Research Topic

The Issue of Workplace Bullying: the Causes, Impacts and Prevention in China

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Abstract

A respectful workplace offers a positive environment enabling a motivating place of work where the workforce focuses its energy to offer their best. Respectful behaviors can significantly minimize work-related stress and encourage the employees to undertake their tasks diligently. The positive outcomes associated with respectful behaviors have led to organizations establishing clear procedures

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as well as policies to guide the workforce regarding good and appropriate conduct. Nonetheless, in some workplaces, bullying is ingrained and perceived as a cultural norm. While a variety of studies have explored workplace bullying in the Western economies, no substantial research has been done in workplaces located in countries such as China. Such nations are notorious for having long working hours, performance-oriented culture, and an autocratic leadership style that is closely associated with bullying and work-based stress.

This study, therefore, examined the Chinese workplace to assess the causes, impacts, and preventive measures that can be utilized to fight bullying. A cross-sectional quantitative survey was utilized to collect primary data from Chinese workers regarding bullying. Findings indicate that 50 percent of the respondents have come across some kind of bullying in the workplace. The major causes of bullying include discrimination, insecurity, vulnerable or non-confrontational, lack of accountability, the desire to gain dominance or control over other works, as well as perceiving others as a threat to one's status, revenge, and showing off.

The most common bullying episodes witnessed include isolation or alienation (**15%**), physical assault (**15%**), verbal threats or warning (**10%**), and naming calling (**5%**). Bullying has led to low self-esteem (**25%**), absenteeism/high turnover (20%), stress (**20%**) and low productivity (**5%**), or all these factors at the same time. The commonly utilized mechanisms to fight workplace bullying include organizational policies (**20%**), reporting bullying (20%), and a culture that enhances respect (**20%**). The majority of the respondents believe that organizations should deploy a multidimensional approach of resolving workplace bullying involving code of conduct, policies against bullying, reporting of bullies, and promoting a culture of respect throughout the workplace. Notwithstanding these measures, many Chinese organizations have left workplace bullying leading to devastating impacts on their workers, including a toxic, demoralizing, and unproductive workplace that can occasion increased turnover absenteeism and failure of an organization to accomplish its long-term goals as well as mental health problems. The deployment of the ecological model of bullying can significantly assist organizations to tackle the bullying menace based on evidence-based interventions.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background

In an increasingly diverse workplace treating people with respect can make a difference by improving productive work-relationships with minimal time used to resolve conflicts and misunderstanding between workers and their managers (Kemp, 2014). Organizations hire diverse personnel to compete favorably by tapping the differences in people to enhance workplace vibrancy. Respect lifts the spirit of workers, motivation, and morale that ultimately leads to workplace satisfaction. It lets personnel know that their qualities, achievements, and abilities are valued and that their roles positively contribute to organizational success. Being respected and treasured fosters a positive workplace culture where workers are loyal, contented, and motivated to give their best (Nauman et al., 2019). It is a powerful force that would result in greater engagement of employees and commitment with respected employees being more likely to share and embrace company vision and its strategic objectives. Ng (2019) acknowledges that respectful behaviors minimize workplace stress and make workers perform their duties more diligently. It establishes that a fair workplace environment with a sense of belonging, will improve friendly interactions that encourage coworkers to share knowledge (Giorgi et al., 2016). Eventually, respect enhances the bottom line of an organization where both short-term and long-term objectives are well understood and accomplished.

While organizations have implemented clear policies to offer guidelines concerning the code of conduct, appropriate and inappropriate workplace behaviors, disrespectful behaviors like bullying still exist in the workplace (Giorgi et al., 2016). Even though there are many types of disrespectful behaviors, this study focuses on bullying. Workplace bullying is ingrained in many organizations and considered a cultural norm. Embarrassing scenes are witnessed daily among coworkers yelling, condescending, or swearing and are considered to be acceptable (Kemp, 2014). Organizational bullying can involve intentional or insistent attempts to control, intimidate, torment, or demean mentally as well as physically isolate or harm an individual (Ng, 2019). More commonly, bullying in the workplace is characterized by behaviors that are clandestine making them having to monitor or detect. It can involve constantly changing a worker between different responsibilities, deadlines, and even priorities to disappoint the employee.

When bullying is left unchecked, it can lead to devastating impacts, including a toxic, demoralizing, and unproductive workplace that can occasion increased turnover absenteeism and failure of an organization to accomplish its long-term goals. Ng (2019) observes that bullying can kill communication and collaborative efforts while undercutting the ability of workers to contribute positively to organizational objectives. Furthermore, bullying can contribute to an unhealthy and hostile work environment causing some workers to abandon their profession due to fear, anger, uncertainty, shame, self-doubt, confusion, isolation, and depression, among other mental health problems such as anxiety and depressive symptoms (Nauman et al., 2019; Giorgi et al., 2016; Kemp, 2014). Such behaviors diminish individual ability to think, speak up, and make sound judgments on day-to-day tasks.

Due to the multifaceted nature of bullying and its detrimental implications, comprehensive research needs to be undertaken to understand how these behaviors manifest themselves in the workplace. Furthermore, preventive or corrective mechanisms used to manage these behaviors can significantly improve the way organizations deal with these issues. Thus, this study examines bullying

in the workplace in China with the intent of determining the causes, impacts, and preventive mechanisms that will end the bullying culture.

1.2 Research Problem and Relevance

The World Health Organization (WHO) acknowledges that bullying within the workplace as a severe public health challenge (Srabstein & Leventhal, 2010). Researchers have recorded mortality and morbidity cases associated with bullying with existing studies, further showing how bullying can negatively affect the organization (Finne, Knardahl & Lau, 2011; Grynderup et al., 2017). For instance, severely bullied workers have reported experiencing suicidal ideation at a rate of six times higher than employees who have never been bullied (Einarsen, 1994). A systematic literature review conducted by Leach, Poyser, and Butterworth (2017) revealed that a positive correlation occurs between organizational bullying and suicidal thoughts, reporter stated that there is a significant connection between organizational bullying, cardiovascular illnesses, and depression. Bonde et al. (2016) observed that depression and health problems among bullied victims endure for a long time irrespective of whether bullying has stopped or not. Thus, it is evident that bullying results in negative impacts in the workplace.

Many studies have focused on studying the prevalence of bullying in Western economies, but no substantial attention has investigated the Asian workplaces. Yoo and Lee (2018) demonstrated that 87 percent of workers had come across some elements of bullying in the last six months in their workplace. Meanwhile, in Japan, 25.3% of the participants argued that they had experienced bullying in their workplace in the last three years, with men reporting more cases than their female counterparts (Naito, 2013). Similarly, in Hong Kong, data obtained show a high prevalence of workplace bullying, with many employees suffering in silence (Ho, 2016). China is notorious for having long working hours with autocratic management styles that can lead to work-related stress and enable bullying behaviors to flourish, putting workers at physical and mental health risks. Thus, it is prudent to undertake a comprehensive exploration of China's workplace to assess the causes, impacts, and preventive measures that should be implemented in the workplace.

