

# TWO IN TEN FEEL EXCLUDED FROM SOCIAL WORK-RELATED PROCESSES BY WORKPLACE BULLYING

Anna M. Dåderman, Ann-Catrin Ohlsson,  
Carina Ragnestål-Impola

## Abstract

The aim was to investigate (1) the prevalence of workplace bullying experienced by men and women in Swedish workplaces with a high level of stress dominated by one sex, (2) the prevalence of unjust treatment in these workplaces, (3) the relationship between workplace bullying and organizational climate, (4) the variability in bullying in these workplaces, and (5) the variability in organizational climate. These issues were examined using a self-assessment questionnaire in two types of workplace in Sweden: one male-dominated (juvenile detention care) and the other female-dominated (elderly care). About 20% of the participants experienced workplace bullying. There was a positive correlation between bullying and negative communication (strong effect size). There were no differences regarding the type of workplace. The internal consistency of the instrument was high, and we recommend its use in studies of workplace bullying.

*Keywords:* workplace bullying, organizational environment, sex differences

Bullying at the workplace is a growing global problem, leading to exclusion from social work-related processes, and a lowering of well-being, job satisfaction and self-esteem. Workplace bullying is correlated with serious health-related and stress-related problems, such as anxiety, depression, irritability, self-hate, sleep problems, concentration difficulties, chronic fatigue, and anger (Einarsen & Mikkelsen, 2003, Einarsen & Raknes, 1997; Einarsen, Raknes, & Mattheisen, 1994; Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2001; Zapf, Knorz, & Kulla, 1996). Employing a longitudinal design, Einarsen and Nielsen (2015) showed that workplace bullying poses a serious long-term threat to the health and well-being, at least for men. Bullying behavior occurs more frequently in work situations of high workload and high stress, although only sparse research has satisfactorily covered the phenomenon in workplaces characterized by a high level of stress. Bullying may be expressed differently in a workplace that is traditionally dominated by female employees than in one traditionally dominated by male employees. In addition, bullying occurs more frequently in organizations with an unfavorable organizational climate. It is, therefore, important to study bullying and the organizational climate at an organization simultaneously.

We have examined workplace bullying in two types of organizations in Sweden (one dominated by female employees, the other by male employees), and we describe here the relationships between workplace bullying and organizational climate. Knowledge about these relationships may enhance the organizational climate, and enable us to develop sustainable strategies for the management of personal resources, in order to improve the quality of interpersonal relationships. A positive organizational climate is one factor that determines organizational success and good employee health.

## **Background**

Workplace bullying is a relatively new psychological construct that has become increasingly important for managers and researchers in work and organizational psychology, during the past 25 years. Heinz Leymann, a German-born physician and psychiatrist working in Sweden, is one of the pioneers in the field of workplace bullying (1986, 1990, 1992a, 1992b, 1992c, 1996), and began studying adult bullying in the early 1980s. He adopted the term “mobbing” from ethologist descriptions of animal behavior in which a group of smaller animals attacked a single larger animal. Leymann worked with children who were bullied at school, and he made people aware of similar experiences of his adult patients. Leymann inspired other Scandinavian researchers, who initiated studies of workplace aggression, bullying, and mobbing in Finland (Björkqvist, Österman, & Hjelt-Bäck, 1994) and Norway (Einarsen et al., 1994). The term “bullying” has been brought to public attention in Britain by Andrea Adams, a freelance journalist (Adams & Crawford, 1992). Her work inspired others in the U.K (e.g., Hoel & Cooper, 2000; Rayner, 1997). Scandinavia and the U.K. continue to lead the research on bullying and mobbing. Scholars and professionals in Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, the European Union, and Japan have also worked extensively in bullying research (Zapf, Einarsen, Hoel, & Vartia, 2003), and the phenomenon has been studied in the U.S. (Lutgen-Sandvik, Tracy, & Alberts, 2007).

