TERICE COLEMAN

EXECUTIVE BOOK SUMMARY

EADM 826

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BULLY IN THE IVORY TOWER:

How Aggression and Incivility Erode American Higher Education

SUMMARY

In *Bully in the Ivory Tower,* Leah Hollis (2012) presented her post-secondary workplace bullying study in an accessible and forthright manner. The book emphasised the finding that workplace bullying in higher education occurred at a greater frequency when compared to the general population. Significant discussion was dedicated to the findings on how leadership initiate and influence bullying in higher education. Recommendations and possible solutions were discussed to help cull the bullying epidemic for those in a post-secondary vocation.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Leah Hollis is an associate professor at Morgan State University in Delaware, a specialist in workplace discrimination, and is a trained diversity consultant (LinkedIn, n.d.). Hollis earned her doctorate in Administration, Training and Policy Studies from Boston University (Morgan State University, n.d.). She currently travels the globe assisting institutions on reducing workplace bullying (LinkedIn, n.d.).

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CHAPTER 1

FROM HOMEROOM TO BOARDROOM

Bullying is different from harassment. Harassment occurs when the target is a member of a protected class, while bullying is non-discriminatory. Namie and Namie found that 37% of Americans have experienced bullying at work, and also found that workplace bullying cost approximately $64 billion annually due to employee turnover and disengagement (as cited in Hollis, 2012, p. 2). According to Namie and Namie, bullying significantly contributed to employee attrition and disability claims (as cited in Hollis, 2012, p. 22).

The power dynamic prevalent in bullying was emphasised in Hollis' (2012) work. Hollis (2012) examined targets' status in the organisation, level of education, age, race, gender, and sexual orientation. The cost of bullying on an organisation in lost productivity, sick time, and turnover were also examined. New models to reduce bullying and increase engagement need to be implemented due to the restricted financial climate in post-secondary education.

Emotional Labour

As the target of a bully, strenuous emotional labour is required to overcome negative feelings. Unwavering positivity is often promoted as excellent customer service and has come to be expected of staff and faculty in higher education. In fact, employees are often hired for their positive temperament. With a shift towards a service-based orientation, higher education professionals often endure abuse while putting on a happy face for their customers, whether they be parents, students or other colleagues in the organisation. Great emotional energy is required to overcome abuse or bullying while simultaneously building and maintaining these relationships essential for success.

Research Methods

Hollis (2012) developed and distributed a 35-question survey to over 3,200 faculty and administrators in 175 diversely representative colleges and universities across the United States of America. Participants were guaranteed anonymity and were able to withdraw from the study at any time. Qualitative interviews were conducted in conjunction with surveys and analysed using descriptive statistics. An intervention model was utilised to provide solutions and recommendations to schools involved in the survey.

“The target of a bully...must manage the
emotional abuse and find a way to reclaim
professional composure” (p.12)

"The bully is an instrument that can take an institution away from its stated mission" (p. 20)

THE UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN COMMUNITY IS COMMITTED TO ACTING IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE FOLLOWING VALUES:

COLLEGIALITY

FAIRNESS AND EQUITABLE TREATMENT

INCLUSIVENESS

INTEGRITY, HONESTY AND ETHICAL BEHAVIOUR

RESPECT

(University of Saskatchewan, 2016)

"Any organization loses thousands of work hours when employees expend emotional labour to manage aggression instead of focussing on the organization's mission" (p. 31)

CHAPTER 2
GET THE BULL OUT OF WORK

"Bullies often target those who are perceived as different or weak" (p. 31)

Not only does bullying affect the target, but it also affects those who witness bullying. A range of studies from Europe and North America found that bullying affects anywhere from 49% to 88% of the workforce (as cited in Hollis, 2012, p.32). Further, Rayner found that 75.6% of those bullied, and 73% of those who had witnessed bullying, reported negative health effects (as cited in Hollis, 2012, p. 33).