1.3 Aims and Research Questions

This research aims to comprehensively assess the origins and the effects of workplace bullying, coupled with the preventive measures utilized to heal the vice. Guided by this aim, the subsequent research questions will be answered:

- What contributes to workplace-related bullying in China?
- How does bullying in the workplace affect the victims' productive, mental, and physical well-being?
- What preventive mechanisms have been implemented to minimize or curb workplace-based bullying in Chinese organizations?

1.4 Outline

This original study is organized into various chapters. Chapter two delves into both theoretical framework and empirical studies concerning workplace bullying to offer a basis on the study. Chapter

three delivers the methodology utilized to gather and analyze data used to explain workplace bullying. Chapter four presents the findings from the Chinese workplace concerning bullying. Chapter five delivers a summary, conclusion, and recommendations by extensively explaining result and connecting them to both the theoretical and empirical studies.

1.5 Key Concepts

Harassment : ⬚ᴙᴇᴘ Acts or remarks made against a person with the aim of destroying him or her psychologically and / or physically.
Harassment is a weapon for what is called in psychoanalysis the narcissistic pervert. The goal of such a profile is to affect or even destroy the identity of the individual. In repetitive and insistent ways, the person subjects his/her victim to humiliation.
In repetitive and insistent ways, he/her subjects his victim to humiliation. But there are other forms of harassment, just as violent, which cannot be found in law. Other forms are sexual harassment and psychological harassment.

Organizational Behavior :
This key concept focuses on a field of study whose aim is to analyze the impact that a group of individuals can have on the behavior of actors in a society, the objective being to improve its efficiency.

Bullying : ⬚ᴙᴇᴘ Bullying is a form of aggression characterized by an imbalance of power; by considering that the person who bullies has power over the person who is subjected to and being bullied.
There is differents type of Bullying:
- *Physical Bullying*:
The one who is bullied will use physical force or violence against another person.
- *Verbal bullying*:
Anyone who bullies will use words to verbally attack a person.
- *Social or relational bullying*:
The bully will try to hurt a person by excluding them, spreading false rumors about the victim or by rejecting them.
- *Cyber-bullying*:
Those who bully will use social networks, or other platforms to threaten, embarrass, intimidate or exclude a person, or as well by tarnishing their reputation.

Difference between Bullying and Harassment:

Bullying and harassment are similar in a lot of way, but have a few differences and shades between these two concepts:
→ Harassment is like bullying because it involves hurting another person with insulting, offensive and cruel behavior.
→ Harassment differs from bullying in that, because it is a form of discrimination.

Emotional Abuse :

The concept of emotional abuse, also known as emotional abuse, when someone threatens, persecutes or intimidates an individual. This concept is hard to identify because it leaves no "physical" traces. The victim who experiences this psychological abuse does not necessarily realize it.

Emotional abuse can be more devastating than physical abuse.

Examples of what emotional abuse is:

→ Insults or criticism

→ Mockery

→ Public humiliation

→ Denigrate someone

→ Threat

Workplace Bullying :

Violence is not always physical. In fact, violence at work is very often characterized by degrading remarks or even insults, an exaggerated overload of work or, on the contrary, a humiliating underemployment, constant criticism, (etc.), from the supervisor or even from work colleagues.

These acts of intimidation are sometimes insidious and have serious consequences for the company.

Abusive Supervision :

This concept is linked to an imbalance between the supervisor and the subordinate.

It can manifest itself in several ways:

→ Facial expression

→ Body posture

→ In the form of Humiliation

→ Pejorative names

→ tone of voice

→ Willingness to hurt and offend your collaborator

→ Ignoring tasks

The concept of Abusive Supervision utilized when the hostile behaviors mentioned above are frequent and repetitive over a long period. Abusive Supervision has consequences at the individual, relational but also organizational level.

Chapter 2: Summary of Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Background

Theories on bullying reveal various conceptualizations. These conceptualizations focus on all manner of bullying, the interfaces between various actors (the bystander, target and the perpetrator) the significance of group dynamics, the importance of workplace environment and its associations with people or groups of people coupled with the influence of the modern society (Branch et al., 2018). A multi-perspective ecological model is perceived to be applicable to explain the multifaceted techniques through which workers, teams, and organizational systems interrelate to drive prompting

the continuance of workplace bullying activities (Branch et al., 2018). The exploration is thus guided by the ecological framework to explain the issue of workplace bullying.

2.1.1 Ecological Model of Bullying

Workplace bullying is traditionally perceived as a dyadic challenge between people (the target and the bully). Nonetheless, the environment has a significant part in enhancing bullying. While deliberating on this argument, workplace bullying is best understood using an ecological outlook, as depicted in figure 1: Ecological Framework of Bullying adopted from Johnson (2011) that shows that bullying is an outcome of individual, social, departmental, and organizational variables.

The ecological framework of bullying emerged from the work of Bronfenbrenner (1979) on human development ecology. This theory indicates that humanoid development is influenced by components which are nested by tiered systems. Such systems involve mesosystem (the interaction among different groups), microsystem (interpersonal relationships, activities, and roles), exosystem (the wider systems that indirectly impact a person like the government), and macrosystem (society, culture, and belief system) (Johnson, 2011). The ecological scheme of workplace bullying comprises four interrelated structures that involve a series of events considered as bullying. The framework comprises of a microsystem (the target and the bully), the exosystem (the organization), the mesosystem (the immediate team or workgroup and the manager), and macrosystem (the society) (Johnson, 2011). Further, the model is subdivided into three phases that are symbolized by the dotted lines, the antecedents, the events of bullying, and impacts. The arrows, as shown in figure 1 depict that the antecedent components run from the macrosystem via the central systems occasioning situations that are suitable for the occurrence of bullying. The impacts involve the consequences of workplace bullying that flow from bullying incidents (Johnson, 2011). The interventions or preventive mechanisms are located at the centre. Thus, they can be created to concentrate on the antecedents, the impacts of the two. The dotted line separates all the phases and displays the fluid nature of the association between the antecedents and the outcomes. For instance, the implications of unmanaged bullying encompass anger, shame, low self-esteem or self-blame, and a cycle of continuous bullying. In some cases, unresolved power struggles or disputes can be the cause of bullying. Managers and colleagues can escalate a dispute by backing up one individual over the other, which enables power inequity and one-sidedness to exist, resulting in bullying. In another instance, Hutchinson et al. (2009) indicate that bullying is not related to a dispute but is an outcome of habitual attributes of interpersonal interactions, a way of controlling others, or a rite of passage.

The microsystem comprises the target and the bully or several targets and bullies. Contemporarily, no consistent association has been revealed about demographic variables (age, education, socioeconomic status, race, or sex) and being an object of bullying in an organization (Johnson, 2011). Moreover, no victim's personality profile has been associated with bullying, but some variations have been found between non-targets and targets' personalities concerning emotional instability (Glaso et al., 2007). Bullying victims or targets do not vary from the broader society regarding their interpersonal challenges like the ability to trust, or argumentative nature. Besides, perpetrators of bullying involve diverse people, including supervisors, subordinates, colleagues, and managers, either from the same or different organizational departments (Johnson & Rea, 2009). Further, the males and females engage in bullying activities, but females are more likely to bully females, while males can bully both females and males. The outcomes of bullying include

psychological challenges like nervousness, sleep problems, post-traumatic stress disorders, and depression. Physical impacts include the onset of cardiovascular illnesses, elevated cortisol, fibromyalgia, and others. Furthermore, workplace bullying can impair the victim's career by limiting advancement opportunities.

