SOCIAL SUPPORT FOR MANAGERS WHO ARE
BULLIED UPWARDS

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ABSTRACT

Despite the recent increase in focus on workplace bullying, research into the phenomenon referred to as 'upwards bullying' (i.e. managers who are bullied by their staff) has received modest attention. This paper presents the results from two studies, an interview and questionnaire study, into upwards bullying. In particular, the results in relation to the social support managers who had been upwards bullied received from senior management, colleagues and family and friends will be presented. It was expected that managers would be reluctant to seek support due to concern about how it could impact on their organisational standing. The findings of the interview study suggest that managers did seek support although they were disappointed with the amount of support available for them from senior management and organisational representatives. Alternatively, support from colleagues and family and friends was found to be very important. The results of the questionnaire study indicated that managers who experienced upwards bullying perceived they received less support from senior management and colleagues, than those who had not experienced upwards bullying. These results may either reflect the impact of their bullying experience or may explain, in part, why they were bullied.

Keywords: Human Resource Management, Workplace Bullying, Upwards Bullying, Social Support

INTRODUCTION

Despite significant research attention into workplace bullying relatively little is known about the nature of upwards bullying: that is, when a staff member bullies a supervisor or manager. Indeed, the focus of workplace bullying research has mostly been on downwards bullying, which is conducted by managers towards their staff, and more recently, on horizontal bullying, which entails bullying from one colleague to another (Lewis & Sheehan, 2003). Despite limited use of the term upwards bullying (Lewis & Sheehan, 2003; McCarthy, Henderson, Sheehan & Barker, 2002; Rayner & Cooper, 2003), there does appear to be general agreement in the literature that managers can indeed be targets of workplace bullying by their staff (e.g., Zapf, Einarsen, Hoel & Vartia, 2003). Nevertheless, this area of research is under-explored (Branch, Ramsay & Barker, 2007). Cases of upwards bullying have been reported rarely in the literature (Rayner & Cooper, 2003), and generally are presented anecdotally or as single cases (refer to Braverman, 1999, for a case of upwards bullying). Despite this, prevalence data from surveys into the broader area of workplace bullying indicates that upwards bullying is experienced by between 2% and 27% of the workforce, with a mean of 11% (as reported by Zapf et al., 2003, p. 116).

However, results that focus on upwards bullying have been overshadowed by findings that consistently confirm that people in supervisory or managerial positions are the primary perpetrators of workplace bullying (Zapf et al., 2003). While it is legitimate that the predominant focus has been on managers as the perpetrators of workplace bullying we argue it is vital to explore workplace bullying from all perspectives. That is, unless upwards bullying is included in workplace bullying research

understanding of the interpersonal and organisational processes that are involved in workplace bullying will be relatively limited. In summary, despite research findings indicating the occurrence and prevalence of upwards bullying (e.g., Hoel, Cooper & Faragher, 2001; Salin, 2001), a comprehensive exploration of the nature and severity of upwards bullying is largely lacking within the literature. Research into the causes, behaviours and impacts associated with upwards bullying is important in addressing this gap in the literature. As a result, a research program entailing two studies (Study 1-Interview study; Study 2-Questionnaire study) was developed to further understand the nature of upwards bullying. This paper presents the results from both studies as it relates to social support.

Social Support and Workplace Bullying

Given the complex and multi-dimensional nature of workplace bullying, "no single, off-the-shelf policy will suit every organisation" (Woodman & Cook, 2005, p. 10). Indeed, a wide variety of elements are recommended in any workplace bullying policy (Woodman & Cook, 2005). A number of researchers and practitioners have suggested a range of responses to prevent and manage bullying in the workplace, including the provision of social support. Quine (1999) proposed that the provision of support can reduce the impact of workplace bullying, suggesting that support "may function as a buffer against stress by providing resources to enable [targets] to cope" (Quine, 1999, p. 231). Conversely, it has been suggested that the lack of support is central to the inability of targets to cope (Lewis & Orford, 2005; Leymann & Gustafsson, 1996; Matthiesen, Aasen, Holst, Wie, & Einarsen, 2003). In an interview study of 10 women who had experienced workplace bullying, Lewis and Orford (2005) found that being heard and 'believing in you' was important to a sense of support. By contrast, showing scepticism by questioning an individual's account was described as unhelpful (Lewis & Orford, 2005).