The concepts of “harassment” and “bullying” are sometimes used synonymously, and several definitions of workplace bullying have been proposed. “Harassment” has been defined by the Swedish National Board of Occupational Safety and Health (1993) as “recurrent negative actions directed at particular employees in a reprehensible manner that can lead to their exclusion from social interaction at the workplace” (p. 3). Leymann (1990, 1996) defined “mobbing” as “hostile and unethical behavior directed at individuals who are unable to defend themselves”. “Bullying” is, according to Adams (1997), “persistent, demeaning, and downgrading treatment of human beings through vicious words and cruel acts, which gradu-

ally undermines confidence and self-esteem”. Salin (2003) defined bullying as “*repeated and persistent negative actions towards one or more individual(s), which involves a perceived power imbalance and creates a hostile work environment.* Bullying is thus a form of interpersonal aggression or hostile, anti-social behavior in the workplace” (p. 1214; emphasis in original). Zapf and Gross (2001) defined workplace bullying as “consistent exposure to persistent, oppressive, offensive, abusive, intimidating, malicious, or insulting behavior by a manager/supervisor or co-worker”. Einarsen and Mikkelsen (2003, p. 35) proposed the following definition:

Bullying at work means harassing, offending, socially excluding someone or negatively affecting someone’s work tasks. In order for the label bullying (or mobbing) to be applied to a particular activity, interaction or process, the bullying behavior has to occur repeatedly and regularly (e.g. weekly) and over a period of time (e.g. about six months). Bullying is an escalating process, in the course of which the person confronted ends up in an inferior position and becomes the target of systematic negative social acts. A conflict cannot be called bullying if the incident is an isolated event or if two parties of approximately equal ‘strength’ are in conflict.

The definitions of bullying have several core components in common: exposure to negative acts, the frequency (regularity) and duration, the process of interpersonal development (escalation), the power imbalance (non-control situation for the victim), and the persistent character of bullying.

Workplace bullying can be measured by two main methods (Einarsen, 2000; Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2007; Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2001; Nielsen, Notelaers, & Einarsen, 2011): (1) a “subjective” or “self-labeling” method asks participants whether they perceive themselves as victims of workplace bullying, based on a given definition of bullying; and (2) an “operational” method or criterion-based method (also known as “the behavioral experience method”), in which various questionnaires are used. The participants are given a list of negative unwanted acts at the workplace, and they are asked to tick the ones to which they have been subjected during a certain specified period (e.g. six months). If the frequency of reported negative acts is above a certain threshold, it can be concluded that bullying has taken place.

The prevalence of bullying that is reported may be subject to both under-reporting and over-reporting. The prevalence (i.e., the percentage of the workforce that experiences bullying) that has been determined ranges from 3% to 51%, where the magnitude of the range is due to differences in study design, definition of bullying, choice of measurement instrument, and selection of study sample. Nielsen, Matthiesen, and Einarsen (2010) carried out a meta-analysis of data from about

140,000 people from 86 independent samples, and estimated the prevalence of workplace bullying to be 14.6%. The figure obtained from the self-labeled /subjective method was 11.3%, while that obtained from the behavioral measure/objective method was 18.1%. Under-reporting is likely when bullying is measured by the subjective method (Einarsen, 2000), since people may decline to self-identify with a victim role, which associates personal attributes with weakness and passivity (Mikkelsen, & Einarsen, 2001). It is also possible that people are unaware of the fact that they are being bullied. In contrast, over-reporting is likely when the operational method is used, because the concept of workplace bullying is not explicitly defined, and some negative unwanted behaviors at work may not be bullying, but rather criminal acts. Examples of such serious negative behaviors are sexual harassment, physical abuse, and the threat of physical abuse.

Some studies have compared male-dominated and female-dominated workplaces with respect to workplace bullying (Leymann, 1992c). The sex-distribution of the people at each type of workplace who experience bullying is similar. Further, bullying behavior is similar in many ways in male-dominated and female-dominated workplaces. Both sexes feel excluded in a similar way when co-workers are forbidden to speak to them, and give only glances or gestures with negative meaning. There are, however, some differences. Women experience more often that people talk behind their back, that their superiors limit the opportunities for development, that colleagues spread negative comments and false rumors, and that their private lives are ridiculed or attacked. Men, in contrast, experience more often verbal intimidation, their professional skills being called into question, and vociferous exchanges. Scandinavian studies (Einarsen & Raknes, 1997; Leymann & Tallgren, 1989) have shown that employees working in male-dominated manufacturing companies run a higher risk of exposure to bullying. Einarsen and Skogstad (1996) found a high (17%) prevalence of bullying among male workers in a Norwegian shipyard.