For the antecedents of the mesosystem, they include colleagues of the targets or the bullies and their managers. These individuals try to be passively involved in different activities to enhance bullying by paying no attention to what is happening or can even enthusiastically support the bully against the target. The psychosocial features of a workgroup can foster bullying like the presence of incivility, gossip, backbiting, and mockery (Johnson, 2011). Other antecedents of mesosystem entail the role of conflicts, poor working conditions, low job control, highly demanding works, poor social support, and ambiguity as well as leadership featuring laissez-faire, favoritism and autocratic. The impacts of mesosystem include low levels of job satisfaction and poor commitment, declining productivity, a decrease of teamwork and creativity.

The ecosystem's antecedents encompass the entire organization as a whole, coupled with the unions representing the workers. Organizational antecedents of bullying can include highly rigid and vertical structures, restructuring or downsizing the entire workplace, competitive workplace culture, job insecurity, and chaotic as well as adversarial workplace. The outcomes of ecosystem include increased organizational costs linked to bullying due to sick leaves, a decline in productivity, worker turnover, and litigation due to bullying (Johnson, 2011). Concerning the macrosystem, its antecedents of bullying include the cultural and societal values of behavior and the rules regulating workplace bullying. The repercussions of workplace bullying from the macrosystem perspective include the increased cost to taxpayers and the consumers attributed to the cost accrued by a company due to bullying.

The ecological model can also be deployed to respond to workplace bullying since the model makes a case that mitigation should be considered widely to target both the antecedents and outcomes (Johnson, 2011). It is prudent to resolve ongoing bullying through conflict resolution as seen in the microsystem level supplemented with team building as well as dispute resolution seminars evident at the mesosystem level that intends to enhance interaction in teams and avert imminent disputes from intensifying to the extent of bullying others. In case it is ascertained that managers have poor leadership occasioning bullying and other problems, training might be offered. Within the exosystem level, an organization working with external consultancy needs to assess how to create workplace environment, procedures, and policies based on the bullying antecedents of bullying.

Furthermore, to repair the damages caused by workplace bullying, mitigations should be targeted on the outcomes. At the microsystem level, businesses can help individuals access psychological help through counseling as well as healthcare to tackle the physical outcomes (Johnson, 2011). For exosystem and mesosystem levels, outcomes of bullying like the normalization of bullying activities, a decline of team and performance can be corrected through providing workers with training as well as creating novel ways of interacting. In the macrosystem level, comprehensive policies need to be developed, and procedures deliberating on approaches to curbing and managing bullying in the workplace. Therefore, the ecological model is relevant in probing the sources, impacts, and deterrence of workplace bullying in Chinese organizations.

2.2 Empirical Studies

Bullying is considered as a multifaceted aspect which is deployed synonymously with terms like harassment, workplace incivility, abusive supervision, and emotional abuse (Ng et al., 2012). Nonetheless, workplace bullying is described as repeated actions directed on an employee (s) done unconsciously or deliberately and cause distress, humiliation, and even interfere with productivity in the workplace. Einarsen et al. (2011) define bullying as a way of distressing, socially isolating, upsetting, or destructively impacting people's works. There are three different attributes of workplace bullying: a) the source of harassment, b) the persistence and regularity of mistreatment, and c) the supremacy of the performer (Raja, et al., 2017). An outstanding feature of bullying is that it is not stand-alone, but it involves an array of events that are continuously carried out and escalate to create a cumulative detrimental impact on the victims. Scholars have shown that is pervasive issues and occurs at all levels and professions.

2.2.1 Causes of workplace bullying

Vega and Comer (2005) opine that bullying can be caused by various members of an organization including the co-workers, immediate supervisors or managers, and subordinates. At individual level, scholars have tried to understand personality factors that might expose people to workplace bullying. For instance, Einarsen et al. (1994) used Norwegian population involving 2200 employees that found that victims being bullied had low social competence, higher anxiety levels, and low self-esteem. Coyne and colleagues (2000) examined 60 victims of bullying from Ireland, and revealed that the victims were more suspicious and anxious, had low emotional coping resources and were less assertive. According to Perminiene and colleagues (2016), bossy, controlling, more cautious, and rule-focused individuals were more prone to workplace bullying. Conversely, Leymann (1996) refuted the opinion that personal attributes of the targets might be precursors of bullying but rather indicated that a person could go through changes due to exposure to bullying.

Bullying is perceived to occur in organizations where the workforce and managers believe they are supported or are implicitly blessed by their seniors to undertake abusive and disrespectful behaviors like bullying (Williams, 2011). Also, new managers can rapidly accept the view that bullying and other disrespectful behaviors are accepted in an organization when they see others practicing it and even being rewarded (Einarsen et al., 2010). When bullying occurs at the topmost levels of an organization, its implications can be far-reaching. This implies a negative and destructive domino effect whereby bullying can cascade upwards and downwards as targeted supervisors or subordinates might offload their stresses onto others. In such instances, bullying can threaten the productivity of the entire organization.

Explorations examining the acceptability of bullying across various cultures (such as by Power et al., 2013) indicate that culture impacts the perception of what is considered acceptable and unacceptable in the workplace. The national background can also significantly influence the occurrence of bullying. There are various orientations and cultures in the workplace: future orientation, performance orientation, and humane or people-centric orientation. The humane and people-centric orientation is negatively linked with workplace bullying acceptability. On the other hand, performance orientation (task-centered workplace) is positively correlated to the acceptance of bullying (Power et al., 2013). For future orientation, it has been negatively associated with accepting workplace bullying. Three wide dimensions have been explored in relation to culture and bullying in the workplace: power distance, individualism versus collectivism, and femininity versus masculinity. The femininity culture values interpersonal relationships; hence it is unlikely to favor bullying. In

Asia, where the Confucian culture is widely acknowledged, performance-orientation is accepted, and bullying is likely to be accepted to compel high performance (Power et al., 2013). In America, individualism is treasured driving competition that might also escalate issues of bullying.

2.2.2 Impacts of Bullying

Studies on the impacts of workplace bullying have found that it is one of the major concerns affecting the health and safety of workers. Frequently, bullying has been associated with psychological psychosomatic as well as depressive symptoms. Workplace bullying is an occupational stressor that results in destructive impacts on the victims like job-related stress (Jenkins et al., 2011), depression and emotional fatigue (Hershcovis & Barling, 2010), mental disorders (Finne et al., 2011), disrespectful behaviors, aggression (Vegas & Comer, 2005), family conflicts (Raja et al., 2017); retaliatory aspects (Naseer et al., 2018) and deviant behaviors in the workplace.