Seeking support, however, is proactive and is not a behaviour someone who is feeling helpless and victimised would be likely to perform (Lee, 1997). For instance, Lewis's (2004) interview study of 15 college and university lecturers who had experienced workplace bullying found profound feelings of shame. These feelings of shame may result in targets avoiding opportunities to seek support. In particular, a person in a higher status position may not want to seek help for fear of appearing weak and the perceived impact it may have upon their standing within the organisation (Lee, 1997).

Thus, because of the position a manager holds and the expectations they and others may have of their role, it is proposed that when faced with upwards bullying a manager could feel constrained in how they seek assistance or support. As help seeking is closely related to impression management, a person in a higher status position may be reluctant to seek help due to the concerns introduced above and expectations by others that they should be able to handle the situation (Lee, 1997). In support of this perspective, Miller (1997) in her study into Gender Harassment in the U.S. Army found that female

officers were reluctant to report inappropriate behaviour as they felt it would be considered a sign of their inability to lead or get along with others. It could be that those in higher status positions may feel that by seeking help or support they will appear incompetent or dependent and that this may be used against them in a performance review or harm their organisational standing in some way (Lee, 1997). Indeed, the shame experienced as part of the workplace bullying process (Lewis, 2004) could very well be intensified for managers who think they have failed (Lee, 1997). In fact, Lee (1997) suggested that managers would more often seek help from colleagues, rather than more senior managers, due to these concerns.

An interview study was conducted to examine the phenomenon of upwards bullying, to ascertain whether social support was an important consideration and if managers felt constrained in seeking support. Following this, a questionnaire study was designed to elicit detailed information about social support. The questionnaire study allowed for the comparison of two groups of managers; those who experienced upwards bullying and those who had not experienced upwards bullying. After the review of the literature it was proposed that managers who experience upwards bullying may be reluctant to seek support and hypothesised that:

> *Hypothesis One: Managers who self-identified as having experienced upwards bullying would feel less supported by their manager, than those who had not experienced upwards bullying.*

> *Hypothesis Two: Managers who self-identified as having experienced upwards bullying would feel more supported by their colleagues, friends and family, than those who had not experienced upwards bullying.*

METHOD - STUDY ONE

Interviews were conducted with 24 participants (12 males and 12 females, aged between 30 and 60 years approximately) who belonged to a range of small to large public and private organizations (for example, transport, health, education, IT and welfare) with 15 interviewees recruited from one large Government Owned Corporation. Those interviewed came from differing managerial levels, including three supervisors, eight middle managers, nine senior middle managers and four senior managers. The managers interviewed also had varying degrees of experience in the role of manager, with two of the managers new to a managerial position, 17 with more than five years managerial experience and five with more than 10 years managerial experience. Participants were recruited for the current study via the HR service within their organization or the research team's network, such as a workplace bullying support service. Brief information about the focus of the research was provided to all potential participants to assist them to self-identify as people experienced and informed about the topic.

Of those interviewed, nine managers discussed the general managerial workplace environment with reference at times to inappropriate behaviours by staff directed at them or other managers (Group 1).

Thus managers within this group had not directly experienced upwards bullying (in that their experiences did not fulfill the definition of workplace bullying). The other fifteen managers discussed personal experiences of upwards bullying (Group 2). Two of these managers recounted witnessing upwards bullying of others as well.

Two one-hour semi-structured interviews were conducted with 19 of the interviewees. Two one-hour sessions were considered ideal because this structure gave sufficient time to allow participants to tell their story, enable the researcher to develop a relationship and level of trust necessary for this type of research, and allow the time necessary for deeper meaning to develop (Jones, 1985; Neuman, 2006). The sequence of two interviews also allowed the researcher to follow-up any questions or points that required clarification after the first interview (Jones, 1985; Neuman, 2006; Patton, 2002). However, due to particular interviewee time constraints, only one interview of approximately one hour was possible with five of the participants. In each of these cases the researcher obtained permission from the interviewees to contact them within two weeks of the interview to follow up any issues needing clarification or further discussion.

