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Coping strategies to exposure to workplace bullying¹

ABSTRACT: This article concerns coping strategies of workers subjected to workplace bullying. First, it compares the development of the bullying process with various models of conflict escalation. Next, it presents the review of literature on the responses of employees exposed to bullying to negative workplace activities. Finally, it describes the results of studies comparing targets' and non-targets' strategies on various stages of bullying development. The findings indicate that employees previously exposed to bullying at the very early stage of conflict respond in a way that may be interpreted as unconstructive, while those who encounter single conflicts intensify their endeavors to make a good impression and try to gain social support from their surrounding interpersonal relationships. When the conflict is severe and difficult to solve, targets of bullying seek support and use strategies based on cooperation. The article concludes with directions for future studies to identify strategies for prevention programs.

KEYWORDS: social psychology, workplace bullying, coping strategies.

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Bullying is increasingly recognized as a serious problem within organizations (Gamian-Wilk and Grzesiuk, 2016; Glasø, Nielsen, and Einarsen, 2009; Grzesiuk, 2008; Mayhew, McCarthy, Chappell, Quinlan, Barker and Sheehan, 2004; Marcinia, 2015; Merecz, Drabek and Mościcka, 2009; Mościcka-Teske, Drabe and, Pyżalski, 2014; Nielsen, Skogstad, Matthiesen, Aasland, Notelaers and Einarsen, 2009; Strutyńska, 2016; Turska and Pilch, 2008, 2016; Warszewska-Makuch, 2007). Even though research on bullying has been discussed since the 1980s, there are still many open questions and unsolved problems. This article focuses on the dynamics of responses to exposure to workplace bullying. The authors are trying to answer the question how targets behave at particular stages of the process: the very beginning of the conflict and further stages of escalation. It is valuable to compare and, if possible, even contrast activities undertaken by workers who experience single conflicts and social stress at work with those of employees previously exposed to bullying at work, defined regular and frequent negative experiences against which the workers cannot defend themselves.

WORKPLACE BULLYING

The research literature refers to bullying as a long-lasting process of frequent and repeated acts of hostile communication, humiliating an employee, who experiences discomfort and personal and health problems (Brodsky, 1976; D'Cruz, 2015; Einarsen, 2000; Leymann, 1990, 1996; Matthiesen, 2006; Lipinski and Crothers, 2014; Zapf and Einarsen, 2001, 2005). Bullying indicates frequent and persistent negative activities that occur at least once a week. It is common to define workplace bullying as negative acts and actions occurring regularly over a period of time (Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf and Cooper, 2011). Moreover, imbalance of power between a target and an oppressor is a crucial aspect of bullying. Targets have difficulty defending themselves against these actions (Einarsen, 2000; Leymann, 1990, 1996; Matthiesen, 2006; Zapf and Ein-

arsen, 2001, 2005). Some researchers have found that several parts of the bullying process may involve coping (Baillien, Neyens, De Witte, and De Cuyper, 2009).

Two main explanations for workplace bullying highlighted in the literature are associated with the role and impact of individual and work-related factors. According to the work environment hypothesis, the antecedents of bullying are connected to organizational factors (Hauge, Skogstad and Einarsen, 2007, 2010; Hauge, Einarsen, Knardahl, Lau, Notelaers and Skogstad, 2011; Leymann, 1996). The vulnerability thesis focuses on the personality traits and dispositions of employees previously exposed to bullying at work (Bowling and Beehr, 2006; Bowling, Beehr, Bennett and Watson, 2010; Coyne, Seigne and Randall, 2000; Glasø, Matthiesen, Nielsen and Einarsen, 2007; Nielsen and Knardahl, 2015; Lind, Glasø, Pallesen and Einarsen, 2009; Podsiadly and Gamian-Wilk, 2017). According to the work environment hypothesis, the targets' personality traits play a minor role in explaining workplace bullying. Bullying is associated with role conflicts, poor management and work overload (Hauge et al., 2011). Bullying is experienced as a traumatic event occurring in inconvenient organizational circumstances.

