

The Relationship Between Workplace Bullying and Job Stress in Female Blue Collar Workers in Indonesia

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Abstract

Introduction: Among the many risk factors for stress in the workplace, bullying is a factor that is rarely discussed. As many as 19% of people in America experience bullying at work, followed by other European countries. Bullying is a strong link to worker stress, especially in blue-collar workers. Gender differences, especially in women, also have an important prevalence in workplace bullying. In Indonesia itself, there is no data regarding bullying in the workplace, especially among women and blue-collar workers.

Objective: This study aims to find the relationship between bullying and stress in the workplace among female blue-collar workers.

Method: This research is a cross-sectional analytical study using a negative act questionnaire-revised (NAQ-R) questionnaire on work stress in female blue collar workers in garment factories, in Bekasi city, Indonesia. Job stress assessment uses the Perceived Stress Scale-10 (PSS-10) questionnaire. Other variables assessed are age, salary, marital status, and subjective questions related to workload and work communication.

Results: A total of 379 female blue collar workers in garment factories, in the city of Bekasi, Indonesia took part in this research. Workplace bullying is associated with job stress in female blue-collar workers. Workers who are often bullied tend to have medium-high levels of work stress. Bullying is the type of bullying with the highest scale.

Conclusion: Workplace bullying is the factor that has the most influence on work stress in female blue-collar workers. Then, high workloads, poor communication, and lower salaries are related to bullying and stress in the workplace.

Keywords: bullying, job, stress, female, blue, collar

Abstrak

Pendahuluan: Di antara sekian banyak faktor risiko stres di tempat kerja, bullying merupakan faktor yang jarang dibicarakan. Sebanyak 19% orang di Amerika mengalami perundungan di tempat kerja, diikuti oleh negara-negara Eropa lainnya. Penindasan (bullying) mempunyai kaitan erat dengan stres pada pekerja, terutama pada pekerja kerah biru. Perbedaan gender, terutama pada perempuan, juga mempunyai prevalensi penting dalam intimidasi di tempat kerja. Di Indonesia sendiri, belum ada data mengenai perundungan di tempat kerja, khususnya di kalangan perempuan dan pekerja kantoran.

Tujuan: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui hubungan antara bullying dan stres di tempat kerja pada pekerja kerah biru perempuan.

Metode: Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian analitik cross-sectional dengan menggunakan kuesioner negative act question-revisi (NAQ-R) terhadap stres kerja pada pekerja kerah biru perempuan di pabrik garmen, di kota Bekasi, Indonesia. Penilaian stres kerja menggunakan kuesioner Perceived Stress Scale-10 (PSS-10). Variabel lain yang dinilai adalah usia, gaji, status perkawinan, dan pertanyaan subjektif terkait beban kerja dan komunikasi kerja.

Hasil: Sebanyak 379 perempuan pekerja kerah biru di pabrik garmen, di kota Bekasi, Indonesia mengambil bagian dalam penelitian ini. Penindasan di tempat kerja dikaitkan dengan stres kerja pada pekerja kerah biru perempuan. Pekerja yang sering di-bully cenderung memiliki tingkat stres kerja yang sedang-tinggi. Bullying merupakan jenis bullying yang skalanya paling tinggi.

Kesimpulan: Bullying di tempat kerja merupakan faktor yang paling besar pengaruhnya terhadap stres kerja pada pekerja kerah biru perempuan. Kemudian, beban kerja yang tinggi, komunikasi yang buruk, dan gaji yang rendah berhubungan dengan perundungan dan stres di tempat kerja.

Kata kunci: bullying, kerja, stres, wanita, biru, kerah

Introduction

Among the many risk factors for stress in the workplace, bullying is rarely discussed. The phenomenon of workplace bullying was first described by Swedish researcher Heinz Leymann (1984), who defined workplace bullying as hostile and unethical communication that occurs at least once a week for a minimum of 6 months.¹ A survey report in the United States in 2017 showed that 19 % of Americans have experienced bullying at work, while another 19% have witnessed such acts, and 63% have identified bullying in their workplace.¹ There are some data on the prevalence of bullying in Sweden (3.3%), Finland (16 %), France (10.2%), Norway (11%), Belgium (8.3%) and Denmark (5.8%).^{2,3} Literature studies suggest that the prevalence and persistence of workplace bullying can be very influenced by the extent of national culture in each country and also influenced by organizational culture and the hierarchical structure of the company.⁴

