WORKPLACE BULLYING: PREVALENCE AND EFFECT ON EMPLOYEE JOB PERFORMANCE IN ROAD TRANSPORT COMPANIES IN IMO STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to investigate the prevalence and effect of workplace bullying on employee job performance in road transport Subsector in Imo State, Nigeria. Workplace bullying for this study is regarded as that offensive behaviours/actions at work that is of repetitive nature, vindictive, cruel, malicious and humiliating aimed at undermining an individual or group of employees' ability to perform their duties. Based on Questionnaires survey administered on 8*0 management and supervisory staff of ABC Transport plc we established that employees in the road transport sector faced a number of bullying behaviors that impeded on their performance in the workplace, mostly, humiliation, persistently assaulted, often physical abused, exposure to unmanageable workload, deliberate denial of entitlement, excessive monitoring of work by superiors and given tasks with unreasonable deadlines .The study also showed that there is significant but negative relationship between workplace bullying and employee job performance. We recommended as a way out that organisations in the sector should formulate and implement programs that will ensure early detection of bullying actions, zero tolerance to bullying behaviours at work place, better handling of reported bullying cases, Punishments for convicted offenders, Copping strategies for the bullied and Necessary mechanism to guarantee non repeat.

Keywords: Workplace, Bullying Behaviour, Employee Job Performance, Road Transport Companies, Imo State.

Background of the Study

Bullying in the workplace has been reported by researchers worldwide, Hoel and Salin (2003), Einarsen & etal (2003), Hart hill (2008). Bullying is said to be a repeated offensive behaviour

at work that is vindictive, cruel, malicious, and humiliating in nature aimed at undermining an individual or group of employees, (Hart hill (2008). Arynne (2009) opined that, bullying actions inflict on the victims emotional and psychological punishment in which the bully uses his superior authority to undermine, threaten, frighten, or intimidate the bullied, thereby leaving the him feeling fearful, powerless, and ashamed Arynne (2009).Research has linked hostile work environment as one of the precursors of workplace bullying that is capable of affecting organisational outcomes such as job satisfaction, job engagement/commitment, self efficacy, organisational citizenship, job stress, work life balance, and productivity.

Many countries around the globe have fought this antisocial phenomenon using several anti-bullying policies. Africa and indeed Nigeria have no clear bullying policy from the government or organisations. This lack of awareness has given bullies a free day. Aside this, research on bullying in Nigeria has so far concentrated on prevalence of bullying behaviours neglecting the substantive issue of investigating the impacts on employees and employers. In addition to the dearth of adequate studies on workplace bullying and its effect in Nigeria, none has been seen in the road transport industry in spite of the nature of work there that is characterised by chaotic operations and thus a likely beehive for workplace bullying behaviours. In this study we investigated the prevalence and effect of workplace bullying behaviours on job performance of employees in road transport sub sector in Imo state of Nigeria using ABC transport plc, the largest passenger transport company in the state as case study.

ABC transport plc commenced operation in road passenger transport in February 1993 with a view to running a modern road transportation services in Nigeria and west coast of Africa based on internationally accepted standards using modern terminals,, with comfortable lounges', courteous crew on ground and on board. In its many years of operation, the company has been characterized with ground breaking innovations, making the company the most outstanding and innovative road transport operator in land transportation in Nigeria. The Company is the only transport company in West Africa currently quoted on the Nigeria Stock Exchange. The company has expanded operation into cargo and haulage movement with current staff strength of 1,500 making it the second largest employer of labour in Imo State.

Literature Review
Conceptual framework
There is no universal definition of workplace bullying. Various authors and researchers use different words and phrases to explain workplace bullying, ranging from workplace aggression, mobbing, and harassment to workplace terrorism. The perpetrators were also variously addressed by authors as aggressors, abusers, mobbers, harassers, terrors in the workplace. However, the most widely accepted definition and which this author align himself with, was repeated offensive behaviours at work through vindictive, cruel, malicious and humiliating actions aimed at undermining an individual or group of employees Harhill (2008), Adams (1994), Tepper (2002), Name and Namie (2009), and Safe Work Australia (2013). Other researchers see workplace bullying only as an aggressive act at workplace that includes persistent verbal and non verbal aggressions in workplace Mettic & et al (2011). However, some authors such as LeReux and colleagues quarrelled with the insistence of many

definitions that bullying behaviour must be repetitive, consistent and no one off cash for it to be said to be bullying. Their argument was that some bullying experience could be so damaging and destructive that the effects can last long in the mind of the bullied leReux et al (2012).