Although semi-structured in nature, the researcher worked from a guide of research areas derived from the literature (Babbie, 2001; Denzin, 2001; Fossey, Harvey, McDermott, & Davidson, 2002; Patton, 2002). This ensured that the same research areas were explored in each interview (Patton, 2002; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). Thus, rather than a structured set of questions, the guide offered a list of suggested research areas to be covered throughout the interview process (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). The interviews therefore tended to take on the feeling of an informal conversation, although the researcher was always clear about the topic to be examined (Fontana & Frey, 2003). With the permission of the participants, the interviews were audio-recorded for future transcription, which enabled the researcher to attend to the participant intently (Bernard, 2000). Only one of the interviewees declined audio-recording of the interview; in this case comprehensive notes were taken and a summary of the notes sent to the interviewee for approval.

It is suggested that coding commence with a list of concepts, in the knowledge that most coding themes are generated throughout the overall process that encompasses the entire data set (Neuman, 2006). Therefore, prior to the analysis of the data an initial coding scheme was developed based on the review of the literature. While the initial coding scheme assisted in focusing the analysis of the raw data (Patton, 2002) it did not limit the development of further codes and themes. NVivo (v.2) was used to develop and collate the different themes.

In presenting the results of this study considerable caution was exercised to protect the identity of participants. Pseudonyms as well as limited contextual and specific identifying material was used in reporting the findings. Moreover, in order to be more concise, the term 'inappropriate behaviour' will be

used to describe both behaviours that specifically met the definition of workplace bullying as well as behaviours that were clearly negative but occurred only occasionally.

FINDINGS - STUDY ONE

As expected managers appeared wary about seeking support due mainly to concern how this would impact their career. As Alice (Group 2) who discussed an experience with an individual in an administrative role [and others in the office] bullying her stated: *I'm very scared, particularly of the affect [the bullying is] going to have on my career because this is the only career I've ever wanted.* Similarly, managers also expressed that it was often easier to give in or, as one manager observed, most managers: *walk before it gets too [far] for their own career protection* (Sally—Group 2). Furthermore, managers expressed concern about who they could turn to for help. For example: *…you feel pretty isolated, you're the manager, you're there by yourself, but where do you go with it…if I rang my manager and said one of my staff is harassing me, he'd say, you sort it out. You're isolated. Where do I go to?* (Bob—Group 1).

Despite managers being reluctant to seek support, findings from the interview data indicate that managers sought support from either their senior manager or Human Relations staff. However, a significant number of the managers interviewed expressed frustration that there was little assistance available for them from these sources. In particular, half of the managers interviewed expressed a concern about the lack of support from senior management or Human Relations. Sally (Group 2) expressed concerns:

> I said to him [senior manager] I feel bullied what's there for me and he goes disciplinary action—
> You're the manager your response to someone bullying you is to take full disciplinary action and I
> said was it?—it's different cause when you read all the policies and everything it's not that same
> perceptual issue. If you look at the codes of bullying…it's about how the person receives it—it
> might not be something that you think is harassing it's about how the receiver is [perceiving it]. It
> really makes you think of how's that person feeling or responding to it, as opposed to the
> disciplinary action which is rules….The only people I could talk to about it were my
> supervisors…And they kept it very professional—sort of for their own protection. Very careful
> about what they said no leading statements, no gossip, about their view, or anything like that, they
> kept it very upfront. Yeah so I had no emotional support except from my partner at home. So you
> feel very isolated.