LINKED TO THOSE WITNESSING BULLYING:

Loss of confidence

Loss of self-esteem

Sleep problems

Depression

Lack of concentration

Stomach problems

Moodiness

Anxiety

Higher susceptibility to colds

CHAPTER 3

BULLYING IN AMERICAN HIGHER EDUCATION ADMINISTRATION

OF THE 3200 SURVEYS DISTRIBUTED AMONGST 175 UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES, 401 PARTICIPANTS COMPLETED THE SURVEY, RESULTING IN A PARTICIPATION RATE OF 15.5%. OF THIS SAMPLE, 62% OF RESPONDENTS REPORTED BEING BULLIED OR WITNESSING BULLYING IN THE PAST 18 MONTHS. ADDITIONALLY, 53% OF THESE RESPONDENTS WERE ACTIVELY SEARCHING FOR WORK ELSEWHERE.

DEMOGRAPHICS

EDUCATIONAL LEVEL OF TARGET

2 YEAR DEGREE (5%)
HIGH SCHOOL (8%)
EVERYONE CAN BE A BULLY (27%)
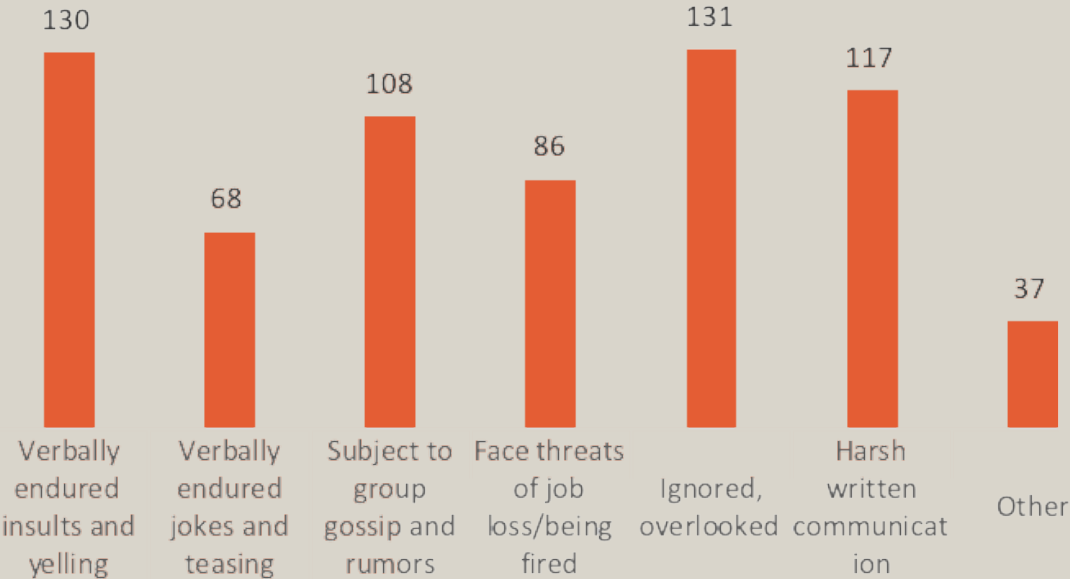**DOCTORATE (15%)**
MASTER'S (25%)
BACHELOR'S (20%)

(HOLLIS, 2012, P. 50)

BULLYING WAS MORE LIKELY TO BE ENCOUNTERED IN ARTS AND SCIENCE ACADEMIC DEPARTMENTS, ATHLETIC DEPARTMENTS, AND AT THE EXECUTIVE LEVEL WITHIN A POST-SECONDARY INSTITUTION. THE MOST COMMON TARGET DEMOGRAPHICS INCLUDED HOLDING A MASTER'S DEGREE, WORKING IN AN ENTRY-LEVEL POSITION, OR HAVING AFRICAN AMERICAN HERITAGE. BULLYING WAS REPORTED TO OCCUR MOST OFTEN IN ONE-ON-ONE MEETINGS.

