

A Facebook-based survey on workplace bullying perceptions in Hong Kong

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Abstract:

Workplace bullying has been well recognized as a pervasive and increasingly serious problem in many parts of the world. At the same time, workplace bullying has been investigated in the academic and professional community since the early 1990s. Yet, its nature, impacts and organizational/ legal treatments are still being investigated on. Meanwhile, the topic per se is quite under-researched in Hong Kong. The literature review presented in this paper summarizes all the ideas and concerns on workplace bullying into a set of related workplace bullying themes (WBTs). The Facebook-based survey findings on workplace bullying perceptions in Hong Kong and the accompanying multiple regression analysis on the survey dataset further portray and confirm these ideas and concerns as perceived in Hong Kong in quantitative terms, even though the external validity of the findings are quite limited. Finally, the paper recommends to research on workplace bullying via the critical systems lens.

Key words: critical systems thinking, Facebook-based questionnaire survey, multiple regression analysis, workplace bullying, workplace bullying themes (WBTs)

INTRODUCTION

Workplace bullying has been reported to be a prevalent problem in many societies and is increasingly so, e.g. Woodman and

Cook (2005) on the U.K., Dusan (2008), Officeteam (2015) and Schumpeter (2010) on the U.S.A., and Divya (2014) on a global poll. For instance, a Monster Global Poll in May 2011 on workers worldwide reported that “of the 16,517 responses received 64% answered that they had been bullied” (Divya, 2014). Despite the severity of the workplace bullying problem, “there is a general lack of awareness about the bullying and the types of behaviors the term encompasses” (Dusen, 2008). This unsatisfactory status on the awareness and knowledge status on the topic prompts the writer to undertake a Facebook survey on workplace bullying perceptions in Hong Kong so as to contribute to the knowledge of the workplace bullying topic. The next section provides a literature on workplace bullying, which paves the way for the presentation of the Facebook-based survey findings from the writer.

CHARACTERISTICS AND THEMES UNDERLYING THE WORKPLACE BULLYING SUBJECT

The term of workplace bullying was introduced around the early 1990s (Galanaki and Papalexandris, 2013). In general, workplace bullying is conceived as a kind of counterproductive workplace behaviours (CWB) (Barlett II and Barlett, 2011), which, in turn, is an umbrella term subsuming harmful behaviours at work. CWB include aggression, deviance and retaliation (Barlett II and Barlett, 2011). Workplace bullying is also viewed as a kind of workplace mistreatment, which comprises “a range of abuses and insults that workers may experience” (Hodgins, *et al.*, 2014). Bullying, Stephens and Hallas (2006) remind us, is not “easy to define in concise terms” and “examples of what constitutes such behavior are many and varied”. Their observation has been echoed in the workplace bullying literature, thus:

- Barlett II and Barlett (2011): “Workplace bullying is a phenomenon that appears widely in research literature in a

variety of disciplines. The review found that a concise definition for workplace bullying was not available in the literature”.

- Goldsmid and Howie (2014): “Lack of definitional consensus remains an important unresolved issue within bullying research”.
- Chan-Mok *et al.* (2014): “... The academic discussion continues regarding whether bullying and other “mistreatment” behaviours should be treated as separate concepts or dealt with in an overarching framework... Adding to the confusion is the tendency for behaviours that are related to bullying, such as violence and harassment, to be treated interchangeably, or as categories of one another..”.
- Cicerali and Cicerali (2015): “Bullying is a nebulous phenomenon, without a firmly established description concerning its parties, intensity, duration, frequency, severity, and intent...”.