Blue-collar workers are the type of worker who does manual or physical work. Types of work that are categorized as blue-collar include workers in manufacturing, warehousing, mining, quarrying, power plants, and many other types of physical work.⁵ Bullying is a strong link between stress and the physical health of workers, especially in blue collar workers. Finstad et.al (2019), stated about their research in Rome, Italy, that stress has a significant relationship with workplace bullying ($p=0.001$) and workplace bullying is related to workers' physical health. Meanwhile, independently there is no significance between stress and workers' physical health ($p=0.21$).⁶ Blue-collar workers generally have high levels of stress. The addition of bullying factors in the workplace will further manifest stress into a medical complaint.^{7,8}

Not only the type of work, but gender differences also have an important prevalence in workplace bullying. In research conducted by Akhter et al (2019), it was found that 20 female workers in this study reported that their superiors often shouted, insulted, criticized, and spoke rudely to them at work. Yelling was the most common type of harassment and women felt that supervisors lacked empathy. Looking at demographic factors, the role of women in the global market, several organizations or institutions, and sexist culture in the work environment make the risk of bullying for female workers higher in the workplace.⁷

In Indonesia there is no data regarding bullying in the workplace, especially among women and blue-collar workers. This research aims to find the relationship between bullying and stress in the workplace among female blue-collar workers.

Method

This research is a cross-sectional analytical study (Cross-Sectional) using the Indonesian version of the negative behavior questionnaire (NAQ-R) on work stress in female 66 blue collar workers in garment factories, in Bekasi city, Indonesia. A higher NAQ-R score reflects a higher level of bullying. The only workers included were female workers who had worked for at least 6 months during the research period in August 2023. Job stress assessment used the Indonesian version of the Perceived Stress Scale-10 (PSS-10) questionnaire. A PSS-10 score of <14 indicates mild stress, 14-26 represents moderate stress, and ≥ 27 represents high stress. Other variables assessed were age (cut-off 40 years), salary (rupiah), marital status, and subjective questions related to workload and work communication. The question used to assess workload is "Regarding the work you are currently doing, how much workload do you feel?" with three choice scales: low, medium/fair, and high. Meanwhile, the question used to assess work communication is "In carrying out your duties at work, how do you communicate and interact with your co-workers?" with the same three choice scales. Bivariate analysis was conducted to analyze the relation between workplace bullying and job stress. Multivariate analysis was carried out on variables related to or determinants of job stress.

Result

A total of 379 blue collar female workers in garment factories, in Bekasi city, Indonesia took part in this research, with all respondents working only 8 hours a day and there was no shift pattern. The majority of garment factory workers are under 40 years old 85 (81.8%) and married (58.3%). Workers in this study had salaries that tended to be homo-geneous, with an average of 5.19 million rupiah (± 0.307) a minimum salary of 5.2 million, and a maximum of 5.5 million.

The workload is assessed from the subjective question “Regarding the work you are currently doing, how much workload do you feel?” has a moderate/fair proportion of 74.9%. Only 0.5% of workers felt they had a high workload, and the rest felt they had a low workload (24.6%). Meanwhile, work communication is assessed from the subjective question “In carrying out your duties at work, how do you communicate and interact with your co-workers?” most felt their communication was good (70.1%) and sufficient (29.9%). No one feels that communication at work is lacking. PSS-10 has 10 statement items that describe personal stress measures to help measure individual stress levels. A total of 280 workers (73.8%) were categorized as moderate work stress (14-26), while 24.6% of workers were categorized as low stress (14-26). 0-13). Only 1.6% of workers fall into the high-stress category (≥ 27).

The NAQ-R questionnaire has 25 statement items, statement no. 1-22 is an agreement scale of 1-5 (never – every day) while statements 23-25 are descriptions of the characteristics of bullies. According to the literature review, the NAQ-R is structured based on three factors, namely as follows: 1. Person-related bullying is a negative treatment that targets the victim’s duties and work. Represented by statements number 2, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 12, 15, 17, 20 and 22; 2. Work-related bullying is bullying that aims to humiliate the victim by giving them work that is different from their main duties. Represented by statements number 1, 3, 4, 14, 16, 19, 21. and Intimidation bullying is an unpleasant negative treatment shown by the perpetrator. Represented statements number 8, 11, 13 and 18.