Bullying is also seen from the angle of existence of power imbalance in which the bully hold superior power than the bullied that is then placed on the receiving end (Power imbalance perspective). Bullying can further be classified as work related or person related bullying. It becomes person related when it is directed at an individual by another individual or group of people such as public humiliation, spreading rumours against an individual, ignoring, insulting, and yellied at. It is work related if victim is giving unachievable task, impossible deadlines, unimaginable workloads, meaningless and demeaning tasks, unclear information on matters involving him, and threats both verbal and non verbal Beswick et al (2006). It also included ignoring , excluding and disregarding an individual, constantly undervaluing some one's work no matter how good, persistently criticism of someone without valid reason, sexual harassment, being wrongly judged, given unfair promotion, and poor performance evaluation of someone, denial of opportunities Adams (1994), Einarsen et al (2001).

Workplace bullying is said to be organisationally sponsored bullying if organisational structure and process encourage bullying as a way of getting things done D, Cruz (2009). Consequently, organisational bullying is said to be present when bullying exist as the only best way to get work done Caniff et al (2012), Lieflooge et al (2001), Colliers (2012), and Visiagie et al (2012).

Bullying sometimes becomes classified as Witness bullying on the ground that those who witness bullying behaviour can mimic the same behaviour of the perpetrator thereby making bullying to have ripple effects years beyond its occurrence Samnani et al (2012).

Anew type of workplace bullying behaviour that is evolving rapidly is called cyber bullying, which is a type of bullying behaviours committed using cell phone, internet, and emails. This is where communication technology are used to defraud, cheat, harass, threaten and deceive employees and employers through cell phone calls, text messages, emails Privitera et al (2009). This is evident in most kidnapping incidents in Nigeria where cell phones are used to intimidate, harass and demand money from victim's relations.

Many factors explain why people bully. Fapohunda stated that bullies do so for a number of reasons which included the following: Boosting their self-esteem, ego and self worth, Boosting their power to get and control victims, Perceived threat by the bully on his personality and profession from the victim, Poor organisational culture that encourage bullying as a way of getting things done (Fapohunda, 2013).

Existence of bullies in an organisation could be traced to the organisational environment such as low control and supervision ,role conflicts, dissatisfaction with the manager , and power distance, presence of work stressor(high job demands, organisational change, role ambiguity, job insecurity, and leadership style); System of the work such as lack of resources, lack of training etc ;Work relationships characterised by lack of support and hostilities, rumour

mongering and backbiting ; Workforce characteristics like being knew on the job and in the organisation, an apprentice, casual worker, young worker, health workers, being from minority group and the antecedents of the bully such as Bullies' characteristics like personality trait, early childhood experiences, unresolved conflicts, poor social skills, biases and prejudices; Bullies attempting to hide his inadequacies such as weakness and incompetency Cartwright(2007),Safe Work Australia (2013).

Theoretical Framework
Literature showed a lot of theories that support this study; the theory of interpersonal relationships by Peplau and theory X and Y by Douglas McGregor.

George (2011) stated that when two or more people come together in an environment pursuing common goals, an interpersonal relationship are formed among them with each exhibiting mutual respect and support for the others. Fitzpatrick and Whall (2005) in their study showed that when these interactions that give rise to this mutual respect and support in the environment is threatened, individual anxiety is produced heightening the person sensitivity to the environment.

Another theory that supports this study is McGregor's theory X and Y. Of particular interest to this study is theory 'X' assumptions which states that average human being has inherent dislike for work, very lazy and will prefer to dodge work when possible. Because of this inherent dislike for work, most people must be controlled, threatened, coaxed and forced before they can put hard work. Most managers adopt this principle in organisations today in line with theory 'X' encouraging all form of bullying behaviours at workplace. Organizations do see theory X managers as charismatic and situational managers who do what is expected to get things done thereby promoting the action of bullies and supporting bullying unconsciously in work place leading to hostile work environment.