ORGANISATIONAL BULLYING IS ANOTHER TYPE OF BULLYING IDENTIFIED IN THIS RESEARCH. REPORTED FORMS OF ORGANISATIONAL BULLYING INCLUDED GOALS OR RESPONSIBILITIES CHANGING WITHOUT NOTICE, ASSIGNMENT OF UNREASONABLE ACCOUNTABILITY OR TASKS, OR EXCLUSION FROM SOCIAL EVENTS. OVER HALF OF THE RESPONDENTS REPORTED ENDURING BULLYING FOR TWO OR MORE YEARS.

HOW TARGETS ARE BULLIED

| Category	Value
Verbally endured insults and yelling	130
Verbally endured jokes and teasing	68
Subject to group gossip and rumors	108
Face threats of job loss/being fired	86
Ignored, overlooked	131
Harsh written communication	117
Other	37

(HOLLIS, 2012, P. 53)

"AFRICAN AMERICANS, WOMEN, AND MEMBERS OF THE LBGT COMMUNITY EXPERIENCE PROPORTIONALLY HIGHER LEVELS OF BULLYING" (P. 41)

TARGET REACTION

Category	Value
Report to supervisor	81
Report to HR	65
Leave depart	41
More sick time	57
Isolate self	110
Quit	65

Respondents were found to spend an average of 3.9 hours per week on bully avoidance. Furthermore, over half of respondents reported that at least one person had left their department because of bullying. Twenty-eight per cent of respondents reported the organisation did nothing to address the bullying. Other organisational strategies to deal with bullying were to transfer or coach the bully.

WHO IS THE BULLY?
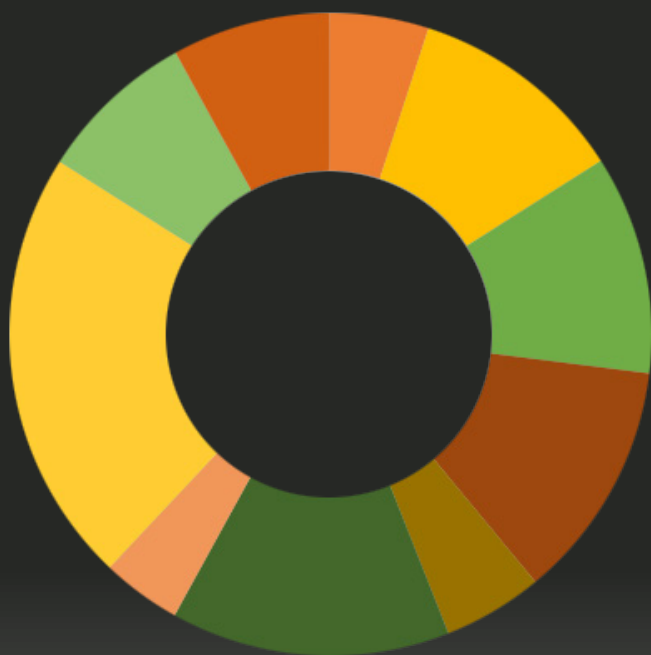
PRESIDENT	5%
VP PROVOST	11%
AVP	11%
DEAN	12%
ASST ASSC DEAN	5%
TENURED	14%
NON TENURED	4%
DIRECTOR	22%
ASST DIR	8%
ENTRY LEVEL	8%

(HOLLIS, 2012, P. 61)