The NAQ-R assessment results have a mean score of 23.3 (± 2.41) with a median of 22 and a minimum score of 20 to a maximum of 41. Table 1 below illustrates the distribution of answers to the NAQ-R questionnaire among female blue-collar workers. calculated from the total frequency of choices on the approval scale multiplied by the respective approval scale index. The percentage is obtained from the agreement score divided by the maximum score (agreement scale 5) for all respondents (379 workers).

Based on the table 1, the risk factor for bullying according to the NAQ-R risk group that occurs in female blue collar workers is intimidation bullying with a total agreement value of 103.7 (5.4%). For the biggest type of bullying according to item number 11, the statement is “I am constantly reminded of my mistakes and negligence” with an agreement scale value of 167

(8.81%). The next table describes the characteristics of bullies according to questions 23-25 of the NAQ-R questionnaire.

Based on the table 2, it was found that the majority of respondents felt that the treatment received in item no. 1-22 was not bullying (60.7%). Most often the perpetrators of bullying were not mentioned (61.5%) but as many as 20.1% said that coworkers were the perpetrators of bullying most often. The gender of the bully was female at 68.1% and only a small percentage of workers said the bully was male (0.8%).

Multivariate analysis was carried out on all variables that were bivariate related ($p < 0.05$) or determinants ($p < 0.25$), and material status was only a determinant ($p = 0.172$). Moreover, workload, communication, salary, and the NAQ-R bullying scale have a significant relationship with work stress ($p < 0.05$). A logistic regression test is used to conclude work stress. Table 3 shows the multivariate relationship between all these variables.

Based on the table 3 and 4, it is found that the variables that remain related to the perception of stress are bullying (NAQ-R), workload, communication, and work salary. Workers with medium-high workloads have a risk of perceiving moderate-high work stress 2.45x (CI 1.4-4.1) than workers with low workloads. Workers with sufficient communication have a 2.13x risk (CI 1.2-3.6) of perceived moderate-high work stress compared to workers with good communication. Even so, the most influential variable is bullying (NAQ-R) with a Wald score of 11.5. Workers with medium-high PSS-10 scores have a higher mean bullying score (NAQ-R).

Discussion

Intimidation bullying is a type of unpleasant negative treatment displayed by bullies. 10 Represented by statements number 8, 11, 13, and 18, on the NAQ-R questionnaire, this type of bullying is the type of bullying with the highest scale for female blue collar workers. ”These results are slightly different from the results of research conducted by Erwandi et al, (2021)8 research conducted on various types of work shows that the work related bullying aspect is higher than the intimidation bullying aspect. Aspects of question descriptions 23-25 discuss workers’ perceptions regarding bullying and the

