

Workplace Bullying: The Perceptions of Canadian University Students

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The purpose of this study was to determine whether future organizational leaders considered behaviors associated with workplace bullying to be ethical. The research question is; Is there a difference between female and male Canadian university students' perceptions of the morality of workplace bullying behaviors? During a 6-month period, 300 undergraduate university students completed an online survey. The findings suggest that certain bullying behaviors are morally unacceptable and others as not.

Field of Research: Ethics, Leadership, Management

1. Introduction

Workplace bullying is an epidemic which leaders, legislators, and society can no longer ignore. Millions of employees are silently carrying the burden of this epidemic. Thirty-five percent of employees regularly experience bullying (Workplace Bullying Institute, 2013). With the increase of organizational restructuring efforts, economic uncertainty, and an overall instability in the global marketplace, many more employees will become the targets of workplace bullying. An increase level of stress due to organizational and job-related changes may be the catalyst for workplace bullying (Wilkin, 2010). Workplace bullying is an ethical dilemma as targeted persons' rights are violated or denied. Immanuel Kant as cited by Cross & Miller (2009) believed that "human beings are qualitatively different from other physical objects and are endowed with moral integrity and the capacity to reason and conduct their affairs rationally. Therefore, a person's thoughts and actions should be respected" (p. 88). Workplace bullies disrespect targeted persons and thus violate their moral rights.

The epidemic will continue to increase, primarily, due to the absence of anti-bullying legislation in many states and provinces, and the absence of effective anti-bullying policies and procedures in organizations. The absence of these key control mechanisms is an invitation for some individuals to bully others. Workplace bullies have the freedom to treat employees in any manner they choose as long as they do not violate human or civil rights laws pertaining to gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, race or religion.

Though anti-bullying legislation has been introduced in a few countries, to date, only three Canadian provinces have adopted anti-bullying legislation. Anti-bullying laws currently exist in the following countries; Sweden, which was the first country to adopt anti-bullying laws in 1994, Britain (2001), France (2002), and Australia (2005). Legislation exists in the provinces

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of Saskatchewan (1993), Quebec (2004) and Ontario (2010). *Boucher v. Wal-Mart Canada Corp.* (2014 ONCA 419) is a landmark case pertaining to workplace bullying in Ontario, Canada. It was the largest damage award in Canadian history, as a jury awarded Meredith Boucher \$1.4 million in punitive damages. However, the award was significantly reduced on appeal.

Though bullying behaviors, for the most part, are legal in many provinces, the question becomes whether such behaviors are ethical or not. Since leaders are primarily responsible for creating the ethical environment in organizations, this study focuses on the perceptions of future organizational leaders to determine if they perceive bullying behaviors as morally acceptable. The motivation for this study is the absence of existing research regarding Canadian undergraduate university students' perceptions of workplace bullying. Current research regarding university students and bullying focuses on their experiences as targeted persons (Coleyshaw, 2010; Chapell, Casey, De la Cruz, Ferrell, 2004). The research does not explore the students' perceptions of bullying behaviors and does not pertain to Canadian university students. This study differs from previous studies in that it is an examination of the perceptions of Canadian university students who are preparing to become future organizational leaders. The students' perceptions of bullying behaviors are pertinent because perceptions influence attitudes, behaviors and interactions with others. The research question this study addresses is; Is there a difference between female and male university students' perceptions of the morality of bullying behaviors in the workplace? The research findings in this study differ from previous findings regarding workplace bullying in that they represent Canadian university students' perceptions of bullying behaviors and whether they are perceived to be morally acceptable. The findings suggest that certain bullying behaviors are ethical and thus are acceptable for leaders to rely on when interacting with others. This study contributes to the body of knowledge pertaining to workplace bullying in Canada (Chapell, Casey, De, Ferrell, 2004; Coleyshaw, 2010). The study is significant in that it reveals a gap between the Canadian university students' perceptions of bullying behaviors and prosocial behaviors. Closing this gap will lead to a decrease in workplace bullying.

