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Prevalence of workplace bullying and its consequence to employee productivity among civil society organizations in Lira City, Uganda

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Abstract

Purpose: This study aimed to investigate the effects of the prevalence of workplace bullying on employee productivity of CSOs in Lira City by focussing on three aspects, *viz.* workplace bullying and employee attendance, workplace bullying and employee efficiency, and workplace bullying and teamwork.

Methodology: This study used descriptive case study and correlational designs. The study employed a mixed methods approach, involving the collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data. Primary data from the field was collected by the researcher using research tools. Primary data were obtained first-hand from the target respondents defined by seeking their knowledge, experiences and/or opinions about the impact of workplace bullying on employees' productivity. External validity which refers to the extent to which the findings of a particular can have credibility and generalizability across populations, contexts and time, the researcher triangulated using both quantitative and qualitative methods.

Findings: Results that workplace bullying is significantly prevalent among the institutions investigated (Mean = 3.614; std. = 1.02) and from the highest extreme, the study shows that superiors maliciously discount the achievements of the subordinates (mean = 3.766; std. = 1.042). The statistics suggest that a variation in workplace bullying is associated to a weak variation in workers' absenteeism. The significant value shows that the correlation is significant and that workplace bullying and employee absenteeism are linearly related. Also, the results show that bullying contributes 11% (R Square = .101) of the variations in employee productivity however when treated in isolation, the effect of workplace bullying is not adequate to explain the level of absenteeism among the selected institutions. So a variation in bullying practices is associated to a variation in slowdown of work even if is not very significant. This can be attributed to the fact that slowdown does not mean complete withdrawal of labour like absenteeism, and therefore its ramifications on productivity is not severe.

Conclusion and recommendations: From the study, it was inferred workplace bullying negatively affect productivity in international non-governmental organizations due to the fact that bullied employees continuously complain of depression and mental illness which put them in the maze of absenting from work. Even when they keep coming for work, bullied employees complain

of nervous breakdown and feign sickness just to escape the hostile work environment. Hence, the need to create awareness about what bullying is and how it can be prevented, as a starting point for creating conducive working environments, and organisational managers should not take workplace bullying lightly but should take it as something costly for organizations and therefore should be prevented or redressed by putting in place anti-bullying policies and measures.

Unique contribution to policy and or practice: This study provides additional evidence to the Lira context as well as helping to widen the methodology of measuring this relationship between workplace bullying and worker productivity.

Keywords: *Workplace bullying, Employee productivity, NGOs, Absenteeism, Work rate*

1. Introduction

Workplace bullying phenomenon, as we know it today, first entered the public consciousness on the heels of the workplace sexual harassment issue in the early 1980s, where Swedish psychologist Heinz Leymann was among the first to conceptual and analyse the act of workplace bullying. Leymann described the phenomenon as a “psychological terrorization” but gave it the term “mobbing” (Namie, 2003). Subsequently, British journalist Andrea Adams popularized the term “workplace bullying” in the early 1990s through a series of British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) radio documentaries (Tarallo, 2017). Ruth Namie and Gary Namie introduced the term “workplace bullying” to the US in the popular press in 1998 (Namie, 2003). Workplace bullying is different from workplace harassment in that for an act to constitute a workplace bullying the unreasonable and unwelcome behaviour must be repeated and create a risk to health and safety (Namie, 2003), whereas to constitute harassment the act does not have to recur but only needs to be unwelcome and should target the victim on the basis of a characteristic such as gender, race or ethnicity (Cunniff & Mostert, 2012; Smit, 2014; and Feldblum & Lipnic, 2016).

This study is underpinned by Substantive Theory. Substantive theory is a theory that emerges from a limited or a single empirical investigation (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Substantive Theory was selected to underpin this study because it labours to explain reality of scientific research on social environments such as management and organizations (Punch, 2014), by reflecting abstract representation of reality to illustrate the phenomena being studied. In other words, it provides a “working theory” of action for a specific context (Charmaz, 2011). It provides an explanatory, constructive, and systematic account of a rich, significant and fundamental subject-matter. It is considered transferable, other than generalizable, in the sense that elements of the context can be transferable to contexts of action with similar characteristics to the context under study. In the circumstances, the theory is relevant in illustrating and understanding workplace issues (Remenyi, 2014) such as workplace bullying. Substantive theory is therefore appropriate in the study of the implications of workplace bullying on employees’ productivity because it offers a reference point to guide employers and their management in rolling out intervention strategies to address workplace challenges such as bullying (Einarsen et al, 2011; Gamian-Wilk, 2013).

