

Mitigation of Workplace Bullying by Increasing Awareness of The Negative Impact It Causes on Employee Behavior

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MITIGATION OF WORKPLACE BULLYING BY INCREASING AWARENESS OF THE NEGATIVE IMPACT IT CAUSES ON EMPLOYEE BEHAVIOR

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ABSTRACT

Workplace bullying can be a significant risk factor for employee depression. Bullying at work can result in anxiety disorders. One of the long-term implications of workplace bullying is the beginnings of hostility among workers/employees, which can disrupt a person's emotional balance and impact mental and physical health, causing emotional exhaustion. According to the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, intimidation can lead to increased emotional exhaustion and affect employee performance at work, disrupting the organization's overall performance. As a result, the importance of raising awareness about the negative effects of workplace bullying on organizational health is emphasized in this study. The impact of mitigation efforts can begin immediately to avoid damaging it by instilling anxiety and emotional exhaustion in employees, which have a negative impact on organizational performance. Employees from the food industry in Semarang were used as samples, and they were processed using SmartPLS. According to the findings, workplace bullying has a significant positive effect on anxiety and emotional exhaustion in employees. As a result, every company must begin to pay attention to its negative impacts and mitigate them through various solutions.

Keywords: workplace bullying, anxiety, emotional exhaustion, Conservation of Resources (COR) theory

ABSTRAK

Workplace bullying (intimidasi di tempat kerja) dapat menjadi faktor risiko yang signifikan terhadap kejadian depresi pada karyawan. Workplace bullying akan menimbulkan gangguan anxiety (kecemasan). Salah satu akibat dari workplace bullying yang berlangsung secara terus menerus dalam jangka waktu tertentu adalah timbulnya permusuhan antar pekerja/karyawan sehingga dapat memengaruhi keseimbangan emosional seseorang yang berdampak pada kesehatan mental dan fisik yang berakhir pada emotional exhaustion (kelelahan emosional). Teori Conservation of Resources (COR) menyatakan bahwa intimidasi dapat menjadi pemicu timbulnya emotional exhaustion yang lebih tinggi. Hal ini tentu saja akan memengaruhi performa karyawan di tempat kerja, dan akan mengganggu kinerja organisasi secara keseluruhan. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini berfokus pada pentingnya membangun kesadaran akan dampak buruk workplace bullying pada kesehatan organisasi sehingga upaya mitigasi pada dampak perlu segera dilakukan agar tidak merusak karena membentuk anxiety dan emotional exhaustion pada karyawan sehingga berdampak buruk pada kinerja organisasi. Sampel yang digunakan adalah karyawan yang bekerja di industri makanan di kota Semarang yang diolah dengan menggunakan SmartPLS. Hasil yang ditemukan adalah adanya pengaruh positif signifikan antara workplace bullying terhadap terjadinya anxiety dan emotional exhaustion pada karyawan. Oleh karena itu, setiap perusahaan harus mulai memperhatikan dampak negatif yang ditimbulkannya, dengan melakukan mitigasi melalui beberapa solusi.

Kata Kunci : Workplace Bullying, Anxiety, Emotional Exhaustion, Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory



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INTRODUCTION

Workplace bullying is defined as a pattern of poor treatment received by workers/employees at work from other workers/employees in the form of actions that harass, offend, isolate, or negatively affect one's work. In the face of a dangerous environment, workplace bullying causes people to doubt their self-concept and self-worth, resulting in psychological or physical discomfort or damage (Attell et al., 2017). Meseguer-De-Pedro et al. (2019) estimated that approximately 14% of the employee population in the United States had been exposed to workplace bullying situations. The food and beverage (F&B) industry, as one of the largest private sector employers in the United States, is particularly vulnerable to the phenomenon of workplace bullying. According to a survey of 440 food

service workers, food service workers were significantly more likely than non-food service workers to experience ostracism, verbal abuse, sexual intimidation, inappropriate jokes, taunts, and cruel jokes. The food and beverage (F&B) business industry is always associated with high-pressure jobs with insecure pay, which causes employees to become dependent on the company (Anasori et al., 2019). Front-line service employees in the food and beverage industry are frequently required to conceal their true emotions while remaining polite and smiling at customers (Shapoval, 2019). Physical and hidden violence, such as workplace bullying, can be increased by job demands that include emotional simulation (Ariza-Montes et al., 2017). Large industries such as hospitality (Anasori et al., 2019) and banking, education, and health frequently research the effects of workplace bullying on workers' mental health (Desrumaux et al., 2018).