COST OF BULLYING

Based on survey responses, institutions annually lose approximately $6869.50 per person due to bully avoidance. To further intensify the issue, turnover costs of replacing individuals who leave due to bullying can range from $30 million to $353 million per year depending on the size of the institution.
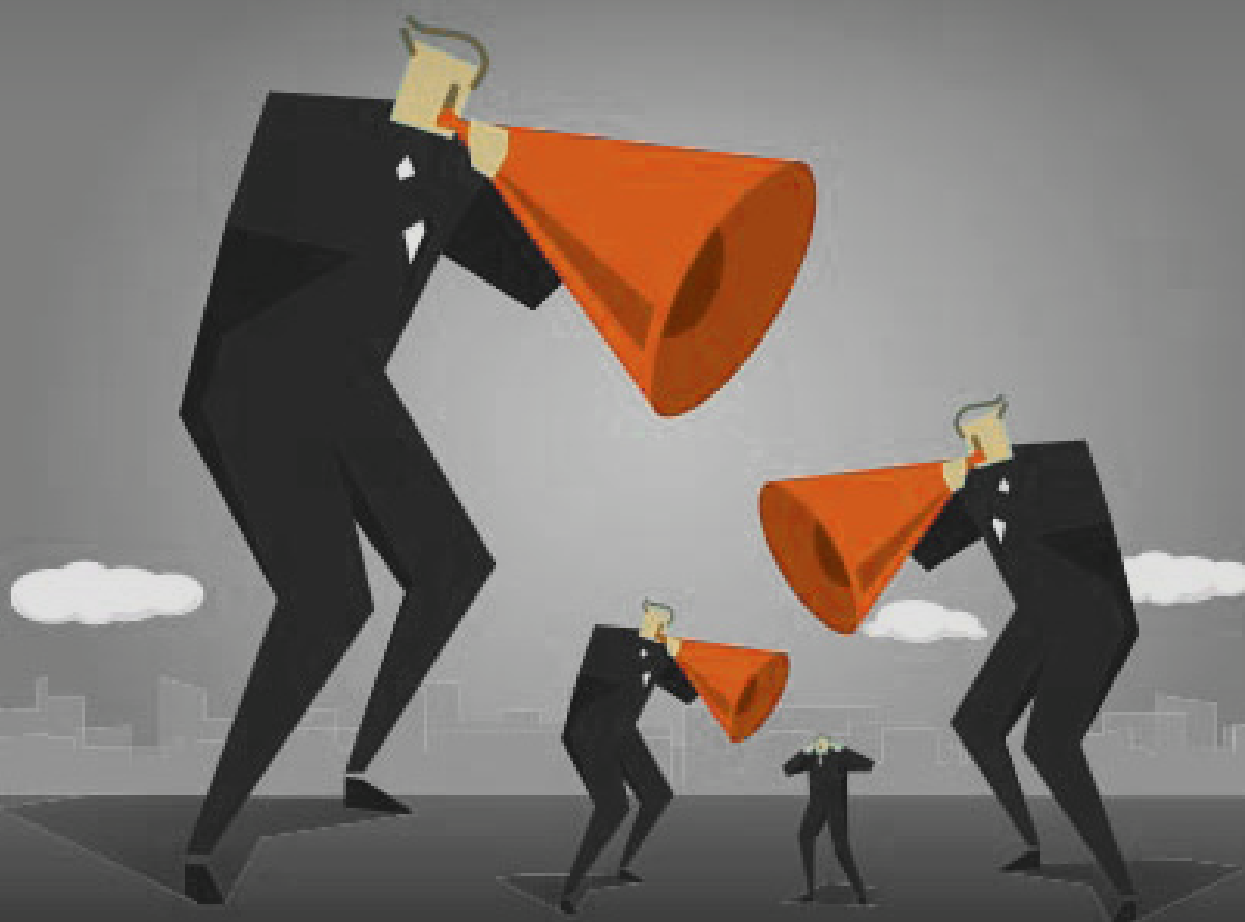
(Clarke, 2019)

CHAPTER 4:

QUALITATIVE FINDINGS ON WORKPLACE BULLYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Qualitative interviews were conducted as part of Hollis' (2012) study in addition to the quantitative survey. Nine participants were interviewed and recorded for their qualitative responses. The author identified five themes from these interviews.