Nevertheless, certain prominent characteristics have been identified for workplace bullying (Stephens and Hallas, 2006; Barlett II and Barlett, 2011; Woodman and Cook, 2005; Goldsmid and Howie, 2014; Branch and Murray, 2015), namely:

- i. *Repeated and unwelcomed acts;*
- ii. *Existence of imbalance of power* (e.g., positional power) between the perpetrator and the victim;
- iii. *Consequences of negative impacts*, to the victim e.g., hurt, violation of dignity and discrimination, and the organization involved, e.g., higher cost, staff turnover, and productivity/ reputation damages;
- iv. *Multidimensional in its causation*, “with individual characteristics of targets, perpetrators and bystanders as well as the work environment itself (e.g., stress, organizational change etc.) all contributing, synergistically, to its occurrence and escalation” (Branch

and Murray, 2015; Francioli *et al.*, 2015). In other words, the causes of bullying are inter-related and “can be found at various levels, like the organization, the perpetrator, the team and the target” (Notelaers *et al.*, 2010).

The four characteristics can be located in the synthesizing workplace bullying model of Moayed *et al.* (2006). Their model comprises 3 major components: (i) risk factors (i.e., related to market, organizations, society/ environment, and people), (ii) bullying behaviours, and (iii) outcomes (i.e., psychological health complaints, psychosomatic complaints, cardiovascular disease, absenteeism, chronic diseases, stress, and lower job satisfaction). Additionally, workplace bullying: (i) “goes beyond simple rudeness and incivility”, (ii) “may include overt aggression” as well as “subtle or covert acts” (Hutchinson, 2009), (iii) can also be depersonalized (i.e., institutionalized bullying) (Berlingieri, 2015), (iv) is broader in scope than managerial bullying (Van Fleet and Van Fleet, 2012) as it can be committed by non-managers or superiors of the victims, and (v) can be categorized as work related, personal, and physical/threatening (Barlett II and Barlett, 2011). In the literature, two popular approaches to understand workplace bullying, according to Francioli *et al.* (2015), are the “work environmental hypothesis” (i.e., psychosocial working conditions)-based approach and the “employees’ individual characteristics”-focused approach. For Francioli *et al.* (2015), these two sets of factors, i.e., psychosocial working conditions and employees’ individual characteristics, are inter-related. Now that the basic nature and pertinent characteristics of workplace bullying have been identified, we can consider a number of workplace bullying definitions offered in the literature which explicitly endorse the aforementioned characteristics. Four definitions are provided as follows:

- Woodman and Cook (2005): “Offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, or abuse or misuse of power, which violates the dignity of, or creates a hostile environment which undermines, humiliates, denigrates or injures the recipient”.
- Barlett II and Barlett (2011): “repeated unwelcomed negative act or acts (physical, verbal, or psychological intimidation), that can involve criticism and humiliation, intended to cause fear, distress, or harm to the target from one or more individuals in any source of power with the target of the bullying having difficulties defending himself or herself”.
- MacIntosh *et al.* (2011): “....repeated physical, psychological, or sexual abuse, harassment, or hostility within workplaces and consists of behaviour that is known, or ought to be known, to be offensive, unwanted, or unwelcome...”.
- Stojanova (2014): “... behaviours...(a) that is directed towards an employee or a group of employees, that is repeated and systematic, and that a reasonable person, having regard to all the circumstances, would expect to victimise, humiliate, undermine or threaten the employee or employees to whom the behaviour is directed; and; (b) that creates a risk to health or safety”.

Regarding literature search concern, academic journals such as *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology* (Routledge), *Work & Stress* (Routledge), *The International Journal of Human Resource Management* (Routledge) and *International Journal of Workplace Health Management* (Emerald) are useful literature sources on workplace bullying. In particular, the workplace bullying literature has discussed a number of *workplace bullying themes* (WBT). Nine such themes are identified here. One theme is on coping approaches, which can be individual- or organization- focused as well as remedial, corrective, regulatory or restorative (Hutchinson, 2009;