Essentially, within Sally's case her feelings of being bullied by her staff member were not considered, placing her in a vulnerable and isolated position. Alternatively, just under half of the managers (the majority of these managers discussed an experience of upwards bullying) reported receiving some form of support from a family member, friends and colleagues. For the managers interviewed, the support from home appeared to relate to being able to discuss what was happening for them. For one manager, Katherine (Group 2): *the most beneficial [support] was the stuff that I was getting from home.* There also tended to be support from colleagues (as opposed to senior management). The support from colleagues

mainly focused on advice giving, providing a 'sounding board', offering support, and standing up for the manager in meetings. Therefore, it appears that support from family and colleagues plays an important role in assisting managers to manage inappropriate behaviour from staff.

Furthermore, Sally raises the significant issue that there is a difference between disciplinary action and a grievance based on bullying. While a grievance based on an accusation of bullying relates to how the target perceives the behaviours (e.g., a target perceives yelling by another person as bullying), disciplinary action is based on the rules of the organisation (e.g., an employee fails to attend required meetings without explanation). This at least partly explains why support from senior management may not be readily forthcoming.

METHOD - STUDY TWO

Participants

One hundred and thirty-eight managers (93 Males; 45 Females) were recruited from two different populations, managers and supervisors from a range of organisations and postgraduate students.

Sample one

Within this sample one hundred and one questionnaires were completed. Four hundred and twenty-four questionnaires were distributed to managers and supervisors in 17 publicly and privately owned organisations throughout Australia (a response rate of 24%). Organisations were contacted based on their interest in the research program (they contacted the researcher as a result of media interest) or through the researcher's professional network. Of those who responded, 76 were male and 25 were female. Of the 101 respondents, 10 identified themselves as supervisors, 70 as managers, and 21 as senior managers. Twenty managers within this sample self-identified as upwards bullied.

Sample two

A further 37 questionnaires were completed by post-graduate students from an urban tertiary institution. Convenors of seven core post-graduate programs consisting of approximately 100 students in total, within an urban University agreed to administer the questionnaire to their post-graduate students with managerial work experience. Of the 37 managers (Male = 17; Female = 20) who responded, six identified themselves as supervisors, 26 as managers, and 5 as senior managers. Eleven managers within this sample self-identified as upwards bullied. Thus, of the one-hundred and thirty-eight respondents, 31 self identified as having had an experience of upwards bullying.

Materials

The complete questionnaire consisted of four parts. Part 1 included of a range of demographic questions: age, gender, length of time with the organisation and organisational position. Part 2, consisted of questions that asked the respondents about working in their organisation. Job satisfaction, intention to leave, organisational identification and social support scales were used. Part 3 consisted of questions from the altered revised Negative Acts Questionnaire (NAQ-R) (Einarsen & Hoel, 2001), upwards bullying items and open ended questions as to individual's experiences of upwards bullying if identified. Finally, Part 4, consisted of questions as to why upwards bullying can occur. Responses from Part 2 in relation to social support and Part 3 in relation to the actions taken by respondents is the focus of this study.

Part 2 – Social Support Measure

In order to test for the amount of support a manager perceived as available to them from a variety of sources within and outside of the workplace, a measure developed in 1975 by Caplan, Cobb, French, Van Harrison and Pinneau (1980) was used. This measure is widely used by researchers and is considered to be one of the most established and reliable measures of social support (Fields, 2002; Lim, 1996). The measure consists of three subscales that measure the support obtained from three sources; your supervisor (boss), co-workers (colleagues), and relatives/friends (Caplan et al., 1980). Respondents are asked to rate each source on: "*How much each of these people go out of their way to help make your work life easier for you?*"; "*How easy is it to talk with each of following people about your work?*"; "*How much can each of these people be relied on when things get tough at work?*"; and "*How much are each of the following people willing to listen to your personal problems, particularly work problems?*" (Caplan et al., 1980). Responses were measured on a five-point Likert scale, where four equalled 'Very much', three equalled 'Somewhat', two equalled 'A little', one equalled 'Not at all', and zero equalled 'Not applicable'. Responses for each source were then summed to form three separate totals.

Part 3 – Actions Taken

Respondents who self-identified as being upwards bullied were also asked to complete a range of questions to do with their experience of being bullied. Based on the literature review a scale of actions taken within and outside organisations was developed. Respondents were asked to identify the actions they took within and outside the workplace and to indicate if these behaviours were helpful or unhelpful.

