Symposium title: Workplace bullying: measures, effects and interventions

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Exploring the Prevalence of Anti-Social Behaviours in Australian Workplaces

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Abstract

Recently, discussions surrounding the prevalence of anti-social behaviours in the workplace have gained momentum due to their potential to negatively affect organisational productivity and individual effectiveness (Ones, 2009). Broadly speaking, 'anti-social behaviour' includes any behaviour that can result in emotional, psychological, physical and/or economic harm (Aquino & Douglas, 2003) and can include violence, organisation-motivated and employee aggression, dysfunctional behaviours, victimisation and incivility in the workplace (Sinclair, Martin, & Croll, 2002). Although there is much discussion on the topic in academic and practitioner circles, at present little is known about the prevalence of anti-social behaviours from an Australian perspective. This study seeks to address this gap, through conducting a national survey of Australia's working population to gain this understanding. Preliminary findings from a pilot study due to be conducted in early 2011 will be presented and discussed in full at the symposium.

Research Summary

Utilising a similar and successful approach taken in the United Kingdom, potential participants involved in the pilot data collection will be informed of the national survey via a

large Australian Trade Union's membership communication channels (the union has agreed to assist with the facilitation and dissemination of the survey to their members). Given the membership numbers of the union we expect a minimum of 500 respondents for the pilot study. The survey will consist of a number of standardised measures which will be employed to explore the antecedents and outcomes as well as the prevalence of anti-social behaviours in the workplace. Preliminary findings from this pilot study will be presented and discussed in full at the symposium.

Survey Measures

The survey entitled 'Taking the Pulse of the Australian Workplace' contains 254 items in total. The first twelve questions gather basic demographic data. Information such as participant's gender, age, employment status, employment basis, industry of employment, position title, time in organisation, time in current position, individual, educational level, ethnicity, total time in the workforce will be collected. The remainder of the survey consists of scales to measure anti-social workplace behaviours, as well as antecedent and outcome measures. For the purposes of this symposium, details of the scales that will be utilised to measure anti-social behaviours are presented in full below, followed by a short description of the antecedent and outcome measures that will be employed.

Anti-Social Behaviour

Incivility. Workplace incivility will be measured using Cortina, Magley, Williams and Langhout's (2001) 7 item Workplace Incivility Scale (WIS). The scale focuses on the frequency of disrespectful, rude or condescending behaviour the respondent has experienced either from managers or co-workers over the past five years. Responses are captured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (never) to 4 (most of the time). Items within the measure include "Made

derogatory or demeaning comments about you" and "Doubted your judgement on a matter over which you have responsibility". The Cronbach's Alpha reliability for the scale was 0.89 when validated by Cortina et al. (2001).

Negative Acts. Items from the revised Negative Acts Questionnaire (NAQ-R, Einarsen, Hoel, & Notelaers, 2009) will be used to determine the extent of anti-social behaviours in the workplace. The NAQ-R consists of 22 items and possesses three underlying factors; personal bullying, work-related bullying and physically intimidating forms of bullying (Einarsen et al., 2009). The NAQ-R has good internal consistency with a reported Cronbach's alpha of .90 and is considered a valid and reliable tool to measure workplace bullying (see Einarsen et al., 2009 for full details).

Workplace Aggression. The prevalence of aggression within organisations will be measured using the Workplace Aggression Questionnaire (WAR-Q, Neuman & Keashly, 2003). The WAR-Q contains 60 items that provides examples of physical and non-physical aggressive events. Respondents are asked to rate the extent to which they have experienced each type of behaviour on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 (never) to 7 (daily occurrence) and then to indicate the person most responsible for subjecting them to that behaviour. Items contained within the WAR-Q include 'Subjected to derogatory name calling' and 'Negative comments about your intelligence or competence'. The internal reliability of the WAR-Q is 0.89 (Harvey & Keashly, 2003).

Antecedent Measures

Five measures that we hypothesise are antecedents to anti-social behaviours are also included within the survey. These include the 28 item 'Emotional Climate of an Organisation Questionnaire' (Yurtsever & de Rivera, 2010), House, McMichael, Wells, Kaplan, and

Landerman's (1979) 15 item 'Occupational Stress Scale' (OSS), Rafferty and Griffin's (2006) 13 item 'Change Survey', the 28 item 'Workplace Tolerance to Aggression Questionnaire' (WTAQ, Coombs & Holladay, 2004), and the 15-item 'Citizenship Rating Scale' devised by Motowidlo and Van Scotter (1994), and Van Scotter and Motowidlo (1996).

Outcome Measures

In addition to the measures presented above, 6 outcomes measures have also been included within the survey. Job satisfaction will be measured using the 3 item 'Overall Job Satisfaction' scale developed by Cammann, Fichman, Jenkins and Klesh (1983). Second, using a similar approach used by Goldberg and Waldman (2000), absence will be measure by asking respondents to list the number of times they had missed a work day in the past 6 months, with one absence defined as one or more consecutive days absent. Third, intention to leave will be measured by O'Reilly, Chatman, and Caldwell's (1991) scale 'Intention to Leave Scale'. Fourth, an individual's and organisation's response to incidents of anti-social behaviour will be measured using a scale developed and used in one of the author's doctoral research. Fifth, social support will be measured using Caplan, Cobb, French, Van Harrison, & Pinneau's (1980) widely used measure. Finally, affects to an individual's physical and psychological health will also be measured using a scale developed and used in one of the author's doctoral research project.

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Data Analysis

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The pilot survey data will be analysed using the statistical software package SPSS. Prior to data analysis all scales will be summated to provide mean composite scores for each of the scales measured. Following the summation of the scales two separate tests will then be conducted. First Pearson product-moment correlations will be conducted to determine the relationship between anti-social behaviours , antecedent and outcome measures. Next, to explore

further the importance of these relationships standard multiple regressions will be conducted and reported. The results of these analyses will be presented in full at the symposium.

Summary

The purpose of this symposium presentation is to introduce and present preliminary results from a pilot study examining the prevalence, antecedents and outcomes of anti-social behaviours within the workplace. This pilot study is part of a wider research agenda which will focus on conducting a national survey to explore the prevalence of anti-social behaviours in the workplace. Data will be collected from Australian organisations to provide an understanding of the pervasiveness of this phenomenon from an Australian perspective. The results of this research are not only of interest to academics, but also to practitioners, organisations and unions alike who are currently seeking ways to reduce the incidence and impact of anti-social behaviours in the workplace. In summary, this research will increase our understanding of the antecedents and outcomes of workplace anti-social behaviours and uncover further directions for a program of research to be conducted.

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