It is often mentioned that bullying is a particular type of escalating conflict, which consists of a series of conflict episodes (Matthiesen, Aasen, Holst, Wie and Einarsen, 2003; Zapf and Gross, 2001). Nevertheless in the case of maltreatment in the workplace, conflicts take a destructive form and escalate extremely (Van de Vliert, 2010). Typical disagreements have their own dynamics, with a climax after which the atmosphere calms down, both parties are equal in strength, and the possible strategies and conflicts may bring positive outcomes for both parties. In contrast, bullying lasts over a period of time, resulting in unequal power structure and harmful effects for the target. The dynamics of the development of bullying are much different from a typical conflict course of action, as in this case hostility and aggression continues to increase (Bechowska-Gebhardt and Stalewski, 2004). Unlike a single conflict, bullying is a process of frequent and prolonged violence. It may take various forms of aggression, rarely sexual (Gibbons, Cleveland and Marsh, 2014) or physical, but more often verbal (Radliff, 2014), relational and social (Field, 2014) and cyberbullying (Schimmel and Nicholls, 2014). This article focuses on one of many approaches to conceptualizing workplace bullying: describing models that compare workplace bullying process to conflict escalation.

However, it is of vital importance to remember that bullying is a process that may be based on a rather everyday singular situation or event. Workplace bullying may start very innocently with workplace incivility (Hughes and Durand, 2014). In any social group, the atmosphere is sometimes tense; there is gossip some people are liked and others are disliked. Some co-workers are given fewer duties, and others have too much work. Thus the beginning of a potential bullying process may at first go unrecognized or neglected by observers and/or the employees involved. The duration and direction of workplace bullying differs from a conflict event, as bullying is a long-lasting process consisting of a series of negative actions (Arenas et al., 2015;

León-Pérez et al., 2015). This article specifies the differences between coping strategies used by bullying targets and by workers who experience single conflict events.

MODELS OF BULLYING DYNAMICS

As previously mentioned, bullying is a process in which hostility and aggression may increase over time (Leymann, 1996; Zapf and Gross, 2001). Björkqvist (1992, after Einarsen, 2000) proposed three stages of bullying development. In the first, indirect strategies are used. The atmosphere becomes more tense and formal. Rumors are spread about the victim. The target's speech is constantly interrupted and criticized. His or her opinions are not taken seriously. In sum, these different social actions may be associated with a changed image and interpretation of the employee in the eyes of co-workers. In the second phase, more direct acts of aggression, such as isolation or public humiliation, are implemented. The bully finds allies. Finally, when the bullying target feels left without any support and totally helpless, extreme forms of direct aggression and power are used. There are threats to distribute intimate knowledge. The target is accused of being psychologically ill. The person performing the systematic and negative behaviors – e.g., the bully or perpetrator – may apply such tactics as threats, blackmailing and/or accusations. In the worst case, bullying may lead to the exposed employee's exclusion from the workplace (Glambek, Matthesen, Hetland and Einarsen, 2014; Glambek, Skogstad, and Einarsen, 2015).

In accordance with Björkqvist (1992), Leymann (1996) also described bullying as a process that lasts and develops over a period of time with potentially devastating health outcomes for the target (Leymann and Gustafsson, 1996). According to Leymann (1996), the process often consists of four stages and starts or is triggered by a difficult, often conflicting situation. Thus, at the onset, a number of behaviors that are not necessarily aggressive may take place in quite normal social interaction. But over time, negative communication becomes more and more frequent and turns from what may be normal actions into more subtle and offensive ones. In the third stage, management steps in, and the case is made official in the organization. Because of the target's previous stigmatization, executives tend to misjudge the situation and accept the negative view of the target, possibly, according to Leymann (1996), because of the psychological phenomenon of stigma and the fundamental error of attribution (see e.g., Jones, 1984). The easiest way to solve the problem is to expel the bullying target as a troublemaker. The final stage is connected to the target's exclusion from the organization. Suffering from various negative consequences of long-term maltreatment, the expelled person is often wrongly diagnosed as paranoid or depressive. Such labels make it very difficult to find another job and exacerbate the target's helplessness.