Workplace bullying can be a significant risk factor for depression. Bullying at work can be a traumatic experience for the bullied individual. The target's hardships, pain, and victimization affect almost every aspect of their life, leaving them feeling lonely, isolated, depressed, and anxious. Anxiety is caused by such workplace bullying effects (Attell et al., 2017). Anxiety describes feelings of worry, nervousness, or fear that accompany the development of panic disorder or anxiety disorders and can be severe enough to cause discomfort during normal activities (Nauman, Malik, et al., 2019; M. Wu et al., 2020).

According to research by (Nauman, Malik, et al., 2019) and (M. Wu et al., 2020), there is a significant relationship between workplace bullying and anxiety, which means that the more workplace bullying there is, the more employee anxiety there is. Workplace bullying, according to M. Wu et al. (2020), can cause discomfort, strengthen individual feelings of anxiety, impair motivation, and result in poor performance. Meanwhile, workplace bullying, according to (Nauman, Malik, et al., 2019), can increase employees' feelings of anxiety about their jobs.

One of the consequences of continuous workplace bullying over time is the emergence of hostility between workers/employees, which can affect a person's emotional balance and impact mental and physical health, resulting in emotional exhaustion (Desrumaux et al., 2018). According to Anasori et al. (2019), emotional exhaustion at work is a continuous state of psychological and physical fatigue caused by excessive work. According to Stevan E. Hobfoll's Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory, intimidation can cause higher levels of emotional exhaustion (Anasori et al., 2019). Bullying at work significantly increases emotional exhaustion (Anasori et al., 2019; Desrumaux et al., 2018).

Anxiety that develops into a state of emotional exhaustion in employees due to workplace bullying practices will almost certainly negatively impact employee performance. Employees become uneasy at work, frequently panic, and are under pressure, affecting work performance, which should be demonstrated with enthusiasm (Nauman, Malik, et al., 2019; M. Wu et al., 2020). Whatever causes it and how to overcome it, there is a possible solution to reduce, if not eliminate, workplace bullying, which occurs and is experienced by employees in their work environment, whether consciously or unconsciously.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory

Work/family stress, burnout, and general stress have all been studied using the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory. The COR theory emphasizes individuals attempting to obtain and keep the resources they have. Goals, conditions (marital status, position), personal character (self-worth), and energy are the resources in question (time, money, knowledge). In other words, someone will always try to keep, obtain, and protect their valuable resources from a threat or disturbance. COR theory is used to explain the etiology or source of burnout and other psychological issues. When a person's resources are threatened, it affects his psychological and physical well-being (Anasori et al., 2019).

The COR theory is based on two fundamental principles that involve preventing the loss of resources. The first principle is known as the Primacy of Resource Loss, which states that the loss of resources is more dangerous than the profit from resources. Losing a salary will be more dangerous than receiving one. Resource Investment is the second principle. According to the COR principle, people tend to invest their resources to protect themselves from resources, recover from losses, and gain resources. People will invest resources to prevent future resource losses in the context of coping (Hobfoll et al., 2018).

This COR theory also explains the impact of stress on individuals, which is reflected when dealing with work-related conflict. The fear of losing a job motivates people to put in more effort to protect the threatened resource.

This theory explains why people act in conflict situations, not just under physical and emotional duress (Hobfoll et al., 2018).

Workplace Bullying

Bullying in the workplace is a major source of workplace stress (Kwan et al., 2020). Bullying in the workplace affects emotions, physical health, and employee well-being (Nwaneri et al., 2016). Workplace bullying is a pattern of persistent ill-treatment from coworkers. It can include verbal criticism or direct personal attacks aimed at intentionally embarrassing or dismissing others (M. Wu et al., 2020). In the face of a threatening environment, workplace bullying causes individuals to doubt their self-concept and self-worth, resulting in psychological and physical discomfort or damage. Workplace bullying, as an interpersonal conflict, represents a comprehensive behavior in the form of insults and insults. It is a type of negative interpersonal behavior that develops because of a formal or informal power imbalance (Attell et al., 2017).

