Does Personality Influence Workplace Bullying and Lead to Depression Among Nurses?

(Adakah Personaliti Mempengaruhi Buli di Tempat Kerja dan Mengarah kepada Kemurungan antara Jururawat?)

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ABSTRACT

Workplace bullying is one of the most common work related psychological problems and has been a topic of interest since the 1990s. However, only a few researchers have investigated the influence of personality towards workplace bullying and depression. This study examines the role of personality factors as predictors of workplace bullying and their effects on depression. Structural equation modeling analysis was used to analyze the workplace bullying model. The research involved 340 registered nurses from the public sector. The respondents completed questionnaires on personality factors, workplace bullying, and depression. Results showed that only conscientiousness influenced workplace bullying and neuroticism affected depression directly. Workplace bullying has been found to directly influence depression among nurses. The findings have implications on how workplace bullying plays a key role in the relationship between personality and depression and may serve as a guideline on how to prevent nurses from psychological problems caused by workplace bullying.

Keywords: Big Five personality; workplace bullying; depression; structural equation modeling, nurses

ABSTRAK

Tingkah laku buli di tempat kerja merupakan satu daripada masalah psikologi yang lazim di alami di tempat kerja dan situasi ini telah menjadi topik yang mendapat perhatian sejak tahun 1990. Walaubagaimanapun, hanya terdapat beberapa kajian personaliti di tempat kerja yang mengkaji pengaruhnya terhadap tingkah laku buli dan kemurungan. Kajian ini mengkaji peranan faktor-faktor personaliti sebagai penyebab buli di tempat kerja dan kesannya ke atas kemurungan. Analisis model persamaan berstruktur digunakan untuk menganalisa model tingkah laku buli di tempat kerja. Kajian ini membabitkan 340 jururawat berdaftar daripada sektor awam yang telah melengkapkan soal selidik berkenaan faktor-faktor personaliti, buli di tempat kerja, dan kemurungan. Kajian menunjukkan hanya kehematan mempengaruhi buli di tempat kerja manakala neurotisisme mempengaruhi kemurungan secara langsung. Sebaliknya, buli tempat kerja mempunyai pengaruh langsung ke atas kemurungan antara jururawat. Dapatan ini mempunyai implikasi tentang bagaimana buli memainkan peranan utama dalam hubungan di antara personaliti dan kemurungan dan boleh menjadi panduan untuk menghalang jururawat daripada mengalami masalah psikologikal yang disebabkan oleh buli di tempat kerja.

Kata kunci: Personaliti lima faktor; buli di tempat kerja; kemurungan; model persamaan berstruktur; jururawat

INTRODUCTION

Although bullying has been prevalent at work, this phenomenon only started gaining attention in the past two decades, especially in Europe. The awareness and interest among researchers on bullying at work have arisen after Leymann's work in the 1980's (Leymann & Gustafsson 1996). Bullying can be defined as harassing, offending, and socially excluding someone from a group in the organization while the negative behaviors can occur repeatedly in systematic ways and the victims of bullying usually find it difficult to defend themselves (Einarsen et al. 2011). Victims who are exposed to persistent workplace bullying usually produce a persistent severe emotional reaction which can lead to subsequent psychiatric disorders, such as anxiety and depression (Gullander & Hogh 2014).Workplace bullying is different from other negative behaviors at work and should not be viewed as a simple conflict between two individuals. In order to claim that bullying is a conflict, the victims have to perceive powerlessness and inability to defend themselves from frequently experiencing persistent harm by perpetrators. Previous studies have shown that there are many different definitions of workplace bullying. However, a consensus on the definition of workplace bullying was agreed by some scholars in terms of frequency, duration, and imbalance of power (Einarsen et al. 2011; Leymann 1996; Nielsen, Glasø & Einarsen 2017).

Most previous studies focused on the work environment variable factors of workplace bullying. The

interest of researchers to study on work environment factors occurred after Leymann disregarded the role of individual factors in his research. Leymann (1996) strongly claimed that personality traits are not the cause of workplace bullying but instead due to inability of management to deal with the conflict among employees at work. A plausible reason to explain this significant relationship is that it can lead to blaming the victim if not treated carefully with regard to this issue. However, there are still legitimate reasons to examine the role of personality in order to understand victimizing process. The personality of victims may not only produce a reaction to certain behaviors based on their perception, but it can also trigger the perpetrator that may end in a destructive encounter.