MODELS OF CONFLICT DEVELOPMENT: BULLYING AS AN EXAMPLE OF LONG-LASTING AND DESTRUCTIVE CONFLICT

Bullying as a social phenomenon is sometimes compared to conflict escalation models (Van de Vliert, 2010). In one such comparison, Matthiesen and his colleagues (2003) used Van de Vliert's model to analyze a workplace bullying case. In addition to the employee in question, they analyzed the reactions of others in the workplace at different stages of the process. This model examines the power structure between parties and the sequences of strategies that may prevent or intensify the argument. Moreover, it considers two types of reactions: parties may behave spontaneously or strategically. With the changing structure of power and resources, various strategic or spontaneous, preventing or escalating steps may be useful for both understanding and investigating the dynamics of conflict in bullying at work.

Because of the constant progression in severity of negative activities in bullying, Glasl's conflict escalation model is also applied to characterize this phenomenon (Zapf and Gross, 2001). According to Glasl (1994, after Zapf and Gross, 2001), there are three phases, each consisting of three stages. The first phase is characterized by attempts to co-operate and debating style. Incidental tensions appear, but parties are interested in reasonable solutions. When frictions are too severe, both sides begin to polarize and interact through deeds instead of words. In the second phase, the original source of conflict disappears and the relationship between parties becomes the main source of tension. Parties are firstly concerned about reputation and coalition, but when it becomes more and more difficult to solve the problem, negative emotions such as distrust, lack of respect and hostility evolve. The parties involved start to exclude each other and use strategies based on dominance and threats. The third phase is the phase of systematic destruction and aggression hardly ever reached within organizations. According to Glasl, at this point the parties perceive each other as having no human dignity and attack each other even at personal cost. This phase ends in total destruction or suicide of one of the parties. Zapf and Gross (2003) argue that bullying in its final stage is a boundary phenomenon between the second and the third stage. This argument implies that evolved workplace bullying cases are characterized by serious aggression and a belief that the conflict cannot be solved, and that as a consequence, one of the parties, namely the target, should leave the company.

Analyzing conflict escalation as an antecedent of workplace bullying has indicated that originally task-oriented conflicts, referred to cognitive aspects (e.g., concerning ambiguities of information or procedures) may turn into relationship conflicts and emotional conflicts (Arenas et al., 2015; León-Pérez et al., 2015). Thus, bullying may be understood as a specific example of destructive escalation of interpersonal conflict. As some researchers stress, destructive conflict-management styles in problem-solving are not effective in cases of workplace bullying (Zapf and Gross, 2001). According to Zabrodska and colleagues (2016), Weick's (1995) theory of sensemaking may be useful when investigating how employees involved in a bullying process

make sense of one another's behaviors, especially in the first phase of hostility. Based on their findings, these authors argue that sensemaking may be a way to understand how differences in power, so vital to workplace bullying, develop (Zabrodzka et al., 2016).

BULLYING TARGETS RESPONSES

Applying various conflict escalation models to describe the bullying phenomenon is helpful in understanding targets' responses at particular stages of this process. Leymann (1996) stressed that to cope successfully with negative activities of the environment, a person should possess certain resources, such as self-confidence and being in good shape physically and psychologically. Moreover, self-beliefs may help control the way a person evaluates extreme life situations. These beliefs affect the strategies people choose to overcome obstacles. Bullying at work is definitely one such harmful situation in which personal resources are especially needed. Unfortunately, the results suggest that people subjected to work maltreatment may lack many important resources (Einarsen, Raknes, Matthiesen and Hellesoy, 1994), most probably because they have been exposed to negative activities for a long time. In other words, prolonged stress and exposure to negative activities may weaken targets' resources. Studies have even shown how employees in high-status occupations at prestigious institutions may respond rather passively to workplace bullying because of, for instance, structural issues (Salin, Tenhiälä, Roberge and Berdahl, 2014).