Organizations are facing changes characterized by increased competitiveness due to globalization and the financial crisis, and workplace bullying should therefore be studied in the context of the organizational climate. The organizational climate of an organization or company is created by the shared perceptions of the organizational members, and the meaning attached to policies, practices and procedures that they experience, as well as the kinds of behavior that are expected, rewarded and supported (Ostroff, Kinicki, & Tamkins, 2003; Schneider, White, & Paul, 1998). Organizational climate reflects the tangible, culture-embedding mechanisms of organizations, through which they attempt to direct the energies of organizational members (Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983; Schneider, Ehrhart, & Macey, 2013). Einarsen et al. (1994) found a positive correlation between workplace bullying and organizational environments in which role conflict and dissatisfaction

with psychosocial organizational climate were elevated. Vartia (1996) found a positive correlation between workplace bullying and organizational climates characterized by poor cooperative relationships, and a high degree of envy and internal competition. Giorgi (2009) found that five of ten measured dimensions of organizational climate (team, job description, leadership, dynamism, and innovation) significantly predicted workplace bullying. Kearns, McCarthy, and Sheehan (1997) postulated that workplace bullying arises during the process of restructuring at an organization. Competitiveness as a trait produces further traits, such as ruthlessness in organizational workplaces (Duffy, 2009), which, in turn, become increasingly absorbed into the values of an organization, as well as into individual values. Since the early 1990s, many studies have been performed in many countries, but research in Sweden into this phenomenon has been remarkably stagnant since 2000. It is, therefore, interesting to explore whether the amount of workplace bullying has increased in recent years, possibly due to globalization and other changes in organizations.

At least 27 questionnaires are available to assess workplace bullying (see Nielsen et al. 2011, Table 6.2). Most of them have a high Cronbach's alpha  $> .80$ , indicating a high homogeneity.

Knowledge about workplace bullying in Sweden is very limited. A database search using PSYCInfo, PubMed, Educational Resources Information Centre, Proquest Dissertations and Theses, Scopus, and Google Scholar entering a combination of the following keywords: harassment AND (bullying OR mobbing) AND (Swedish OR Sweden) AND (organization OR workplace) returned no results that could shed light on the prevalence of workplace bullying in Sweden. The only study that we found described sexual harassment of women officers and cadets in the Swedish military (Estrada & Berggren, 2009). We have also found a qualitative study performed in Sweden by Strandmark and Hallkvist (2007).

This low interest in studying the phenomenon in Sweden is surprising, because research on school bullying has a long tradition in Sweden (Olweus, 1991). It is important to know the prevalence of bullying at different workplaces in order to design and implement strategies to deal with it.

### *The Current Study*

It is necessary to know about the occurrence of bullying at different workplaces and cultures, and to study the effects of organizational climate, in order to work actively for employee well-being, job satisfaction, career development, intentions to stay in the job, and job tenure. Such knowledge is important also to improve the health of the employees, as the organizational climate, which includes interpersonal relationships and organizational dysfunction. The association between bullying and its consequences has been relatively well-investigated, but little is known about the rela-

tionships between bullying and organizational climate in workplaces that are dominated by one sex. The main aim of the present study, therefore, was to investigate the prevalence of workplace bullying and the relationship between workplace bullying and organizational climate in organizations in Sweden where the workforce is dominated by one sex. The following research questions were formulated:

1. What is the prevalence of workplace bullying of men and women at Swedish workplaces with a high level of stress and one dominant sex in the workplace?
2. What is the prevalence of unjust treatment at these workplaces? Does it differ between men and women?
3. What is the relationship between workplace bullying and organizational climate?
4. To what extent does the level of bullying differ between workplaces with a high level of stress that are dominated by one sex?
5. To what extent does the organizational climate differ between these workplaces?

