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The consequences of workplace bullying, on targets and observers, in the nursing environment

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Abstract

Research interest in workplace bullying has gained great popularity over the last two decades. This is because the public is starting to acknowledge the phenomenon as a problem in organisations worldwide. Bullying is now being recognised, not only as a childhood rite of passage that's widespread in the school playground, but as a genuine adult problem occurring frequently in our working environments, which needs to be addressed urgently. This study aimed to determine the prevalence of workplace bullying, for both the targets and observers of workplace bullying in the nursing sector. Additionally, the study tested whether social support moderates the relationship between workplace bullying (victims and observers) and job satisfaction, psychological wellbeing and propensity to leave. Lastly, the socio-demographic characteristics of the nurses were also studied, to determine whether or not they influence the perception of workplace bullying. The sample consisted of 102 nurses, in an African state hospital. The nurses were required to complete a 90-item composite questionnaire consisting of biographical information, the adapted Negative Acts Questionnaire-Revised (NAQ-R), the Job Satisfaction Scale, the Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (SWEMWS), the Propensity to Leave Scale, and the adapted workplace Social Support Scale. The prevalence of workplace bullying was found to be high in the nursing sector. Furthermore, backward multiple regression analyses revealed that social support is a moderator; social support was found to buffer the effects of workplace bullying improving nurses' job satisfaction and psychological wellbeing, as well as decreasing their propensity to leave their current job. Through correlations, t-tests and one way ANOVAs it was also revealed that socio-demographic characteristics of nurses cannot be used to identify risk groups of workplace bullying in an African context.