An exploration in America by Asfaw et al. (2014) demonstrated that workplace mistreatment and bullying led to poor self-evaluation among the victims, particularly on their health status, and among the respondents, 42 percent believed that it escalates the number of days employees reported absent. In Turkey, Bilgel et al. (2006) found that bullied workers reported higher anxiety levels and depression, coupled with lower levels of job satisfaction. Dehue et al. (2012) studied the Netherland's workplace and reported higher health problems among bullied victims, poor well-being, and higher frequency of absenteeism from work than individuals who are not bullied. In Australia, Djurkovic et al. (2004) found that working students who are bullied reported physical harm and negative effects, including intentions to leave their work. A survey undertaken among 516 subjects by Workplace Bullying Institute found that bullying causes psychological aspects, panic attacks, clinical depression, sadness, sleep disruption, insomnia, moods, and about 71 percent of the respondents sought treatment. Furthermore, the participants indicated that bullying worsens stress, irritable bowel disorders, sexual dysfunction, migraine headaches, and chronic fatigue.

Besides, workplace bullying has been found to be a major contributor to the increased cost of running a business. The increase of organizational cost can be attributed to workforce absenteeism, turnover, and litigations due to bullying. Additionally, bullying occasions lower morale and productivity as well as reduce commitment. Also, it compels an organization to invest in bullying intervention among managers and personnel (Giorgi et al., 2016).

2.2.3 Bullying Interventions

According to international employment regulations, organizations should institute anti-bullying policies and rules with zero-tolerance to workplace bullying (Gillen et al., 2017). While such regulations or policies might vary from one organization to another, they ensure that employees are covered and offer mechanisms for reporting and who to punish the bullies. Kemp (2014) notes that over 50 percent of cases of bullying go unreported, but where there are clear procedures for reporting, bullying is significantly reduced. Managers, supervisors, and employers are encouraged to act on complaints of bullying and harassed reported using formal or informal strategies such as investigating bullying training workers on respectful behaviors. Saam (2010) proposes the use of multilevel interventions for bullying that provide interventions for a dyadic, organization, and group levels, including moderation, coaching, training, and organization development as well as mediation. The use of civility, engagement, and respect intervention has also been found to enhance civility and reduction

of bullying. For victims and bullies, they can undergo cognitive behavioral therapy and education to tackle the outcomes of bullying (Gillen et al., 2017).

Emotional intelligence (EI) has been found to be a good intervention against workplace bullying. The capability of managing emotions, particularly stressful symptoms, is a preventive measure to various types of bullying (Giorgi et al., 2016). Bullies have low emotional intelligence coupled with low empathy that is conducive for manipulative and unethical behaviors. Conversely, high EI among workers can significantly improve the work environment and moderates disputes and the manner in which people react when faced by conflicts. The dimensions of EI include self-management and self-awareness and have both been found to be positively associated with good leadership and a healthy culture and environment (Giorgi et al., 2016).

Chapter 3: Body of Thesis

The aim of this research is to comprehensively assess the causes and the impacts of workplace bullying as well as the preventive measures utilized to heal the vice. While studies on workplace bullying have recently progressed, and have examined the aspect with antecedents or predictors of bullying with minimal focuses on the intervention. There are still critical knowledge gaps and key problems in the field that need to be resolved to guide the development of evidence-based interventions with the support of a solid knowledge base. Bullying is a multifaceted aspect that can originate from various antecedents and develop via various pathways (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Knowledge regarding how bullying is causally associated with other variables is lacking. Therefore, this study is important in filling these research gaps.

This chapter details the research methodology utilized to accomplish the study objectives and aims of the research paper. A research methodology involves a systematic and theoretical analysis of the techniques utilized in a study (Bryman & Bell, 2015). It consists of the theoretical analysis of the body of methods as well as principles linked to a body of knowledge. A methodology does not offer a solution hence it is not the same as a method. A methodology provides the theoretical underpinnings of comprehending the set of methods and best practices or principles utilized in a particular case (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Thus a methodology is a path utilized to conduct a research depicting how the researcher formulated problems and the objectives as well as presenting the findings. For emphasis, this chapter presents the research philosophy, research design, research methods, the study sites or area, data sources and data collection approaches, the population consideration, sampling and recruitment of participants.

In Figure 2: Research Onion Framework adopted from Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2011) is deployed to explain the research methodology in this thesis. Saunders's onion depicts the phases involved while developing an extensive research methodology with each onion layer offering detailed description of the phase of a research process. The framework offers an effective progression in a research methodology. The usefulness of the onion framework lies on its adaptability to different research methodologies and can be deployed in various contexts. Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2011) observe that while deploying research onion, an investigator can go from the out later to the

innermost layers. The framework is premised on the unwrapping from the outer to the inner layer with the goal of articulating the right phases that enables a research to achieve the research objectives. For the realization of this paper, the layers needed were utilized.

3.1 Research philosophy

The outermost layer of the onion framework involves the research philosophy that entails a set of beliefs regarding the nature of reality being examined. A philosophy is the nature of knowledge and research philosophies can vary based on the objectives or aims of research as well as the best way of achieving these objectives (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2011). There are three main philosophies that inform a research process: ontology, axiology and epistemology. Ontology involves the study of reality by describing the nature of reality. There are three philosophical positions perceived to be under the ontological worldview: objectivism, pragmatism and constructivism (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Concerning axiology, it assists in learning how opinions and valuables affect the gathering and analysis of a research. Axiology assists in determining how people's opinions matter in a research. Conversely, epistemology is commonly utilized in scientific research to assist in finding knowledge that can be proved beyond doubt by finding commonly acceptable information and addressing the facts accordingly (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2011). Under epistemology, interpretivism, positivism and critical realism are commonly utilized.

The positivism philosophy was deployed in this research based on the premise that science is the only way of learning the truth. Positivism follows the view that only accurate knowledge acquired from observation or measurement is trustworthy (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Therefore, the researcher played a role of data gathering and interpretation in an objective manner. In such studies, research results can be quantified since positivism relies on quantitative data that results in statistical analyses. In positivism, knowledge emerges from human experiences. Additionally, a positivism viewpoint asks the investigator to focus on facts instead of meanings from human opinions. The justifications of deploying the positivism philosophy is that it follows a well-defined structure to minimize errors and knowledge is gained from a scientific method (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Positivism philosophy does not derive deductions or conclusions from subjective approach or feeling and emotions.

3.2 Approach

In the second layer of the onion framework lies the research approach including inductive and deductive reasoning. In inductive approach, the researcher intends to create a new theory instead of adopting the existing theory like in the case of deductive reasoning. This is the major difference between the two approaches of reasoning. An inductive reasoning moves from specific knowledge to more general with no framework which is initially developed to inform data gathering and research focus (Schutt, 2018). The research philosophy usually affects the research approach.