A major limitation of the study is the minimal work experience of the participants. The majority of participants had 1 month to 10 years of work experience. Another limitation is the absence of exposure to workplace bullying behaviors due to limited work experience. This study is limited to behaviors associated with workplace bullying only and doesn't focus on various types of harassment such as sexual, gender or racial. An outline of the article follows. The first section explores the ethical behaviors within the leader-employee relationship. The second section presents a discussion of the influence of organizational culture and prosocial behaviors. The third section exams the ethics of leadership behavior. The remaining sections include a discussion of the study's methodology, the findings, a summary and conclusion.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Ethical Behaviors in the Leader-Employee Relationship

Organizations are entities consisting of human beings who depend on a universality of ethical sense when interacting with each other. The expectation is that all individuals including leaders will embrace a societal moral code of conduct. A contravention of the moral code of

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conduct occurs when leaders resort to bullying behaviors. Leaders who bully not only contravene the moral code of conduct; they violate a universal principle known as the golden rule, which is treating others as one would want to be treated. Thus people are to adopt behaviors towards others, they deem to be acceptable to receive if they are the recipients of such behaviors. The golden rule provides the moral underpinning for leaders' attitudes and behaviors towards employees.

Ethics is essential to the leader-employee relationship as it establishes and reinforces organizational values (Northouse, 2010). Albert Schweitzer suggested that ethics could only evolve when there was a sense of solidarity between human beings. In workplaces today, a sense of solidarity rarely exists between leaders and employees due to the patriarchal nature of the relationship. The leader-employee relationship is patriarchal because a need exists for individuals in positions of authority to focus their attention on maintaining control, consistency and predictability (Block, 1993). In an effort to maintain control, consistency and predictability some leaders resort to behaviors that are not morally acceptable and are unethical. The leaders' behaviors inevitably stifle employee growth, creativity and performance (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; Senge, 1990). Leaders who embrace ethical leadership promote respect in the workplace. When leaders respect others, they allow them to be themselves by providing collaborative support and conveying unconditional worth and appreciation (Onorato, 2013).

The nature of the patriarchal relationship between leaders and employees may cause some leaders to resort to bullying behaviors in order to achieve organizational and personal goals. The leaders achieve their goals by relying on behaviors that devalue and harm unsuspecting employees (Barrow & Mirabella, 2009). Their personal ambitions and desires may supersede organizational concerns and employee well being thus laying the foundation for bullying to occur (Albert, 2002; Byrne, Arndt, Zellner, & McNamee, 2002; Webber, 2002, Barrow & Mirabella, 2009). When leaders rely on behaviors that are self-interested; they are not only contributing to a culture of uncertainty and incivility; they may be embracing unethical behaviors.

2.2 Organizational Culture and Prosocial Behaviors

Leaders are instrumental in creating an organization's culture. They set the tone for how employees will interact with each other. Some leaders embrace prosocial behaviors that uphold the value and dignity of employees. Other leaders rely on behaviors that further their personal agendas while devaluing and harming employees. Leaders who choose to embrace unethical and harmful behaviors often interact with employees with little or no regard for the negative consequences that may occur. Leaders who choose not to adopt prosocial behaviors are negatively influencing the culture of the organization and thus create the foundation for a bully-prone environment to exist. An organization's culture influences its' climate. The climate consists of shared perceptions of procedures, policies and practices that govern behaviors. When bullying occurs in the workplace it is an ethical transgression that can be traced to the influence of ethical work climates (Arnaud, 2010).

Some leaders resort to unethical and harmful behaviors when the organizational culture is devoid of high ethical standards, and when organizations fail to hold leaders accountable for

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their actions. Accountability ensures that individuals complete agreements and tasks in a respectful manner (Harber & Ball, 2003). Though organizations appear to be in control of the actions of individuals it may be an illusion (Senge, 1990). The illusion of control is evident when a culture of unaccountability exists. Perhaps the illusion exists because the organization's moral compass needs recalibration or replacement with a stronger, more durable moral compass (Gibbs, 2002; Hollingworth, 2002; Meisinger, 2002; O'Toole, 1996; Sonnenfeld, 2002).

Relationships between leaders and employees create a sense of community within the organization. A community is a psychological reality (Rousseau, 1991). When bullying behaviors exist within an organization, they disrupt the psychological reality for targeted employees. The disruption creates a yearning for a sense of community and connection with leaders. Leaders can recreate the sense of community for employees by aligning their attitudes and behaviors with Immanuel Kant's philosophical position of people treating humanity as an end and never as a means and by ensuring that their motives are moral. Kant's categorical imperative suggests that rational persons are bound by one universal command; to uphold the value and respect of rational creatures (Borowski, 1998).