Ólafsson and Jóhannsdóttir, 2004) **[WBT 1]**. Other workplace bullying themes concern organizational workplace bullying intervention (Mikkelsen *et al.*, 2011; Hodgins *et al.*, 2014; Cicerali and Cicerali, 2015; Beirne and Hunter, 2013) **[WBT 2]**, implications on health and safety law (Chan-Mok *et al.*, 2014) and workplace bullying legislation (Stojanova, 2014) **[WBT 3]**, human resource development practices (Barlett II and Barlett, 2011; Galanaki and Papalexandris, 2013) **[WBT 4]** and workplace health management (Sheehan and Griffiths, 2011) **[WBT 5]**, cross-cultural/ cross-country differences on workplace bullying perceptions and prevalence (Power *et al.*, 2013; Nielsen *et al.*, 2009) **[WBT 6]**, workplace bullying impacts on individuals (MacIntosh *et al.*, 2011; Nielsen and Einarsen, 2012; Lee and Brotheridge, 2006; Moayed *et al.*, 2006) **[WBT 7]**, organizational anti-workplace bullying policy practices (Cowan, 2011) **[WBT 8]** and relationship between perpetrators'/ victims' profiles and workplace bullying (Cuyper *et al.*, 2009) as well as the relationship between these profiles and psychosocial working conditions (Francioli *et al.*, 2015; Notelaers *et al.*, 2010) **[WBT 9]**. These WBTs, as identified here, are apparently not isolated themes in the field. On the whole, research in workplace bullying study, covering the WBTs, has been surging (Coyne *et al.*, 2004). On reviewing the literature, this writer is in favour of adopting the critical systems lens¹ to comprehend the workplace bullying characteristics and related synthesizing models. The justification is that the “imbalance of power” [characteristic ii] and “numerous factors’ interrelatedness” [characteristic iv] characteristics on workplace bullying point to the high relevance of employing critical systems thinking to examine the subject. To sum up, this brief literature review discusses the definitions of workplace bullying, its main characteristics, and the major workplace bullying research themes. The workplace bullying ideas and concerns are to be

¹ For an elaboration on *critical systems thinking*, readers are to Jackson (2000: Part 3).

revisited in the next section on literature review in the Hong Kong context as well as in the subsequent section on a Facebook-based survey, again in the context of Hong Kong.

WORKPLACE BULLING IN HONG KONG: THE RELEVANT LITERATURE

Several pieces of information on workplace bullying in the context of Hong Kong are found by the writer. Firstly, Southern (2016), from a legal standpoint in Hong Kong, explains that “there is no law against bullying in Hong Kong. But the employee may rely on breaches of the relevant anti-discrimination ordinances.... and the common law duty of the employer to his employee to provide a safe place and a safe system of work. Where there is an “abusive work environment”, it is an act of negligence on the part of the employer....”. Secondly, a 2013 survey conducted by the Vital Employee Service consultancy, with help from the Baptist University in Hong Kong found that “..Half of Hongkongers say they have been bullied at work, with most of them suffering in silence..” (Chan, 2013). Thirdly, Memie (2011), who was the past President of Staff Association of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, observes that, in the Chinese University of Hong Kong, “...The bullies are both men and women, though the targets in most of our cases are women. Contrary to the stereotype of a bullied person who is weak and dysfunctional, I've found among our targets capable, dedicated, above average performers who are well liked by co-workers. It is possible the bullies are driven by jealousy or feel threatened about their own competence, which erupts as the desire to diminish or cut down the targets...”. Fourthly, via news article search on the *South China Morning Post*, three pieces of local news on workplace bullying have been spotted as follows for illustration:

News 1: Man (2009): “A teacher who sued a Tai Wai school for HK\$3 millions claiming she suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder after From Three students bullied her in 2003...”. The news is chiefly related to WBT1, 5, 7 and 9.

News 2: Staff reporter (2006): “Some 46 per cent of Indonesian helpers interviewed said they had less than one day of rest every week, and 25 per cent received no compensation leave or money. Some even had to work seven days a week for the first three to seven months of their employment...”. The news is chiefly related to WBT4.