According to Crowther and Lancaster (2008), positivist research adopts a deductive approach while the inductive approach is associated with phenomenology philosophy. Therefore, a deductive approach will be utilized where pre-existing theory is used to formulate the research path. Deductive approach is increasingly suitable for positivist approach as it allows an investigator to formulate objectives or questions that can be tested statistically. The approach is characterized by moving from general to particular or general theory to specific knowledge base. Deductive reasoning deploys questionnaires to obtain data and understanding on a phenomenon and to compare various opinions and understandings of the participants. Data collected assist in confirming or rejecting the question

being examined. The justification of deploying a deductive approach is that it enables the investigator to explain the causality between the antecedents, predictors and outcomes of bullying and intervention. These concepts can be measured quantitatively providing a precise picture (Schutt, 2018). Furthermore, the results obtained can easily be generalized to a certain extent.

3.3 Research Strategy

A research strategy depicts how the investigator undertakes a research. There are different research strategies at the disposal of the researchers including action research, surveys, experimental research, grounded theory, ethnography, archival research and a case study. In an experimental strategy, the researcher creates an experimentation and examines the outcomes while a case study concentrates on a single object or more. This research utilized a survey strategy which is often connected to a deductive approach. A survey research can be described as the gathering of information from a sample of people by using their responses to questions developed (Check & Schutt, 2012). This strategy offers an investigator a variety of methods to recruit respondents, gather data and use different techniques of instrumentation. Surveys are frequently utilized to explore or describe human behaviors and hence often deployed on psychological and social studies.

A survey is one of the most economical and finest strategies that can enable a researcher to gather in-depth and reliable data. Also, a survey enables a researcher to collect vast data that can be deployed to answer the research questions (Ponto, 2015). Recently, surveys have been developed into rigorous strategies to research comprising scientifically tested methods regarding how to sample a representative population, way of distributing surveys and who to initiate surveys including dealing with non-responders or minimizing non-response errors to foster high-quality research process and findings (Ponto, 2015). Surveys tend to be deployed in quantitative studies and involve sampling a representative population. Also, surveys are extensive in nature since they offer broader capability to foster more accurate samples. Surveys offer significant flexibility because various modes can be utilized in collecting data like social media surveys, face-to-face surveys, online surveys, telephone surveys, paper-based surveys or mobile surveys. For hard-to-reach or geographically distributed respondents, the researcher has an option of deploying virtual surveys to gather and compile results (Ponto, 2015). Additionally, surveys are dependable since they enable respondents to answer anonymously which enhances the ability to offer honest and valid responses. Thus, a survey is a perfect candidate for this study.

3.4 Research Choice

The fourth layer involves the research choice entailing making a choice of either qualitative or quantitative. Survey strategy can deploy quantitative methods (such as questionnaires with statistical rated items), qualitative methods (open-ended interview questions) or both (mixed methods). There are three choices to choose from including multi method, mono method or mixed methods. Mono method is when one type of information is gathered by utilizing either a qualitative or quantitative approach. In a mixed method, qualitative and quantitative data is combined to create a single data. On the other hand multi method is utilized when a research is subdivided into parts of qualitative and quantitative data. This will employ a mono method involving quantitative data. Quantitative data involves measures or counts that are expressed in numerical format. A problem is explored deductively by answering the right questions with each phase intended to minimize bias.

The use of quantitative data enables a research to achieve a wider study encompassing a great number of participants which improves the ability of generalizing the results. It can allow a study to achieve greater objectivity as well as accurate results by providing summaries of data that ensure comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon. The use of prescribed approaches can foster reliability and validity in a research. The use of standards implies that a study can be replicated. Also, personal bias is significantly reduced when using quantitative data as the research keeps a distance from the respondents and can utilize unknown subjects. Statistical data can be tested and evaluated careful to determine whether it is reliable.

3.5 Time Horizon

Time horizon depicts the time needed to complete a research including longitudinal and cross-sectional. In a longitudinal study, data is collected over an extended period of time to determine change with time. The present study is a cross-sectional survey where data was gathered within a specific period. In a cross-sectional study, data is gathered from the participants with varied demographics and attributes. Data collection was conducted in the beginning of May 2020 from the targeted population to comprehend how bullying affects the Chinese workplace. The benefits of a cross-sectional study involve its cost-effectiveness and quicker conduct than a long period of follow-up evident in longitudinal studies. Data on different variables can be gathered at once including the prevalence of a phenomenon under exploration. A cross-sectional study is good for statistical analyses.

3.6 The study Site

The study site for this research was the Chinese workplace. The location was chosen since the country is notorious for having long working hours with autocratic management styles that can lead to work-related stress and enable bullying behaviors to flourish putting workers at physical and mental health risks. Thus, it is prudent to undertake a comprehensive exploration in the China workplace to clearly assess the causes, impacts and preventive measures that can be utilized in the workplace. Also, the Chinese workplace culture and management style is increasingly hierarchical. According to Perminiene and colleagues (2016), hierarchical management styles foster authoritarianism, controlling and rule-focused individuals were more prone to workplace bullying. Furthermore, the Chinese workplace is considerably performance-based or task-centred workplace which is also positively correlated to acceptance of bullying (Power et al., 2013). Therefore, the Chinese workplace was ideal for this study since it is likely to experience bullying but has not received sufficient attention. The participants in the study included persons who specifically work within the Chinese borders.

3.7 Sampling and Recruitment of Participants

The intent of sampling is survey research involves gaining an adequate sample which is representative of the entire population of interest. According to Ponto (2015), it is not viable to gather data from an entire population that the research is interested in (such as the entire Chinese workplace to determine bullying). Thus, a subset of the whole population is utilized to estimate the entire population responses. A large random sample enhances the probability that the obtained responses from the sample accurately depict the opinions of the whole population. This enables a researcher to precisely draw accurate deductions regarding the populations (Ponto, 2015). A sample must encompass the attributes that are similar to the population of interest. As a result, it is prudent to

correctly determine the population of interest (in this case, Chinese workers). A sample will ideally consist of participants who reflect the desired population in relation to sex, experiences and socioeconomic aspects as well as similar distribution of people with these attributes. Participant recruitment strategies impact on the sufficiency and representativeness of a sample. The use of diverse recruitment techniques can assist to enhance the size of the sample and ensure sufficient coverage of the desired population (Ponto, 2015).

There are several sampling approaches that are generally categorized into two classes: non-probabilistic and probabilistic sampling. For probabilistic or random sampling, a researcher begins with a complete frame of all eligible participants and chooses the sample with all participants having an equal opportunity of taking part in the study (Daniel, 2011). The benefits of probability sampling is that it is easier to generalize the results obtained. Nonetheless, probability sampling is expensive and time-consuming as compared to non-probabilistic sampling (Daniel, 2011). For non-probability or non-random sampling, the investigator does not start with a complete sample hence some individuals have are likelihood of being chosen than others. Thus, non-probability sampling cannot approximate the impact of sampling errors and it is likely to end with a sample which is non-representative of the population targeted by the research (Daniel, 2011). Consequently, results obtained from non-probabilistic cannot be generalized.