Some findings show that targeted workers do not notice the first signs that bullying is developing (Leymann, 1996). They do not realize what is happening for a long time. As they start to understand their situation, it may have already escaped their control (Leymann, 1993, after Zapf and Gross, 2001). Moreover, according to some findings, targets do not give the perpetrators any feedback, and bullies stay unaware of the consequences of their actions (Zapf, Knorz and Kulla, 1996). In one case study, the bullying target used denial as a spontaneous prevention behavior: the woman interviewed could not understand what was going on and why she was unwanted at work (Matthiesen et al., 2003). At the same time, she tried to negotiate and speak with management, demanding an explanation. The authors interpreted her behavior as a strategic preventive method of conflict resolution, according to Van de Vliert's model. Despite many attempts to de-escalate the difficult situation, the result was further escalation, as the opposing party understood them otherwise (Matthiesen et al., 2003).

Zapf and Gross (2001) conducted semi-structured interviews with 19 bullying targets. The interviews aimed to observe the reactions of employees previously exposed to bullying at work in relation to the dynamics of bullying escalation. According to the targets, as soon as they realized a bully's bad intentions and hostility, they began with dialogue and constructive conflict-resolution solutions, focusing on both their own and the other party's interests. These integrating, task-oriented strategies proved ineffective. Then some targets undertook obliging, which means they tried

to adapt to the other party and give up their own interests. Finally, a majority of targets escaped the conflict, using avoidance as a passive strategy significantly more often and dominating less often than the control group.

These findings indicate that active and constructive methods of conflict resolution are not successful in the case of bullying. Talking with the bully was the most frequent strategy, but only among unsuccessful targets. Successful employees exposed to bullying less often applied direct strategies than did other employees. Moreover, they did not use “fighting back with similar means” at all. Rather, they tried to make no mistakes and to be as correct as possible in not contributing to further conflict escalation (Zapf and Gross, 2001). Other researchers found that using active tactics in escalated conflicts may increase victimization (Aquino, 2000). Open discussion and information-sharing with the bully increased the likelihood that the bully would retaliate against the target (Rayner, 1999). Literature on conflict resolution indicates that people most often start with constructive strategies. But in the case of unequal power structure in bullying, targets have little control in the conflict situation. If the situation cannot be changed, intrapsychological strategies such as cognitive restructuring, relaxation, denial and avoidance may prove more useful (after Zapf and Gross, 2001).

THE DYNAMICS OF BULLYING TARGETS AND NON-TARGETS RESPONSES

Bullying is a complex process of prolonged negative activities. The specificity of this phenomenon may be more connected to the occurrence of utterly different coping strategies than in the case of single conflicts and tensions. Two studies compared the dynamics of strategies undertaken by bullying targets and non-targets (Gamian-Wilk, 2010). In the first study (N = 143) bullying targets and non-targets were asked to recall how they behaved at the very beginning of a certain workplace conflict and how they were behaving at the present moment of a conflict escalation. Exposure to bullying was measured with SDM (Negative Activities Scale, Durniat and Kulczycka, 2006), and coping strategies were diagnosed with PSPDQ-1 (Psychosocial and Psychic Defenses Questionnaire, Senejko, 2003). The PSPDQ-1 diagnoses the following categories of threats: family problems, problems at school or work, problems with a partner, socializing problems, social incidents, existential problems, illnesses and death, accidents and catastrophes, and material problems (Senejko, 2003, 2003a). The author introduces two criteria in her concept of distinguishing reactions to threats. The first includes the direct results of those reactions and their influence (positive and negative) on human development. Thus there are constructive and unconstructive defenses. The second criterion of differentiating reactions to threats is based on another account of the model, according to which an individual is analyzed as part of a system, remaining in certain relations with his or her surroundings. To defend themselves, individuals may use not only their own resources, but also objects in the environment. On such a basis, psychological and psychosocial defenses are distinguished. In the second longitudinal study (N = 94, in which exposure to bully-

ing was measured with NAQ-R, Negative Acts Questionnaire, Warszewska-Makuch, 2006, and coping strategies were diagnosed by PSPDQ-1, Senejko, 2003), bullying targets and non-targets were asked about their current responses to a certain conflict twice, six months apart. Full- or part-time teachers taking additional pedagogy courses took part in both studies. The results of both studies show a consistent pattern of results and offer several important findings: 1) Bullying targets and non-targets were using different strategies in the face of experienced conflicts; and 2) they implemented various strategies at the beginning and the escalated stage of conflict.