As a consequence, exposure to bullying in an organization may change an individual’s perception of their work environment to one of danger, threat and insecurity which may result in loss of productivity (Turney, 2003), yet a study conducted in the United States revealed that in 62% of bullying cases Human Resource departments did nothing to help the victim despite requests and in 32% of cases Human Resource departments supported the bully and reacted negatively to the victim (Namie, 2000). Besides, a 2002 survey of 9,000 Canadian federal employees indicated that 42% of female and 15% of male employees reported being bullied in a 2-year period, resulting in more than \$180 million in lost time and productivity (Canada Safety Council, 2002). According to Namie and Namie (2003), 82% of employees who had been bullied

left their workplace: 38% for health reasons and 44% because they were victims of a low performance appraisal manipulated by a bullying supervisor to show them as incompetent.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Whereas there has been increasing attention to workplace bullying, with much of the research originating in other countries of the world (Cilliers, 2012) other than Uganda, including Canada (Lee & Brotheridge, 2006), the UK (Harthill, 2008), Australia (Birks et al, 2017), the EU (Xu et al, 2019), and Asia (Kwan et al, 2020; Tsuno et al, 2018) the different researches have not yet resolved the confusion between the phenomenon and other counterproductive behaviours in the workplace such as harassment Cunniff & Mostert, 2012, and Smit, 2014). In the circumstances, to date workplace bullying continue to be a growing problem which has detrimental effects on individual effectiveness, efficiency, absenteeism, productivity, happiness and overall workplace climate (Barrow, 2012). The serious consequences thereof necessitate increased awareness of its nature and dynamics (Ncongwane, 2010). However, whereas workplace bullying has remained a good topic for research due to its implications on productivity, human rights, dignity and the survival of organizations, there are only very few known studies on workplace bullying in East Africa, including Uganda to date. The few known studies in the East Africa region include Moronge and Ndegwa (2016) study in Kenya, which found out that workplace bullying is rampant in Kenya, and Kakumba et al (2014) study in Uganda which found the most common form of workplace bullying in Uganda to include intimidation, forceful assignment, too much workload for juniors, discrimination, sabotage of deserving privileges etc. are just about the prevalence of workplace other than their implications on productivity.

Objective of the study

To investigate the effects of the prevalence of workplace bullying on employee productivity of CSOs in Lira City by focussing on three aspects, *viz.* (i) workplace bullying and employee attendance, (ii) workplace bullying and employee efficiency, and (iii) workplace bullying and teamwork.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research design, population and sampling

This study used descriptive case study and correlational designs. Descriptive research describes how workplace bullying affect the productivity of employees. Further, a cross-sectional case study was adopted given that it is inappropriate to carry out a longitudinal study within the prevailing time and resource constraints. The study employed a mixed methods approach, involving the collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data. While the quantitative method collected generalizable numerical data that were analysed using statistical approaches, qualitative research provided the researcher with the means of explaining the “whys” and the “how” of the phenomenon. Quantitative research in particular was supplemented by a qualitative approach intended to drive an in-depth explanation on the quantitative result. This is

because mixed method offers the best technique to answer a research problem. The population of this study were International Non-Governmental Organizations in Lira City. The study used census approach with purposive exclusion of non-governmental organizations that are not international in origin and operation. The census approach found 12 international Non-Government Organizations in the city, including Lifeline Ministries, World Evangelical Redeemed Church, and Link to Progress (LTP), Lango Community of North America, Jesus Cares International Organization, Volkmission, AVSI Foundation, Plan International, John Snow Inc, World Education Bantwana, World Vision and GIZ. The target respondents from the international organizations included Managers, Human Resource Management Team members, and frontline staff members. Krejcie and Morgan Table was used to determine the sample size. Both males and females were included in the sample size. All the 12 international Non-Governmental Organizations in the city were targeted for the study since the researcher's census, with the support of Lira Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) Forum indicates that is their number.

2.2 Data collection and quality management

Primary data from the field was collected by the researcher using research tools. Primary data were obtained first-hand from the target respondents defined by seeking their knowledge, experiences and/or opinions about the impact of workplace bullying on employees' productivity. Secondary data was collected by the researcher from documents and archival records such as legislations, court decisions and scholarly writings on workplace bullying. This source provided information to supplement the primary sources of data hereinabove. Such data formed the background to the study and literature review. The researchers designed the tool with his research supervisor's support. The questions were clustered per research objectives/questions. An interview guide was administered both face-to-face or remotely through media like telephone, Skype or Zoom. The tool elicited a more detailed information than questionnaires can collect, although on the flip side it was prone to bias.

External validity which refers to the extent to which the findings of a particular can have credibility and generalizability across populations, contexts and time, the researcher triangulated using both quantitative and qualitative methods, which according to Bryman (1988) is one of the important ways to enhance external validity. This also ensured reliability. Internal validity which can be defined as the extent to which the researcher is confident about the conclusion of the causal relationship between variables was enhanced through seeking guidance first and foremost from the research supervisor and other graduate students who have successfully gone through the graduate research endeavour. This has equally ensured reliability of the study. Construct/content validity is about identifying correct operational measures for the concepts being studied (Yin, 2009). To achieve construct validity the researcher put forward explicit definitions for each variable in the conceptual framework as well as in the scope of the study. The researcher also made the sample size representative and use mixed method of study to reduce the threats to construct validity. Reliability was tested and enhanced by carrying out reliability tests using Cronbach

Alpha. Cronbach's alpha was used to determine the internal consistency or average correlation of items in a survey instrument to gauge its reliability. Where the scale showed poor reliability, then individual items within the scale were re-examined and modified or completely changed as needed. Table 1 herein below shows the reliability coefficient of the items used in measuring workplace bullying and workers' productivity.