Notwithstanding the drawbacks of non-probabilistic sampling, the researcher was forced to use the same approach to sample the population due to unavoidable circumstances. The spread of Covid-19 throughout the world has occasioned the closure of many companies in China. Therefore, it was increasingly challenging to reach workers as anticipated via their organisations. Therefore, the researcher was forced to use a snowballing sampling approach in this study. Snowballing sampling method is commonly utilized in social science while investigating a hard-to-reach sample or population. In snowballing sampling one starts by identifying a few participants that match the criteria for inclusion in the research and then ask the same respondents to recommend others they know who meet the same criteria. The respondents recruited will further recommend others until the sample size required is achieved. Since snowballing is purely centered on referrals, it is also known as chain-referral sampling approach (Atkinson & Flint, 2011). The researcher directly recruited some Chinese workers who are close associates who were asked to nominate other participants in order to increase the sample size similar to a rolling snowball. The benefits of snowballing include enabling a study to occur where it could be challenging or impossible to undertake a research due to the lack of participants (Atkinson & Flint, 2011). Snowballing might also assist the investigator discover novel features about the population that the researcher did not know about. Nonetheless, by choosing acquaintances or close associates, significant selection bias might be introduced, especially selecting a big number of participants with similar attributes or views (Atkinson & Flint, 2011). A sample of 100 participants was recruited through snowballing for this study.

3.8 Data Collection and Instrumentation

As noted, a survey can utilize various data collection tools and the most common instruments include interviews and questionnaires. The study utilized a questionnaire as an instrument comprising a series of questions to collect data from participants. The benefits of using a questionnaire include cost-effectiveness and does not need much effort while conducting a survey (Check & Schutt, 2011). Questionnaires have a higher level of objectivity than other alternative data collection instruments. Also, a questionnaire comprises standardized questions and answers that are increasingly easier to

compile that interviews. Check and Schutt, 2011) observes that questionnaires are practical is collecting data especially from a large group of respondents. Polytomous closed-ended questions were utilized consisting of at least two options or answers to choose from. Data was quantified making it is easier to compare and contrast data from different respondents.

The questionnaire utilized included demographic questions including questions about age and sex. The other questions focused on bullying including whether the respondents had experienced bullying in the workplace, the number of cases of bullying witnessed and types of bullying. Also, questions were designed to seek knowledge about the causes of bullying, the type of strategies implemented in the workplace to curb or minimize bullying and the main impacts of bullying. The questionnaire comprised a total of 15 closed-ended questions. The questions are made very simple and could easily be answered within 3 minutes to increase the response rate.

Questionnaires can include self-administered or questionnaires administered by a professional investigator (Ponto, 2015). Additionally, questionnaires are usually in paper format and can be mailed to the participants or emailed in electronic format or even use internet-based tools like SurveyMonkey to gather information (Ponto, 2015). Due to geographical separation, the questions were emailed to the chosen respondents in China via electronic means. This significantly reduced the expense of traveling to various locations in China to meet the respondents and proved to be time-efficient. Online questionnaires also enhance scalability since geography is not a limitation due to the internet. Moreover, it is convenient for participants to complete online questionnaires at their own time which enhances engagement as well as the response rate (Check & Schutt, 2011). Also, online questionnaires enhanced anonymity since the respondents are likely to provide honest and candid answers when they are not being watched which also enhance the response and completion rates of a questionnaire.

3.9 Data Analysis

Data analysis entails the process of cleaning, converting and modeling gathered data to reveal meaningful information. For quantitative data, data analysis will turn raw numbers to useful information by applying critical and rational approaches (Treiman, 2009). A quantitative data analysis is perceived as a process of finding evidence that provides insight, support or reject assumptions made. Data analysis concentrated on numerical values of the data. There are different types of data analysis: cross-tabulation, trend analysis, conjoint analysis, MaxDiff, gap analysis, TURF analysis and text analysis (Treiman, 2009). This study deployed cross-tabulation analysis as the preferred approach that deploys basic tabular forms to draw deductions from the datasets obtained. After data was collected, it was arranged into proper order by entering it into excel sheet to organize it into specific format (Treiman, 2009). The process involved identifying, categorizing and assigning numerical symbols or characters to data. Subsequently, descriptive analysis was carried out to encapsulate the available data using median, mean and mode, percentages and frequencies. After descriptive analysis, the researcher chose the right tables and charts to represent the data. The use of Excel Spreadsheet was beneficial to this study since it provided a free and easy-to-use package (Treiman, 2009). Excel also offered a platform for data entry, manipulation and present as well for statistical analysis.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

Ethics is a field in philosophy that guides decision-making regarding what is right and wrong. Research ethics involve a system of principles that change choices and actions while conducting a study. Since the study involved human subjects, the research acted diligent to protect the subjects by

ensuring the research was ethical. Informed consent was major issues involving ensuring that subjects knowingly, intelligently and voluntarily take part in the study. Study subjects received informed consent forms with comprehensive information regarding the purpose of the study detailing how the findings will be utilized including any adverse effects of taking part in the study. The participation in this exploration was voluntary implying that participation was not through coercion but free will. Participants were informed that they could freely withdraw from the study at any given time they felt like without being penalized. Furthermore, withdrawal could not affect their relationship with the researcher and other bodies involved in the study. The study did not intend any harm on the participants either inflicting physical or mental harm such as diminishing of self-esteem, stress, invasion of privacy or pain. While the study might have reminded the participants about past experiences of bullying, the research did not intend to psychology harm the feelings of the respondents. In the case the respondents felt uncomfortable to answer any question, they were advised accordingly. No monetary incentives were provided to the respondents but all participants can receive a copy of findings from the study to learn more about bullying in the workplace including the mitigation measures that can be used.

Further, subjects were informed that the information collected throughout the study could be kept confidential and their identities could not be revealed in any report. The researcher did not collect any personal identifiable data like names or identification documents. Electronically collected data was encrypted and stored under password-protected files to limit access by a third party. For paper-based reports, they were secured in lock cabinets. The data obtained from the respondents was solely used for the completion of this study and was not shared with any third party. Additionally, for secondary data and literature utilized for the sake of completing this thesis, the APA referencing style is used.

3.11 Limitations

One of the major challenges faced during this study is accessing sufficient participants as required in a quantitative study that should utilize a large sample. However, due to the global coronavirus pandemic, most of the workplace in china had closed down their businesses. Therefore, it was increasingly challenging to access a representative sample through a random probabilistic sampling approach. The research was oriented and utilized a non-random sampling approach (the snowballing method) which is more appropriate in qualitative sampling. Chinese friends were contacted to provide referrals that introduced selection bias. The researcher attempts to the level best to ensure a heterogeneous sample is selected by asking the friends to provide referral of both men and women of different age, socioeconomic status and locations. A small sample size and non-random sampling limits the ability of generalizing the results obtained since the sample is not representative. Therefore, the findings of this study might not be representative of the Chinese workplace. Also, time factor was another challenge for an extensive research. The investigation was limited by the timings for completing and submitting all parts of the research. The investigation was forced to rapidly recruit the participants and plead with them to provide responses in a timely manner via emails. Also, data collection was immediately followed by data analysis to avoid time wastage.