Being exposed to persistent workplace bullying can lead to a severe social stressor that may have adverse effects on workers' health and decrease their well-being. The adverse effects of workplace bullying are stronger than all other work-related stressors combined (Gullander & Hogh 2014). A prolonged stress experienced by a victim often alter an individual's perception of the work environment and workplace, which might subsequently result in symptoms of depression (Takaki, Taniguchi & Fukuoka 2010). As a result of Leymann's works, most studies to date are more focused on the poor environment as a cause to bullying at work (Giorgi 2010; Law et al. 2011; Notelaers, De Witte & Einarsen 2009). However, Coyne et al. (2000) addressed that personality is an essential element in differentiating between the victims and non-victims at work.

This issue is essential to be put much attention among researchers as there is an increasing number of workplace bullying cases among nurses worldwide which could be a serious threat to their health and wellbeing (WHO 2010). In addition, Rowell (2005) also reported that bullying is more serious with four-fold occurrences higher than sexual harassment among nurses in the public sectors. On the other hand, in Malaysia, there is lack of studies on workplace bullying in the nursing profession while its prevalence and impact are silently hidden. Yusop, Dempster and Stevenson (2014) reported from health care support employees that about 42.6% experienced workplace bullying with most of the perpetrators being their supervisors (21.3%). Meanwhile, in another study Ruth et al. (2009) revealed that workplace violence among the nursing staff is average, where 1.2% are being abused every other day. These results demonstrated that there is a high prevalence towards workplace bullying but the number of studies focusing on nurses remains small, particularly in Malaysia

Therefore, this paper is organized to achieve the objectives of the study as follows: The first objective is to identify the influence of Personality (agreeableness, extraversion, neuroticism, openness, and conscientiousness) on workplace bullying. The second objective is to identify the influence of personality (agreeableness, extraversion, neuroticism,

openness, and conscientiousness) on depression and the last objective is to test the influence of personality (agreeableness, extraversion, neuroticism, openness, and conscientiousness) on depression through the mediation of workplace bullying.

LITERATURE REVIEW

WORKPLACE BULLYING AMONG NURSES

Nursing can be categorized as a profession that has a high risk of exposure to workplace bullying. A number of researchers explained that the prevalent bullying among nurses is due to negative behaviors being accepted as part of the job and subsequently they do not complain about the bullying to the management (Hutchinson & Vickers 2010; Hutchinson et al. 2008; Lewis 2006). In addition, the perpetrators usually misuse legitimate power, policies, and procedures to continue their own interests to detriment others. They also may take negative actions in order to uphold these norms and against those who want to challenge the status quo. As a result, the victims prefer to conceal negative emotions such as anger, sadness, and upset feelings in when they realize that their efforts against bullying behaviors have come to naught.

Lutgen-Sandvik, Tracy and Alberts (2007) stressed that many institutions deny the presence of workplace bullying by creating a culture of silence in order to minimize its consequence. This culture will obstruct the countermeasure to overcome the problem of workplace bullying. As highlighted in the previous studies, the serious effects of workplace bullying may be limited to Malaysian employees due to the norms of tolerance and acceptance of negative acts in the workplace. It is thus imperative to study workplace bullying, in this context among nurses, in order to ensure that this behavior does not detriment employee's well-being.