2.3 The Ethics of Leadership Behaviors

The existence of interdependency between organizations, leaders and employees creates a need for shared preconceived notions regarding correct behavior (McCoy, 1997). Behaviors are correct when they are in alignment with universal societal moral and ethical standards. Unfortunately, some leaders rely on behaviors that are immoral, unethical and harmful to employees. The callousness and lack of compassion shown by these leaders negatively affects employees and creates a climate that devalues employees' needs and emotions (Dutton, Frost, Worline, Lilius, & Kanov, 2002; Freed, 2000; Hunter, 2002; Sheehan, 1999; Webber, 2002). Leaders in such a climate tend to see and treat employees as unfeeling, unemotional, inanimate objects; thus, leaders devalue their employees and their well being (Kimura, 2003; O'Toole, 1996; Wren, 1995). Leaders who adopt an uncaring, uncompassionate and detached leadership approach may resort to bullying behaviors when interacting with employees. These behaviors eventually negatively affect employees, the organization and ultimately society.

Leaders who rely on bullying behaviors view employees as viable means for achieving goals rather than as an end. Instead of valuing the humanness of employees, such leaders treat employees as inanimate, disposable objects. Resorting to bullying behaviors is a violation of the universal command from which Kant's categorical imperative derives. Leaders who bully employees devalue and disrespect rational creatures and are treating employees as an end rather than a means. Thus according to Kant's categorical imperative the behaviors are morally unacceptable because the leaders are failing to give employees the respect they deserve. Crane and Matten (2004) suggest that rights are to be respected and protected in all actions. Werhane, Radin, & Bowie (2004) further posit that moral rights extend to employees regardless of the working conditions. Moral rights include the well being of employees, which Ariss (2003) states is one of those rights.

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Understanding the ethical implications of leaders' behaviors is important to examine as the behaviors significantly influence workplace relationships. Leaders and employees perceive their relationship to be a psychological contract that exists due to their employment relationship. When leaders rely on bully behaviors to control employees, they breach the psychological contract by causing harm to targeted employees. Bullying behaviors are harmful as they cause leaders to ignore their responsibility of interacting with employees in a just, moral and fair fashion.

Leaders who bully employees often concern themselves with their personal interests rather than the interests of others. Such leaders rely on rational self-interest behaviors defined as "thinking and acting in a manner that is expected to lead to an optimal or maximum result for a person on the basis of consideration of the person's values and risk preferences" (Meglino & Korsgaard, 2007, p. 946). Because relationships are seen as transactional in nature and void of emotion, rational self-interested leaders rely on systematic reasoning to ensure that their personal goals are met. Rational self-interested leaders tend to concern themselves with organizational objectives coupled with a self-emphasis (Barrow & Mirabella, 2009).

Unlike rational self-interested leaders, other-oriented leaders focus their attention on organizational objectives coupled with a human resource emphasis (Barrow & Mirabella, 2009). Other-oriented leaders rely on the internalization, adherence and enforcement of societal norms rather than systematic reasoning (Meglino & Korsgaard, 2007). Other-oriented leaders embrace prosocial behaviors that promote and uphold the value of employees.

Transactional leadership is an example of a leadership approach that projects self-interest by nature. Transactional leadership focuses on the exchange between leaders and followers, with both parties receiving something of value (Boerner, Eisenbeiss, & Griesser, 2007). The employees perform tasks and leaders monetarily reward them for their efforts. Transactional leaders are those leaders who do not focus on the individual needs of their followers; rather they look to exchange things of value to advance their own and their followers' agendas (Northhouse, 2010). Transactional leaders use positive and negative motivation. Positive motivation focuses on praise, promise and rewards. Negative motivation focuses on negative feedback, threats or disciplinary action (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999).

Transactional leaders avoid taking positive action as long as the goals of the organization are being met (Humphreys, 2001; Kuhnert & Lewis, 1987). They use either contingent awards or management by exception. Contingent awards focus on the exchange of rewards for meeting goals or objectives. Management by exception focuses on negative feedback and corrective action, a punitive approach to management (Northhouse, 2010). In other cases of management by exception, leaders take a hands-off approach and avoid leading.