Table 1: Reliability Statistics

Variable List	Cronbach's Alpha	No of Items
Workplace Bullying	.689	22
Workers' Productivity	.673	6

Source: Field data, 2022

Reliability of the items indicated below 0.7, the score is an acceptable measure of reliability. The results therefore suggest that the items used in this study were internally stable and capable of generating consistent results over repeated administration of the instrument. The results derived using this instrument are adequate for generalization and conclusion.

2.3 Data processing and analysis

The responses of the respondents were entered into the data editor of Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) version 24.0 and the association between the ordinal independent variables and the interval dependent variable was individually tested using Spearman's *rho* correlation analysis, which is a nonparametric measure of the direction and strength of association that exists between two variables measured on at least an ordinal scale. Since the research measured a single independent variable on a set of multiple dependent variables, it was necessary to use general linear models. Qualitative data on the other hand was analysed inductively by identifying themes, coding, and categorizing, which organically resulted in a narrative.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Background characteristics of the respondents

The researcher examined the respondents' background characteristics, which included gender, category of respondents, existence of anti-workplace bullying policy and awareness of someone bullied.

Table 2: Background characteristics

Variable List	Categorization	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	63	58.9

	Female	44	41.1	
	Total	107	100	
Category of respondent	Senior Management Team	9	8.4	
	HRM. Member	8	7.5	
	Middle Management Member	20	18.7	
	Frontline Member	70	65.4	
	Total	107	100	
	Anti-workplace bullying policy	Strongly disagree	6	5.6
		Disagree	7	6.5
Not sure		10	9.3	
Agree		54	50.5	
Strongly agree		30	28	
Total		107	100	
I am aware of someone bullied	Strongly disagree	21	19.6	
	Disagree	22	20.6	
	Not sure	35	32.7	
	Agree	21	19.6	
	Strongly agree	8	7.5	
	Total	107	100	

Source: Field data, 2022

From table 2 above, 58.9% were male and 41.1% were female. The statistics indicate that most of the respondents were male. This can be attributed to the fact that the workplace in international Non-Governmental Organizations is still dominated by male, to extent that although the researcher wanted to balance the gender representation on a 50-50% basis this was practically impossible. Concerning respondents' categorization, 65.4% were frontline staff members, 18.7% were middle management members, 8.4% were senior management members while 7.5% were Human Resource Management members. From the statistics, it is evident that the study was dominated by frontline members because in every workplace there are fewer managers compared to the rank-and-file staff. Concerning the existence of some anti-workplace bullying policy, 12.1% disagreed while 79.3% agreed that their organizations had anti-workplace bullying policy. The statistics suggest that most of the organizations have anti-workplace bullying policy because of the global concurrence that employees are entitled to dignity and protection from ill-treatment. Concerning the existence of someone bullied in the organization, 40.3% disagreed while 27.1% were aware of someone who had ever been bullied. On the other hand, 32.7% were not sure of the existence of any bullied person in their organization. This is evident that a significant number of employees face bullying from their superiors, given that only 40.3% of the respondents are of the view that there is no workplace bullying in their organizations.

3.2 Empirical Results

The researcher used descriptive statistics, especially mean and standard deviation to describe workplace bullying and productivity. The researcher used mean scores to describe the extent to which respondents' views on workplace bullying and productivity clustered and standard deviation to describe the extent respondents' views varied across respondents. For purposes of interpretation, mean scores below 2.500 were interpreted as 'low', mean scores ranging from 2.500 to below 3.500 were interpreted as 'moderate' while mean scores from 3.500 and above were interpreted as 'high'. To ease the interpretation of standard deviation, scores below 1.000 were interpreted as 'consistent' while scores above 1.000 were interpreted as 'inconsistent'. The researcher used correlation statistics to analyse the relationship between workplace bullying and productivity. Correlation uses the correlation coefficient to measure the degree of the strength between related variables. For purposes of interpretation, correlations below 0.4 are weak, correlations ranging from 0.4 to below 0.7 are moderate while correlations from 0.7 and above are strong. The researchers used General Linear Model to analyse the regression between a single independent variable (workplace bullying) against a set of dependent variables (absenteeism, slow down, and teamwork). To bring out the effect of workplace bullying on each of the dependent variables, the researcher used General Linear Model – Univariate. Before running General Linear Model for each of the relationships, the researcher ran descriptive statistics to understand the prevalence of workplace bullying.

