

# IMPACT OF AGE AND EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION OF THE WORKFORCES ON THE PERCEPTION OF WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

Dr. Phurailatpam Dinakumari Sharma, Guest Faculty

Department of Psychology, Manipur University, Canchipur, Imphal (Manipur)  
India.

## Abstract

The purpose of the study was to explore the prevalence of workplace violence committed by different age groups, work experience and educational qualification of professionals working in different organizational sectors. The workplace violence questionnaire was completed by 550 professionals ranging from the age group of below 35 years of age and 55 years or more years having educational background ranging from SSC to post-graduation from the Vadodara district of Gujarat. The data was analyzed using SPSS package version 20. For the purpose of the study it has been hypothesized that that (a) there will be significant differences among employees from different age groups across the dimensions of workplace violence (b) there will be a significant effect of educational qualification on the workplace violence dimensions . A structured interview schedule was used to take open-ended response from these professionals working in different professions. The subjects consist of supervisor, manager, professional level as well as non-supervisory and technical staff level. The findings of the study revealed that (a) employees of the age ranging from 55 years and above perceived more illegitimate pressure to a greater degree as compared to employees in other age groups and (b) the effect of educational qualification of the employees was observed in the perception of workplace bullying, illegitimate pressure and discrimination and sexual harassment.

## Index terms

Globalization, bullying, actively hostile environment, sexual harassment, discrimination, illegitimate pressure, Workplace violence.

## 1. Introduction

Globalization evolves as a new way of domination on the vast majority of society. It not only empowers corporatism through TNCs and MNCs but also introduces a new work culture infected with hostile and overly competitive work environment. With this changing character of the workplace, everything seems so disheveled and seems to be chaos; each and every person seems to increase in their intensity of frustration, anxiety and depression. Generally, violence is the common means through which people seek escape from these frustrations and anxieties. In the act of violence, people become unaware of the fact that they are committing violence. As violence is an undesired act and needs a solution, a critical study on violence is required to study its effect on other factors of work life. Thus, it can be said that the process of globalization breeds conflict and violence. Many people have defined violence in different ways. WHO 1995 has defined violence as “the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against another person or against oneself or a group of people, that results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation”.

The term ‘violence’ is used for the more extensive forms of aggressive behaviour that are likely to cause significant injuries to the victim. Although violence typically refers to physical aggression, it can also be applied to psychological stress that causes suffering or trauma. Broadly the term ‘violence’ has been applied to the narrow issue of physically striking an individual (Keempe, 1982) and causing injury (Gil, 1970) to the act of striking a person with the intent of causing harm or injury but not actually causing it (Gelles and Strauss, 1979) to acts where there is high potential of causing injury (Strauss, 1980) and to acts where there is no hitting at all such as verbal abuse or psychological and emotional violence. Violence many take many forms according to the time, situation and place of its occurrence. Of these many forms, workplace violence is a significant one. It refers to any form of physical abuse or threat, that creates a risk to the health and safety of an employee or multiple employees.

Workplace violence affects us all. Its burden is borne not only by victims of violence but by their co-workers, their families, and their employees - in other words, virtually all of us. The worker at all levels of society does

work to integrate with the demands of family life by compartmentalizing his personality into 'work' self and 'family' self. So, the behaviour a man behaves in his family reveals how well his needs are being satisfied at work and thus this paramount roles play by him is often related with tensions and frustration causing to a reduction in the quality of interpersonal relationships with his family and co-workers. It is with this aspect the family environment and job-related tensions mutually affect each other.

Thus, violence is the use of physical force to injure people or property. Violence may cause physical pain to those who experience it directly, as well as emotional distress to those who either experience or witness it. Individuals, families, schools, communities, society, and the environment all are harmed by violence.

Mattice and Spitzberg (2007) found that Narcissism revealed a positive relationship with bullying. Narcissists were found to prefer indirect bullying tactics (such as withholding information that affects others' performance, ignoring others, spreading gossip, constantly reminding others of mistakes, ordering others to do work below their competence level, and excessively monitoring others' work) rather than direct tactics (such as making threats, shouting, persistently criticizing, or making false allegations). The research also revealed that narcissists are highly motivated to bully, and that to some extent, they are left with feelings of satisfaction after a bullying incident occurs.

Blando (2009) found out that almost 75% of employees surveyed had been affected by workplace bullying, whether as a target or a witness.

According to the Workplace Bullying Institute (2007), Age plays a role in experiencing workplace bullying, the study further reveals that lower prevalence rates for experiencing a hostile work environment were identified for workers aged 65 and older compared to workers in other age groups. With respect to the age, conflict findings have been reported. However, in the study of Einarsen and Skogstad (1996), it indicates that the older employees tend to be more likely to be bullied than the young ones.