Workplace bullying can be done overtly or physically (via direct bodily contact with the target, such as hitting and slapping), verbally (via the use of words, such as gossiping and shouting), or cybernetically (via letters, text messages, and social media). The most common forms of workplace bullying are task schedule manipulation, gossiping, poor interpersonal relations, and unfair job allocation and placement (Nwaneri et al., 2016).

Workplace bullying can take the form of relational aggression. Relational aggression is a psychological aspect of bullying that naturally leads to behaviors like gossiping, forming social communities, bullying, and social exclusion. Anger, weight loss/gain, low self-esteem, altered sleep patterns, alcoholism, and strained social and work relationships among team members are some of the reactions to bullying. These reactions have a negative impact on employee health and workplace service. Employee bullying creates a negative image, which leads to insufficient job representation on the company's management team (Nwaneri et al., 2016).

Anxiety

Anxiety is something that everyone experiences. Anxiety is considered normal because it is a normal part of life. Anxiety is a feeling of fear or loss of self-confidence that has no clear origin or form (Wiramihardja, 2015). Anxiety is a mental state of fear or nervousness about what might happen. It is a common feeling that many health professionals, including those with various health problems, experience daily (Yamamoto-Mitani et al., 2016).

Anxiety can manifest as a subjective feeling and behavior that appears anxious and restless or as a physiological response that originates in the brain and manifests as an increased heart rate and tense muscles. Muscle tension, mental agitation, fatigue, irritability, and sleep disturbances are all symptoms of generalized anxiety disorder. Anxiety is a threat with an unknown origin that is internal, ambiguous, and contradictory. Anxiety can be caused by various factors, including pathophysiological (organism dysfunction) and situational factors. Anxiety is classified into four levels: mild, moderate, severe, and panic. Each person experiences a different level of anxiety due to differences in integrity and level of the circumstance. The greater an individual's level of anxiety, the greater the threat in his life and the greater the impediment to his daily activities (Damaiyanti, 2019).

There are several types of anxiety disorders, including a) panic disorder; b) generalized anxiety disorders (GAD); c) obsessive-compulsive disorder; d) phobic disorders; and e) post-traumatic stress disorder (Putri, 2019). The anxiety discussed here is generalized anxiety disorder (GAD), characterized by persistent or worsening feelings of anxiety that eventually interfere with daily activities. This condition is classified as an anxiety disorder (M. Wu et al., 2020). GAD differs from everyday feelings or anxiety in that sufferers experience anxiety lasting at least six months (Putri, 2019).

Individuals suffering from generalized anxiety disorder cannot pinpoint specific causes for their anxiety. People with GAD are chronic worriers, possibly overly concerned with their life circumstances, such as finances, the welfare of their children, and social relationships. Some characteristics of GAD, for instance, feeling tense, anxious, or worried; being easily tired, having difficulty concentrating, or having your mind go blank; irritability and muscle tension; and sleep disturbances, such as difficulty falling asleep, staying asleep, or having restless and unsatisfactory sleep (Putri, 2019).

Anxiety Caused by Workplace Bullying

Anxiety is an example of the consequences of workplace bullying (M. Wu et al., 2020). Colleagues' social and professional relationships significantly impact the quality of services provided. Workplace bullying has a significant impact on employee performance and retention rates. Anger, anxiety, poor working relationships among colleagues/team members, frustration, and job dissatisfaction are all common outcomes of workplace bullying (Nwaneri et al., 2016).

According to the COR theory, workplace bullying endangers various valuable resources, resulting in unpleasant emotional states such as worry, fear, distress, and anxiety (Nauman, Malik et al., 2019). Employees who were bullied at work experienced higher levels of anxiety than employees who were not bullied. The effects of workplace bullying not only linger after the victim has moved, but they can also resurface later in the form of various anxiety disorders (Attell et al., 2017).

According to (Y. Wu et al., 2020), workplace bullying causes discomfort, strengthens individual feelings of anxiety, impairs motivation, and results in poor performance. Workplace bullying can cause discomfort during normal activities, exacerbating the feelings of worry, nervousness, or fear that accompany the development of a panic disorder or a severe anxiety disorder (Nauman, Raja, et al., 2019).