## Methods

### *Settings*

We chose two divisions of juvenile detention care and two divisions of elderly care, since bullying is a widespread problem in social work (Macintosh, Wuest, Gray, & Cronkhite, 2010).

Juvenile care is a typically male workplace. State-run treatment departments (the Swedish National Board of Institutional Care, or “SIS”), and privately run and council-owned treatment departments provide care in Sweden for adolescents with neuropsychiatric and psychosocial problems. A typical workplace is a secure treatment unit at which disruptive young people with substance-abuse problems, criminal behavior, or psychosocial problems are located. Young people can be placed in such a unit by coercion, according to the Care of Young Persons (Special Provisions) Act, or on a voluntary basis, according to the Social Services Act (SoL). Such workplaces are dominated by male employees. We chose two such workplaces; both were secure treatment facilities at which young boys are placed according to the Care of Young Persons Act.

In contrast, care of the elderly is a typically female occupation. It is most often carried out by private operators, although some County Councils are principals. Healthcare consumers in elderly care have a greater need for care. We chose one such workplace: a service home at which the elderly are offered a place when they are no longer able to fend for themselves due to high age, poor health or disease.

The second workplace within elderly care was a short-term accommodation unit, in which the elderly live for a short period following, for example, a hospital stay.

### *Participants*

Participants consisted of 62 employees aged between 19 and 65 years ( $M = 43.8$ ,  $SD = 10.5$ ). One group was from the two male-dominated workplaces (juvenile care,  $N = 28$ ) aged between 25 and 59 years. In this group, five participants were women. Another group was from the two female-dominated workplaces (elderly care,  $N = 34$ ) aged between 19 and 65 years. In this group, two participants were men. Eight persons from the elderly care units declined to participate in the study.

### *Instruments*

The instruments presented by Nielsen et al. (2011) are in English, and none of them was available in Swedish at the time (2013) of the data collection for the study presented here. We used an instrument in Swedish constructed by Westerlund (2011) at Novia University of Applied Science in Vasa (Vasa is in the Swedish-speaking part of the Finnish coastline), in order to examine both workplace bullying and organizational climate. Two initial questions measured experience of workplace bullying and two further questions measured unjust treatment at work (see below). Further, two scales were constructed, one that determined workplace bullying, and the other working climate (see the Appendix, where the English version of the instrument may be found). Westerlund (personal communication, 12 December 2013) gave us her permission to use and present the scales. The Swedish version may be found in Ohlsson and Ragnestål-Impola (2013, Appendix 2).

*Workplace bullying.* Two methods of estimating the prevalence of workplace bullying were applied (Westerlund, 2011). The first method was the “self-labeling” (often known as the “subjective method”), which was obtained by two questions dealing with the respondent’s experience of *workplace bullying*. The response format here was “Yes” or “No” (Questions 8 and 9). The definition of bullying was provided (see the Appendix). Two further questions dealt with the experience of *unjust treatment* (Questions 10 and 11). The answers were coded on an ordinal scale with response options 0 (*Never*), 1 (*Rarely*), and 2 (*Sometimes/often*). (Actually, it was five response options here, but it was zero response rate to “Very often”, and very few respondents answered “Often”, thus, this response was coded together with “Sometimes”). No definition of such unjust treatment was presented.

The second method was the “behavioral experience” method (often known as the “operational method”) using the Bullying Scale and the Organizational Climate Scale. The Bullying Scale has 16 items (Questions 27-42) (including, for example, such items as “Have you at your work been subjected to colleagues spreading gossip and rumors about you”). Using a five-point Likert-type scale from 0 (*Never*) to

4 (*Very often*), respondents stated how often they had been subjected to the 16 negative and unwanted work-related acts described by the questionnaire, based on their experience in their current workplace. The value of Cronbach's alpha of this scale was .97. Only mean scale scores were analyzed (the frequency of unwanted negative acts was not considered).