Table 3: Prevalence of workplace bullying

Variable List	Mean	S.D
1. I am aware of superiors at my workplace who maliciously and unfairly discount achievements of subordinates frequently	3.766	1.042
2. I am aware of a colleague at my workplace who frequently sabotages effective performance of work by colleagues or subordinates	3.748	1.056
3. I am aware of a colleague at my workplace who frequently faces intimidation from a workmate.	3.701	0.944
4. I am aware of a colleague at my workplace who frequently assigns work tasks forcefully to subordinates	3.607	0.959
5. I am aware of superiors at my workplace who frequently insult or rebuke subordinates in the presence of others	3.551	1.075
6. I am aware of superiors at my workplace who frequently sabotage subordinates from getting deserving privileges	3.308	1.177
Average	3.614	1.042

Source: Field data, 2022

Table 3 shows that workplace bullying is significantly prevalent among the institutions investigated, based on mean = 3.614; std. = 1.02. From the highest extreme, the study shows that superiors maliciously discount the achievements of the subordinates (mean = 3.766; std. = 1.042). Besides maliciously discounting achievements of subordinates, the study shows that colleagues frequently sabotage the effective performance of their colleagues (mean = 3.748; std. = 1.056), and frequently intimidate other workmates (mean = 3.701; std. = .944). The dominance of maliciously discounting the achievement of others in the institutions investigated can be attributed to unhealthy competition among employees, driven by the motivation to excel at the expense of others. From the lowest extreme, the study shows that superiors frequently sabotage subordinates from getting deserving privileges (mean = 3.308; std. = 1.117). This is attributed to the competitive attitudes of many supervisors not to be outshined by their subordinates. But while the mean scores present malicious discount of subordinates' achievement as key among the forms of workplace bullying, a comparison of standard deviations present intimidation of workers from colleagues as key form of workplace bullying. This is attributed to the tendencies of supervisors to use hard

power which is normally easier to use, than soft power where a supervisor demonstrates superior knowledge, skills and better interpersonal relationship to influence their subordinates.

3.3 To determine how far workplace bullying contribute to employee absenteeism in civil society organizations in Lira City

Before establishing the contribution workplace bullying on employee absenteeism, the researcher examined the prevalence of absenteeism among the institutions investigated. Table 4.3 shows the prevalence of absenteeism among the organizations selected.

Table 4. Workplace bullying contribute to employee absenteeism in civil society organizations in Lira City

Variable List	Mean	Std.
1. Based on my experience, victims of workplace bullying frequently complain of depression/mental health problems which cause them to absent themselves from work	3.869	0.991
2. Based on my experience, victims of workplace bullying complain of nervous breakdown which frequently cause them to absent themselves	3.701	1.057
3. Based on my experience, victims of workplace bullying dread the workplace and therefore frequently feign sickness just to escape the hostile work environment created by the bully.	3.682	1.104
4. Based on my experience, victims of workplace bullying frequently absent themselves from work	3.439	1.142
5. Based on my experience, victims of workplace bullying frequently complain of stress at the workplace	3.140	1.153
Average	3.566	1.090

Source: Field data, 2022

From table 4, employee absenteeism among the institutions investigated was high (mean = 3.566; std. = 1.090). From the highest extreme, employees who have experienced workplace bullying continuously complain of depression and mental health and end up absenting from work (mean = 3.869; std. = .991). Besides depression as the immediate cause of absenteeism, the study shows that bullied employees complain of nervous breakdown (mean = 3.701; std. = 1.057), and feign sickness just to escape the hostile work environment (mean = 3.682; std. = 1.104). Employees who complain of depression/mental health problems are mostly absent from work because they have to attend mental health clinics to treat the depression. From the lowest extreme, bullied employees complain of stress and end up absenting themselves (mean = 3.140; std. = 1.153). Employees who complain of stress at the workplace least absent themselves from work because in the short run stress is not as disruptive to work as depression and nervous breakdown. Generally,

a comparison of standard deviations confirms that employees who complain of depression/mental health problems dominate the list of workplace absentees.

Table 5: Correlations between workplace bullying and absenteeism

			Absenteeism	Bullying
Spearman's rho	Absenteeism	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.282(**)
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.003
		N	107	107
	Bullying	Correlation Coefficient	.282(**)	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	.
		N	107	107

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Field data, 2022.

From table 5, the relationship between bullying and employee absenteeism ($r = .282$; sig. $<.05$) is weak but significant. The statistics imply that a variation in workplace bullying is associated to a weak variation in workers' absenteeism. The significant value shows that the correlation is significant and that workplace bullying and employee absenteeism are linearly related.

Table 6: The contribution of workplace bullying on absenteeism in international non-government organizations

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	4.678(a)	1	4.678	12.952	.000
Intercept	13.660	1	13.660	37.823	.000

BULLYING	4.678	1	4.678	12.9 52	.000
Error	37.921	105	.361		
Total	1403.520	107			
Corrected Total	42.599	106			

a R Squared = .110 (Adjusted R Squared = .101)

Source: Field data, 2022

The results show that bullying, which is the independent variables contributes 11% (R Square = .101) of the variations in employee productivity. Above all the statistic is significant (sig <.05). However, the results indicate that treated in isolation, the effect of workplace bullying is not adequate to explain the level of absenteeism among the selected institutions.