RESULTS - STUDY TWO

Social Support Measure

Three independent t-tests were used to compare those who self-identified as having experienced upwards bullying and those who did not experience upwards bullying, in relation to the social support they received from their supervisor, colleagues, or family and friends. Using Caplan et al.'s (1980) measure of social support, individuals rated the amount of support they received from their supervisor, colleagues, and family and friends. Prior to analysis, the data was screened for errors and outliers. One outlier for each of the sub-scales, colleagues and family and friends was found. After an inspection of the mean and trimmed mean, these cases were retained. Cronbach's alphas for each of the sub-scales (supervisor = 0.92, colleagues = 0.84, family and friends = 0.84) suggest the sub-scales were reliable.

Results from three independent t-tests found significant results on the supervisor and colleagues sub-scales. Managers who self-identified as not upwards bullied (M = 11.71, SD = 3.54) indicated they were supported to a greater extent by their supervisor, than were those who were upwards bullied (M = 8.39, SD = 4.60). The difference was significant, t (40.95) = -3.71, p = 0.001 (equal variances were not assumed). The magnitude of the differences in the means was large when using Cohen's d (-1.39). Similarly, managers who self-identified as not upwards bullied (M = 11.79, SD = 2.88) indicated they were supported to a greater extent by their colleagues than those who were upwards bullied (M = 10.29, SD = 3.44). The difference was significant, t (136) = -2.43, p = 0.05. The magnitude of the differences in the means was approaching medium (Cohen's d = -0.47). Comparisons for the sub-scale family and friends yielded a non-significant difference (Not upwards bullied, M = 12.99, SD = 3.35, Upwards bullied, M = 13.20, SD = 2.91, t (135) = -.31, ns). Cohen's d (0.07) indicated a very small effect size. These findings suggest that managers who have had an experience of upwards bullying feel less supported by their own manager and colleagues than those who have not had an experience of upwards bullying. As a result, Hypothesis One was supported, but Hypothesis Two was not supported.

Actions Taken

The actions taken by self-identified targets of upwards bullying inside of the organisation appear to have been perceived by the respondents as unhelpful. One action that 61.3% of respondents who attempted this action indicated was unhelpful, was confronting the person(s) directly and asking them to stop. By contrast, only 9.7% of respondents who attempted this action found it to be helpful. Similarly, asking someone else to speak to the person(s) on their behalf also appeared to have been unhelpful, as indicated by 41.9% of those who attempted this action. A number of respondents also indicated that they discussed the situation informally and formally with either the manager or supervisor of the alleged bully,

as well as their own manager or supervisor and also a HR staff member. However, in each of these circumstances, these actions appear to have been predominantly unhelpful. Interestingly, 74.2% of respondents indicated that they had discussed the situation with a colleague(s), which proved to be helpful in 38.7% of cases and unhelpful in 35.5% of cases.

Alternatively, the actions taken by self-identified targets of upwards bullying outside the organisation appear to have been perceived by the respondents as helpful. The two actions that appeared most helpful were discussing the situation with family and with friends (64.5% and 74.2% who took these actions found them to be helpful, respectively). Furthermore, educating or informing oneself about inappropriate behaviour, was another action that appeared to be helpful by those who engaged in it (54.8%). For some of those who engaged in them, actions such as taking part in leisure activities, relaxation or stress reduction activities appear to have been helpful (51.6% leisure activities; 48.4% relaxation or stress reduction activities).

DISCUSSION

The provision of support has been suggested as important in reducing the impact of workplace bullying (Matthiesen et al., 2003; Quine, 1999), while the lack of support has been related to a target's inability to cope and manage workplace bullying (Lewis & Orford, 2005; Leymann & Gustafsson, 1996). The provision of support is even more important due to the escalating nature of workplace bullying, including upwards bullying (Keashly & Jagatic, 2003). However, it was argued that due to the position a manager holds and concern managers may have that seeking support may adversely impact their standing in the organisation (Lee, 1997), a manager may feel constrained in how they seek assistance or support when faced with upwards bullying. Indeed, for targets in general, seeking support appears to be a difficult process, perhaps due to the feelings of shame associated with being a target of workplace bullying (Namie, 2003).

