

The gendered nature of workplace bullying in New Zealand

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Focus: #MeToo movement in 'early stages' in NZ

10 Apr, 2018 10:07pm

PR specialist Claudia Macdonald thinks businesses ought to be dirty laundry might be aired.

The seedy side of NZ's legal industry exposed

11 March 2018 | NewsHub staff



2018's poster is for the #MeToo movement, which has more than 50 submissions in 40 hours. Credit: iStock - NewsHub, Photo - Getty

The host of an anonymous blog aimed at highlighting sexual harassment in the law industry has been blown away by the response.

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The study

- ▶ Online survey
- ▶ Participants currently working in NZ
- ▶ 2 time points 3 months apart (just T1 data,)
- ▶ 991 men (41%) and 1421 women (59%);

- ▶ mean age M: 53

F: 47 (p<.05)

- ▶ mean tenure M: 8.0

F: 6.0 years (p<.05)

“A situation where a person feels they have **repeatedly** been on the receiving end of **negative actions** from one or more other people, in a situation where it is **difficult to defend** themselves against these actions. These negative actions could be physical or non-physical (e.g. verbal abuse). A one-off incident is not defined as bullying.” (Einarsen et al., 2003)

repeated negative actions

power imbalance

Unjustified

[Different from harassment: sexual and racial harassment are defined in Employment Relations Act (2000), bullying is not. Harassment doesn't need to be repeated].

Bullying

- ▶ Negative behaviours can be face to face or online.
- ▶ Health and wellbeing impacts are well known (Cooper-Thomas *et al.*, 2014).
- ▶ Organisational correlates of bullying:
 - ▶ Poor leadership, policy, support, strategies to manage it (Gardner *et al.*, 2016)
 - ▶ Organisational systems are more important (prevention, harm reduction) than individuals' coping (Bentley *et al.*, 2012, Catley *et al.*, 2013).

We measured bullying in 3 ways:

The 22-item Negative Acts Questionnaire (Einarsen et al., 2009)

- ▶ Mean number of negative acts experienced over the last 6 months
- ▶ Criterion for being bullied: at least 2 negative acts at least weekly for at least 6 months

Self-reported bullying: we provided the definition given earlier and asked people if they had been bullied.

- ▶ Those that said 'yes' were then asked who the bully had been in terms of role and gender.

Overall, women experienced more workplace bullying than men:

- ▶ NOT in the mean number of negative acts experienced ($p=.052$)

BUT

- ▶ more women met the criterion for having been bullied (18% vs. 13%, $p<.01$)
- ▶ More women self-identified as targets of bullying (21% vs. 13%, $p<.001$)

Women reported worse physical health, more strain, and worse perceptions of the workplace leadership and teams, than men (Gardner et al., 2016).



Possible factors

Gender minority at work?

- ▶ Associated with more bullying on all measures for men and women.

Ethnicity?

- ▶ Sample primarily NZE.
- ▶ No interaction between gender and ethnicity

Sector?

- ▶ more women in education, health, administrative/professional and retail/wholesale, more men in construction, manufacturing and mining ($p < .001$).
- ▶ No significant differences in bullying between sectors, and no interaction between gender and sector.

Factors (cont.)

Role?

- ▶ Women more likely to be in non-managerial roles.
- ▶ No differences between non-managers and managers in experiences of bullying.
- ▶ No significant interaction between gender and role on experiences of bullying.



Main effect for gender.

- ▶ Women, regardless of role, ethnicity, or sector they work in, are more likely than men to experience negative behaviour in the workplace.
- ▶ The numbers that met our strict criterion for having been 'bullied' may seem low (18%, 13%) but are high by global standards.
- ▶ The mean numbers of negative acts experienced was 1.4 (seems low, but repeated).
- ▶ Men get bullied too, just not quite as much.

Who are the bullies?

Senior bullies (employers, senior managers, $n=100$ M, 84 F):

- ▶ Men bullied men and women (46% / 54%)
- ▶ Women mostly bullied women (13% / 87%)

Middle managers/supervisors ($n=67$ M, 82 F)

- ▶ Men bullied men and women (52% / 48%)
- ▶ Women mostly bullied women (16% / 84%)

Peers (n=58 M, 107 F)

- ▶ Men bullied men and women (47% / 53%)
- ▶ Women mostly bullied women (14% / 86%)

Subordinates (upwards bullying) (n=20 M, 28 F)

- ▶ Men bullied both (50 / 50)
- ▶ Women bullied mostly women (25 / 75)

Clients (n=21 M, 14 F)

- ▶ Men bullied both (48 / 52)
- ▶ Women almost only bullied women (7 / 93)

Cautions



Self-report

Small numbers of targets

Maybe men are less likely to see negative behaviour as bullying?

- ▶ But the main gender difference also appeared in the data on negative behaviour which did not mention bullying at all.

Solutions?

We know the solutions to bullying lie, not with 'fixing' individuals (resilience training, stress management) but with effective systems, procedures and policies, and leadership.

Leadership in some NZ workplaces clearly needs improvement!

How do we deal with gendered power at work?

ENTERTAINMENT

Karl Lagerfeld says he's 'fed up' with the #MeToo movement

14 Apr, 2018 1:46pm

3 minutes to read



Karl Lagerfeld told French magazine Numéro he's 'fed up' with the #MeToo movement. Photo / Getty Images

Daily Mail

By: Erica Tempesta



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