Emotional Exhaustion

Emotional exhaustion is chronic psychological and physical exhaustion caused by work overload or personal demands. Emotional exhaustion is not only a personal problem because of the resulting physical and mental well-being but also a problem for the organization because it has negative consequences (Anasori et al., 2019). Emotional exhaustion develops from excessive stress and is difficult to overcome, causing individuals to deteriorate and develop apathy, cynicism, and frustration. Individuals who are perfectionists or want perfection in every job can be sources of emotional exhaustion. Emotional exhaustion is fatigue caused by feelings characterized by feelings of helplessness and depression. Emotional exhaustion is always preceded by anxiety whenever you want to begin working; this bad habit makes individuals frustrated or angry at themselves, characterized by tiredness, lack of energy, and physical and emotional overload (Desrumaux et al., 2018).

All work is a job with emotional demands and involvement. High job demands frequently result in pressures and challenges that cause emotional tension and stress. When workplace stress is unavoidable, it can have several physiological and behavioral consequences. Burnout is defined as the result of demanding and stressful working conditions (Yulianti, 2020), so emotional exhaustion is at the heart of burnout syndrome and occurs when there is an imbalance between one's work-life expectations and the reality of daily work (Desrumaux et al., 2018). The first dimension of burnout syndrome is emotional exhaustion, which occurs when employees are emotionally exhausted because they do not want to provide psychological services fully. Employees experience emotional exhaustion and a lack of enthusiasm in carrying out tasks (Wirati et al., 2020).

The Effect of Workplace Bullying on Emotional Exhaustion

According to the COR theory, workplace bullying is a mechanism that depletes employee resources and influences employees' feelings of emotional exhaustion (Anasori et al., 2019). Emotional exhaustion is a possible negative outcome of workplace bullying (Desrumaux et al., 2018). Workplace bullying, such as employee hostility, is likely to disrupt a person's emotional balance because it affects mental and physical health and leads to emotional exhaustion (Desrumaux et al., 2018).

Bullying behavior reflects the social climate at work. Bullying and workplace bullying have been linked to various mental and physical health issues. Psychological harassment or bullying at work entails social isolation from members of the workplace community, threatening, gossiping behind one's back, or other types of pressure that, if repeated, can lead to emotional exhaustion (Anasori et al., 2019).

This study, like previous research, contends that workplace bullying predicts emotional exhaustion. The research hypothesis is as follows, and the research model shown in Figure 1.

H₁ = *Bullying in the workplace has a significant positive effect on the development of anxiety in employees subjected to it.*

H₂ = *Workplace bullying has a significant positive effect on the development of emotional exhaustion in employees subjected to it.*

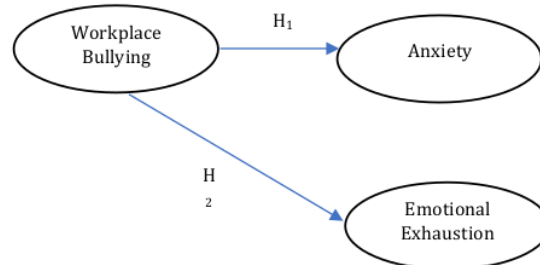


Figure 1. Research Model

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a survey research design and is classified as a quantitative field study (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000; Neuman, 2014). Survey research seeks to confirm a previously conceptualized relationship or hypothesis, namely the impact of workplace bullying on anxiety and emotional exhaustion (Neuman, 2014). The survey method determines a sample of a number of respondents who receive the same question, measures a number of variables with questions, and tests several hypotheses about past behavior, experiences, or characteristics at the same time (Neuman, 2014). The samples were drawn from the population of employees guarding outlets (lower level) from Smooly Juice companies (33 employees) and OTI Fried Chicken (115 employees) in Semarang. As a result, the total population in this study was 148 employees. The Slovin method was used to determine the number of samples used in this study. The Slovin formula is entered with a value of $d = 10\%$ for the 148 population (Sugiyono, 2018).

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N \cdot d^2}$$

$$n = \frac{148}{1 + 148 \cdot 0,1^2}$$

$$n = \frac{148}{2,48}$$

$$= 59,67 \approx 60 \text{ sample.}$$

Then, 60 research samples were obtained. To avoid dropping out or missing people, the number of samples is increased by 10%, bringing the total sample to 66 people.