Liefooghe (2012), in his research noted that a lot of employees describe their organization as bully. It is not environmental factors facilitating the bullying but it is the bullying itself. Tremendous power imbalance enables company to "legitimately exercise" their power in the way of monitoring and controlling as bullying. The term

“bullying” traditionally implies to interpersonal relationship. Talking about bullying in interpersonal level is legitimate, but talking about the exploitation, justice and subjugation as bullying of organization would be "relatively ridiculous" or not taken as serious. Bullying is sometimes more than purely interpersonal issue.

Maarit V (2001) explains that being bullied at work can be classified as a significant source of social stress at work. Bullying or mobbing refers to situations in which someone is subjected to long-lasting, recurrent and serious negative or hostile acts or behaviors that are annoying and oppressing.

Schneider (1997) reveals that sexual harassment of women in workplace is very high in US. There has been a sharp rise in the number of harassment cases reported to the U.S. equal employment opportunity commission (EEOC) in recent years. For sexual harassment alone, the number rose from 6883 in 1993 to 15618 in 1998.

International Labour Organization (1992) found out that 15-30 percent of working women had been subjected to sexual harassment which varied from explicit demands for sexual inter course to offensive remarks. One out of the 12 women surveyed had to quit their job. Some of them were dismissed. The issue of sexual harassment has been in the forefront of western women’s movements for equality and in the efforts to make educational institutions and workplaces safer.

Jacob (2004) reported that violence against women is often perpetrated by the very people who are supposed to protect them such as the members of the law enforcement and criminal justice system. Thousands of women held in custody are raped in the police detention centers worldwide. Between “1980-1990”, there was an increase of nearly 74% in crimes against women. The National Crime Records Bureau of 1998 predicts that by 2010, the growth rate of crime against women would be higher than the population of growth rate.

From the review of literature, it can be concluded that bullying at workplace, aggressive behaviour, sexual harassment, humiliation and other psychological violence like withholding information, ignoring others, spreading gossip, constantly reminding others of mistakes, ordering others to do work below their competence level, and excessively monitoring others' work, making threats, shouting, persistently criticizing, or making false allegations etc. are the common forms of violence prevailing at the workplace and it tremendously affects the performance behavior of the employees.

## Objectives:

- To explore the prevalence of workplace violence committed by different age groups of professionals working in different organizational sectors.
- To study the effect of educational qualification on the dimensions of workplace violence.

## 2. Research Methodology:

The methodology section outline the plan and method that how the study is conducted.

This includes the sample of the study, sample description and procedure.. The details are as follows:

### 2.1 Population and Sample

The study was conducted on 550 employees belonging to different sectors i.e corporate, health, finance and law& enforcement sector located in the Vadodara district of Gujarat. The data had been collected from 46 organizations i.e 15 police stations (law& enforcement sector), 9 banks and insurance companies (finance sector), 8 hospitals (health sector) and 12 manufacturing units (corporate sector). The participants were chosen from the managerial, non-managerial and technical staff level.

## 2.2 Sample Description

Table 4.1. *Sample break-up according to different demographic characteristics.*

Sample	N=550
Age	Below 35 years (n=348); 63%
	35-44 years (n=94); 17%
	45-54 years (n=89); 16%
	55 or more years(n=18); 3%
Educational qualification	SSC (n=74); 13%
	HSC (n=73);13%
	Graduation (n=247);45%
	Post- graduation (n=156); 28%

## 2.3 Procedure

The researcher had taken prior permission from the respective authorities of the organizations and had almost spent 2-3 months with them to observe the organizational processes and assessed how the employees belonging to different age categories understand workplace violence. A structured interview schedule was used to take the open-ended response and the questionnaire was constructed as part of the research study. The responses obtained were content analyzed.

## 3. Statistical analysis

In order to find out the differences in the perception of employees on the dimensions of workplace violence, the data of 550 participants were subjected to one way ANOVA. The employees of four sectors were divided into age groups (ranging from below 35 years of age to 55 or more years) and across their educational qualification (from SSC to Post-graduation).

## 4. Result and Discussion

### (a) Effect of different age groups in the perception of workplace violence dimensions

The data of 550 professionals of different professions belonging to different age groups were subjected to one-way ANOVA to find out the differences in employees' respondents in the perception of workplace violence dimensions.