At the beginning, bullying targets had a significantly higher profile of psychic maladaptive and adaptive strategies. It means they were trying to cope with the problem completely on their own. They experienced *intrapsychological maladaptive* strategies throughout the conflict period, but the magnitude of these strategies was greater at the beginning. Employees also initially experienced threat-originated *emotional and physiological responses*, such as crying or screaming. These strategies were of high intensity and could potentially be destructive for constructive functioning and psychological balance. The development of such health responses could also deepen an already existent problem. For instance, if an employee already has a physiological problem, such as stomach-related issues, these may on their own demobilize and deprive him of energy – energy that is necessary to overcome a problem such as coping with bullying. Previous health-related issues, such as blushing or tics, may also turn into new perceived threats; if experienced by shy people, they may prevent exposed employees from social interaction with others.

Moreover, it appears that employees exposed to bullying were to some extent aware of the threat, as they applied a combination of *sensitization and repression*, which means they were concentrated on the threat. By using *repression* (motivated forgetting), targets were rejecting threatening information, avoiding memories of people or places associated with work troubles, diminishing threatening thoughts through symbolic gestures, etc. These strategies of avoidance can bring some temporary relief, but especially if used in a threatening situation requiring an immediate or radical intervention, they do not bring expected results; instead of resolving it, they often makes a problem worse.

On the other hand, targets applied *sensitization*, or which is the excessive concentration on a threat, which is the opposite of repression, and involves permanent thinking about the work problems, brooding over them or remembering the situations and people associated with them. The adaptive value of sensitization lies in the fact that permanent concentration on a threat enables understanding of the problem. However, sensitization may be maladaptive if mental involvement in a threat is excessive, making a person unable to do anything else, incapable of keeping it at a distance, which is necessary for constructive coping. For instance, rumination may influence the benefit of psychological treatment as well as the duration of a depression (see e.g., Nolen-Hoeksema, Parker and Larson, 1994). Targets also experienced a *sense of guilt*, another non-constructive psychic strategy that is a fixation on a real

or imagined inappropriate behavior toward someone or something, therefore reducing potential ability to perceive a threatening situation and react to it.

It seems that workers exposed to bullying were only partly aware of the problem, as they were using particularly strongly psychic maladaptive strategies. On the other hand, they scored quite high in the psychic constructive responses. To some extent (but not significantly greater than non-victims did), they tried to overcome the difficulty psychologically by applying *psychic mobilization* and *self-control and relaxation*. They introduced self-persuasive thoughts strengthening their own image, tried to gain strength from their personal values systems, generated self-oriented positive feelings and emotions, and may have been more prone to apply self-induced optimistic thoughts when confronted with a threat. According to the need-threat/need-fortification framework, being met by others with silence and ostracism threatens our fundamental needs, but which tendencies surface in response to these may “depend on the method of measurement or the behavior that is measured” (Williams, 2007, p. 443). Targets were also making effort to control their emotions and behavior in threatening situations by applying relaxation techniques and/or methods of increasing self-control. Thus they may have been conscious that a threat existed and tried to help themselves, but they did not understand the reasons for the problem and did not know how to manage it. These results offer further insight into Leymann’s (1996) and Matthiesen’s et al. (2003) observations suggesting that bullying targets may not notice the first symptoms of the conflict. They seem to perceive that something wrong is happening but may have difficulties planning and taking appropriate steps at the very beginning.

At further stages of bullying escalation, targets experienced a wider range of responses than in the first phase of a work conflict. They still applied maladaptive psychological strategies and both adaptive and maladaptive strategies to a greater extent than non-targets did. Bullying targets simultaneously still strongly focused on the threat as they experienced *repression* and *sensitization*; on the other hand, they were more open to undertaking interactions with their social surroundings. Moreover, they used *cognitive reappraisal*, another psychic non-constructive strategy directed at such a mental working-out of a threat, so that its subjective image becomes less menacing. Using this strategy means targets were using self-deception by explaining away a threatening situation, searching for its positive aspects, diminishing it or making excuses. Though these strategies help decrease fear or maintain positive self-image, it does not, in fact, enrich targets with knowledge on how to overcome a threat.