The theoretical model of this study is refers to the causes and consequences of the mobbing model (Zapf 1999). The reason for using this model is there are multiple causes of bullying that have to be taken into consideration in order to understand the causes and consequences of bullying where a one-sided explanation should be avoided. As can be seen in Figure 1, there are four potential causes of bullying, namely organizational, perpetrator, social group, and person. However, earlier studies are more focused on organizational factors as a result of exaggerated conflict among the employees (Leymann 1996) while disregarding the role of individual factors. In fact, to build comprehensive theoretical models of the nature, causes, and consequences, of the individual personality should be understood (Einarsen et al. 2011). Meanwhile, this study is also more focused on depression compared to other consequences of bullying as it is prevalent in the health sector, especially among nurses.
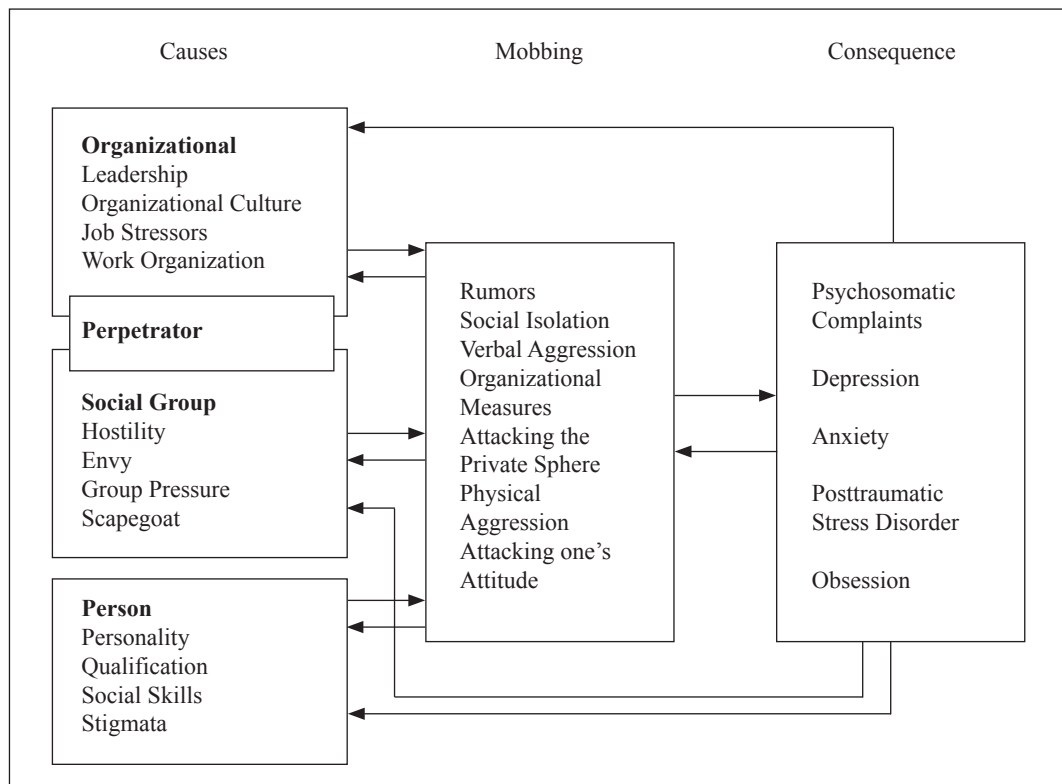
FIGURE 1. Causes and consequences of mobbing

PERSONALITY FACTORS AS ANTECEDENT OF WORKPLACE BULLYING

Researchers on antecedents of workplace bullying have focused more attention on organizational factors rather than individual factors such as personality. A reasonable explanation for this situation is based on Leymann's (1996) work on workplace bullying that pointed out poorly organized working environment, such as ambiguous role, poor leadership, and low autonomy can lead to an escalation of the conflict. Bullying can, therefore be seen as a serious conflict at work where the targeted employee is exposed to hostile social acts over a prolonged time period and find it difficult to defend him/herself due to the power imbalance between two parties (Olweus 1994). Meanwhile, personality factors are seen as consequences of antecedents of being exposed to bullying where there is no difference between victim and non-victim on the onset of the bullying process.

Nevertheless, some research findings indicated that a different personality between victim and non-victim might exist before the onset of bullying. Coyne, Seigne and Randall (2000) identified victims of workplace bullying as being conscientiousness, less extrovert, and more unstable than non victims. Also, Mikkelsen and Einarsen (2002) reported that victims showed personality traits of neuroticism while tend to be easily upset and display less conscientiousness, agreeableness, and extraversion (Glaso et al. 2007). Therefore, in order to have a comprehensive understanding on bullying at work, personality has to be considered as a cause of bullying due to its relevance in explaining the reaction and perceptions on victim towards certain negative behaviors at work (Einarsen 2000). Consistently from prior research, it is clear that personality plays an important role in escalating workplace bullying.

BULLYING AND DEPRESSION

Bullying is largely associated with serious consequences on an individual's psychological and mental health, such as burnout, and psychological complaints, including depression. Workplace bullying is engaged with prolonged stress that can contribute to increasing vulnerability to depression. A study of 632 nurses showed that victims of workplace bullying experienced depression when anticipated with longer and frequent exposure to bullying at work (Kivimäki et al. 2003). In England, the victims of workplace bullying felt more depressed with the ratio of 8:1 against those who had not suffered from bullying (Quine 2001). People who are weaker may be at risk of becoming a victim and this also weakens an individual's ability to cope with a prolonged stressor such as bullying.