*The Organizational Climate Scale.* The Organizational Climate Scale comprises general questions that, according to the content of the items, may be assumed to measure indirectly a particular kind of managerial bullying. This is the case, since the leader is responsible for the organizational climate. The scale deals with general statements of "conduct/misconduct" and "inclusion/exclusion". One of the seven statements for the "participation/co-determination" factor is, for example, "At my work, I participate in decision-making", while a statement for the "negative communication" factor is: "In the workplace there is someone who spoils the atmosphere". Using a four-point Likert-type scale to quantify level of agreement from 0 (*Not at all*) to 3 (*A great deal*), respondents rate the importance of 15 work-related phenomena regarding organizational climate.

We have developed the Organizational Climate Scale further by estimating its dimensionality. We used exploratory factor analysis, specifically with principal axis factor factoring with varimax rotation, to estimate this. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure produced a strong value of .81 for the 15 items, indicating a high-to-partial correlation ratio that made the items well-suited to factor analysis. We identified: (a) Factor 1, which we named "Participation/Co-Determination", which comprised seven items (Questions 12, 13, 16, 19, 21, 23, and 26), Cronbach's alpha = .78; and (b) Factor 2, which we named "Negative Communication", which comprised also seven items (Questions 14, 15, 17, 20, 22, 24, and 25), Cronbach's alpha = .87. We deleted one item (Question 7, "Nobody is discriminated") due to its poor psychometric properties. The two factors explained 53% of the total variance.

*Background.* The background information that we collected was sex, age, type of work, working hours, employment type, and the number of people in the work group. Participants were also asked to describe their own experiences with bullying in their workplaces (Question 43). Participants were asked to describe how the bullying behavior was expressed, and whether any actions were taken in order to stop it. Three participants chose to answer this question. The descriptions they gave revealed that they had been subjected to being ostracized, violated, and discriminated against. No action had been taken in any case.

## Results

### *Workplace Bullying*

A total of 19.4% of the sample ( $n = 12$ ) reported being a victim of bullying at the current workplace. Twenty-five per cent of men ( $n = 6$ ) and 15.8% ( $n = 6$ ) of women had been exposed to workplace bullying. The sex difference in these frequencies was not significant ( $\chi^2 = 0.80$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .371$ ).

Further, 35.5% of the sample ( $n = 22$ ) reported witnessing bullying at the current workplace. More than half of men (54.2%  $n = 13$ ) and 23.7% ( $n = 9$ ) of women reported witnessing workplace bullying. The relationship between having witnessed bullying and sex was significant ( $\chi^2 = 5.97$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .015$ ).

There was no significant sex difference in the mean score on the Bullying Scale ( $t = 1.20$ ,  $df = 60$ ,  $p = .234$ , two-tailed). Men reported a higher mean score ( $M = 14.0$ ,  $SD = 11.4$ ) than women ( $M = 10.2$ ,  $SD = 12.6$ ).

### *Unjust Treatment*

Twenty-nine per cent of the sample ( $n = 18$ ) had been a victim of unjust treatment at work. Ten men (41.7%) and 8 women (21.1%) reported that they sometimes or often had been a victim of unjust treatment. The relationship between being a victim of unjust treatment and sex was not significant ( $\chi^2 = 4.07$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p = .131$ ).

Further, 40.3% of the sample ( $n = 25$ ) reported witnessing unjust treatment at the current workplace. More than half of men (66.7%,  $n = 16$ ) and 23.7% of women ( $n = 9$ ) reported having witnessed unjust treatment. There was a significant relationship between witnessing unjust treatment and sex ( $\chi^2 = 11.47$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p = .003$ ).

### *Correlations between Bullying and Organizational Climate*

Table 1 shows the correlations between bullying and the two dimensions of organizational climate that we defined, participation/co-determination and negative communication. There was a positive correlation between bullying and a climate of negative communication. The effect size was large. In addition, there was a negative correlation between a climate of participation/co-determination and both negative communication and bullying. The effect sizes were medium.

