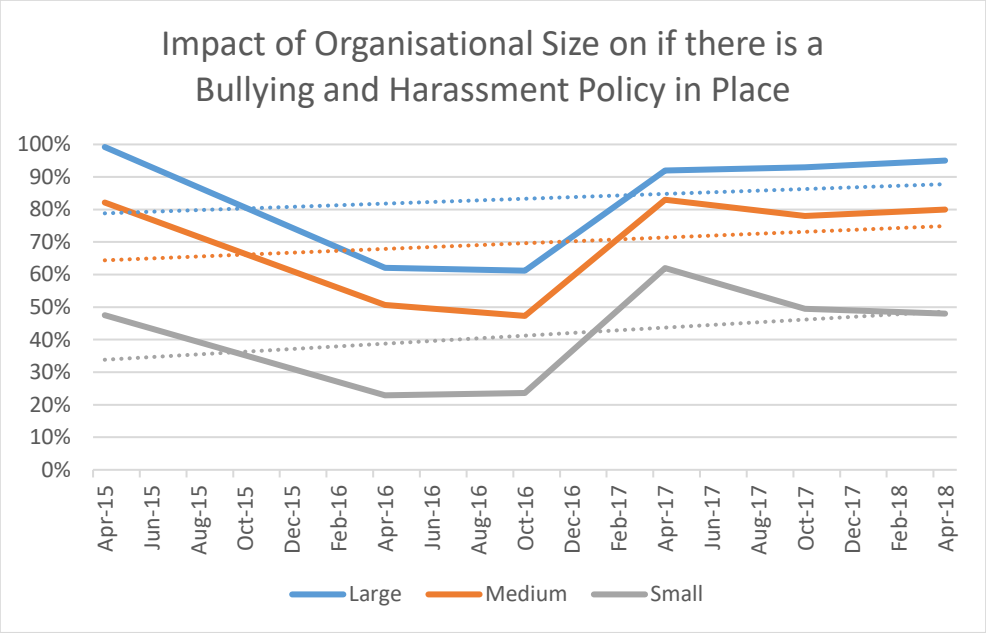


Figure Five highlights that the New Zealand Diversity Surveys have revealed high degrees of relative consistency between organisations of different sizes and their likelihood of having a bullying and harassment policy. As would be generally accepted, organisational size is positively related to the presence of a policy, and with more organisations on average over time adopting a bullying and harassment policy. However, where such a finding might naturally be assumed to be related to the greater deployment of formal human resource management efforts in larger rather than smaller organisations, a small insight into an unexpected alternative explanation has been reported in the three most recent New Zealand Diversity Survey results. Namely, bullying and harassment seem much more likely to occur, or perhaps, are more likely to be recorded, as having occurred in larger rather than smaller organisations. This pattern is highlighted in Figure Six below.

Figure Six

Reported Incidences of bullying and harassment in the last 12 months	Apr-18	Oct-17	Apr-17
Large-sized Organisations	56%	56%	45%
Medium-sized Organisations	27%	30%	38%
Small-sized Organisations	8%	11%	9%

Another area of insight offered by the New Zealand Diversity Survey's most recent reports is in the difference in reporting of bullying and harassment concerns/ occurrences in the public versus the private sector. As is illustrated in Figure Seven, public sector organisations are much more likely to consider bullying and harassment as important organisational issues. But as most public sector organisations tend to be in the larger organisational size bracket, this finding may simply reflect the observations on size related above.

Figure Seven

Importance of bullying and harassment according to sector	Apr-18	Oct-17	Apr-17
Public Sector Organisations	36%	30%	40%
Private Sector Organisations	28%	24%	30%

As Figure Eight highlights in the single most recent data points, the gaps between public sector and private sector adoption of policy responses to bullying and harassment might be closing, and warrant further attention.

Figure Eight

Organisation has a bullying and harassment policy	Apr-18	Oct-17	Apr-17
Public Sector Organisations	74%	80%	81%
Private Sector Organisations	69%	61%	79%

Figure Nine

Reported Incidences of bullying and harassment in the last 12 months	Apr-18	Oct-17	Apr-17
Public Sector Organisations	38%	35%	37%
Private Sector Organisations	19%	22%	23%

The New Zealand Diversity Survey's most recent data sets (Figure Nine) show that although more public sector organisations show interest in bullying and harassment as important issues compared to private sector organisations; the reported prevalence of cases of bullying and harassment over the preceding 12 months are much higher in the public sector than the private sector. Such observations may reflect the impact of organisational size again, or may reflect occupational and demographic differences - further analysis is necessary to determine this. But the finding does replicate earlier research i.e. D'Aleo (2007, p.15) suggesting that "…both private and public sector employees (but particularly the public sector) appear to face a significant risk of workplace stress in the areas of understanding job roles and of relationships, particularly regarding bullying, harassment and lack of peer support".