3.12 Dissemination of Data

The findings of this study will be disseminated to Geneva Business School. Subsequently, the report will be published online in a scientific journal for access to the general public. Moreover, the research participants can receive a copy of the reports after its compilation upon their request.

3.13 Conclusion

The aim of this study involved investigating the causes and the impacts of workplace bullying as well as the preventive measures utilized to heal the vice. This chapter has presented the processing of gathering data including the guidelines and processes utilized. The study is guided by a positivism based on the premise that only accurate knowledge acquired from observation or measurement is trustworthy. A deductive reasoning approach was adopted which is closely associated with quantitative research. A cross-sectional quantitative survey was employed to collect data through a questionnaire. The research was considered ethical measures to protect the integrity of this paper and the subjects involved in the study. Collected data was analyzed using descriptive statistics to provide insights about bullying in the Chinese workplace.

Chapter 4: Findings

This chapter presents the results regarding workplace bullying in China.

4.1 Background Data

From the data collected, the majority of the respondents were males (52.4 percent). Female respondents were slightly lower than males since they were only 47.6 percent. (Figure 3: The Gender of the respondents)

Also, the study collected information regarding the age of the respondents. The age groups of the respondents were divided into 18-25 years, 26-30 years, 31-40 years, 41-50 years, 51-60 and above 60 years. The findings concerning the ages of the respondent are documented in figure beneath. (Figure 4: The Age of the Respondents)

The majority of the respondents were aged between 18 to 25 years (42.9%) followed by the age group of between 26 and 30 years at 28.6% then 31 to 40 years with a percentage of 14.3%. No respondent was aged over 60 years.

4.2 The Predominance of Bullying in the Chinese Workplace

Before examining what contributes or causes bullying in the Chinese workplace, the study sought to establish whether the respondents had experienced workplace while working. The findings obtained in regarding the prevalence of bullying are depicted in Figure 5: The Prevalence of Bullying.

Half of the respondents, 50 percent indicated that they have experienced bullying in the workplace. A similar number, 50 percent also indicated that they had not experienced workplace bullying. Therefore, the occurrence of workplace bullying in Chinese's workplace stands at 50%.

The study inquired further concerning how many times they had experienced bullying or another person being bullied in the workplace. Some respondents indicated that they had never seen people being bullied while others indicated that sometimes they had seen other workers being bullied. Others indicated that bullying is an everyday occurrence in the workplace. The findings regarding this question are documented in the Figure 6: The frequency of workplace bullying

The majority of respondents argued that they had never seen bullying episodes (40%) while 20 percent of the respondents indicated that they had sometimes or once experienced bullying episodes. Twenty percent of the respondents were not sure about the occurrence of workplace bullying while 20 percent said that bullying occurred regularly in their workplaces. No respondent indicated that bullying is an everyday occurrence.

For respondents who indicated they had experienced bullying, they were asked to indicate how many people they had observed being bullied. The responses obtained are shown in Table 1: The Number of People who are bullied in the Chinese Workplace.

According to the data from Table 1: The Number of People who are bullied in the Chinese Workplace, 40 percent of the respondents (the majority) had never witnessed bullying in the workplace. Also, a significant number, 30 percent, had witnessed at least one to two cases of bullying in their workplace with 25 percent experiencing 2 to 3 cases of bullying. Nonetheless, while 5 percent of the sampled population had witnessed at least five bullying cases, no respondent had witnessed between three and four bullying cases. It is evident that as the number of bullying cases increase, the number declines.

4.3 Causes and types of workplace-related bullying in China

Respondents were asked what they believe is the major cause of workplace bullying when considering discrimination, insecurity, vulnerable or non-confrontational, lack of accountability or the desire to gain dominance or control over other works. The findings concerning this questions are shown in Figure 7: Causes of Workplace Bullying in China.

From the results obtained, the major cause of workplace bullying is the desire to gain dominance or control over other workers with 40% followed by lack of accountability 25% and then insecurity 15%. The least causes of workplace bullying involve discrimination and vulnerability of people with each 5%.

There are also individual/personal factors associated with bullies. Respondents were asked why some people in their workplace are bullies and their feedback are presented in the figure Figure 8: Personal factors responsible for bullying.

Fifty-five percent of the respondents indicated that people are bullies since they perceive other as a threat to their status while 30% were not sure. Ten percent indicated that bullies want to get even or revenge while 5% believe that bullies want to show off.

The study sought to determine the most prevalent types of workplace bullying. Respondents were asked to indicate the most witnessed bullying in the workplace and their responses are presented in Figure 9: Common Types of Workplace Bullying.

The majority of respondents indicate that they have not experienced any type of bullying. Nonetheless, a significant number indicated that they had experienced physical assault (15 percent), others were isolated or by people evading their company or completely avoided talking to them (15 percent), others received warnings or threats (10 percent) and others were called names or abused verbally (5 percent).

4.4 The Impacts of Workplace Bullying

Bullying can affect the productivity, physical and mental health of the workforce. The study sought to determine the main impacts of workplace bullying as shown in the Figure 10: The Main Effects of Workplace Bullying.

For the majority of the respondents, 25% felt that bullying causes low-esteem among the workforce with a similar number indicating that bullying causes lower productivity, stress, absenteeism and high turnover in the workplace. Only 5% of the participants were not sure of the impacts of bullying.

Moreover, the study examined whether bullying led to absenteeism since the workers felt unsafe to go to work. The results obtained are shown in Figure 11: The Number of times workers felt unsafe to go to the workplace due to bullying.

Sixty percent of the respondents have never felt unsafe because of bullying to go to their workplace. However, 15 felt unsafe at least once in 6 months to visit their workplace due to safety issues brought by bullying.

4.5 Preventive Mechanisms for Bullying

To determine the preventive mechanisms utilized to manage or end bullying, the respondents were asked various questions. First, the study sought to determine which approach can best prevent workplace bullying between, code of conduct, having clearly defined workplace bullying policies and consequences, creating a corporate culture promoting respect and taking bullying reports seriously.

The majority of the respondent believe that organizations should deploy a multidimensional approach of resolving workplace bullying involving code of conduct, policies against bullying, reporting of bullies and promoting a culture of respect throughout the workplace.

One of the questions was to ascertain whether victims had a channel to report cases of bullying in order for the management or supervisors to penalize bullies. Some of the persons experiencing bullying had reported to higher authority as shown in Figure 12: Strategies Best-suited for Resolving Bullying in the Workplace.

The majority of the respondents had never reported bullying (40 %) while 25 percent had reported bullying and could report any cases in future while about 30 percent of the sampled population was not sure whether to report or not to report bullying to senior management for resolving. (Figure 13: Frequency of Reporting Bullying cases to seniors)

The study examined whether the Chinese workplace has policies against bullying.

In the Figure 14: Organizations with Bullying Policy, we noticed that the majority of the respondents were not sure (45%) whether their organizations had policies against bullying while 35 percent argued that their organizations use policies to fight bullying. Also, a significant number, 20% of the respondents indicated their workplace had no policy against bullying.