Table 1. Distribution of NAQ-R Scores for statement items no. 1-22

| Factor | No | Statement | Approval Score | % of maximum score (1895) |
|--------------------------------|----|---|----------------|---------------------------|
| <i>Person related bullying</i> | 2 | I was embarrassed or laughed at because of things related to my work | 62 | 3,27% |
| | 12 | I was ignored or received a hostile reaction when I approached someone | 47 | 2,48% |
| | 15 | I was the victim of jokes from people who didn't get along with me | 36 | 1,90% |
| | 5 | Some people spread gossip and rumors about me | 34 | 1,79% |
| | 7 | I was insulted or received harsh words about myself (e.g. about my habits and background, attitude, or personal life) | 32 | 1,69% |
| | 10 | I received innuendo or signs from other colleagues that I should resign from my job | 26 | 1,37% |
| | 6 | I was ignored or excluded (considered non-existent) in my work environment | 18 | 0,95% |
| | 20 | I became the target of ridicule and sarcasm | 17 | 0,90% |
| | 17 | I have been accused of wrongdoing or illegal actions without evidence | 10 | 0,53% |
| | 9 | I received intimidating treatment such as being pointed at, violating personal space/privacy, being pushed, being hindered/impeded when walking | 8 | 0,42% |
| | 22 | I received threats of physical or verbal violence or harassment | 6 | 0,32% |
| Total Score | | | 296/11=26,9 | 1,42% |
| <i>Work related bullying</i> | 14 | My opinions and views were not heard | 111 | 5,86% |
| | 3 | I was ordered to do work below my level of competence | 45 | 2,37% |
| | 4 | My main responsibilities are eliminated or replaced with more trivial/unimportant/low/unpleasant tasks | 24 | 1,27% |
| | 19 | I am not allowed to take what is rightfully mine at work (e.g. sick leave, holiday entitlements, travel expenses) | 22 | 1,16% |
| | 16 | I was given assignments with unreasonable targets or deadlines | 21 | 1,11% |
| | 21 | I was given a workload that I couldn't possibly manage | 18 | 0,95% |
| | 1 | Someone is withholding information that affects my performance | 2 | 0,11% |
| Total Score | | | 243/7=34,71 | 1,83% |
| <i>Intimidation bullying</i> | 8 | I was shouted at or became the target of spontaneous anger (or spontaneous tantrums) | 53 | 2,80% |
| | 11 | I am constantly reminded of my mistakes and omissions | 167 | 8,81% |
| | 13 | I constantly receive criticism regarding my work and business | 126 | 6,65% |
| | 18 | I am excessively supervised at my workplace | 69 | 3,64% |
| | 8 | I was shouted at or became the target of spontaneous anger (or spontaneous tantrums) | 53 | 2,80% |
| Total Score | | | 415/4=103,7 | 5,4% |

Table 2. Distribution of NAQ-R Scores for statement items no. 23-25

| Bullying NAR-Q (point 23-25) | | Frequency (n=379) | % |
|---|--|----------------------|-------|
| 23. Have you experienced bullying? | | | |
| | No | 230 | 60,7% |
| | Yes, But Rarely | 120 | 31,7% |
| | Yes, Sometimes | 28 | 7,4% |
| | Yes, Several Days a week | 1 | 0,3% |
| | Yes, almost every day | 0 | 0,0% |
| 24. Bullies | | | |
| (*there are several options selected simultaneously by respondents) | | | |
| | Direct supervisor | 63 | 16,6% |
| | Other superiors/managers in the organization | 4 | 1,1% |
| | Work colleague | 76 | 20,1% |
| | Subordinate | 3 | 0,8% |
| | Customers/Patient/Students | 0 | 0,0% |
| | Others | 5 | 1,3% |
| | Not mentioned | 233 | 61,5% |
| 25. Gender of the bully | | | |
| | Male | 3 | 0,8% |
| | Female | 258 | 68,1% |
| | Not mentioned | 123 | 31,1% |

Table 3. Relationship between work stress (PSS-10) and worker characteristics (multivariate)

| Variable | PSS-10 Low Stress (<14) | % from Variable group | PSS-10 Medium- High Stress (≥14) | % from Variable group | P-value / Odd Ratio (Bivariate) | P-value / Odd Ratio (Multivariate) | Wald |
|-----------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|---|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|--|------|
| Matrrial Status | | | | | | | |
| Not Married | 76 | 48,1% | 82 | 51,9% | Reference | Reference | 1,43 |
| Married | 122 | 55,2% | 99 | 44,8% | 0,172 | 0,23 | |
| Workload | | | | | | | |
| Low | 558 | 62,4% | 35 | 37,6% | Reference | Reference | 11,1 |
| Medium- | 140 | 49% | 146 | 51% | 0,024 | 0,001 | |
| High | | | | | | OR:2,13 x (CI 1,4-3,6) | |
| Communication | | | | | | | |
| Good | 74 | 65,5% | 39 | 34,5% | Reference | Reference | 8,0 |
| Adequate | 124 | 46,6% | 142 | 53,4% | 0,001 | 0,004 | |
| | | | | | OR:2,085x(CI 1,3-3,2) | OR:2,13 x (CI 1,2-3,6) | |

Table 4. Relationship between workplace bullying (NAQ-R), salary and job stress (PSS-10)

| | PSS-10 Low Stress (<14) | PSS-10 Medium-High Stress (≥14) | P-value (bivariate) | P-value (multivariate) | Wald |
|------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------|------------------------|------|
| Average NAQ-R | 22,77 (±1,54) | 23,89 (±3,00) | <0,001* | 0,001 | 11,5 |
| Salary (million) | 5,29 (±0,529) | 5,18 (±0,481) | <0,001** | 0,026 | 4,9 |