News 3: Staff reporter (2010): “Susan Yu, a former bank teller, quit her job six months ago after being subjected to repeated abuse by a colleague, when she describes as a ‘backstabber’ pitting co-workers against her and blowing her mistakes out of proportion in front of senior executives..”. The news is chiefly related to WBT 1, 7 and 9.

Finally, also related to workplace bullying was a survey over 1,200 organizations, including both government and non-government ones, on workplace violence by the Occupational Safety and Health Council in Hong Kong (Occupational Safety & Health Council, 2010). Workplace violence is related to workplace bullying in the sense that they are both a kind of workplace mistreatment and counterproductive workplace behaviors. Other than that, based on the writer’s literature search, both the academic literature and professional journals, notably *Human Resources* published by the Hong Kong Institute of Human Resource Management rarely offer published works on workplace bullying per se in Hong Kong. Having presented the brief literature review, the paper now moves on to the presentation of findings on a recent Facebook-based survey carried out by the writer.

ONLINE SURVEY FINDINGS ON WORKPLACE BULLYING PERCEPTIONS IN HONG KONG

A Facebook-based survey was conducted by the writer with his Facebook friends from April 3 to 6, 2016. The Facebook friends are mainly the writer's present or past students in tertiary education programmes, both business and non-business ones. Only those who primarily work and live in Hong Kong were invited to do the survey. The survey questionnaire was constructed with the free-of-charge survey tool from Kwiksveys.com. The method of Facebook-based survey was explained in Ho (2014), thus not repeated here. In the workplace bullying literature, Van Fleet and Van Fleet (2012) is another study that made use of social media-based (including Facebook) questionnaire survey. Thus, discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of this survey method was also covered by them. The questionnaire questions in this survey are in two parts. The first part learns the participants' profiles and the second part asks for their perceptions on workplace bullying. The survey questions and other information on the survey exercise are provided in the *appendix*. Altogether, 89 persons have participated in the survey. The following are the eight main survey findings, grouped into two parts:

Part 1 - basic findings (findings 1 to 6)

Finding 1: (re survey questions 8, 9 and 10): This finding gauges the pervasiveness of workplace bullying in the respondent's organization at the personal, departmental and organizational levels.

Table 1

	<i>Victim in your organization now</i> (re: question 8)	<i>Workplace bullying common in your department</i> (re: question 10)	<i>Workplace bullying common in your organization</i> (re: question 9)
<i>Strongly feel this way</i>	5 (6%)	9 (10%)	15 (17%)
<i>Mildly feel this way</i>	26 (29%)	26 (29%)	31 (35%)
<i>Do not feel this way</i>	53 (60%)	50 (56%)	35 (39%)

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<i>Not applicable</i>	5 (6%)	3 (3%)	7 (8%)
<i>Don't know</i>	0 (0%)	1 (1%)	1 (1%)

The statistics indicate that the pervasiveness of workplace bullying is at the highest at the respondents’ organizational level, and lowest at the respondents’ personal level. Nevertheless, even at the personal level, strong and mild perceived victimization still amounts to 35%, a significant figure. This finding is mainly related to WBT 9.

Finding 2: (re survey questions 17, 18 and 19): This finding gauges the expected severity of workplace bullying in the respondent’s organization at the personal, departmental and organizational levels in two years’ time.

Table 2

	<i>Personal workplace bullying will get worse</i> (re: question 19)	<i>Departmental workplace bullying will get worse</i> (re: question 18)	<i>Organizational workplace bullying will get worse</i> (re: question 17)
<i>Strongly feel this way</i>	6 (7%)	9 (10%)	11 (12%)
<i>Mildly feel this way</i>	22 (25%)	21 (24%)	21 (24%)
<i>Do not feel this way</i>	44 (49%)	49 (55%)	40 (45%)
<i>Not applicable</i>	11 (12%)	9 (10%)	10 (11%)
<i>Don't know</i>	6 (7%)	1 (1%)	7 (8%)

Roughly half of the respondents do not foresee worsening of workplace bullying at their personal, departmental and organizational levels in the coming two years. Around 34% of them either strongly or mildly feel that the bullying problem at the personal, departmental and organizational levels will get worse. Such a significant figure at 34% points to a quite unsatisfactory perceived trend on workplace bullying. This finding is mainly related to WBT 9.