Moreover, the study examined whether bullied victims prefer using counseling or talking to their colleagues about such experiences.

Only 25 percent of the respondents could talk about bullying in the workplace while 40% could prefer to keep silent. A significant number, 35% felt that there is no need to talk about bullying in their workplace. (Figure 15: Respondents who prefer using talking to resolve bullying)

Chapter 5: Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

From the findings, the Chinese workplace seems to experience high prevalence of bullying since 50 percent of the respondents indicated that they had experienced bullying in their workplaces. A significant number of the respondents further argued that they had experienced one to two bullying

cases in their workplace even though it is not an everyday occurrence within the workplace. The high prevalence of workplace bullying in China can be associated with several aspects like highly demanding work, autocratic leadership, power social support and others. According to Power et al. (2013), in Asian countries like China, the performance-oriented culture is likely to increase bullying in order to compel workers to achieve high performance. Additionally, high cases of bullying in the Chinese workplace can be occasioned by the culture and management styles which are increasingly hierarchical. Perminiene et al. (2016) note that hierarchical management styles foster authoritarianism, controlling and rule-focused individuals were more prone to workplace bullying.

After ascertaining that indeed bullying occurs in the Chinese workplace, the study went further to examine the causes and types of bullying that commonly occur. The frequently reported type of bullying include isolation or alienation of some employees, sending of warnings or threats, physical assault and name calling or verbal abuses. Social media trolling seems not to be common in the Chinese workplace. This can be attributed to the fact that China censors the use of social media which might limit online trolling. The research further inquired the causes of workplace bullying. From the findings obtained, the major cause of workplace bullying involves the desire by some workers to control or gain dominance over other workers. According to the ecological framework of bullying, four interconnected aspects come into play during bullying: microsystem, exosystem, mesosystem and macrosystem. The microsystem involves the bully and the target while the exosystem involves the organization or the workplace. The mesosystem entails the immediate team or workgroup an employee is positioned in and the managers while the macrosystem encompasses the larger society (Johnson, 2011).

Therefore, the bully, the target, the organizations, teams and the larger society common together to contribute to bullying problems. Similarly, an empirical study by Vega and Comer (2005) notes that bullying is caused by various persons with the workforce. For instance, the model notes that colleagues and supervisors can escalate bullying by supporting a bully over the target that facilitates power imbalance and dominance of the bully against the targets. Thus, in some occasions bullying does not emerge from a dispute but habitual attributes of people including their attempt to control other people (Hutchinson et al., 2009). The results obtained also depict other factors that occasion bullying including discrimination, insecurity, vulnerable or non-confrontational and lack of accountability. Some individual attribute can make people bullies. From the study it was discovered that bullies some other people to threaten their status while others bullies want to show off that they are above other employees. In some instances, bullies want to get even or avenge. Nonetheless, studies on the microsystem of the ecological model have disputes that no demographic variables (age, education, socioeconomic status, race or gender) are associated with bullying (Johnson, 2011). Hence, bullies involve diverse individuals, subordinates, supervisors, workmates or managers without specific demographic attributes.

The effects of bullying are many ranging from absenteeism, physical injury, mental health problems to poor productivity. According to the results obtained, the major impacts of bullying include low self-esteem, increased absenteeism or turnover of workers, stress and low productivity. The ecological model seems to share similar observations indicating that unmanaged bullying can cause low self-esteem, anger, shame, self-blame and ultimately a cycle of continuous bullying (Johnson, 2011). Besides the model, several empirical studies reveal that bullying results in depressive symptoms (Savicki et al., 2003), retaliatory (Naseer et al., 2018), higher frequencies of absenteeism (Dehue et al., 2012) and escalates the cost of running a company. Also, the study found that bullying

made some workers feel unsafe and increased cases of absenteeism with at 15 percent of workers feeling it was unsafe to go to their workplace due to bullying cases. Such implications are shared by the ecological model indicating that bullying increases organizational cost due to sick leaves, decline in productivity, worker turnover and litigation due to bullying (Johnson, 2011). Furthermore, the model's mesosystem layer indicates that bullying can occasion low levels of job satisfaction and poor commitment, declining productivity, decrease of teamwork and creativity. Evidently, bullying is a costly vice that can turn a profitable organization into loss making.

To manage or prevent bullying in the workplace, various strategies can be deployed. According to the findings of this study, most common strategies deployed to prevent bullying include workplace policies against bullying, instituting workplace culture that clearly bans bullying while promoting respectful behaviors and reporting of senior management for resolving bullying. Seemingly, the majority of organizations do not deploy a single strategy but more than one mechanism to fight the vice. These findings are similar to the study of Saam (2010) who proposed the use of multilevel interventions for bullying delivering dyadic, organization and group levels including moderation, coaching, training and organization development as well as mediation.

Nonetheless, while there are clear lines for reporting bullying, some employees felt that it was not important to report bullying. This gives room for bullying to flourish in the workplace. Kemp (2014) observed a similar trend whereby 50% of bullying cases are unreported due to unclear procedures for reporting. Also, it was disturbing that some organizations do not have clear policies on curbing bullying which implies that the vice is likely to thrive. Meanwhile, while counseling or talking to colleagues about bullying can be helpful in finding a solution and getting psychological help, only a quarter of the respondents could seek such help. Therefore, many victims of bullying might be suffering in silent because they fear or do not want to expose bullies.

The ecological model is a perfect framework for assisting organizations to respond to bullying cases by targeting both the antecedents and outcomes of bullying. In tackling the antecedents and the outcomes of bullying, organizations must first focus on the ongoing cases of bullying through team building and conflict resolutions approaches that can enhance interactions among workmates and teams while preventing future occurrences of bullying or even escalating. For cases where management and leadership is the problem, training should be provided to promote a culture of respect. Furthermore, the ecological model exosystem level advances the use of external consultancy to assess the workplace and develop a harmonious and friendly workplace as well as policies and procedures that limit antecedents of bullying. Gillen et al. (2017) supports these ideas by proposing the use of anti-bullying policies and zero-tolerance policies at the workplace. Moreover, to repair the outcomes of bullying, interventions should focus on the bullies that victims including enabling the affected individuals to access psychological help such as counseling and healthcare treatment for physical injuries.

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Appendices

Figure 1: Ecological Framework of Bullying adopted from Johnson (2011)

Figure 2: Research Onion Framework adopted from Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2011)

Figure 3: The Gender of the respondents

Figure 4: The Age of the Respondents

Figure 5: The Prevalence of Bullying

Figure 6: The frequency of workplace bullying

Table 1: The Number of People who are bullied in the Chinese Workplace

Figure 7: Causes of Workplace Bullying in China

Figure 8: Personal factors responsible for bullying

Figure 9: Common Types of Workplace Bullying

Figure 10: The Main Effects of Workplace Bullying

Figure 12: Strategies Best-suited for Resolving Bullying in the Workplace

Figure 13: Frequency of Reporting Bullying cases to seniors

Figure 14: Organizations with Bullying Policy

Figure 15: Respondents who prefer using talking to resolve bullying