With transactional leadership, the transaction becomes more important than the employees' well being. Leaders are not interested in nurturing and preserving relationships with employees; they are interested in ensuring that tasks are completed in order to achieve desired outcomes. This myopic view of the leader-employee relationship sets the foundation for toxic interactions, as preserving the humanness and dignity of employees is not a priority (Barrow, 2009).

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A review of the literature related to workplace bullying revealed the absence of research related to Canadian university students' perceptions of workplace bullying. Previous research studies have not explored the differences between female and male university students' perceptions of the morality of bullying behaviors in the workplace. The research focused on the bullying experiences of students in university and not their perceptions of bullying in the workplace. In addition, previous studies have focused on current leaders and not on university students preparing for future roles as leaders.

3. Methodology

A quantitative method utilizing a correlational design was used in the study to determine whether future organizational leaders considered behaviors associated with workplace bullying to be ethical. The research question is; Is there a difference between female and male university students' perceptions of the morality of bullying behaviors in the workplace? The null hypothesis is; H_0 : There is no significant difference between female and male university students' perceptions of the morality of bullying behaviors in the workplace. The alternative hypothesis is; H_1 : There is a significant difference between female and male university students' perceptions of the morality of bullying behaviors in the workplace.

During a 6-month period, 300 undergraduate university business students completed an online survey. The students were in their second year of studies. A University Research Ethics Board approved the study. Participation was voluntary. Due to the sensitive nature of the topic, participants' identity remained anonymous. Participants provided consent by completing and submitting the survey. Participants provided demographic information, which consisted of their gender, age, employment status, length of service, year of study, and industry. Data were collected to determine if a relationship existed between demographics and their length of service and employment status as the literature is devoid of analysis pertaining to the variables as they relate to workplace bullying. Fifty-four percent of the participants were female. Forty-six percent of the participants were male. Eighty-five percent of the participants were between the ages of 18 and 30. Fifteen percent were 31 years old and older. Fifty-four percent of participants were part-time employees. Eighteen percent of participants were full-time employees and twenty-eight percent were co-op students. Ninety percent of participants had a length of service of 1 month to 10 years and ten percent of participants had a length of service of 10 years or more. Eighty-one percent of participants worked in the service industry and nineteen percent worked in manufacturing. Forty-nine percent of participants were in their second year of studies, thirty-eight percent were in their third year of studies and thirteen percent were in their fourth year of studies. Forty-nine percent of participants majored in business. Twenty-one percent of participants were accounting majors, two percent were human resource management majors, and twenty-eight percent identified their major as other.

The online survey consisted of 14 statements representing behaviors that are commonly associated with workplace bullying. Using a 5- point Likert type scale rating from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5), participants were asked to rate bullying behaviors based on their experiences. The categories for bullying behaviors as set forth by Rayner and Hoel (1997) are:

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- Threat to Professional Status: humiliating the person in public or sabotaging the person's work.
- Threat to Personal Standing: name calling, spreading malicious rumors about a person, teasing or intimidating a person.
- Isolation: preventing access to opportunities or isolating the person physically or socially.
- Overwork: imposing undue pressure to produce work and setting impossible deadlines.
- Destabilization: failing to give credit where it is due, failure to acknowledge or reward, assigning meaningless tasks, removing responsibility or setting the person up for failure.

An online survey used in a previous study conducted by Barrow, Kolberg, Mirabella, & Roter (2013) was modified for this study. The early study consisted of the 14 statements representing workplace bullying. The current study revised the statements to include the phrase "It is morally acceptable to " followed by the behavior. By incorporating this phrase, the previous survey was improved and provided more clarity of perceptions.

4. The Findings

An independent sample t-test was conducted to assess whether there are any statistical significant differences between female and male university business students' perceptions regarding whether bullying behaviors are morally acceptable. The research question this study addresses is; Is there a difference between female and male university students' perceptions of the morality of bullying behaviors in the workplace? The corresponding null hypothesis is; H_0 : There is no significant difference between female and male university students' perceptions of the morality of bullying behaviors in the workplace. The alternative hypothesis is; H_1 : There is a significant difference between female and male university students' perceptions of the morality of bullying behaviors in the workplace. The means, 95% confidence intervals and standard deviations for female and male students' responses are represented in Table 1.