3.4 To determine how far workplace bullying contribute to work slowdown in civil society organizations in Lira City

The researcher used descriptive statistical measures to understand the prevalence of slowdown in the selected organizations.

Table 7: The prevalence of slowdown in international non-government organizations.

Variable List	Mean	Std.
1. Based on my experience, those who are bullied feel that they are not valued or respected and as a consequence reduce their work efforts, thereby slowing down work	3.916	0.972
2. Based on my experience with those who are bullied, they lose many-hours by attempting to avoid the bully, thereby slowing down work	3.766	1.060
3. Based on my experience, those who are bullied tend to waste time defending themselves or networking for support, thereby slowing down work due to work hours lost	3.654	0.943
4. Based on my experience, bullies sabotage their targets by preventing them from obtaining the needed resources to do their work, thereby slowing down work	3.598	1.008
5. Based on my experience, those who are bullied cut back on the number of hours they work, thereby slowing down work	3.243	1.180
Average	3.636	1.033

Source: Field data, 2022

From table 7 above, respondents indicated that those who are bullied feel less valued, less respected, and slowdown work by reducing their work efforts (mean = 3.916; std. = .972). Besides feeling less valued and less respected, those who are bullied lose a lot of time in attempting to avoid the bully (mean = 3.766; std. = 1.060). From the lowest extreme, those who are bullied tend to slowdown work by wasting time in self-defence, networking for support (mean = 3.243; std. = 1.180). These statistics imply that few workers slow down work by cutting on the number of hours they work. This can be attributed to the fact to cover up their work slowdown they at least appear for work, though don't do much while at work. While the mean scores do not show much variations in respondents' opinions on slowdown, the standard deviations show that besides reducing their work effort due to feelings of less respect and being less valued, workers also slowdown work by wasting time in self-defence and networking for support. Therefore, the indicators of slowdown are not only limited to reducing work efforts but also wasting time in self-defences.

Table 8: Correlations between bullying and slowdown

			Bullying	Slowdown
Spearman's rho	Bullying	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.161
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.098
		N	107	107
	Slowdown	Correlation Coefficient	.161	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.098	.
		N	107	107

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Field data, 2022.

From table 8 above, the relationship between bullying and slowdown ($r = .168$; sig. $>.05$) is weak and positive. However, the significant value, which is above 0.05 suggests that relationship is not statistically significant. The above statistics imply that a variation in bullying practices in the selected organizations is associated to a variation in slowdown of work. However, the variation in slowdown in work is not very significant even though it exists. This can be attributed to the fact that slowdown does not mean complete withdrawal of labour like absenteeism, and therefore its ramifications on productivity is not severe.

Table 9: The influence of workplace bullying on slowdown in international non-government organizations

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	1.571(a)	1	1.571	4.472	.037
Intercept	22.155	1	22.155	63.053	.000
BULLYING	1.571	1	1.571	4.472	.037
Error	36.894	105	.351		
Total	1452.680	107			
Corrected Total	38.465	106			

a R Squared = .041 (Adjusted R Squared = .032)

Source: Field data, 2022.

Taking bullying as the independent variable and slowdown as the dependent variable, (R Square = .041; sig. <.05) reveals that bullying accounts for only 4.1% of the variations in work rate among the organizations investigated. The statistics seem to suggest that for a very single-unit change in the number of workers bullied, workers are likely to slow down their work by one-hour. Notwithstanding the variations in slowdown due to bullying is significant. This can be attributed to the fact that although bullying causes employees to slowdown work just by one hour per day, one hour over an extended period of time like a week, a month or a year adds up and affects productivity significantly.

3.5 To examine the influence of workplace bullying on teamwork among employees in civil society organizations in Lira City

The researcher used descriptive statistical measures to understand teamwork in the selected organizations. Table 10 shows the prevalence of teamwork in international non-government organizations.

Table 10: Prevalence of teamwork

Variable List	Mean	Std.
1. Based on my experience, supervisors who are bullies fear and fight open communication among colleagues	3.748	1.047
2. Based on my experience, victims of bullying withhold information from colleagues as a self-protection technique	3.430	1.117
3. Based on my experiences, victims of bullying distance themselves from supervisors who are perceived to be bullies	3.168	1.193
4. Based on my experience, fear of bullying or victimization frequently causes colleagues to work in isolation	3.075	1.147
5. Based on my experience, supervisors with bullying tendencies frequently use divisive techniques like favouritism	2.972	1.247
6. Victims of bullying withhold vital information as a revenge mechanism	2.065	1.246
Average	3.076	1.166

Source: Field data, 2022

From table 10 above, supervisors with bullying tendencies fight open communication among colleagues (mean = 3.747; std. = 1.047). Besides bully supervisors fighting open communication, bullied workers withhold communication as a means of self-protection (mean = 3.430; std. = 1.117). Most of the bully supervisors fight open communication as a means of self-protection in that where there is open communication among subordinates there is a risk of their bullying being exposed and they get implicated. From the lowest extreme, bullied workers withhold vital information as a revenge mechanism (mean = 2.065; std. = 1.246). Bullied workers withhold vital information as a revenge mechanism because they feel that by withholding such vital information, they would frustrate the work of their supervisors who are bullies who may need such information to use in their own work. Going by the standard deviations, which are as high as above 1.000, the researcher finds there is a significant relationship between workplace bullying and limited teamwork in selected organizations. This can be attributed to the fact that workplace bullying limits free communication which is necessary for teamwork.