Note: *Independent T-Test; ** Mann-Whitney

characteristics of bullies. In this study, 60.7% felt that the treatment they experienced was not bullying. This is by research conducted by Erwandi et al, (2021)⁸, in fact, this research shows a higher percentage, namely 89.9%. Furthermore, this research is consistent with reference research, namely that they both mention co-workers who are the biggest perpetrators of bullying. In this study, 20.1% of coworkers were mentioned as perpetrators of bullying, although 61.5% chose not to mention who the perpetrators were. The gender of the bully is different from the reference research because in this study the majority were female workers so they cannot be compared. However, research by Erwandi et al, (2021)⁸ shows that men bully more often than women.

In this study, workload, communication, salary, and the NAQ-R bullying scale had a significant relationship with work stress (multivariate $p < 0.05$), while marital status (determinant) and age had no relationship with work stress. High workloads, poor communication, and lower salaries are associated with bullying and stress in the workplace. According to a literature review, work stress is related to workers' age,⁶ marital status,⁹ economic factors, and workload.¹⁰ Furthermore, poor communication is considered to be the beginning of bullying.¹⁰ Relationships at work are another main source of stress in the workplace, referring to communication relationships with superiors, subordinates, and co-workers. Lack of supervisor attention seems to have contributed significantly to feelings of pressure at work.¹¹ Economic factors are indirectly associated with work stress. According to Brunner et al., (2019), economic factors indirectly increase work stress through their influence on productivity.¹² Workers with low economic conditions tend to have low work productivity, and vice versa so the balance between work and income is disturbed.¹²

Bullying based on the NAQ-R questionnaire is the most influential factor in female blue-collar workers in this study. Workers with medium-high PSS-10 scores

have a higher mean bullying score. The factors that influence workplace bullying are quite complex. From the literature obtained, there are three factors related to bullying in the workplace, namely the continuation of negative behavior regularly, the consequent impact on morale and health, and inappropriate behavior towards workers.^{15,16} This work-reward imbalance^{10,13} causes work stress which is one of the most important occupational factors reported in empirical studies, and is strongly and positively associated with bullying.^{13,14}

This research has a weakness in that this research cannot maximize work shift and working time variables, because all workers have the same working time and there is no work shift pattern (only the morning shift). In this research, workload, and work communication were assessed subjectively based on 1 question. It is hoped that further research can assess workload and work communication using a more specific questionnaire.

This discussion delves into the intricate dynamics of workplace bullying and its correlation with job stress among female blue-collar workers in Indonesia. By examining the issue at micro (employee), meso (company), and macro (policy) levels, we aim to propose a holistic approach for managing workplace bullying. At the micro level, understanding the experiences of individual employees is crucial. Workplace bullying significantly impacts job stress among female blue-collar workers, leading to adverse effects on mental health and job satisfaction.¹⁵ Intervention strategies at this level may involve employee counseling, training programs, and support networks to empower victims.¹⁶ At the meso level, organizations play a pivotal role in addressing workplace bullying. Companies must establish clear anti-bullying policies, conduct regular awareness programs, and foster a positive organizational culture that promotes respect and inclusivity.¹⁷ Additionally, implementing reporting mechanisms and ensuring swift resolution of complaints is crucial for creating a safe working environment. Macro-level interventions involve government and industry-wide policies

to address workplace bullying systematically. The Indonesian government should enact and enforce robust labor laws that explicitly address workplace bullying, outlining penalties for noncompliance.¹⁸ Collaborative efforts between government agencies, trade unions, and employers can enhance the effectiveness of these policies.

This comprehensive approach, addressing workplace bullying at the micro, meso, and macro levels, is essential for creating a safe and conducive work environment for female blue-collar workers in Indonesia. It requires a collaborative effort from individual employees, companies, and policymakers to combat the detrimental effects of workplace bullying on job stress.

Conclusions

Workplace bullying is related to job stress among blue-collar female workers. Employees who experience frequent bullying (with higher average bullying scores) tend to have moderate to high levels of job stress. Intimidation bullying is the type of bullying with the highest scale. Furthermore, high workload, poor communication, and lower wages are associated with bullying and stress in the workplace.

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