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Table 1: Means, 95% Confidence Intervals & Standard Deviations For Bullying Behavior Statements

Bullying Behavior Statements	Means		95% Confidence Intervals		Standard Deviations	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
It is morally acceptable to publicly humiliate a person during a business meeting.	1.24	1.32	1.154 - 1.319	1.230-1.412	0.517	0.568
It is morally acceptable to regularly isolate a person from his or her colleagues.	1.51	1.29	1.411 - 1.611	1.195-1.378	0.687	0.505
It is morally acceptable to regularly tease a person at work.	1.29	1.55	1.197 - 1.385	1.448-1.656	0.552	0.678
It is morally acceptable to sabotage a person's work.	1.18	1.18	1.101 - 1.251	1.100-1.265	0.481	0.503
It is morally acceptable to fail to acknowledge a person for the work he or she has done.	1.55	1.69	1.440 - 1.658	1.567-1.805	0.729	0.683
It is morally acceptable to regularly assign meaningless tasks to an employee.	1.66	1.82	1.548 - 1.769	1.694-1.938	0.722	0.722
It is morally acceptable to regularly provide unreasonable deadlines for an employee to meet.	1.45	1.64	1.350 - 1.547	1.534-1.751	0.578	0.715
It is morally acceptable to spread rumors about an employee.	1.25	1.26	1.153 - 1.338	1.162-1.363	0.557	0.645
It is morally acceptable to regularly deny a qualified employee a job promotion.	1.44	1.74	1.333 - 1.549	1.625-1.860	0.660	0.740
It is morally acceptable to withhold acknowledgements or rewards to a person who has performed well.	1.55	1.64	1.439 - 1.653	1.527-1.761	0.687	0.696
It is morally acceptable to resort to threats, anger and yelling when interacting with an employee.	1.27	1.33	1.180 - 1.354	1.235-1.427	0.531	0.609
It is morally acceptable to regularly rely on behaviors that harm an employee.	1.26	1.36	1.165 - 1.350	1.257-1.458	0.551	0.650
In an effort to hold a person known to bully others accountable for his actions it is morally acceptable to tease, threaten, isolate, spread rumors about him and publicly humiliate him.	1.54	1.33	1.436 - 1.644	1.239-1.428	0.653	0.588
Depending on the situation and the people involved, bullying is morally acceptable.	1.46	1.28	1.360 - 1.567	1.185-1.373	0.688	0.548

All responses to statements were analyzed using independent t-test. Table 2 represents the means, variances and standard deviations for the three hundred university students' responses to the bullying behavior statements.

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Table 2: Mean, Variance, & Standard Deviation

Statements	N=300	Mean	Variance	Standard Deviation
It is morally acceptable to publicly humiliate a person during a business meeting.		1.28	0.29493	0.54308
It is morally acceptable to sabotage a person's work.		1.18	0.24093	0.49085
It is morally acceptable to fail to acknowledge a person for the work he or she has done.		1.62	0.50146	0.70814
It is morally acceptable to spread rumors about an employee.		1.25	0.35582	0.59651
It is morally acceptable to withhold acknowledgements or rewards to a person who has performed well.		1.6	0.47266	0.68750
It is morally acceptable to resort to threats, anger and yelling when interacting with an employee.		1.31	0.33262	0.57673
It is morally acceptable to regularly rely on behaviors that harm an employee.		1.31	0.35929	0.59941
It is morally acceptable to regularly isolate a person from his or her colleagues.		1.4	0.37333	0.61101
It is morally acceptable to regularly tease a person at work.		1.42	0.38972	0.62428
It is morally acceptable to regularly assign meaningless tasks to an employee.		1.74	0.51746	0.71934
It is morally acceptable to regularly provide unreasonable deadlines for an employee to meet.		1.55	0.42116	0.64896
It is morally acceptable to regularly deny a qualified employee a job promotion.		1.58	0.5036	0.70965
In an effort to hold a person known to bully others accountable for his actions it is morally acceptable to tease, threaten, isolate, spread rumors about him and publicly humiliate him.		1.43	0.39222	0.62628
Depending on the situation and the people involved, bullying is morally acceptable.		1.37	0.38643	0.62164

To determine whether statistical differences exist between the perceptions of female and male university students as it pertains to bullying behaviors. With a significance level of .05 and a two-tailed hypothesis, $df= 299$, there are no statistical differences between perceptions of seven bullying behaviors (Table 3). The results are not significant at $p < 0.05$ for the statements.