Finding 3: (re survey questions 11 and 12): This finding estimates whether certain groups of employees, i.e., female and

junior employees, are perceived to be more likely to suffer from workplace bullying in the respondents' organizations.

Table 3

	<i>Junior employees suffer more from workplace bullying</i> (re: question 11)	<i>Female employees suffer more from workplace bullying</i> (re: question 12)
<i>Strongly feel this way</i>	24 (27%)	3 (3%)
<i>Mildly feel this way</i>	29 (33%)	18 (21%)
<i>Do not feel this way</i>	29 (33%)	57 (66%)
<i>Not applicable</i>	7 (8%)	9 (10%)
<i>Don't know</i>	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

Regarding the statistics, respondents generally feel that junior employees are quite vulnerable to workplace bullying in their organizations (re: question 11). The majority of them have either a strong or a mild feeling agreeing on this (60% [27% + 33%]) while female employees per se are perceived to be much less likely to suffer from workplace bullying in their organizations (re: question 12): only 25% [3% + 21%] of the respondents either strongly or mildly agree on the corresponding proposition. This finding is mainly related to WBT 9.

Finding 4: (re survey questions 14, 15 and 16): This finding reveals perceptions on organizational anti-workplace bullying efforts in terms of measures and staff training.

Table 4

	<i>Sufficient anti-bullying measures exist in your organization</i> (re: question 14)	<i>Formal anti-bullying measures have been implemented in your organization</i> (re: question 15)	<i>Employees need more training on anti-workplace bullying-related rules</i> (re: question 16)
<i>Strongly feel this way</i>	4 (4%)	5 (6%)	24 (27%)
<i>Mildly feel this way</i>	14 (16%)	13 (15%)	36 (40%)
<i>Do not feel this way</i>	49 (55%)	52 (58%)	13 (15%)
<i>Not applicable</i>	11(12%)	9 (10%)	15 (17%)
<i>Don't know</i>	11 (12%)	10 (11%)	1 (1%)

The statistics reveal that respondents consider anti-workplace bullying measures are neither sufficiently established nor actually implemented in their organizations. The majority of the respondents (at 67%) either strongly or mildly feel that employees need more anti-bullying training in their organizations. In short, organizations are expected by the respondents to do more to combat workplace-bullying. This finding is mainly related to WBT 1, 2, 3, 4 and 8.

Finding 5: (re survey questions 8 and 20): This finding compares the figures of perceived own victimization with workplace bullying (re: question 8) and interest in learning workplace bullying (re: question 20).

Table 5

	<i>A victim of workplace bullying now</i> (re: question 8)	<i>Interested in learning more on workplace bullying</i> (re: question 20)
<i>Strongly feel this way</i>	5 (6%)	18 (20%)
<i>Mildly feel this way</i>	26 (29%)	43 (48%)
<i>Do not feel this way</i>	53 (60%)	12 (13%)
<i>Not applicable</i>	5 (6%)	11 (12%)
<i>Don't know</i>	0 (0%)	5 (6%)

The figures indicate that the prevalence of interest in learning workplace bullying, at 68% (20% + 48%), is much higher than perceived own victimization with workplace bullying, at 35% (6% + 29%). This finding is mainly related to WBT 1 and 4.

Finding 6: (re survey questions 1, 8, 13, 19 and 20): The finding examines whether gender affects perceived own victimization with workplace bullying and interest in learning workplace bullying. The figures in Table 6 are obtained by using Excel's data-filter function on the survey dataset.