Findings from the interview study indicate that managers (targets) were reluctant to seek support, but the majority indicated that when necessary they did seek some form of assistance from their immediate manager, Human Relations Department, colleagues, friends or family. As noted earlier, concern expressed by managers in the interview study about seeking support from within the organisation appeared to centre around how situations with a staff member(s) behaving inappropriately can impact a manager's future career. Similarly, female officers were also reluctant to seek help in Miller's (1997) study of gender harassment. Reluctance by women to report inappropriate behaviour was attributed to concern that they would be blamed. Furthermore, the link between profound feelings of shame and workplace bullying may also result in targets not seeking support (Lewis, 2004).

Notably, when support was sought to address the situation within the organisation, most interviewees reported that the support provided appeared to not exist or were unhelpful. Responses from many of the managers who self-identified as targets of upwards bullying in the questionnaire study indicated that support schemes in place within organisations (i.e., contact officer or Employee Assistance Programs) were not accessed or used, or when they were used they were generally not constructive. Alternatively, findings from both studies would indicate that, on the whole, support that came from family and friends was helpful. These results suggest that managers had concerns about seeking help and in general did not seek support within the organisation.

Thus, the findings from the interview and questionnaire study indicate that managers who experience upwards bullying feel less supported by senior management or Human Relations representatives. Furthermore, although the interview study suggested that family and friends were important in supporting managers who had experienced upwards bullying the results of the questionnaire study failed to obtain significant results. Interestingly, despite the interview study suggesting that support from colleagues was important to managers who had experienced upwards bullying, the questionnaire study indicated that managers who had been upwards bullied felt less supported by their colleagues than those who had not experienced upwards bullying.

One explanation for the perceived lack of support from their boss and colleagues by those who experienced upwards bullying in the questionnaire study may be a result of their bullying experience. For example, as a result of their bullying experience managers felt they did not receive the support they needed from their senior manager and colleagues. An alternative explanation, however, is proposed by Zapf et al. (2003). Zapf and his colleagues (2003) suggest that in order to overcome the positional power of a manager, staff would need support from superiors (i.e., other managers and supervisors) to bully a manager. In essence they suggested that it would be difficult for a staff member(s) to bully any manager who has the genuine support of their senior managers and colleagues (Zapf et al., 2003). By contrast, they argued that isolated managers who have lost the support of their colleagues and senior management would be vulnerable to upwards bullying. The present results may be an indication that the managers in this study were isolated from their senior managers and colleagues (i.e., they do not feel supported by them), and as a result are vulnerable to upwards bullying. If this is the case, the lack of support for some managers (i.e., they are isolated from their colleagues and senior management) could be a possible contributing factor of upwards bullying. Additional research is required to investigate the causal relationship between lack of support and upwards bullying, focused on whether lack of support in fact increases vulnerability, or whether an experience of upwards bullying leads to a perception of a lack of support (due to lack of action on the part of organisational representatives to address the situation).

Limitations of the studies

An important limitation within both studies relates to the focus of the study, wherein only the voice of managers was heard, which could reflect a potential bias in relation to the situation or environment that was discussed by the interviewees and respondents. This tendency to focus on the targets of workplace bullying is a common issue within workplace bullying research (Zapf & Einarsen 2003), mainly due to the reluctance of perpetrators of workplace bullying to be involved in research. The voice of staff and not only those who are identified as perpetrators is needed within future research to fully understand the dynamics of upwards bullying and the position of all parties within this complex and multifaceted phenomenon.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

It has been proposed that the provision of support can reduce the impact of workplace bullying (Matthiesen et al., 2003; Quine, 1999). Alternatively, the lack of support appears to be related to a target's inability to cope (Lewis & Orford, 2005; Leymann & Gustafsson, 1996). This is particularly important because workplace bullying has been found to be a conflict that is likely to escalate over time (Keashly & Jagatic, 2003). For these reasons, it is suggested that specific assistance is needed for managers who are faced with upwards bullying by their staff, so that they do not suffer loss of face and are encouraged to seek assistance. Prevention and management strategies that may assist managers could include, recognising upwards bullying; training for both staff members and management in the organisation on the nature of workplace bullying and developing personal skills; and enhancing relationships and communication between staff and management.