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Table 3: T-Values & P-Values For Statements With No Statistical Differences

Statements	T-Value	P-Value	Standard Deviation
It is morally acceptable to publicly humiliate a person during a business meeting.	1.383919	0.167409	0.541
It is morally acceptable to sabotage a person's work.	0.21174	0.832452	0.491
It is morally acceptable to fail to acknowledge a person for the work he or she has done.	1.727486	0.085103	0.709
It is morally acceptable to spread rumors about an employee.	0.332344	0.739861	0.598
It is morally acceptable to withhold acknowledgements or rewards to a person who has performed well.	1.286826	0.19914	0.691
It is morally acceptable to resort to threats, anger and yelling when interacting with an employee.	1.14981	0.251129	0.568
It is morally acceptable to regularly rely on behaviors that harm an employee.	1.500532	0.134525	0.598

The null hypothesis as it pertains to the seven statements presented in Table 3 is accepted. The alternative hypothesis is rejected. Based on the students' responses to the statements there is not a significant difference in their perceptions of the morality of bullying behaviors associated with public humiliation, sabotage, failure to acknowledge efforts, spreading rumors, failure to reward, resorting to threats, anger and yelling, and reliance on harmful behaviors. The findings suggest that female and male students perceive these bullying behaviors as morally acceptable.

The alternative hypothesis for the seven statements presented in Table 4 is accepted. The null hypothesis is rejected. The results show that there are statistical differences between females and males regarding bullying behaviors such as isolation, teasing, assigning meaningless tasks, providing unreasonable deadlines, and denial of opportunities. There are further statistical differences for adopting bullying behaviors towards the bully and situational bullying. With a significance level of .05, a two-tailed hypothesis, and $df = 299$. The results are significant at $p < 0.05$. The findings suggest that female and male students perceive these bullying behaviors to be morally acceptable.

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Table 4: T-Values & P-Values For Statements With Statistical Differences

Statements	T-Value	P-Value	Standard Deviation
It is morally acceptable to regularly isolate a person from his or her colleagues.	3.259251	0.001246	0.595
It is morally acceptable to regularly tease a person at work.	3.673082	0.000284	0.612
It is morally acceptable to regularly assign meaningless tasks to an employee.	2.034041	0.042821	0.722
It is morally acceptable to regularly provide unreasonable deadlines for an employee to meet.	2.733281	0.006638	0.644
It is morally acceptable to regularly deny a qualified employee a job promotion.	3.810392	0.000168	0.698
In an effort to hold a person known to bully others accountable for his actions it is morally acceptable to tease, threaten, isolate, spread rumors about him and publicly humiliate him.	2.916205	0.003808	0.618
Depending on the situation and the people involved, bullying is morally acceptable.	2.620311	0.009229	0.615

The research question for this study is; Is there a difference between female and male university students' perceptions of the morality of bullying behaviors in the workplace? The results suggest that there is a difference between female and male university students' perceptions of bullying behaviors. Female students perceive bullying behaviors that threaten the personal standing of targeted persons to be morally acceptable. They also perceive behaviors such as isolation, assignment of meaningless tasks and unreasonable deadlines to be morally acceptable behaviors for leaders to embrace.

The results of this study differ from previous research regarding workplace bullying in that they reveal that participants perceive bullying behaviors such as isolation, teasing, assigning meaningless tasks, providing unreasonable deadlines, and denial of opportunities to be morally acceptable. Perhaps the students consider these behaviors to be innocuous and appropriate behaviors for leaders to rely on when leading and motivating employees. The students may not have an understanding of the negative effects these behaviors have on targeted persons. When targeted persons are teased, isolated physically or socially, regularly assigned meaningless tasks, and given unreasonable deadlines, they experience anxiety, depression and suicidal ideations (Barrow, 2009). Twenty-nine percent of targeted employees experience anxiety and depression as a result of their bullying experience (Barrow, 2009). Ten percent of bullied employees consider suicide as a viable option for addressing the problem (Barrow, 2009).