Table 6

	<i>Female</i> (total: 56) (re: question 1)	<i>Male</i> (total: 33) (re: question 1)
<i>Strongly feel as a victim now (re: question 8)</i>	3 (5.4%)	2 (6%)
<i>Strongly and increasingly feel as a victim over the last two years (re: question 13)</i>	7 (12.5%)	6 (18.2%)
<i>Strongly and increasingly feel as a victim in the coming two years (re: question 19)</i>	7 (12.5%)	4 (12.1%)
<i>Strongly feel interested to learn more on workplace bullying (re: question 20)</i>	10 (17.9%)	8 (24.3%)

The figures indicate that (i) more male respondents than female respondents are interested in learning workplace bullying (re: question 20) and (ii) more male respondents than female respondents have experienced additional workplace bullying over the last two years (re: question 13). Gender does not make material difference on the topic of (i) felt victimization now (re: question 8) and (ii) expectation of more personal workplace bullying in the coming two years (re: question 19). This finding is mainly related to WBT 1, 4 and 9.

Part 2 – findings based on multiple regression analysis (findings 7 and 8)

Additional survey findings can be derived via multiple regression analysis on the survey data collected (Lind *et al.*, 2001: chapter 14). To do so, the survey dataset has to be converted to numerical values with a coding scheme (re: appendix 4).

Finding 7 (re: survey questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 14 and 15): A multiple regression analysis is conducted on a number of variables as captured in the following formula:

Formula 1

Being a victim in present organization (y) = a + b1 x (x1: gender) + b2 x (x2: age group) + b3 x (x3: education background) + b4 x (x4: job status) + b5 x (x5: enterprise type) + b6 x (x6: no. of years with the

employing organization) + $b_7 x$ (x_7 : familiarity with the workplace bullying topic) + $b_8 x$ (x_8 : existence of anti-bullying measures) + $b_9 x$ (x_9 : actual implementation of anti-bullying measures)

The variables involved in the formula are explained as follows:

Variable y (being a victim in present organization) is based on survey question 8.

Variable x1 (gender) is based on survey question 1.

Variable x2 (age group) is based on survey question 2.

Variable x3 (education background) is based on survey question 3.

Variable x4 (job status) is based on survey question 4.

Variable x5 (enterprise type) is based on survey question 5.

Variable x6 (no. of years with the employing organization) is based on survey question 6.

Variable x7 (familiarity with the workplace bullying topic) is based on survey question 7.

Variable x8 (existence of anti-bullying measures) is based on survey question 14.

Variable x9 (actual implementation of anti-bullying measures) is based on survey question 15.

Based on the regression analysis report of Excel (re: *appendix 6*), the **resultant formula 1** is produced as follows:

Being a victim in present organization (y) = 3.8644 - 0.1062 x (x1: gender) - 0.0082 x (x2: age group) - 0.0637 x (x3: education background) - 0.8095 x (x4: job status) + 0.1255 x (x5: enterprise type) - 0.0023 x (x6: no. of years with the employing organization) + 0.3450 x (x7: familiarity with the workplace bullying topic) + 0.0137 x (x8: existence of anti-bullying measures) - 0.0010 x (x9: actual implementation of anti-bullying measures)

Interpretation on the resultant formula 1: The resultant formula mainly detects quite weak influences (some with positive correlation; others with negative correlation) of the independent variable (all the x variables) on the dependent variable (the y variable) in absolute value measurement. In terms of % change, their influences are still noteworthy, especially for independent variables of x_4 (job status) and x_7 (familiarity with the workplace bullying topic). Nevertheless, only variable x_7 of “familiarity with workplace bullying” has a p-value lower than

2.5% (a critical value of 5% for a two-tail test) at 2.4%. This means that, for variable x7, the null hypothesis that the b value of variable x7 being zero can be rejected. As to the other independent variables, their corresponding p-values are larger than the critical value of 5%, implying that the null hypotheses of the b values of these variables (i.e., x1 to x9, except x7) being zero cannot be rejected. This finding is related to WBT 1, 8 and 9.