Table 1  
*Correlations between the work-related variables studied*

Variable	<i>M (SD)</i>	Negative communication	Participation/ Co-determination
Negative communication	11.6 (4.9)		
Participation/ Co-determination	13.2 (3.5)	-.40**	
Bullying	11.6 (12.2)	.65**	– .43**

*Note.* Pearson’s correlation coefficient was applied. \*\* $p < .01$

#### *Level of Bullying in Workplaces Dominated by One Sex*

Mean scores on the Bullying Scale were higher in the male-dominated workplaces ( $M = 13.96$ ,  $SD = 2.33$ ) than in the female-dominated ones ( $M = 10.16$ ,  $SD = 2.04$ ). An independent  $t$ -test, however, showed that the difference in the bullying score between male-dominated and female-dominated workplaces was not statistically significant ( $t = 1.20$ ,  $p = .230$ ).

#### *Organizational Climate in Workplaces Dominated by One Sex*

The participants at female-dominated workplaces experienced a greater sense of participation/co-determination than those at male-dominated workplaces. There was, however, no statistically significant mean scale score difference in the dimension of organizational climate “Participation/co-determination” between male-dominated ( $M = 12.54$ ,  $SD = 0.80$ ) and female-dominated ( $M = 13.63$ ,  $SD = 0.52$ ) workplaces ( $t = 1.19$ ,  $p = .240$ ).

Further, there was no statistically significant mean scale score difference in the dimension of organizational climate “Negative communication” between male-dominated ( $M = 8.13$ ,  $SD = 0.97$ ) and female-dominated ( $M = 10.66$ ,  $SD = 0.77$ ) workplaces ( $t = 1.96$ ,  $p = .550$ ).

## **Discussion**

The results presented here show that: (1) Two in ten employees at Swedish workplaces with a high level of stress and at which one sex dominates feel bullied. The figure is higher in men than in women but the difference is not significant. In contrast, the percentage of men who witness workplace bullying is significantly higher

than the percentage of women (most men have witnessed bullying). (2) The prevalence of unjust treatment at work is high; three in ten participants have experienced it. Twice as many men than women experience unjust treatment. (3) The relationships between workplace bullying and the two dimensions of organizational climate that we defined are significant and in an opposite direction: negative communication is positively related, while participation/co-determination is negatively related, to workplace bullying. (4) The level of bullying in male-dominated workplaces is higher than in female-dominated workplaces, but the difference is not significant. (5) Organizational climate does not differ significantly between these two types of workplace, although employees at female-dominated workplaces experience a greater sense of participation/co-determination and greater negative communication than employees at male-dominated workplaces.

Research into workplace bullying has been stagnant in Sweden during the past 15 years, even though the workplace has become increasingly competitive with signs of decreasing empathy for others (Twenge, Campbell, & Freeman, 2012), and has undergone rapid change during this period. Our results are an innovative contribution to such research. Sweden is one of the highest ranked countries in the world with respect to both cultural individualism and social mobility (Hofstede, 2001; Jäntti et al., 2006). Individualism may promote workplace bullying. The figures for workplace bullying presented in this study are higher than those recently reported, which have been determined from replies to a simple question. Salin (2015), for example, reported the prevalence of bullying in Finland as follows: 4.4% are currently experiencing bullying, 12.6% have previously been subjected to it at the current workplace, and 8.1% have previously been subjected to it at another workplace. In our study, 25% of men and 15.8% of women have experienced workplace bullying at the current workplace, a far higher figures than that reported by Salin.

We have investigated also how often workplace bullying is witnessed, which is innovative. Men witness bullying significantly more frequently than women, and most men had witnessed it. This finding may be explained by the fact that it is difficult for people to admit that they are being bullied. It is easier to state that one has witnessed bullying than it to admit that the bullying in question was directed at oneself. It is possible that men are more willing to report having witnessed bullying than they are to admit that they have been bullied. Agervold (2007) postulated that the assessment of witnesses is the closest one may come to an objective observation of bullying. School-based research on bullying has used the peer nomination method to identify both victims and bullies (Solberg & Olweus, 2003). Higher figures for bullying in men may be related to a general tendency among males to be more aggressive than females (Einarsen, 2000). It may be related also to a tendency of males to use competitive, unyielding and aggressive strategies in conflict man-

agement (Miller, 1991). The U.S. Workplace Bullying Institute reported that males are more often found in the role of the bully (62%), while females are more often found among those targeted (58%) (Farmer, 2011).