In a related study, Rugulies et al. (2012) examined the role of bullying in contributing to the symptoms of depression in 102 nurses in a Danish eldercare sector and found that bullying can predict an onset of Major Depression Episode (MDE). There were some changes to the emotions of victims when they were not exposed to

bullying. Therefore, bullying is strongly associated with depression, especially in a hostile manner. Meanwhile, in Japan, bullying was evidenced to play an important role in mediating the relation between job strain and depression (Giorgi 2010). Results revealed that employees in a conflict created symptoms of depression whenever they were ordered to work under their competence or received excessive amounts of work compared to others. A study carried out by Niedhammer, David and Degioanni (2006) reported that bullying had the same effect; either as a victim or bystander to depression for both men and women. The result indicates that frequent bullying exposure leads to detrimental consequences such as depression symptoms.

BULLYING AS MEDIATOR IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERSONALITY TRAITS AND DEPRESSION

The relation between personality and workplace bullying has been a contentious topic among scholars in recent years. The argument emerged among scholars due to differences in findings that showed clear distinctions in personality among the victims and non-victims but other findings demonstrated that it was difficult to differentiate between victims and non-victims (Nielsen et al. 2017). Identification on the role of personality is important because the acceptance of bullying among victims is relying on their perception on certain behaviors. However, the roles of bullying as a mediator in the previous study are related with individual perceptions of stressors positively related to workplace victimization. The process of bullying may actually include characteristics of a vicious circle in which mental health problems are a result of bullying and increase susceptibility (Kivimäki & Virtanen 2003). Daderman et al. (2017) revealed that the relationship between personality and depression became significant toward employees who had low extraversion, humility sincerity and narcissism when bullying was entered.

MODEL DEVELOPMENT

Most of the studies on nurses being bullied focused on organizational antecedents and personal consequences experienced by the victims. However, there is lack of studies that focus on personality factors as antecedents to the onset of workplace bullying and their consequences on health. Therefore, this study examined the perception of workplace bullying as a mediator between personality and depression. Indeed, individual interpretation on certain circumstances that occur in a hostile and negative setting are deemed bullying by the victims but not to other employees (Giorgi 2010). Besides, when a target is intentionally being harrased, she feels bullied and develops mental health problems such as depression. Furthermore, the impact of personality on victims is a process which contributes to onset, escalation, and consequences of bullying. Personality can also be related to depression; which will lead to an assumption of why some people develop stress reactions and health problems after exposure to bullying. Therefore, it was hypothesized that personality and workplace bullying are related to depression among nurses. In order to evaluate this problem, a theoretical model of cause and antecedent of workplace bullying is shown in Figure 1. This model particularly integrates prior research and theory in which antecedent and consequence of workplace bullying were combined. In terms of personality factors, the fit of the model from the sample by using oblique factor model (latent factor inter-correlations were estimated by the analyses and secondary factor loadings were fixed at zero) was assessed instead of the orthogonal factor model(factor inter-correlations and all secondary factor loadings were fixed at zero). Yoon, Schmidt and Ilies (2002) addressed that studies involving Asian samples which showed that the traits in the big five were highly correlated rather than defined as a single trait. Moreover, the orthogonal factor model also does not fit with any set of data.

The first hypothesis is to examine the influence of personality, comprising agreeableness, extraversion, neuroticism, openness, and conscientiousness may influence workplace bullying which is measured by bullying related to work, bullying related to personnel, and intimidation. The second hypothesis is to assess the influence of personality on depression, namely negative view of self, physical, and affective. The final hypothesis is to propose that personality may contribute to the escalation of depression through the mediation of workplace bullying. Below is the summary of the three hypotheses in this study:

H_1 Personality (agreeableness, extraversion, neuroticism, openness, and conscientiousness) influences workplace bullying.

H_2 Personality (agreeableness, extraversion, neuroticism, openness, and conscientiousness) influences depression.

H_3 Personality (agreeableness, extraversion, neuroticism, openness, and conscientiousness) influences depression through the mediation of workplace bullying.