Concluding Comments:

Bullying is clearly damaging to individuals and organisations alike, contrary to health and safety in employment regulations, and often a human rights violation when it is related to protected characteristics. Bullying also has a significant impact on national well-being and health, and therefore would be a matter of governmental interest. There is no question that bullying both needs to be decreased in prevalence and understood more deeply at an organisational level.

While the two standard approaches to estimating the prevalence of bullying are in widespread use by researchers, they are both dependent upon the subjective experience of workers, and both methods have deep-seated risks of over-reporting in general, but under-reporting in specific areas. Arguably, the fundamental structure of the data collected in these ways may inadvertently limit some of organisational insights into this issue which may prove more important in respect to addressing prevalence rates.

Approaching bullying from the perspective that stresses the role of "perpetrators" and "victims" individualises the conception of bullying issues to some degree. So in this paradigm, we will inherently accept that bullying behaviours are only the actions of aberrant (mad, bad or stupid) dysfunctional individuals, leaders and cultures. And in this paradigm estimating bullying based on reports of perceived and self-reported prevalence rates is nominally appropriate, as are core responses of organisational bullying and harassment policies. In this paradigm interventions to address bullying will be aimed at decreasing the opportunities for, or likelihoods of, people behaving in aberrant ways by making it clear what is unacceptable, and in making sure people are aware there are consequences.

And yet, key insights derived from the New Zealand Diversity Survey's long-run data for example, highlights that having a bullying policy is not clearly linked to reducing instances of bullying (indeed having such a policy may be positively related to prevalence rates).

So, another paradigm might accept that the research that identifies that both individual and organisational antecedents may have a role 'causing' bullying, and use that to help identify the underlying profile of situations where the risk of bullying is likely to be the greatest (all other things being equal). However the literature in the workplace bullying field (to date) does not apparently contribute to a risk-based approach to evaluating industry and sectoral characteristics for organisations that may be inherently more prone to bullying instances than others. In this paradigmatic approach, institutional and sectoral insights into patterns of prevalence in bullying may contribute to developing strategic responses to decrease risk. This approach would be analogous to strategies for addressing specific health and safety risks in certain occupation and industry groups, i.e. use of vehicles on farms, immunisation requirements for nurses, or the use of ballistic vests by police officers. This analogy being even more appropriate perhaps when we pause to consider the depth of individual ill-health that is related to bullying.

Insights derived from the New Zealand Diversity Survey for example, echo findings from other research that workers in smaller organisations are less likely to work in organisations that rate bullying as an important issue and are also less likely to be in organisations that have policies to address bullying. And yet, organisational size is negatively related to bullying prevalence, so workers in smaller organisations are actually less likely to experience (or report) bullying than those in medium and larger organisations. Similarly, private sector employees are less likely to be in organisations that rate bullying as an important issue and have policies to address it, and yet they are also likely to experience lower prevalence rates than their public sector counterparts.

Obviously there are some limitations in the breadth of the New Zealand Diversity Survey data. But when taking a risk-focused to bullying reduction for instance, the New Zealand Diversity Survey would highlight that greater efforts need to go into tackling cultures of bullying in medium- and larger-sized organisations and in the public sector organisations.

As this paper took only an exploratory approach to this area, further research will be needed look at establishing whether other organisational characteristics can give greater insight into the prevalence of bullying. In particular, the industry sector and the proportion of gender and ethnic diversity were areas that were worthy of investigation but were unable to be revealed because of reporting quirks in the New Zealand Diversity Survey. Additionally, the more fundamentally challenging question that arises from the counter intuitive findings for low

rates of bullying in smaller organisations, and higher rates for public sector organisations, may be highlighting that it is the act of defining certain workplace behaviours as "bullying" that is contributing to a false positive 'discovery' of bullying (in the public sector and large organisations), or indeed, not having policy is giving a false negative finding of absence of bullying (in smaller organisations). These are also matters for further research.

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