Empirical studies on the prevalence and effects of Workplace bullying on job performance
Various empirical studies have highlighted the prevalence and negative impacts of bullying at workplace in some jurisdictions around the world. In America, over two million Americans and managers have left their jobs due to workplace unfairness, costing corporate America approximately 64 million dollars annually Query and Henley (2010). Workplace Bullying Institute reported that 37 million Americans report being bullied with 65millions being affected. In Australia, occupational Health News issue of February 2013 reported that 6.8 % Australian workers experienced bullying Workplace Bullying Institute (2012). In United Kingdom, a survey carried out by a consulting firm, You Gov plc for British Trade Union Congress in 2015 showed that, a third of British workers have been bullied at work. In South Africa, the situation is even worse. Cunniff &et al(2012) reporting on a survey conducted by Work Dignity Institute in 2000   showed that 77.9% of South African workers feel bullied in the workplace. In Nigeria, though no reported country wide prevalence rate, very few works on workplace bullying points to its existence in Nigeria Fapohunda. (2014), Owoyemi. (2014).

Bullying effect on job performance in general has been variously documented in literature especially within the western world. They reported that bullied staff has low level of job satisfaction, decreased commitment to work , decreased organisational citizenship, and

decreased productivity due to the impact of bullying on them. For instance, a study by Mete and Sokemen in Ankara, Turkey, among health workers showed that there is negative relationship between workplace bullying and job performance. This was corroborated by the work of Ikhanyon and Ucho (2013).

In 2008, Judith Fisher-Blandon wrote a doctoral research dissertation on Aggressive Behaviour: Workplace Bullying and Its Effect on Job Satisfaction and Productivity. The data in this study determined that 75% of participants reported witnessing mistreatment of co-workers sometime throughout their careers, 47% have been bullied during their career, and 27% admitted to being a target of a bully in the last 12 months. Her research also showed how the bullying behaviour affects an individual's ability to perform their jobs, which can impact the morale of employees and the financial performances of an organization. In a study conducted by McCarthy et al (2003) in Australia, they found that 21% of those who had experienced workplace bullying also reported reduced output and 19% reported decrease in work quality.

Research Methodology
This study is a survey research. Associated Bus Company plc with a population of 1,500 employees was our case study. Primary data was sourced through structured questionnaire while secondary data was collected from the human resources department of the Case organisation. Purposive sampling technique was used to select our samples of 80 supervisory and managerial staff of ABC Transport plc.

Instrument for data collection on workplace bullying behaviours was the Negative Acts Questionnaire - Revised developed by Einarsen and Hoel (2001). The Negative Acts Questionnaire (NAQ) consists of 22-items of the negative acts or behaviours. The NAQ is based on the definition of Einarsen et al. (2001). The NAQ, measures how often during the previous six months respondents has been subjected to various negative acts in the workplace. The respondents should respond to what degree they have suffered such behaviours during the last six months, on a 5-point Likert type rating scale, ranging from 1 (never), 2 (yes, but not often), 3 (yes, monthly), 4 (yes, weekly) to 5 (yes, daily). The scale has shown high reliability and validity in previous studies (Einarsen et al., (1996); Einarsen & Raknes, (1997); Hoel et al., (2001).

The second instrument for data collection was the Self Performance Assessment Questionnaire (SPAQ) used for the collection of data on job performance .This instrument was developed by this author. Job Performance indices were extracted from the company's annual performance appraisal (APA) form with the permission of HR department. Indices of job performance extracted and built into the questionnaire include Quality of work, Job knowledge, Time management, consistency in meeting target, team work, Initiative, and innovation. It allowed the respondents to respond to the degree to which they have performed in those indices for the last six months on a 5-point Likert type rating scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (no idea), 4 (agree) to 5 (strongly agree).Statements such as 'I have consistently been achieving my target' was posed . Test-retest method of testing reliability was used to test the reliability of this second instrument .With a co-efficient of .72, the instrument was adjudged reliable.