However, they started to use one of the psychosocial adaptive strategies, *affirmative interpersonal relations*. Targets began to emphasize their own or others’ qualities (or advantages of their relationships with social objects) to create better psychological and social conditions helpful in coping with a threat. Using this strategy means they undertook various forms of both ingratiating behavior (complimenting, stressing other people’s strengths, etc.) and social self-presentation (boasting, emphasizing their significance, achievements, merits, etc.). Because of affirmative interpersonal contacts, it is possible to mobilize oneself for more active coping with a threat and

inspire others to help, or at least not to make a threatening situation worse. Thus, active strategies, as reported in two previous studies (Matthiesen et al., 2003; Zapf and Gross, 2001) were not applied at the beginning of a conflict in those studies. It seems that affirmative interpersonal behaviors may have been used too late, when bullying had already escalated and the bullies, with their allies, had already had negative influenced negatively – for example, by destroying the exposed employee's reputation.

To summarize, the findings suggest that targets tended to implement psychic rather than psychosocial strategies such as sensitization, repression and mental coping with threats. The strategies used by targets off bullying may be compared with the maladaptive pattern of coping style described by Nielsen and Knardahl (2014). The “disengagement coping group” comprised workers scoring low on proactive coping strategies and higher on passive and maladaptive coping strategies such as denial, substance use, self-blame and behavioral disengagement. In the longitudinal study (Nielsen and Knardahl, 2014), these maladaptive responses at baseline were most related to increased levels of psychological distress two years later. However, it is also important to stress that baseline distress was associated with enhanced use of maladaptive strategies, especially self-blame later (Nielsen and Knardahl, 2014). Therefore, experiencing bullying as a traumatic event may lead to using less adaptive coping responses.

These results are also in line with observations by Matthiesen et al. (2003) showing that targets may have problems asking for help and gaining support. Moreover, previous research shows that bullying targets are less extroverted and more submissive, anxious and neurotic, which implies that they score lower in social competence and communication skills than other employees (Gamian-Wilk, 2013; Glasø et al., 2007). Thus it is possible that employees previously exposed to bullying at work tend to avoid confrontation with a threat and reveal helplessness, expecting that somebody else will resolve the problem. Glasø et al. (2007) also found that one of the employee clusters exposed to bullying showed low agreeableness. The researchers concluded that such a pattern of features as social anxiety, shyness and low social competencies may provoke aggressive behaviors by a bully. The current findings confirm that targets display behavior that may make social interactions difficult and may be the source of further conflict escalation. However, the results from prospective studies indicate that the drop in agreeableness may be a consequence rather than a predictor of exposure to workplace bullying (Nielsen and Knardahl, 2015; Podsiadly and Gamian-Wilk, 2017).

The non-targets' responses to single conflicts at work were generally not so intense as the targets' responses. The non-targets seemed aware of the threat connected with the conflict, as they used *mobilization* and *affirmative interpersonal relationships* from the very beginning of a conflict. Thus they mobilized themselves psychically and were open to others by trying to ingratiate others and present themselves in good shape. Thus they were actively coping with a threat from the very beginning.

Previous results have shown (e.g., Zapf and Gross, 2001) that successful bullying targets hardly ever used active tactics. Applying an active and constructive strategy

such as affirmative interpersonal relationships does not mean that non-exposed employees were trying to talk to and explain to the bully about the reasons a conflict developed. Thus, behaving nicely to employees other than the perceived bully is quite a different strategy than open discussion with the bully. Flattery is an active but indirect method of improving one's image in the eyes of others and enhancing one's own self-esteem. Findings on bullying targets' responses gathered by Zapf, Matthiesen and their colleagues (Matthiesen et al., 2003; Zapf and Gross, 2001) indicate that successful targets applied psychosocial behaviors such as searching for external support, help and intrapersonal psychological strategies; they were trying to reach psychological equilibrium and distancing themselves from the problem.

CONCLUSIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

In the education sector, teachers have been shown to be much exposed to workplace bullying (Mościcka-Teske, Drabek and Pyżalski, 2014; Strutyńska, 2016; Warszewska-Makuch, 2006). Teachers exposed to workplace bullying suffer symptoms of professional burnout, such as emotional exhaustion, cynicism and a lower level of professional efficacy (Mościcka-Teske, Drabek and Pyżalski, 2014), low job satisfaction and feeling of work overload and being controlled (Strutyńska, 2016). These negative outcomes of workplace bullying must lead to further destructive consequences, such as poor relations with clients (children) and decrease in educational effects (children's motivation to work, etc.). The results of the present study broaden our knowledge on coping strategies undertaken by individuals exposed to bullying in the educational sector. The fact that they were using mainly maladaptive and psychic strategies such as sensitization, repression and mental coping with threats may be connected with the little support they received from supervisors. If heads of schools gave their subordinates adequate support, these teachers would cope with their problems more constructively and use more psychosocial strategies. As Strutyńska's findings (2016) suggest inadequate management style, the lack of supervisors' support and fair treatment cause bullying in the educational sector. It is therefore essential to foster good interpersonal relationships in educational institutions and implement procedures to prevent workplace bullying. Prevention procedures should include workshops for management on giving adequate support, enabling teachers to cope with current problems.

CONCLUSIONS

Investigating strategies for coping with bullying is necessary, as it may be helpful in building management coping programs. Knowledge on bullying targets' responses to negative actions provides HR managers with feasible ways of managing bullying behaviors at work. As Nielsen and Knardahl (2014) found that coping strategies are stable across time, an important implication for clinical treatment suggests that it is possible to change unhealthy and dysfunctional coping strategies. However, they

also found that the individual's level of psychological distress may trigger certain patterns of coping strategies, and that the pattern of coping responses is stable but does not, unfortunately, change the level of distress over time. As coping strategies have limited impact on stress experienced, other factors seem more important (Nielsen and Knardahl, 2014).

Taking into account the complexity and different manifestations of workplace bullying, its identification and prevention are extremely difficult (Lewis, 2006). Future studies should focus on research integrating organizational and personal antecedents, as well as such factors as conflict and power imbalance (Arenas et al., 2015) and conflict management styles (León-Pérez et al., 2015). As findings, in line with work environment hypothesis, indicate that organizational factors are significant predictors of escalation of workplace bullying (Hauge et al., 2011), we argue that bullying should foremost be met with organizational measures against such factors. Therefore, fair procedures and policies should first be introduced. As workplace bullying may evolve from task conflicts into relational conflicts (Arenas et al., 2015; León-Pérez et al., 2015), it is essential to emphasize first coping with task conflicts by clarifying potential ambiguities in relation to information and procedures before potential subsequent measures are taken.

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STRATEGIE RADZENIA SOBIE Z BYCIEM PODDAWANYM MOBBINGOWI W PRACY

ABSTRAKT: Artykuł stanowi przegląd literatury na temat sposobów, w jaki radzą sobie osoby poddawane negatywnym oddziaływaniom w miejscu pracy. Rozpoczęto od porównania procesu rozwoju mobbingu do modeli eskalacji konfliktu. Następnie przedstawiono przegląd wyników badań nad reakcjami osób mobbingowanych na bycie negatywnie traktowanym, zaprezentowano rezultaty wskazujące na różne wzorce reakcji pracowników poddawanych i pracowników nie poddawanych mobbingowi na różnych etapach rozwoju mobbingu. Wyniki wskazują na to, że osoby poddawane mobbingowi na początkowym etapie rozwoju mobbingu podejmują strategie mało konstruktywne, podczas gdy osoby doświadczające pojedynczego konfliktu w pracy podejmują starania zrobienia dobrego wrażenia, szukają wsparcia. Na kolejnych etapach rozwoju mobbingu, gdy konflikt jest nasilony i trudny do rozwiązania, osoby poddawane mobbingowi nękanymi pracownicy zaczynają szukać wsparcia i podejmują strategie oparte na kooperacji. Zaprezentowane wyniki stanowią podstawę dla projektowania szkoleń prewencyjnych.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: mobbing, bullying, strategie radzenia sobie.



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