METHODOLOGY

The conceptual framework in Figure 2 shows the five factors of personality namely agreeableness, openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, and neuroticism; workplace bullying was measured by bullying related to work, bullying related to personnel, and bullying related to intimidation; depression is divided into a negative view of self, physical, and affect.
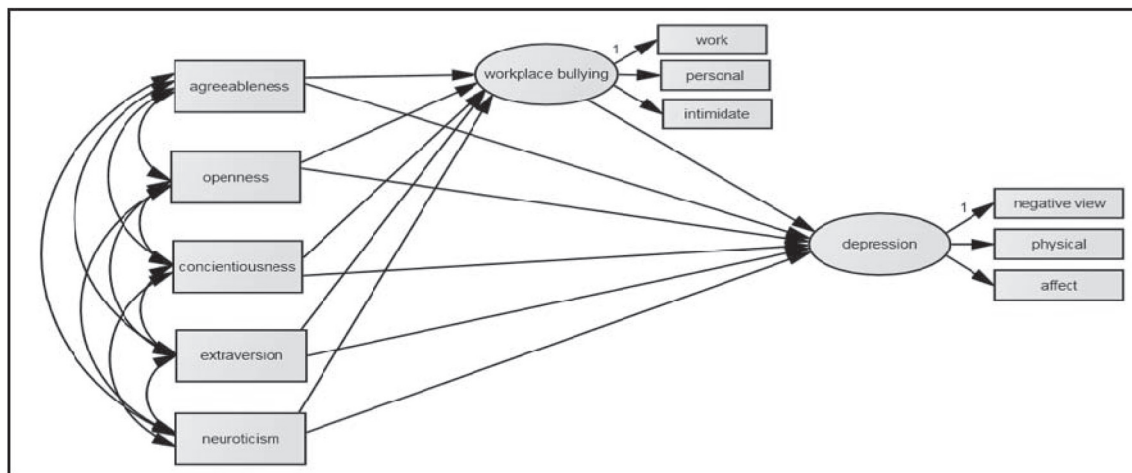
FIGURE 2. Conceptual framework

SAMPLE AND PROCEDURES

This cross-sectional survey was performed among the registered nurses in Kuala Lumpur Hospital via stratified random sampling to select participants. The participants were from various units in order to ensure an opportunity to be selected in the study. All respondents were females. The reasons for the selection were due to females being more vulnerable to negative behaviors at work (Eriksen, Hogh & Hansen 2016) and having a stronger relation with verbal bullying compared to the males (Brotheridge & Lee 2010). The questionnaires were distributed to 400 participants. A sample size calculation required 340 samples. Hence, a sample size of 400 was targeted to allow for the non-response rate. The sample size calculation was based on chi square analysis, with an alpha value of 0.05, a minimum power of 90%, two degree of freedom and medium effect size. Data were collected through distributed questionnaires where any missing elements were replaced by the scale and by means of anonymity to keep the confidentiality of voluntary participants. Informed consent was obtained from each research participant. Formal consent was received through the Ministry of Health via the Medical Research and Ethics Committee together with the Clinical Research Center which officially approved this study.

MEASUREMENT INSTRUMENTS

The instruments used in this study were translated using a back translation technique. The reason for translation was to ensure the participants really understood the meaning of the items. In this study, two translators were used to check the accuracy of words and ensure that Malay version was in line with the original version. For this purpose, experts in language were asked to translate the questionnaire from the English to Malay version while in terms of content validity a psychology lecturer was used to translate from the Malay to English version.

Negative Act Questionnaire-Revised (NAQ-R) Exposure to bullying at work was assessed by using the self-labeling and behavioral experience approaches. Self-labeling is an approach to identify whether the respondents considered themselves as victims by giving the formal definition of bullying at work. The response categories were 'yes' or 'no'. The victims also had to provide information of the bullying duration and the numbers of perpetrators. For behavioral experience approach, the Negative Act Questionnaire- Revised (NAQ-R) was used. This version was an improvement from the original version as the previous version focused more on the severe effects of bullying and there were biased items after being translated into the English version (Einarsen, Hoel & Notelaers 2009). This scale consisted of 22 items, describing different kinds of behavior and probably perceived as bullying if happened on a regular basis. All items were written in behavioral terms and there was no reference to the phrase of bullying. The respondents were asked about how often they had been exposed to those behaviors and the responses were assessed by a five-Likert scale ranging from 'never' to '*about daily*'.

International Personality Item Pools Openness, conscientiousness, agreeableness, extraversion, and neuroticism were assessed by using the item scale of International Personality Item Pools (IPIP) (Goldberg 1992). IPIP was used to measure one standing on five broad personality domains. IPIP has also demonstrated good psychometric properties than the other big five personality measures. Respondents were required to give consent for each statement on how one feels and acts. Agreeableness elucidates the extent that an individual is soft-hearted, sympathetic, likeable, and diplomatic. Individuals who have high conscientiousness are prone to be organized and dependable while extraversion is likely to be high in-excitement seeking and very talkative. On the other hand, neuroticism tends to easily cause upset and anxiousness. Openness reflects traits such as imagination, intelligence, and competence. This scale consisted of

50 items to check the big five personality traits. The respondents were asked to rate each item from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. The responses were assessed by a five Likert scale in which the higher marks shown from each of the five factors refer to the predisposition to the respective factors.