Composite results were computed for each indices of workplace bullying. Total score and mean responses were obtained for each index from the computed composite results. Mean of 2.5 and above for any index of workplace bullying indicates significance presence in the workplace. Correlation coefficient was used to test the relationship between workplace bullying and job performance. To do this, composite results of each individual respondent from the two measuring instruments (NAG-R and SPAQ) were totalled and correlated using Pearson product correlation analysis. Correlation coefficient is a statistical technique used to study linear associations or relationship between two or more variables. It tries to ascertain the degree of associations between two variables. The formula is

$$r = \frac{n(\sum xy) - (\sum x)(\sum y)}{\sqrt{[n\sum x^2 - (\sum x)^2][n\sum y^2 - (\sum y)^2]}}$$

However, SPSS package was used here.

Results and Discussion

A total of 80 structured questionnaires were distributed among supervisors and managers in the company and 60 were returned completed, representing 75%.

To compute composite scores for an index negative act, scale responses was multiplied by the scale rate and to get total scores and mean, the composite scores were added together and subsequently divided by the 60 to get the total scores and mean responses respectively (see table 1)

Table 1: Composite results and analysis outcome

Negative Acts	Daily 5	Weekly 4	Monthly 3	Now and Then 2	Never 1	Total scores	Mean
Someone withholding information which affects your performance	10x5=50 (16.67)	9x4=36 (15.0%)	7 x3=21 (11.67)	20 x2=40 (33.33)	14x1=14 (23.33)	161	2.68
Being humiliated or ridiculed in connection with your work	3 (5.0%)	2 (3.33%)	48 (80%)	5 (8.33)	2 (3.33)	179	2.85
Being ordered to do work below your level of competence	8 (13.33)	3 (5.0%)	19 (31.67%)	21 (35.0%)	9 (15.0%0	160	2.67
Having key areas of responsibility	4 (13.33)	11 (18.33)	10 (26.67%)	19 (31.67%)	16 (10.0%)	148	2.47

removed or replaced with more trivial or unpleasant tasks						
Being ignored or excluded	7 (11.67%)	8 (13.33)	12 (20.0%)	16 (26.67%)	17 (28.33%)	152	2.53
Having insulting or offensive remarks made about your person, attitudes or your private life	11 (18.33%)	9 (15.0%)	17 (28.33%)	13 (21.67%)	10 (16.67%)	178	2.97
Spreading of gossip and rumours about you	4 (13.33)	11 (18.33%)	10 (26.67%)	19 (31.67%)	16 (10.0%)	148	2.47
Being shouted at or being the target of spontaneous anger	2 (3.33%)	5 (8.33)	16 (26.67%)	24 (40.0%)	13 (21.67%)	139	2.27
intimidating behaviours such as finger-pointing, invasion of personal space, shoving, blocking your way	7 (11.67%	3 (5.0%)	15 (25.0%)	25 (41.67%)	10 (16.67%)	152	2.58
Hints or signals from others that you should quit your job	8 (13.33)	11 (18.33%)	10 (16.67%)	21 (35.0%)	10 (16.67%)	167	2.77
Repeated reminders of your errors or mistakes	9 (15.0%)	9 (15.0%)	19 (31.67%)	12 (20.0%)	11 (18.33%)	173	2.78
Being ignored or facing a hostile reaction when you approach	9 (15.0%)	12 (20.0%)	7 (11.67%)	15 (25.0%)	17 (28.33%)	161	2.93
Persistent criticisms of your errors or mistakes	10 (16.67%)	3 (5.0%)	10 (16.67%)	20 (33.33%)	17 28.33%)	149	2.48
Having your options ignored	8 (13.33)	4 (6.675)	24 (40.0%)	17 (28.33%)	7 (11.67%)	169	2.82
Practical jokes carried out by people you don't get along with	10 (16.67%)	3 (5.0%)	10 (16.67%)	20 (33.33%)	17 28.33%)	149	2.48
Being given tasks with unreasonable deadlines	14 (23.33)	6 (10.0%)	11 (18.33%)	15 (25.0%)	14 (23.33)	171	2.85