Table 11: Correlations between bullying and teamwork

			Bullyi ng	Teamwork
Spearman's rho	Bullying	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.234(*)
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.015
	N	107	107	
	Teamwo rk	Correlation Coefficient	.234(*)	1.000
Sig. (2-tailed)		.015	.	
N		107	107	

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Source: Field data, 2022.

From the table above, the relationship between workplace bullying and teamwork ($r = .234$; sig. $<.05$). Importantly however, the significant value, which was below 0.05 suggests that a variation in workplace bullying practices is associated to a weak variation in teamwork among the selected organizations. The weak association between workplace bullying and teamwork is because in an environment of bullying open communication, which is a sine qua non for teamwork, is thwarted.

Table 12: The influence of workplace bullying on teamwork in international non-government organizations

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	2.395(a)	1	2.395	5.534	.021
Intercept	12.055	1	12.055	27.852	.000
BULLYING	2.395	1	2.395	5.534	.021

Error	45.445	105	.433		
Total	1048.400	107			
Corrected Total	47.841	106			

a R Squared = .050 (Adjusted R Squared = .041)

Source: Field data, 2022.

From table 12 above, workplace bullying accounts for only 5.0% of the variations in teamwork among the selected organizations (R Square = .050; sig. <.05). The statistics suggest that a variation in the number of workers bullied by one-unit results in a 5% variation in the level of teamwork. Though the unit-effect of workplace bullying on teamwork appears small, the relationship is significant and has serious implications on policy directions. This can be attribute to fact that when the small, daily effects of bullying on teamwork accumulate over an extended period of time and an organization loses synergy productivity is affected in the long run.

Table 13: Correlation between workplace bullying and productivity in NGOs

		Workplace Bullying	Workers' Productivity	
Workplace Bullying	Pearson Correlation	1	.386(**)	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	
	N	107	107	
Workers' Productivity	Pearson Correlation	.386(**)	1	** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		
	N	107	107	

Source: Field data, 2022.

Table 13 hereinabove shows that the relationship between workplace bullying and workers' productivity ($r = .386$; $p\text{-value} < .01$) is weak. The statistics suggest that any variation in workplace bullying is associated with a weak variation in workers' productivity. By implication, any traces of workplace bullying in the organization investigated translates in weak low variations in productivity. Whereas the relationship between the two variables appear weak, the two variables are statistically related. The weak relationship between the two variables can be attributed to the fact that even with the bullying, the victims still try to do their best to perform their responsibilities. This is because there is high unemployment in Uganda so despite the bullying, the bullied workers still struggle to perform, so as to keep their jobs.

4. Discussion of Results

4.1 To determine how far workplace bullying contribute to employee absenteeism in civil society organizations in Lira City

This study has established a low significant contribution of workplace bullying on absenteeism among the selected organizations. The results seem to disagree with Tapas (2014) and Anjum et al (2011) who show that workplace bullying leads to increased absenteeism among employees. According to these authors, the more workers are bullied, the more they absentee themselves. On the contrary, the findings in Lira provide little evidence of this. Findings from interviews show that much as workers are bullied, they rather complain than absentee themselves, because they prioritize keeping their jobs at all costs in light of the high unemployment rate in Uganda:

It is common to be bullied though some of us do not understand that it is bullying. Now that we do not really tell when it is a bully, we rather complain than disappearing from work. It has ever happened to me.

Given the above excerpt, workers might be bullied though they do not consider the experience as bullying. This is because the experiences of bullying may not be outstanding, pronounced, nor earmarked as bullying. However, the unfriendly relationship that may exist amongst workers may point to instances of bullying. This is consistent with one interviewee:

Many workers collide with fellow workers in many instances yet it is uncommon for many of them to report the incidence under the context of bullying. I once had a female supervisee who used to dress unwell as per our tradition. When I commented on her short 'kitenge', the lady nearly wanted to resign...little did I know that I had bullied her.

From the foregoing excerpts, it emerges that bullying takes place in many organizations but the reporting and recognition of the act is very unpopular, because of lack of awareness and

policies related to workplace bullying in organization. No wonder, some workers fail to report to work without directly linking their failure to turn-up for work to any incidents of bullying from colleagues.