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this study, the data was analyzed using the Partial Least Squares (PLS) method and SmartPLS version 3 software. There were 66 questionnaires distributed in total. However, due to two flawed questionnaires (which contained items that the respondents did not answer), the total number of respondents who could be used in this study was 64.

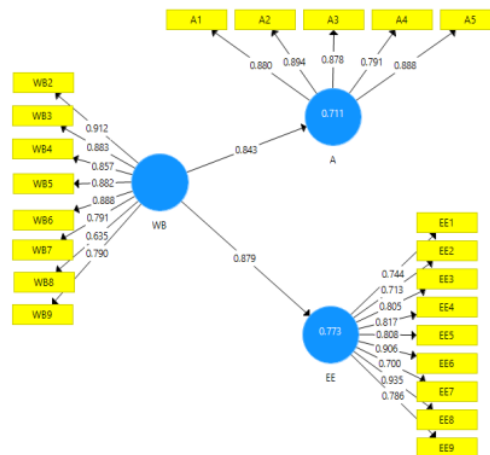


Figure 2. Outer Model Final (PLS Algorithm)

Based on the results of the initial outer model test, it is known that one indicator, WB1, has a loading value less than 0.6. As a result, the outer model is retested. According to the modified results, each indicator has a loading value greater than 0.60.

Reliability and Validity Test

Table 1. Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha and Composite Reliability Values Research Variable

Variabel	Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha	Composite Reability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Anxiety	0,917	0,938	0.752
Emotional Exhaustion	0,931	0,943	0.648
Workplace Bullying	0,936	0,948	0.696

Source: processed data, 2022

The table shows that the Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha values for all variables are greater than 0.6 or even close to 1, and the Composite Reliability (CR) value is greater than 0.7. This means that all variables in this study are reliable. The AVE value in all of the research variables then exceeds the existing convergent validity parameter of 0.50.

Table 2. Path Coefficients Testing Hypothesis

Path Coefficients	Direct Effect		t-Statistics	p-Value
	Original Sample (O)	Std. Deviation (STDEV)		
Workplace Bullying (X) → Anxiety (Y1)	0,843	0,039	21,580	0,000
Workplace Bullying (X) → Emotional Exhaustion (Y2)	0,879	0,028	31,077	0,000

Source: processed data, 2022

Hypothesis Test Results

According to the first hypothesis, workplace bullying reduces anxiety. The findings revealed that workplace bullying had a positive and significant effect on anxiety, with a path coefficient value of 0.843 (positive) and a p-value of 0.000 0.05 (significant). Employee anxiety rises in direct proportion to the level of workplace bullying experienced. As a result, H1 is accepted.

According to the second hypothesis, workplace bullying has a positive effect on emotional exhaustion. The findings revealed that workplace bullying had a positive and significant effect on emotional exhaustion, with a path coefficient value of 0.879 (positive) and a p-value of 0.000 0.05 (significant). Employees who have experienced workplace bullying are more likely to experience emotional exhaustion. As a result, H2 is accepted.

Discussion

When associated with the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, the effect of workplace bullying on anxiety occurs when employees believe workplace bullying threatens all types of valuable resources, resulting in an unpleasant emotional state marked by worry, fear, distress, and anxiety. Employees who were bullied at work reported higher levels of anxiety than employees who were not bullied. Anxiety is a term used to describe the effects of workplace bullying (Nwaneri et al., 2016; M. Wu et al., 2020). Bullying in the workplace exacerbates people's anxiety (M. Wu et al., 2020). According to Nauman, Malik, et al., (2019), workplace bullying can cause discomfort during normal activities, heightening feelings of worry, nervousness, or fear associated with the development of panic disorder or severe anxiety disorder. It is consistent with the findings of Nauman, Malik, et al. (2019), who discovered that workplace bullying significantly impacts anxiety. Workplace bullying is linked to psychological distress, putting all kinds of valuable resources, including psychological resources like anxiety, at risk. Anxiety is felt when high job demands appear out of control. Workplace bullying raises job demands and threatens valuable resources, contributing significantly to work-related anxiety.

M. Wu et al. (2020) found that workplace bullying has a significant effect on anxiety in their study. Workplace bullying exacerbates individuals' anxiety. Bullying/bullying/intimidation in the workplace significantly negatively impacts the victim's work efficiency and quality. Anxiety is the emergence of complex emotional responses such as internal anxiety and physical discomfort. Anxiety can impair individual task performance and may explain the negative consequences of workplace bullying.