Beck Depression Inventory Malay Depression was measured by BDI-Malay, a modified version of the original Beck Depression Inventory (Beck 1967) which is related to cognitive symptoms of depression such as despair and irritation, guilty feeling, and physical symptoms consist of exhaustion and weight loss. Respondents reacted to the questions on how they felt over the past week and higher scores indicated a severe depression. The full scale was considered to have strong psychometric properties, but this study excluded item 21 (loss of libido) as it irrelevant to any of the factors (Muhktar & Oei 2010). Furthermore, Zheng and Lin (1991) verified that the item on sex had a low relationship towards depression in China. The reliability of the modified version of depression scale was high at 0.91. This scale consisted of 20 items for measuring the severity of depression. Each item comprised four statements presented in an orderly sequence to reflect increasing intensity of experience. Each item had a 0-3 scale with 0, indicating absence of the symptom and 3 as the most intense statement.

DATA ANALYSIS

The structural equation modeling (SEM) was employed to examine the influence of bullying on personality and depression. The advantage of using SEM lies in the ability to test the complexity of the model in a single analysis (MacKinnon 2008). In order to examine the fit data of the models, multiple indices of fit were used. The most used fit index was the chi-square (χ^2). A small χ^2 indicated that the observed data were not significantly different from the hypothesis model. However, since this study used a large study sample, other alternative indices should also be considered. Alternative indices were the Goodness of Fit Index (GFI), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), and Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI). The following criteria were established to measure the model fit, GFI $\geq$ 0.90, CFI $\geq$ 0.90, RMSEA < 0.08, TLI $\geq$ 0.90.

In order to improve goodness-of-fit of the workplace bullying model, model re-specification can be used through modifications of the structural or measurement model. According to Fullagar and Barling (1989), there are three situation that allowed the removal of parameters; i) the path is not significant (k>.05) ii) the path is not significant but important in which the concept remains, if the beta is over .50, and iii) the path is significant and will be removed if there is no correlation with the hypothesis model. The final structural model is probably different with the hypothesis model when only the significant path remains in the model.

RESULTS

The descriptive analysis showed that the majority of the respondents were Malay (87.6%), followed by others (5.6%), Indian (5.3%), and Chinese (1.5). Most of the respondents were 26-30 years old (43.2%), followed by 20-25 years old (42.9%), and 31-35 years old (13.8%). Most of the respondents had 1-2 years of experience (40.9%), followed by 3-4 years (28.5%), 5-6 years (15.3%), 7-8 years (10.6%), and 9-10 years (4.7%). Majority of the respondents had a personal income of RM2001-RM3000 (37.6%), followed by RM1000-RM2000 (37.6%), RM3001-RM4000 (12.6%), and RM4001-RM5000(0.6%). The highest level of education was diploma (97.4%), followed by certificate (2.1%), and degree (0.6%).

DESCRIPTIVE AND CORRELATION ANALYSIS

Table 1. shows the mean, standard deviation, Cronbach's alpha, and zero order correlation between the variables of the study. For the first column, the highest significant correlation was between neuroticism and conscientiousness (r = -.44, p < .05). The second column of the correlation from the nurse sample showed a pattern of significant positive correlations between extraversion and the highest was an openness to experience (r = .50, p < .05), followed by agreeableness (r = .30), p < .05) and conscientiousness (r = .16, p < .05). Meanwhile, openness to experience correlated with agreeableness (r = .30, p < .05) and conscientiousness (r = .24 p < .05). Agreeableness also correlated with conscientiousness (r = .24, p < .05) in the nurse sample. It was also found that the work related bullying had the highest significant positive correlation with personnel related bullying (r = .88, p < .05) while personnel related bullying had a positive correlation with work related bullying (r = .80, p < .05). Physical bullying also showed the highest positive correlation with work related bullying (r = .88, p < .05). Finally, negative view showed the highest significant correlation with physical function (r = .66, p < .05), physical function correlated with negative view (r = .66, p < .05) and affect had the highest significant correlation with negative view (r = .60, p < .05).