QUALITATIVE THEMES

Theme #1: Leadership Drives Organizational Culture

The qualitative research confirmed that bullying is often instigated by the leader of a department. Commonly, bullying was modelled at the highest level, which led to the behaviour permeating all levels of the department. One individual reported targets in their unit leaving, while non-target members began to mimic the bullying behaviour. One participant noted their experience with a positive leader who modelled civility and made it a priority in the institution.

Theme #2: The Cost of Bad Behaviour

Participants reported their institutions losing millions of dollars each year to sick time, unproductive work hours, turnover, recruiting and retraining, lost grant opportunities, and lawsuits. Many participants commented that the situation usually ended with either the bully being fired or the target resigning. However, it often took many months or even years to get to that point, and still could result in a lawsuit.

Theme #3: Coping with the Bully's Tactics

Qualitative answers to coping strategies aligned with the quantitative data. Participants utilised or saw others utilise avoidance, sick time, isolation, disengagement, meditation, religion, overexertion, early retirement, alcoholism, overeating, or directly addressing the bullying behaviour as strategies to deal with the bullying they experienced or witnessed. Many participants reported health problems as a result of the bullying and either had left, or were planning to leave, their position at the time of the interview.

"In the face of statewide budget cuts, increasing tuition, and fluctuating enrollment, higher education cannot afford these costs simply to maintain a bully" (p. 86).

> **"Even while the organization and human resources are aware of aggression and bullying coming from the powerful executive ranks, bullies tend to remain in place because they are seldom held accountable" (p. 94).**

Theme #4: The Role of Human Resources and/or EEO Office

Respondents stated there was little to no support offered to targets or departments by human resources or higher administration. Some participants noted a bully put the organisation risk by not abiding by federal legislation which resulted in audits and lawsuits. Some organisations' tactic was to remove the target rather than the bully.

"We have sensitivity training, but there is no training on how to deal with bullying" (p. 97)

Theme #5: Impact on Services and Functions

Several of the qualitative participants noted that bullying negatively affected the operations of the department. Participants felt they were denied creativity in their work, required to hide their feelings from stakeholders, and forced to put their survival first, often at the expense of student service. One participant reported their unit was federally audited as a result of the bully's work.

> **"Students suffer in an organisation that is always fighting itself" (p. 99)**

RESPONDENT COMMENTS:

"**Jealousy** is part of the problem" (p. 64)

"You don't expect it, you **can't believe it** and you are not prepared to deal with it and most organizations have **nothing in place to help you**" (p. 65)

"We have **workshops**, **presentations**, and an **Ombudsman**. It is all a load of **crap**" (p. 65)

"High level administrators must express a **zero tolerance** stance on bullying" (p. 66)

"The worst bullying occurs at the executive level and this **destroys morale**" (p. 67)

"It would be helpful to have HR offer greater **assistance and support**" (p. 69)

"Bullies are **equal opportunity discriminators**" (p. 69)

"Untenured faculty is very susceptible to being bullied by their tenured colleagues; the whole system is set up to support that. Lots of senior colleagues have a **hazing mentality**" (p. 71)

CHAPTER 5

RECOMMENDATION AND SOLUTIONS

"To rise above mediocrity, transformation and innovation are critical elements for any organization, but neither can exist without trust for a leader with integrity" (p. 104)

Institutions must take into account their accreditation standards and mission statements when addressing bullying. If an institution claims to value and protect integrity, collegiality, and respect then action must be taken against bullying behaviour which opposes those ideals. Bullying behaviour needs to be prevented and removed through "policy, training, and leadership" (p. 109). The leadership of the organisation plays a key role in bullying behaviour on campuses. Over half of bullies are in leadership roles, and even when the bully is not in a leadership position, often the leader enables bullying behaviour by not addressing it.

(Resolve, n.d.)

Possible solutions to the problem of workplace bullying in higher education encompass both individual and organisational solutions.

Human Resources are often the first point of contact with a bully, and the best defence against allowing a bully into the institution. One preventative solution is to obstruct the hiring of bullies. Educating HR professionals and hiring managers on how to spot a bully is an important aspect of reducing bullying in the organisation.