Finding 8 (re: survey questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 14, 17, 18, 19 and 20): A multiple regression analysis is conducted on a number of variables as captured in the following formula:

Formula 2

Interested in learning workplace bullying (y) = a + b1 x (x1: gender) + b2 x (x2: age group) + b3 x (x3: education background) + b4 x (x4: job status) + b5 x (x5: enterprise type) + b6 x (x6: no. of years with the employing organization) + b7 x (x7: familiarity with the workplace bullying topic) + b8 x (x8: existence of anti-bullying measures) + b9 x (x9: being a victim in present organization) + b10 (x10: personal workplace bullying gets worse in the coming 2 years) + b11 (x11: departmental workplace bullying gets worse in the coming 2 years) + b12 (x12: organizational workplace bullying gets worse in the coming 2 years)+ b13 (x13: organizational workplace bullying is common)

The variables involved in the formula are explained as follows:

Variable y (being a victim in present organization) is based on survey question 20.

Variable x1 (gender) is based on survey question 1.

Variable x2 (age group) is based on survey question 2.

Variable x3 (education background) is based on survey question 3.

Variable x4 (job status) is based on survey question 4.

Variable x5 (enterprise type) is based on survey question 5.

Variable x6 (no. of years with the employing organization) is based on survey question 6.

Variable x7 (familiarity with the workplace bullying topic) is based on survey question 7.

Variable x8 (existence of anti-bullying measures) is based on survey question 14.

Variable *x9* (being a victim in present organization) is based on survey question 8.

Variable *x10* (personal workplace bullying gets worse in the coming 2 years) is based on survey question 19.

Variable *x11* (departmental workplace bullying gets worse in the coming 2 years) is based on survey question 18.

Variable *x12* (organizational workplace bullying gets worse in the coming 2 years) is based on survey question 17.

Variable *x13* (organizational workplace bullying is common) is based on survey question 9.

Based on the regression analysis report of Excel (re: *appendix 7*), the **resultant formula 2** is produced as follows:

Interested in learning workplace bullying (y) = 0.2849 – 0.0235 x (x1: gender) + 0.0071 x (x2: age group) – 0.0242 x (x3: education background) + 0.1186 x (x4: job status) + 0.1210 x (x5: enterprise type) + 0.0065 x (x6: no. of years with the employing organization) + 0.1958 x (x7: familiarity with the workplace bullying topic) + 0.0817 x (x8: existence of anti-bullying measures) – 0.0044 x (x9: being a victim in present organization) + 0.3549 (x10: personal workplace bullying gets worse in the coming 2 years) – 0.2324 (x11: departmental workplace bullying gets worse in the coming 2 years) + 0.3560 (x12: organizational workplace bullying gets worse in the coming 2 years)+ 0.0296 (x13: organizational workplace bullying is common)

Interpretation on the resultant formula 2: The resultant formula mainly detects quite weak influences (some with positive correlation; others with negative correlation) of the independent variable (all the x variables) on the dependent variable (the y variable) in absolute value measurement. In terms of % change, their influences are still noteworthy, especially for independent variables of *x10* (personal workplace bullying gets worse in the coming 2 years) and *x12* (organizational workplace bullying gets worse in the coming 2 years). Nevertheless, none of the x variable has a p-value lower than 2.5% (a critical value of 5% for a two-tail test) at 2.4%. This means that all the independent variables possess p-values larger than the critical value of 5%. This implies that the null hypotheses of the b values of all the

independent variables (i.e., x1 to x13) being zero cannot be rejected. This finding is related to WBT 1, 4, 8 and 9.