As an additional check, we investigated the prevalence of being unjustly treated and the prevalence of witnessing unjust treatment at work. One third of employees had felt unjustly treated by their co-workers at their current workplace. Although a definition of “unjust treatment” was not presented, participants interpreted it as a broader concept than bullying. It is possible that employees did not associate it with similar negative perceptions as bullying. An interesting finding was that twice as many men than women had witnessed unjust treatment at the current workplace. It should be kept in mind that the workplaces of all but two of the men were secure correctional institutions for male juvenile delinquents. Many of the residents in such institutions have a pattern of deviant personality traits (Dåderman, 1999; Dåderman, Wirsén Meurling, & Hallman, 2001), a high degree of psychopathy (Dåderman & Kristiansson, 2003; 2004), or alcohol and severe drug abuse (Dåderman & Lidberg, 1999). This workplace environment is very stressful. It is possible that the high prevalence of witnessing unjust treatment by men is related to this severely stressful work environment. The majority of women in our study worked in elderly care. The work environment of these women is, of course, also stressful, but in a different way, and the stress may be not so visible, because many of these women work alone or in small groups. It is also possible that it is easier to notice (and remember) when somebody suffers unjust treatment in a male-dominated environment than it is in a female-dominated environment. Workplaces such as juvenile institutions are much louder environments than workplaces in elderly care, because the former house male delinquents who make more noise than older people. Studies that compared male-dominated and female-dominated workplaces with respect to workplace bullying (Leymann, 1992c) have shown that men experience more verbal intimidation than women, their professional skills are brought more often into question, and vociferous exchanges occur more frequently.

The results presented here cannot be explained in terms of objective differences in the experience of negative acts reflected in the Bullying Scale, nor in general statements of “conduct/misconduct” and “inclusion/exclusion” reflected in the Climate Scale, because the mean score differences for these variables between male-dominated and female-dominated workplaces were not significantly different. We have not used an established instrument to measure the perception of being exposed to a range of specific bullying behaviors, and thus our results on the Climate Scale cannot be compared with previous results. Factor analysis allowed us to determine that the scale comprises two separate factors. This was necessary, since the results from the total scale were unreliable, which indicated that several (covert) dimensions were involved. Our consequent analyses were performed using these

two factors, and we did not analyze the items of the scale. Westerlund (2011) only analyzed individual items from the two scales.

Our correlational analysis showed that a negative communication climate was positively related to workplace bullying, while a participation/co-determination climate was negatively related. These correlations were significant, and indicate that the Bullying Scale is a valid instrument. Bullying may be positively related to a negative communication climate because a workplace with a positive communication climate should lead to less bullying. Similarly, bullying should decrease when employees are allowed to participate in decisions, which indicates collegiality. They are, in this case, informed about decisions and their opinion is respected. It is possible that these relationships are self-evident in the eyes of employees, but these relationships do not allow us to draw any causal conclusions. Giorgi (2009) found that team, job description, leadership, dynamism, and innovation significantly predicted workplace bullying. More research is required in order to understand the relationship between workplace bullying and organizational climate. Future research should also include investigation of social values in this context. Work with organizational values should lead to better cooperation between employees and deeper awareness of workplace bullying, and thus to a reduced experience of bullying. Continuous work on the managerial level with different aspects of organizational climate should include seeking for different ways in order to increase respect, tolerance, and empathetic approach to diversity.

Some methodological limitations should be discussed. The new instrument that we have used here has not yet been validated. The relationships between the variables were reasonably convincing, however, and the instrument had excellent internal consistency. More research that uses the instrument must be carried out in order to allow us to conclude that the conclusions drawn are valid. Future research in the Swedish context would benefit from using this instrument in combination with an internationally validated instrument, such as, the Negative Acts Questionnaire-Revised (Einarsen, Hoel, & Notelaers, 2009).

We conclude that the prevalence of workplace bullying in Swedish organizations characterized by a high level of stress is relatively high. The level of workplace bullying and the frequency of witnessing unjust treatment are similar in male-dominated and female-dominated workplaces.