5. Summary and Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, there are significant differences between the perceptions of female and male university students as they pertain to behaviors associated with four categories of bullying: threat to personal standing, isolation, overwork and destabilization. The significant differences were found for the following behaviors: teasing, isolation, denial of opportunities, setting unreasonable deadlines, and assigning meaningless tasks. The results further reveal significant differences pertaining to the reliance on bullying behaviors when interacting with a known bully and in given situations. Based on the results female university students perceive certain bullying behaviors to be ethical. This position contradicts previous

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research findings that suggest leaders' reliance on workplace bullying behaviors is unethical (Stouten, Baillien, Van den Broeck, Camps, De Witte, & Euwema, 2010).

Behaviors associated with the category of threat to personal standing, represent a form of direct aggression. When a person's intention is to inflict harm through face-to-face situations he or she is displaying direct aggression towards the targeted individual (Coyne & Archer, 2005). The findings reveal that there is a significant difference between the perceptions of female and male students regarding teasing. Students may perceive teasing to be innocuous behavior and thus to be morally acceptable. Teasing is direct aggression towards a targeted person, which is intentional, causes harm and occurs during face-to-face interactions. Female bullies tend to rely on teasing more so than male bullies (Barrow, 2010). Thirty-nine percent of participants surveyed indicated that female bullies regularly teased them (Barrow, 2010). Since females are more apt to resort to teasing this may account for the significant difference that exists in this study. These results support previous research pertaining to female bullies in the workplace (Holiday & Rosenberg, 2009). Female bullies rely direct aggression such as teasing to devalue and isolate targeted persons.

There is a significant difference between female and male participants' perceptions of the reliance on isolation as a way to bully others. Isolation occurs when a targeted person is physically or socially excluded from a group or is not given the same opportunities as others. Isolation is social aggression, which is relied on to manipulate acceptance into a particular group (Coyne & Archer, 2005). It is also relational aggression as the behavior damages or threatens to damage certain relationships or feelings of acceptance or group inclusion (Holiday & Rosenberg, 2009; Crick & Grotpeter, 1995). Attempts to isolate targeted persons can be direct or indirect, as bullies may overtly or circuitously isolate the targeted person. Such behavior causes harm and negatively affects the targeted person's personal standing within the group. The results of this study suggest that females may be more socially and relationally aggressive than males and thus may perceive isolation as morally acceptable behavior. The results support previous research related to female aggression (Holiday & Rosenberg, 2009; Campbell, 1999; Crick & Grotpeter, 1995).

A significant difference exists between the perceptions of female and male students as it pertains to the bullying categories of overwork and destabilization. The act of setting unreasonable deadlines is an example of behavior found in the overwork category. The assignment of meaningless tasks is a form of destabilization. Based on the findings, setting unreasonable deadlines and assigning meaningless tasks were perceived to be morally acceptable behaviors. The participants of this study may consider these behaviors to be ethical and within the scope of a leader's responsibilities. Setting unreasonable deadlines and assigning meaningless tasks are forms of relational aggression as they are manipulative acts (Holiday & Rosenberg, 2009). Females tend to rely on manipulation as a way of controlling others (Holiday & Rosenberg, 2009; Crick & Grotpeter, 1995). The results of this study support previous research regarding relational aggression (Holiday & Rosenberg, 2009; Crick & Grotpeter, 1995).

The purpose of this study was to determine if female and male future leaders perceive bullying behaviors to be ethical. The findings suggest that there are significant differences in the perceptions of the ethics of certain bullying behaviors. This study advances the body of

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knowledge regarding workplace bullying by revealing the perceptions of future Canadian leaders. In particular, it reveals the perceptions of female university students and their acceptance of certain bullying behaviors. The implication of this research is that students seeking to become future leaders, who continue to perceive bullying behaviors as ethical may contribute to the workplace bullying epidemic in the future. They may intentionally or inadvertently cause harm to others, which will inevitably hinder their effectiveness as leaders and contribute to a hostile work environment.

The limitations of the study include the participants' inexperience in leadership roles and minimal work experience. Future research of a qualitative nature would provide further insights regarding the differences between female and male perceptions of bullying behaviors and workplace aggression.

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