The findings that bullied workers manifest incidents of mental ill-health agree with Anjum et al (2011) and Upton (2010) who established that bullied workers often suffer from mental health and frequent absence from work. The experiences of mental health among the bullied may not be obvious because of the many stress-factors that affect mental health among workers. This view coincides with one respondent who reiterated in response to the question: How often do your staff absent themselves due to actions of bullying?

I may not tell who has ever been absent because he/she was bullied. I still cannot provide any statistic of any sorting regarding the staff who may not appear for work because they were bullied...there are many stressing factors that affect workers ranging from personal factors, economic factors, family factors, and job-related factors. With all these in place, you may not be precise on the actual cause of one's absence from work.

From the foregoing excerpt it emerges that a number of factors, including personal, economic, family and job-related factors, account for the absence of workers work in international non-government organizations in Lira. While there is enough literature that attributes staff absence from work to ill-health (Executive HaS, 2018; Upton, 2010; Kivimaki et al., 2003; Wilkin's, 2010). The findings from Lira do not provide enough evidence that workers absentee themselves due ill-health related to workplace bullying. More so, it is far difficult to associate sleep disorders and weight gain or loss to bullying (Killoren, 2014; Barlett & Barlett, 2011; Namie & Namie, 2011; Momberg, 2011). This is simply because there are several factors that might cause such body reactions and attributing them to workplace bullying is not succinct. The findings however agree with (Rayner et al. 2002; Yildirim, 2009; Branch et al., 2013) who attribute a decline in worker productivity to a hostile work environment. The level of bullying in Lira was moderate and characterized as malicious discount of supervisees' achievements, sabotaging effective performance of colleagues, and intimidation of other workmates.

4.2 To determine how far workplace bullying contribute to work slowdown in civil society organizations in Lira City

This study found a low and significant effect of workplace bullying on workers' slowdown. The findings disagree with Randall (2001) and Sidle (2010) who link workplace bullying to slowdown work and reduced employee productivity. The traces of feeling less valued, less respected, and therefore a potential cause of low motivation might be prejudicial to the employing organizations. The low effect of workplace bullying on slowdown is associated to the invisible behaviour of slowdown. No single employee will indicate their intention to slowdown. Evidence from Lira confirms this. From the study it is revealed that employees will engage in less work,

slow pace of productivity and refusal to extend working hours because they feel less valued, less respected and less motivated. The findings therefore agree with McFarlane-Ossmann & Curtis (2011) who observed that bullied subordinates may withhold actions that benefit the organization and its representatives as a coping mechanism. The study however found that withholding useful actions or information as a result of bullying is rather overt than covert to the extent that the abuser may hardly notice it. One respondent denied the existence of bullying in their organization:

Bullying is suicidal to the organization yet it may hardly be noticed. The only incidences a supervisor may notice bullying is when they study the behaviour of their subordinates, which may differ from the behaviour before they were bullied...if you are not careful, the bullied may continue performing in the negative direction, which affects the overall performance of the organization.

In another experience related to slow down due to actions of bullying from colleagues, one respondent observed:

I remember working with one staff who was ardent at working overtime including weekend certainly because of the allowance that was attached to such services. From nowhere, the staff started refusing working overtime. At one point, the staff disguised to be sick and later found hanging in town at the time of working...Later, he disclosed some unbecoming interaction with colleague that made him withdraw his overtime services to the organization.

From these excerpts, it emerges that slowdown is silent and, in most cases, unobserved by the supervisor. The excerpt however, provides some simple indicators of slowdown especially when one opts to refuse to behave in a way that they once cherished such as not taking overtime.

The findings that there is a low influence of workplace bullying on slowdown disagrees with Einarsen (2000) and Fisher-Blando (2008) who show that bullies normally prevent colleagues from accessing the resources they need to meet their performance targets. The bullies act this way to place their colleagues in blame for poor performance. These studies view the causes of slowdown from the intended actions of the perpetrators of bullying than the bullied. Given the state of international non-government organizations, one interviewee observed:

Deadlines and reporting is the game of non-government organizations yet one worker may prevent their colleagues from beating the deadline or reporting timely...I recall some incidence when a junior staff intentionally withheld some crucial information that was needed by the senior to complete his reporting. Though the action seemed deliberate by the junior, it was later discovered in a disciplinary meeting that the junior had been abused and was somewhat acting in revenge.

A related encounter of slowdown from the abused was an account of one IT expert in one organization:

We all have passwords to access our data files on the computers. One day, we came to the office to open the computers only to find when the passwords had been changed and login was impossible. Attempts to get in touch with the IT expert were futile since he had reported the previous day that he was not feeling well...the entire system was paralyzed until late in the day when his phone was available. It was learnt in a disciplinary meeting that both the sickness and the switching-off of the phone were deliberate and a retaliation to the unresolved conflict between the IT and some staff in the organization.