The results from Figure 1 illustrate the proposed model for workplace bullying and personality. The two factors of personality, namely; conscientiousness and neuroticism were the significant predictors of depression as shown in Figure 2. The results from SEM partially support the theoretical model in Figure 1 which indicates that only neuroticism had a direct effect on depression. Neuroticism was significantly associated with depression with path coefficient (β = .12, p < 0.05). Therefore, this result partially rejected hypothesis 1 that agreeableness, openness, conscientiousness, and extraversion on depression influence workplace bullying due to no direct effect found. In other words, neuroticism had a significant positive direct effect on depression while conscientiousness had a significant negative direct effect on workplace bullying.

TABLE 1. Means, standard deviation, zero order correlation

Construct	Mean	SD	α	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Neu	27.70	5.09	.76	-	-.42*	-.43*	-.20*	-.44*	.09	.18*	.15*	.12*	.18*	.16*
Ext	28.88	4.46	.69	-.42*		.50*	.30*	.19*	-.05	.04	.07	-.16*	-.13*	-.11*
Open	16.69	2.57	.62	-.43*	.49*		.30*	.32*	-.06	-.06	-.08	-.14	-.02	-.03
Ag	25.17	2.92	.50	-.20*	.30*	.30*		24*	-.12*	-.12*	-.13*	-.17*	-.13*	-.05
Con	21.90	3.69	.71	-.44*	.19*	.32*	.24*	.	-.17*	-.17*	-.20*	-.13*	-.08	-.11
WRB	5.13	2.64	.83	.09	-.05	-.06	-.12*	-.17*		-.71*	-.88*	.26*	.31*	.40*
PeRB	5.13	2.58	.84	.15*	-.04	-.06	-.12*	-.17*	.71*		.80*	.27*	.34*	.37*
PhRB	4.82	2.46	.83	.12*	-.07	-.08	-.13	.20*	.88*	.80*		.28*	.37*	.38*
NV	1.14	1.75	.70	.18*	-.16*	-.16*	-.16*	-.13	.26*	.27*	.28*		.66*	.60*
PF	1.79	2.31	.77	.18*	-.13*	-.02	.13*	.13*	.31*	.34*	.37*	.66*		.58*
AF	.77	1.17	.64	.16*	-.11*	-.03	-.05	-.05	.40*	.37*	.60*	.58*	.58*	

Please refer to Appendix 1 for variables' definition.
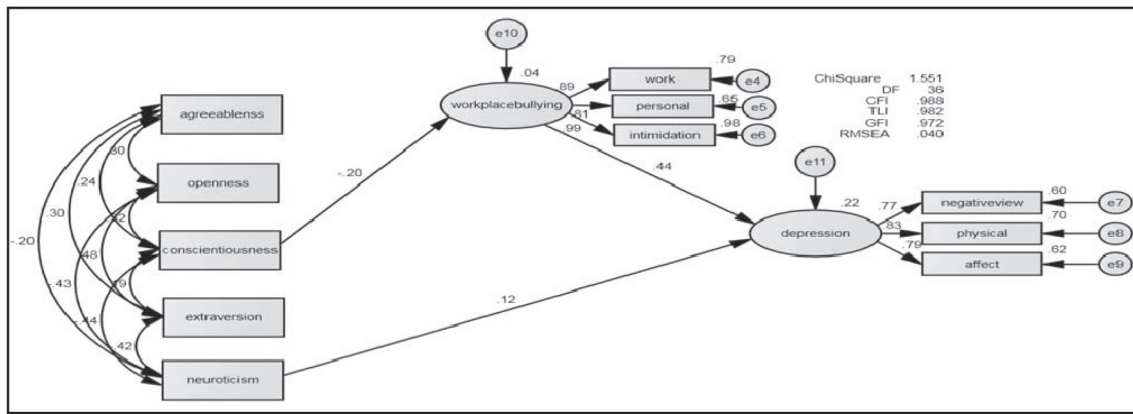Notes significant at *p<.05

FIGURE 3. Structural model on direct effect of personality on depression and indirect effect of personalities towards depression through mediation of workplace bullying

The hypothesis 3 was confirmed, indicating that workplace bullying was only fully mediating the relationship between conscientiousness and depression. However, there were no indirect effects from agreeableness, openness, extraversion, and neuroticism because the indirect effects were not significant. As can be seen in Figure 2, conscientiousness was related to workplace bullying with path coefficient ($\beta = .12$, $p < 0.05$) and workplace bullying was associated with depression ($\beta = .44$, $p < 0.05$). An inspection of the fit indices considered in the present study showed that they met the criteria suggested by Hair et al. (2006): GFI = .972, TLI = .982, CFI = .988, RMSEA = .040. Based on Figure 2, all path coefficients were significant with values ranging from .44 to -.20.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The present study showed that conscientiousness was one of the dimensions of the big five model which significantly led to workplace bullying. It is surprising that the finding showed a negative direction of the relation compared to the previous research, showing that individuals with high conscientiousness were predicted to be bullied at work (Coyne et al. 2000). This means that the victims who are negligent and disorganized are vulnerable to experienced bullying behaviors at work. In addition, bullying may not be seen in terms of one of the personalities but rather a combination of other traits.

