

A Scoping Review of Staff Bullying and Harassment in Higher Education Institutions

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Aims and Objectives: To conduct a systematic scoping review of staff bullying and harassment in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in order to:

1. Identify the volume, range, nature and characteristics of studies of workplace bullying in HEIs between 2003 and 2023.
2. Identify the extent to which the specific context of HEIs was considered to contribute to the enactment and/or the response to workplace bullying.

Design and Methods: An online literature search was conducted using search terms identified from the literature and previous scoping or systematic reviews for phenomenon, context and population. Searches were run on abstract/title and abstract, as appropriate for each database. Limiters for language (English only) and publication dates (2003-2023) were applied. Records were imported to COVIDENCE software and de-duplicated, resulting in 1,713 records for initial screening. Assessment for eligibility took place for 271 papers, with 140 included in the review and charted by date of publication, study aims, the country in which data was collected, methods, type of HEI, population, and type of bullying.

Results: Much of the work to date has been conducted in industrialized nations with the associated cultural lenses. Only 15 of 140 studies were conducted in Africa, for example. Extending research into emerging economies and non-westernized cultures will better reveal the intersection between the various biases that attend the problem. A further screening exercise was undertaken of the 140 charted papers, which involved the categorisation of papers based upon the focus of enquiry within the individual paper. Studies where the focus was on the particularities of the HE environment were selected for full-text review (n=47). These papers were synthesised to reveal two themes; the impact neoliberalism on bullying and harassment in HE, and the impact of complex and malevolent gendered power dynamics in HE. The review offers a model of contextual factors driving workplace bullying in HEIs, crystallising the importance of addressing it at the highest possible level and offering insight into why individualised, 'case management' approaches do not work and will not work in Higher Education.

Dissemination: Results were presented at the International Workplace Bullying and Harassment Conference in Huddersfield, June 2024. A paper has been accepted for publication by International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health (September 2024).

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