These excerpts suggest that a group of staff in the organization may interfere with the performance of others in the organization. The interference maybe intentional from the abuse while the reaction of the abused is sometimes non-intentional and therefore does not call for a disciplinary action. The low significant effect of workplace bullying on slowdown is not consistent with Bailien et al. (2009) and Salin (2001) who show that employees who experience repeated workplace bullying tend to waste time at work defending themselves and networking for support. While the study in Lira could not estimate the amount of time which abused workers would waste in slowdown, at least it provides evidence that bullied workers slow down work for different reasons, including revenge, networking for support and defending themselves against malicious accusations by bullying supervisors. The findings from Lira rather disproves Sysenck (2010), Namie (2014), and Moriya (2018) who observed that anxiety caused among others by bullying motivates individuals to work harder and faster to avoid failure.

4.3 To examine the influence of workplace bullying on teamwork among employees in civil society organizations in Lira City

This study found that workplace bullying has a low significant effect on teamwork in international non-government organizations in Lira. However, the findings agree with Lutgen-Sandvik (2005) who observed that workplace bullies disrupt interpersonal relationship and teamwork, and the synergy associated with teamwork, which diminishes productivity. The finding also concurs with the view reported by Collinson (1994) who contended that blue collar workers distance themselves from their abusers, and continuously withhold information from their abusers, which sabotage teamwork and communication. The consequence of bullying on the bullied manifests in the continued silence of the abused. There are related studies that disagree with the findings in Lira that workplace bullying affect team work. For instance, Smit (2014) and Momberg (2011) relates workplace bullying to increased costs in organizational management. While the effect of bullying on teamwork was not explicit as demonstrated in Lira, bullying was found to affect interpersonal relationships at work. Similarly, Yildiz's (2007) reports some paralysis of work in organizations where bullying is unchecked. Though the extents of bullying on paralyzing work were not investigated in Lira, there is evidence to concur with previous scholars that bullied workers sabotage the effectiveness of team operations, like the IT expert who is reported to have sabotaged work in the entire organization because of feeling mistreated. The low effect of bullying

on teamwork can be attributed to the covert tendencies of the abused in response to the bullying. This view is consistent with one interviewee when asked: How can you overcome the effects of bullying in the organization?

It is a little difficult to identify and overcome bullying in the organization. In the first place, the abuser will never act in the open that I am going to bully someone. Secondly, the abused may never report the abuse because they are not sure whether their abusers intended so...now the supervisor, who many not be the abuser may take long to notice the reactions of the abused to provide immediate solutions. I think you now understand why I said it is difficult.

Another scenario that threatens the mitigations to bullying in any organization is the absence of written rules and guidelines to handle specific actions of bullying. Right from its conceptualization, which is ambiguous, bullying actions can be disguised by supervisors as holding subordinates accountable. According to one respondent during this study, categorizing and singling out bullying in the workplace is difficult:

Exactly, what actions constitute bullying and differ from harassment? When should one report harassment or bullying? You see, it is cumbersome. The thinness of the line between the two behavioural practices makes it hard to deal with bullying.

Given the foregoing excerpts, it emerges that bullying behaviours are common in organizations but their consequences on productivity are rather implicit than explicit. It also emerges from these excerpt that handling cases of bullying is rather hard because of limited understanding of the vice, compared to other vices like harassment.

5. Conclusion

This study has found that workplace bullying negatively affect productivity in international non-governmental organizations, though the effect is generally weak, as indicated in table 4.12. This was accounted for by the fact that bullied employees continuously complain of depression and mental illness which put them in the maze of absenting from work. Even when they keep coming for work, bullied employees complain of nervous breakdown and feign sickness just to escape the hostile work environment. However, evidence from employees from international non-government organizations in Lira provides that the effects of bullying on absenteeism is not all that strong.

6. Contribution to Knowledge

From the contextual perspective, there are very few or no studies that have investigated bullying in workplaces in international non-government organizations. This study provides additional evidence to the Lira context. This area is not well researched given that workplace bullying is an emerging tort that is not yet well clarified, appreciated and recognized. From a methodological perspective, the few studies that have investigated bullying in workplaces measure

different constructs of workplace bullying against employee productivity, hence applying multiple regression. The current study has measured employee productivity on the different constructs of productivity including absenteeism, slowdown, and teamwork. This study used General Linear Model to measure the effect of bullying (an independent variable) on a set of dependent variables (absenteeism, slowdown, teamwork). This approach to analysing the nexus between workplace bullying and workers' productivity is scarce. This study has widened the methodology of measuring this relationship.

7. Recommendations

The results show that much as workplace bullying is prevalent in workplaces, it is difficult for many employees to recognize and/or identify it and single it out from other vices. As a result;

- a) Organizations (CSOs) should create awareness about what bullying is and how it can be prevented, as a starting point for creating conducive working environments.
- b) Management of international non-government organizations should not take workplace bullying lightly but should take it as something costly for organizations and therefore should be prevented or redressed by putting in place anti-bullying policies and measures.
- c) Organizations (CSOs) need to put in place policies for handling both the bullies and victims of workplace bullying.

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