Table-2: Mean, SD, F ratio and significance to show differences across different age groups on the workplace violence dimensions

Variable	Below 35 years(n=349)	(35-44)years (n=94)	(45-54)years (n=89)	(55 or more) years(n=18)	F ratio
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	
<b>Bullying</b>	11.48 <sup>a</sup> (3.41)	11.76 <sup>ab</sup> (3.07)	11.75 <sup>a</sup> (3.24)	13.61 <sup>b</sup> (12.00)	2.13
<b>Actively hostile behavior</b>	74.70 <sup>a</sup> (16.43)	76.31 <sup>ab</sup> (13.79)	72.05 <sup>a</sup> (20.04)	83.50 <sup>b</sup> (3.45)	2.13
<b>Illegitimate pressure</b>	56.92 <sup>a</sup> (13.66)	57.20 <sup>ab</sup> (13.06)	55.45 <sup>a</sup> (16.34)	66.22 <sup>b</sup> (5.44)	2.44*
<b>Humiliation</b>	21.14 <sup>a</sup> (5.38)	21.51 <sup>ab</sup> (4.66)	20.96 <sup>a</sup> (6.19)	23.50 <sup>b</sup> (4.72)	1.06
<b>Discrimination &amp; sexual harassment</b>	75.34 <sup>a</sup> (16.12)	77.62 <sup>ab</sup> (13.83)	73.62 <sup>a</sup> (21.66)	84.00 <sup>b</sup> (1.57)	1.99

\*\*P<0.01, \*P<0.05

As seen in the above table 1, age of the employees does not significantly affect the perception of workplace violence dimensions of bullying, actively hostile behavior, humiliation and discrimination & sexual harassment. However, there is a significant difference between employees across varied age groups in the perception of the illegitimate pressure as a dimension of workplace violence.

The employees from the age group ranging from 55 or more years perceived more illegitimate pressure as a dimension of workplace violence as compared to the employees' counterparts in other age groups. The



employees of the age group 55 and above significantly differ from the employees of the age group 45-54 in perceiving illegitimate pressure. The employees of the age group below 35 and age group 45-54 do not differ significantly in terms of perceiving illegitimate pressure at their workplace.

*It was hypothesized that there will be significant differences among employees from different age groups across the dimensions of workplace violence.*

The conjectured hypothesis was partially confirmed since the findings of the study indicate that employees of the age ranging from 55 years and above perceived more illegitimate pressure to a greater degree as compared to employees in other age groups. There is no evidence to support the findings of the study that older employees perceived more illegitimate pressure than the younger employees. The reason could be the fact that the older employees are more focused and inclined to their work and strive for better results. The present study finding is found to be in contradiction with the study conducted by Alterman & Colleagues (2013), where they revealed that lower prevalence rates for experiencing a hostile work environment were identified for workers aged 65 and older workers compared to workers in other age groups. With respect to the age, conflicts findings have been reported, in the study of Einarsen & Skogstad (1996), it indicates that the older employees tend to be more bullied than the young ones.

(b) *Effect of educational qualification on the perception of workplace violence dimensions.*

In order to find out the differences in the employees perception of psychosocial parameters across the four educational qualifications, the data was subjected to one way ANOVA.

Table-3 Mean, SD, F ratio and significance to show difference across the level of education in workplace violence dimensions

Variable	SSC (n=74)	HSC (n=73)	Graduation (n=247)	Post- graduation (n=156)	F ratio
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	
<b>Bullying</b>	11.97 <sup>a</sup> (3.25)	12.09 <sup>b</sup> (3.47)	11.16 <sup>a</sup> (3.38)	12.07 <sup>ab</sup> (3.02)	3.36**



<b>Actively hostile behavior</b>	75.82 <sup>a</sup> (17.01)	77.52 <sup>b</sup> (14.02)	72.90 <sup>a</sup> (18.34)	76.22 <sup>ab</sup> (13.75)	2.25
<b>Illegitimate pressure</b>	55.53 <sup>a</sup> (14.98)	61.48 <sup>b</sup> (12.18)	55.41 <sup>a</sup> (14.79)	57.83 <sup>ab</sup> (12.27)	3.86**
<b>Humiliation</b>	22.14 <sup>ab</sup> (4.45)	22.37 <sup>b</sup> (5.05)	20.90 <sup>a</sup> (5.55)	20.86 <sup>a</sup> (5.61)	2.40
<b>Discrimination &amp; sexual harassment</b>	78.22 <sup>ab</sup> (15.73)	78.76 <sup>b</sup> (14.85)	72.74 <sup>a</sup> (18.85)	77.81 <sup>a</sup> (12.95)	4.96**

\*\*P<0.01, \*P<0.05

As seen in the table-3 , educational qualification of the employees significantly affects the perception of workplace violence dimensions of bullying, illegitimate pressure and discrimination & sexual harassment. However, there is no significant difference between employees across different educational qualification in actively hostile behavior and humiliation dimensions of workplace violence.