Having allegations made against you	6 (10.0%)	8 (13.33)	8 (13.33	22 (36.67%)	16 (26.67%)	146	2.43
Excessive monitoring of your work	12 (20.0%)	8(13.33	19 (31.67%)	14 (23.33)	7 (11.67%)	184	3.07
Pressure not to claim something to which by right you are entitled (e.g. sick leave, holiday entitlement, travel expenses)	16 (26.67%)	15 (25.0%)	2 (3.33%)	4 (6.675)	23 (38.67%)	177	2.95
Being the subject of excessive teasing and sarcasm	6 (10.0%)	2 (3.33%)	18 (30.0%)	19 (31.67%)	15 (25.0%)	145	2.42
Being exposed to an unmanageable workload	10 (16.67%)	7 (11.67%)	12 (20.0%)	21 (35.0%)	10 (16.67%)	166	2.77
threat of violence or physical abuse or actual abuse	7 (11.67%)	15 (25.0%)	19 (31.67%)	11 (18.33%)	8 (13.33)	182	3.03
						Mean of mean ((2.73)

The table 1 above showed that there was significant presence of workplace bullying behaviors experienced by employees of road transport sub sector in Imo State (mean of mean 2.73). The result also showed that the following workplace bullying behaviors were significantly present in the subsector: deliberate withholding of information that will help in performance(mean 2.68), humiliation at workplace(mean 2.85), being ignored or deliberate exclusion(mean 2.53), being persistently assaulted(mean 2.97), being subjected to violence or physical abuse(mean 3.03), being exposed to unmanageable workload(mean 2.77),deliberate denial of entitlements(mean 2.97), excessive monitoring of work by superiors(mean 3.07),being given tasks with unreasonable deadlines(mean 2.85) .

The above results can be explained by the fact that employers and managers have wrong perception of employees and what makes them participate in organizational life. In Africa and indeed Nigeria ,most managers align themselves with the early management theorist(classical, neoclassical and humanists) that human beings should be seen and treated just as machines that must be made to work the way you want without any initiatives of their own. They also align themselves with the McGregor' theory x by believing that human beings at work must be pushed, harassed, coaxed and forced before they participate in organizational life. Thirdly, the lust for profit by owners, and managers who are constantly under threat to make money make them place undo demand on employees including unrealizable targets and failure to which is responded with bullying of various categories. Finally, the erroneous believe by employers that employees have no choice no matter how badly you treat them in the face of rising unemployment and employment market saturated with people looking for

job. These explain why bulling has been institutionalized and subsequently tolerated by the bullied who don't want to lose his job.

The results above can also be explained by the nature of work and the industry, an industry that were occupied and managed majorly by illiterates and semi illiterates. Road transport business is all comers' affairs with little or no professionalism. The only means of entry is having a car or being able to drive.

Table 2: SPSS output showing correlation between WB and JP Correlations[b]

Table 2: correlation matrix

		WB	JP	
WB	Pearson Correlation	1	-.587[**]	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	
JP	Pearson Correlation	-.587[**]	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		

WB = Workplace bullying. JP =Job performance
Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
b. List wise N=60

The result showed that there is a significant negative relationship between workplace bullying and employee job performance in road transport sub sector in Imo State(r= -.587, p 000). This means that the more employee perceive being bullied, the lower his performance. This results is in line with earlier research findings that workplace bullying negatively affects employee job performance Quine (2001); Hoel et al, (2003); Hoel and Cooper (2000); layman (1996); Ikyanyon and Ucho (2003).

Conclusion
The study was to establish the prevalence and effect of workplace bullying on job performance of employees in road transport sub sector in Imo State. It was discovered that job performance is being affected negatively by workplace bullying.

Recommendations
We make the following recommendations in this study with an eye on three key words: Prevention, management and copping strategy. Organisations should develop and implement a clear cut policy on preventing and dealing with workplace bullying. Such policies shall have the following:

For prevention, zero tolerance to all form of bullying behaviour at work; Necessary preventive mechanism including early detection techniques such as whistle blowing, pre employment back ground checks.

For management, procedure of reporting and handling reported bullying cases and punishment for convicted offenders.

For Copping strategy, options available to the victims, and the role of the organisation in implementing this strategy such as transfers, redeployment, counselling sessions and treatment costs.

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