In addition, the first hypothesis showed that only one of four personality dimensions predicted workplace bullying. However, the negative path coefficient of conscientiousness showed a contrast to the previous finding indicating that victims of bullying were more conscientious than non-victims of bullying (Coyne et al. 2000). A reasonable explanation for the deviation from the previous result was that the correlation between conscientiousness and neuroticism was negative (-.44) but others showed a positive correlation. In other words, the result elucidated that a reduction of conscientious was associated with the increase in neuroticism factor. The interaction between low conscientiousness and neuroticism was predicted not to have the appropriate self control and tend to perform poorly at work (Alsuwailem & Abou Elnaga 2016). Employees who do not perform in line with the organizational standard will be closely monitored by their superior. The behaviors could turn to

bullying if employees feel that the monitoring process is illegitimate, unfair, and not systematic.

Meanwhile, consistent with the second hypothesis, neuroticism was found to be related to depression among nurses. The same findings were found by Merciline and Ravindran(2011)who showed that neuroticism was the most significant predictor of the escalation of depression among nurses. This result was not surprising as neurotic people are prone to experiencing negative effects and unable to manage their emotions, especially in stressful conditions.

Another interesting finding was that workplace bullying fully mediated personality and depression. This result was supported by Siegrist (1996)in the Effort-Reward Imbalance model which claimed that there was an inequity between works characterized by high effort but low rewards that could elicit negative emotions in employees. As a result, employees perceived the treatment as unfair and became less conscientious, subsequently showing poor quality in work and obligation. Prolonged negative treatment could turn to depression due to the inability of employees to defend themselves against the perpetrators.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The essential implications of this study are two-fold. Firstly, on a practical level, the findings from this study show that personality has a significant role in affecting individual acceptance of negative behaviors as workplace bullying. Therefore, it is recommended to use the big five personality model as a predictor that can be applied by the Human Resources of the organization to include personality assessment in personnel selection system. The pre-screening process is essential in order to ensure the applicant not only meets the job requirements but also understands the behavioral expectation of the organization. In addition, employer can be aware of such personnel and propose some kind of prevention program or system that will reduce the occurrence of bullying at work. Secondly, the finding in this study, demonstrated that the associations of low conscientiousness and depression were mediated by workplace bullying. This result indicates that those individuals who have low conscientiousness must be given high attention as they are vulnerable and sensitive to negative behaviors at work which can lead to depression. HR personnel need to understand the true role of personality traits in order to avoid being captive of the fundamental attribution error that lead to them overestimating the role of these dispositions and needing information about the role of personality characteristic when dealing with treatment of the victims. Therefore, this finding added insight regarding the role of personality in bullying especially in Malaysian context.

LIMITATIONS AND AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study had some limitations. Firstly, it was a cross-sectional study design which did not study the cause and effect between of the variables. In order to show the causality, it is recommended for the future research to use longitudinal or experimental designs. Besides, the sample of study only focused on nurses at a public hospital where the procedure, rule, and working styles may differ from those in private hospitals. Therefore, in order to look into a wider scope, it is recommended to use a large sample from both sectors.

CONSCLUSION

This study examined the influence of personality on workplace bullying and depression among 340 registered nurses in Kuala Lumpur Hospital. In line with the previous studies, workplace bullying played an important role in predicting personality on depression. Therefore, it is important to emphasize that personality should not be neglected in order to understand employees' vulnerability to bullying at work. Furthermore, conscientiousness is associated with exposure to workplace bullying which indirectly has an effect on depression. In order to fully understand the nature, causes, and consequences of workplace bullying, organizational characteristics should be put along with personality factors as antecedents when investigating bullying at work.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX 1. Definition of the variables

Variables	Definition
Neu	Neuroticism
Ext	Extraversion
Open	Openness
Agr	Agreeableness
Con	Conscientiousness
WRB	Work Related Bullying
PeRB	Person Related Bullying
PhRB	Physical Bullying
NV	Negative View
PF	Physical Function
AF	Affect