#### *Workplace bullying*

Significant differences are observed among the four educational qualifications in terms of experiencing workplace bullying in their respective workplaces ( $F=3.36$ ,  $P<0.01$ ). The highest mean score of HSC employees ( $M=12.09$ ) indicates that they do experienced workplace bullying significantly as compared to their counterparts in other educational qualifications. It is also seen from the table 3, that there is no significant difference among those employees whose educational qualification is SSC and graduates in terms experiencing workplace bullying at their respective workplaces. The employees having post graduate degrees do not differ significantly with those employees having SSC and graduate degree in experiencing bullying at their workplace.

#### *Illegitimate pressure*

Results in the table 3 indicate that employees across different educational background do differ significantly in terms of perceiving illegitimate pressure ( $F=3.86$ ,  $P<0.0$ ). Employees having SSC and graduate degrees do not significantly differ from each other in terms of perceiving illegitimate pressure at their respective organizations.

The highest mean score of employees having HSC degrees ( $M=61.48$ ) indicate that they do differ significantly from the employees having SSC, graduate and post-graduate degrees in terms of perceiving illegitimate pressure.

#### *Discrimination & sexual harassment*

Significant differences are observed among the four educational qualifications in terms of perceiving discrimination and sexual harassment at their respective workplaces ( $F=4.96$ ,  $P<0.01$ ). It is observed from the table 3 that employees having HSC degree do significantly differ in perceiving discrimination and sexual harassment from their counterparts at different educational qualifications. There is no significant difference among the employees who are graduate and post-graduate in perceiving discrimination and sexual harassment at their workplaces.

*It was hypothesized that there will be significant differences among employees from different levels of education on the perception of workplace violence dimensions.*

The findings of the study confirmed the conjectured hypothesis. The effect of educational qualification of the employees was observed in the perception of workplace bullying, illegitimate pressure and discrimination & sexual harassment as the dimensions of workplace violence.

**Workplace bullying-** Employees having HSC degree are observed to perceive workplace bullying as compared to other employees at different educational qualification. However, employees having graduate degree are relatively less likely to perceive workplace bullying. This implies that those employees who have the lower educational status are more likely to be bullied by other employees in their respective organizations. On the other hand, those graduate employees are less likely to perceive workplace bullying at their work as compared to other employees at different levels of educational background. The present study finding is in contradiction with the study findings by Alterman & Colleagues (2013) where they revealed that higher prevalence rates for experiencing hostile work environment were identified for workers with only a high school and workers with some college education compared to workers with less than a high school education.

**Illegitimate pressure-** Again, we observe that the employees having HSC degree perceived illegitimate pressure at a greater extent whereas, employees having graduate degree are likely to perceive illegitimate pressure at a lesser degree at their work.

**Discrimination & sexual harassment-** Employees having HSC degree perceived discrimination & sexual harassment at a greater extent when compared to other employees at different levels of educational qualification. However, those employees having graduate degree perceived discrimination & sexual harassment at a lesser degree. The present finding is very similar to Chou & Choi (2011), in which workers with the lowest education reported the highest prevalence of perceived workplace discrimination and those with the highest education reported the lowest. Another similar finding is by RoperASW (2002), in which 25 percent of all the respondents aged 45-74 reported that having higher education resulted in better treatment from employers, whereas 53 per cent of those with a post graduate education reported receiving preferential treatment. The reason could be that education provides more resources for better job performance and therefore highly educated employees may be less likely to be discriminated.

## 5. Findings and Conclusions

In order to study the perceptions of the employees working in four different sectors, a questionnaire was administered on 550 employees across varied organizational sectors, measuring their perceptions on workplace bullying, actively hostile behavior, illegitimate pressure, humiliation and discrimination & sexual harassment.

On the basis of the above results and discussion, it can be concluded that the demographic variables such as age and educational qualification of the employees are found to have a significant effect on the workplace violence dimensions such as workplace bullying, actively hostile behavior, illegitimate pressure, humiliation and discrimination & sexual harassment.

- The findings of the present study indicate that employees whose age groups ranging from 55 years and above perceived more illegitimate pressure compared to employees in other age groups. Employees having HSC degree are observed to perceive workplace bullying as compared to other employees at different educational qualification.

- The employees having HSC degree perceived illegitimate pressure at a greater extent whereas, employees having graduate degree are likely to perceive illegitimate pressure at a lesser degree at their work.
- Employees having HSC degree are observed to perceive workplace bullying, illegitimate pressure, discrimination & sexual harassment as compared to other employees at different educational qualification. at a greater extent.

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