"Often, the combination of power and the lack of accountability breeds bullying and aggression in higher education administration". (p. 120)

HOW TO AVOID HIRING A BULLY

- Look for candidate red flags such as bragging, desire for control, coerciveness, and lack of empathy.

- Be aware of the culture of the department. Do not hire a shrinking violet into an aggressive unit.

- Conduct a thorough search. A candidate 360 evaluation may be appropriate for executive-level positions.

- Develop a comprehensive onboarding program that includes an anti-bullying policy.

- Educate management on the liability of a human rights complaint.

CREATING A HEALTHY WORKPLACE

Both proactive and reactive approaches help to cultivate and maintain a healthy work environment. Survey participants named "respect from colleagues, positive attitude of the boss, respect from administration, and the positive attitude of colleagues" (p. 71) as vital to a healthy workplace. Management needs to be present and involved. Staff should feel comfortable and confident that if an issue were to arise, management would deal with it. Ideally, high level administrators would receive annual 360 evaluations to ensure a minimum standard of effectiveness. Student complaints, high staff turnover, and a lack of internal applicants to vacant positions are signs of trouble and should be investigated as soon as they arise.

62% of 2000 staff members are bullied x **Wasting 187 hours avoiding a bully** = **$7.6 MILLION annual loss in salaries due to employee disengagement**

SOLUTIONS

ORGANISATIONAL

- HIGH SEARCH STANDARDS
- FAMILIARITY WITH THE WORK ENVIRONMENT
- COMPREHENSIVE ONBOARDING
- 360° EVALUATIONS
- SWIFT ACTION ON COMPLAINTS
- BUILD TRUST THROUGH ACCESSIBILE LEADERSHIP

INDIVIDUAL

TARGET

- SELF-CARE
- SELF-WORTH EXTERNAL TO WORK
- TAKE CONTROL OF THE SITUATION
- FAITH THAT THINGS WILL IMPROVE

MANAGEMENT

- MODEL RESPECT
- ZERO TOLERANCE FOR BULLYING
- CLEARLY DEFINED BULLYING POLICY
- FAIRNESS IN REPERCUSSIONS

BULLY

- EXECUTIVE COACHING
- MENTORSHIP
- CLEARLY COMMUNICATED EXPECTATIONS

LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

While Hollis (2012) attempted to collect a diverse sample, a 15.5% completion rate is quite low and self-selection may have led to selection bias. Self-selection could have led to a higher instance of reported bullying, as those who had experienced bullying may have been more motivated to complete the survey. Further, the selection of only nine participants, or 0.02% of quantitative participants, for qualitative interviews is extremely low. Although qualitative study is a labour intensive practise, a larger sample would have allowed insight into demographic information on these participants without compromising confidentiality. With such a small sample, Hollis (2012) chose to exclude any participant identifying factors. However, insight into how qualitative participants were chosen and whether they were members of protected classes would have been valuable information. Hollis (2012) recommended further study with a more diverse population, especially including a younger demographic and more executive-level staff. Hollis (2012) also recommended research into the influence of unions on campuses and how they affect bullying.

CONCLUSION

Bullying and aggression in post-secondary institutions is a complex problem with a variety of initiatives that can be implemented to cull the issue. This study illuminated many areas where there are opportunities to reduce or eliminate bullying. Although Hollis' (2012) interpretation of the data was ambiguous and repetitive at times, this comprehensive study and resulting solutions were a much-needed insight into the significant and systemic issue of workplace bullying in higher education. Although this work was undertaken at American institutions, Canadian schools are not immune to the bullying epidemic and would be wise to implement Hollis' (2012) suggested solutions. Canadian institutions must consider how our organisations are structured to encourage bullying behaviour systematically or via lack of accountability. There is a growing need for institutions to support individuals and healthy workplace initiatives while actively working to eliminate bullying behaviour. ■

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