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### **Author Notes**

Anna M. Dåderman, Ann-Catrin Ohlsson, and Carina Ragnestål-Impola, Department of Social and Behavioural Studies, Division of Psychology and Organizational Studies, University West, Trollhättan, Sweden.

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Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Anna M. Dåderman, Department of Social and Behavioural Studies, Division of Psychology and Organizational Studies, University West, SE-461 86 Trollhättan, Sweden. Email address: [anna.daderman@hv.se](mailto:anna.daderman@hv.se)

## Questionnaire about the working climate in juvenile detention care and elderly care

Please answer the following questions based on your experiences and your assessment of your workplace. Specify only one answer for each question.

### Background

1. Sex                      Female                      Male
2. Age \_\_\_\_\_
3. Field of work              Juvenile care              Elderly care
4. How long have you worked at your current workplace? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Working hours              Full-time                      Part-time
6. Employment type              Permanent                      Temporary  
    Substitute                      Other, please specify
7. Number of people in your workgroup \_\_\_\_\_

### Working climate

8. Have you been subjected to bullying\* by colleagues at your current workplace?  
 Yes                       No
9. Has any of your current colleagues been subjected to bullying\* at the workplace?  
 Yes                       No
10. Have you been subjected to unjust treatment by colleagues at your current workplace?  
 Never               Seldom               Occasionally  Often               Very often
11. Have you witnessed any of your current colleagues being subjected to unjust treatment at your workplace?  
 Never               Seldom               Occasionally  Often               Very often

#### \*Bullying:

- repeated negative activities that continue during a longer period, against one or several people
- may be expressed in many forms, from ostracisation, harassing looks and spreading rumours, to serious violence and physical abuse.

Answer Questions 12-26 on a scale from 0-3,  
 where 0 – not at all, 1 – not very much, 2 – a certain amount and 3 – a great deal.

At the workplace...

	0	1	2	3
12. there is a good atmosphere	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. all employees are respected	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. people gossip	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. there are people who cannot work in collaboration	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. the expertise of the employees is well managed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. there is someone who spoils the atmosphere	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18. nobody is discriminated against	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19. I participate in decision-making	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20. employees are defamed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21. information flows freely	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
22. negative comments about employees are made	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
23. the opinions of the personnel are considered	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
24. there is someone who complains without a reason	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
25. the working methods of the personnel are questioned	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
26. everyone takes the responsibility of creating a workplace that is free from discrimination	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Answer Questions 27-42 on a scale from 0-4,  
 where 0 – never, 1 – seldom, 2 – occasionally, 3 – often, 4 – very often.

Have you been subjected to the following by colleagues at your workplace:

	Never	Seldom	Occasionally	Often	Very often
	0	1	2	3	4
27. Rumours about you have been spread	<input type="checkbox"/>				
28. Your opinions have been ignored	<input type="checkbox"/>				
29. You have been defamed	<input type="checkbox"/>				
30. You have been given harassing looks or actions	<input type="checkbox"/>				
31. You have been addressed by a degrading nickname	<input type="checkbox"/>				
32. You have been continuously interrupted	<input type="checkbox"/>				

	Never	Seldom	Occasionally	Often	Very often
	0	1	2	3	4
33. Lies about you have been spread	<input type="checkbox"/>				
34. You have been ostracised	<input type="checkbox"/>				
35. Hurtful comments have been made to you	<input type="checkbox"/>				
36. You have been made fun of	<input type="checkbox"/>				
37. You have been avoided	<input type="checkbox"/>				
38. You have been studiously ignored	<input type="checkbox"/>				
39. You have been snapped at	<input type="checkbox"/>				
40. People have refused to speak to you	<input type="checkbox"/>				
41. People have ignored you when you addressed them	<input type="checkbox"/>				
42. Your working methods have been criticised	<input type="checkbox"/>				

43. Do you have any experience of bullying at the workplace?

Describe what happened and how it was dealt with, if at all.

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(Continue on the other side of the page if required.)

**We are extremely grateful for your cooperation in completing the questionnaire**