Research has consistently found those in lower levels of an organisation to be the primary targets of workplace bullying (Rayner & Cooper, 2003; Rayner, Hoel & Cooper, 2002) and manages the perpetrators (Zapf et al., 2003). As a consequence it appears that upwards bullying is not recognised as an issue of importance by organisations. Ways in which organisations conceptualise and address workplace bullying appear to be limited, with little understanding that workplace bullying can occur at all levels. The implication for organisations is that there is a need to recognise the existence of upwards bullying and initiate policies and strategies to assist managers faced with upwards bullying. Further research into upwards bullying will bring the issue of upwards bullying to the notice of organisations. However, recognising the phenomenon of upwards bullying, may involve shifting the current thinking and culture within the workplace, such as the expectation that some staff may display inappropriate behaviours as part of the work environment and receive no negative sanction (Archer, 1999; Hadikin & O'Driscoll, 2000; Rayner, 1997, 1999; Salin, 2003).

Recognising upwards bullying is even more important when the vital role managers perform within organisations is considered (Bartol, Tein, Matthews & Martin, 2005). Upwards bullying may have a high

cost to organisations financially, not to mention the negative impacts on the manager's health and on the functioning of the workgroup. Importantly, it needs to be made clear to both managers and staff that, just as bullying behaviours are unacceptable when perpetuated by a manager or colleague, these behaviours are also unacceptable when carried out by a staff member(s) and directed at a manager.

Acknowledgement of the occurrence of upwards bullying would enable organisations to take the first step in addressing the phenomenon of upwards bullying. Further action, such as implementing comprehensive training programs and support mechanisms for managers and staff, can then occur. Workplace bullying training in relation to the nature of workplace bullying and discrimination would be the initial step in preventing upwards bullying, with personal skills development suggested to further assist in preventing and managing upwards bullying (McCarthy et al., 2002). Indeed, McCarthy, Sheehan and Kearns (1995) found that training in interpersonal skills, conflict resolution and stress management assisted in helping targets of workplace bullying manage the behaviours of perpetrators better. Personal skills development for managers may also aid the manager to cope with inappropriate behaviour when it occurs. For instance, Zapf and Gross (2001) found that targets who successfully coped with workplace bullying were found to be better at recognising and avoiding escalating behaviour. Personal skills development may assist managers in how to de-escalate potential upwards bullying situations.

Finally it is suggested that enhancing relationships and communication between staff and management may further assist in preventing upwards bullying. By enhancing relationships and communication between managers and staff, it may also be possible to reduce the number of conflicts that develop into upwards bullying cases. Interestingly, the quality of the relationship between staff and manager has been linked to the use of political tactics (Waldron, 1999). For instance, staff with low quality relationships with their managers were found to use deceptive and avoidant communication and, if allowed to continue, more direct political tactics (Waldron, 1999). Social identity theory may assist us in understanding how the relationships between staff and management could be enhanced. Research would suggest that different groups will benefit through a better understanding of the characteristics, stressors and importance of each group's role and how they can be mutually coordinated with consideration for the broader organisational goals (see Eggins, Reynolds & Haslam, 2003, for a review of this research), thereby potentially breaking down the 'Us' and 'Them' divide. Thus, by developing better understanding, relationships and communication between and within staff and management, organisations may be able to prevent upwards bullying (and indeed all forms of workplace bullying). Such action on the part of organisations is seen as vital, not only for the well-being of managers, but also the workgroup and organisation. In particular, this study has emphasised the role of support for managers faced with upwards bullying and the difficulties that surround it.

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