Emotional exhaustion is a possible negative outcome of workplace bullying (Desrumaux et al., 2018). Workplace bullying, such as employee hostility, is likely to disrupt a person's emotional balance because it impacts mental and physical health and leads to emotional exhaustion (Desrumaux et al., 2018). According to the findings, workplace bullying significantly impacts emotional exhaustion. Employees who have experienced workplace bullying are more likely to experience emotional exhaustion.

When workplace bullying is associated with the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, employees who feel threatened by the valuable resources they have become uncomfortable. If this continues, it will result in emotional exhaustion. Emotionally exhausted employees have higher anxiety levels, especially when workplace bullying occurs. Employees who are bullied at work experience emotion, helplessness, depression, alienation, job dissatisfaction, decreased intellectual function, loss of spontaneity and creativity, loss of enthusiasm for life, and low self-esteem and self-confidence.

According to the findings of Anasori et al. (2019), workplace bullying has a significant impact on emotional exhaustion. Bullying behavior reflects the social climate at work. Bullying and workplace bullying have been linked to various mental and physical health issues. Psychological harassment or bullying in the workplace is defined as

social isolation from members of the work community, threatening, talking behind someone's back, or other types of pressure repeated repeatedly, resulting in emotional exhaustion.

According to Desrumaux et al. (2018), workplace bullying significantly increases the occurrence of emotional exhaustion. Bullying at work is a draining experience that saps physical and mental resources. It eventually leads to severe exhaustion of self-control resources and self-control failure. Bullying can cause burnout because of the tension created by suppressing the action. The second reason bullying can cause burnout is that stressful situations reduce satisfaction, pride, and power, cause a loss of autonomy, and increase the frustration of psychological needs that are the source of energy, vitality, and morale.

Dealing with workplace bullying could be done in three methods. The first method is increasing worker resilience. According to Meseguer-De-Pedro et al. (2019), workplace bullying will worsen employee health, and dealing with it can be accomplished by increasing worker resilience. However, Meseguer-De-Pedro et al. (2019) mentioned the intended workers' technical extent and stages of growing resilience. According to Anyan & Hjemdal (2016), resilience moderates the impact of anxiety symptoms. According to research (Anasori et al., 2019), resilience moderates the effect of workplace bullying on emotional exhaustion. Meseguer-De-Pedro et al. (2019) discovered a link between resilience mediation and the effect of workplace bullying on emotional exhaustion. According to research by Bonanno et al. (2007), age, level of trauma, and social support are all factors that influence resilience. Resilience is the ability of an individual to use their inherent capacity while also taking advantage of available external support. Positive outcome response is another term for resilience (MacLeod et al., 2016).

The second method is group counseling (Fitria et al., 2020). Cognitive Behavior Therapy Counseling is one effective approach that can be used in group counseling (CBT). CBT is a therapeutic approach that focuses on thought processes and addresses emotional, behavioral, and psychological states. CBT is based on the idea that certain people can change their cognition and that changing one's thinking impacts one's emotional well-being (Wilding & Milne, 2013). CBT is a counseling approach that aims to solve current counseling issues by restructuring cognitive and deviant behavior (Beck et al., 2015). CBT is a method that focuses on thought processes related to emotional, behavioral, and psychological states. CBT is based on the notion that an individual can change cognitively to alter the impact of thinking on an individual's cognitive well-being (Wilding & Milne, 2013).

The third method is to conduct extensive interpersonal communication between policyholders and company employees (Putrianti & Budiarto, 2018). Interpersonal communication's effective contribution to reducing workplace bullying leads to a significant increase in job satisfaction among BPDB (Regional Disaster Management Agency) Yogyakarta City employees.

CONCLUSION

Based on previous research studies on the negative effects of workplace bullying on employees' mental health (anxiety and emotional exhaustion), and of course, it will have a further impact on organizational health and performance, immediate concrete action to mitigate this is required. Several options have been presented for how to overcome and reduce it. However, more in-depth empirical research is required to identify the causes and how to overcome and reduce workplace bullying in organizational life. It includes delving deeper into the role of anxiety in influencing workplace bullying and emotional exhaustion.

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