Overall, the survey statistics are compatible with the findings and observations from the workplace bullying literature as presented in the previous sections. They are shown to be related to specific workplace bullying themes (WBTs) in the interpretation of findings. The survey figures give more concrete information on the workplace bullying perceptions in Hong Kong in terms of absolute values (re: Part 1 findings) and correlation values among two sets of x variables and y variables (re: Part 2 findings). Given the non-randomness of the survey sample and the relatively small sample size, the external validity (Shafron, 2015) of these Facebook-based survey findings is quite limited. Nevertheless, it has some reference value for learning workplace bullying in the Hong Kong context.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Together the literature review and the Facebook-based survey findings here render workplace bullying as an evolving, conceptually somewhat ambiguous and intellectually rich field of study. In the world of organizational life globally, workplace bullying is significant and widespread as a personal, organizational and, subsequently, social problem. Due to the complexity and coercive nature of the workplace bullying problem, this writer recommends to study it with the critical systems lens. Given its gross under-investigation in Hong Kong, this paper, reporting survey and literature findings in the Hong Kong context, offers some academic and practical values on this topic even though the external validity of the survey findings is quite limited. Finally, the discussion in this paper sheds light on two other related topics examined by the writer, namely on Facebook-based survey (Ho, 2014) and work stress (Ho, 2015).

Interested readers are thus referred to them as relevant readings to pursue the workplace bullying study.

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Internet resources

Kwiksurveys.com. A free to use online survey builder (url address <https://kwiksurveys.com/about>).

Literature on survey research, maintained by Joseph, K.K. Ho, for academic research and teaching purposes (url address: <https://www.facebook.com/Literature-on-survey-research-596689917162895/timeline>).

Literature on workplace bullying, maintained by Joseph, K.K. Ho, for academic research and teaching purposes (url address: <https://www.facebook.com/literature.workplace.bullying/timeline>).

APPENDIX

Appendix 1: The Facebook-based survey questions (20 questions) and responses statistics, from April 3 to 6, 2016.

<i>Survey questions</i>	<i>Survey statistics</i>
Question 1: What is your gender?	Male: 33 (37%) Female: 56 (63%) Standard Deviation: 11.5 Responses: 89
Question 2: What is your age?	18 to 27: 8 (9%) 28 to 37: 42 (47%) 38 to 47: 31 (35%) 48 to 57: 7 (8%) 58 to 67: 1 (1%) 68 or above: 0 (0%) Standard Deviation: 15.91 Responses: 89
Question 3: What is your education background?	Not yet a degree-holder: 15 (17%) Finished University Undergraduate Degree study: 63 (71%) Finished Master Degree study: 11 (12%) Finished Ph.D. Degree study (or equivalent): 0 (0%) Standard Deviation: 24.16 Responses: 89
Question 4: What is your job status?	I have full-time job: 81 (91%) I solely work part-time: 4 (4%) I am not working in any industry: 3 (3%) Not applicable/ no idea: 1 (1%) Standard Deviation: 33.94 Responses: 89
Question 5: Is your employing organization a commercial enterprise?	Yes, it is: 69 (78%) No, it is not: 16 (18%) Not applicable/ no idea: 4 (4%) Standard Deviation: 28.24 Responses: 89
Question 6: How long have you been working in your present organization?	Less than 3 years: 46 (52%) More than 3 years up to 6 years: 22 (25%) More than 6 years up to 9 years: 5 (6%) More than 9 years up to 12 years: 6 (7%) More than 12 years: 9 (10%) Standard Deviation: 15.45 Responses: 88
Question 7: Do you feel that you are familiar with the topic of workplace bullying?	Yes, I strongly feel this way: 17 (19%) Yes, I mildly feel this way: 42 (47%) No, I do not feel this way: 26 (29%) No comments/ not applicable: 4 (4%) Standard Deviation: 13.83 Responses: 89
Question 8: Do you feel that you are a victim of workplace bullying in your present organization?	Yes, I strongly feel this way: 5 (6%) Yes, I mildly feel this way: 26 (29%) No, I do not feel this way: 53 (60%) No comments/ not applicable: 5 (6%) I don't know: 0 (0%)

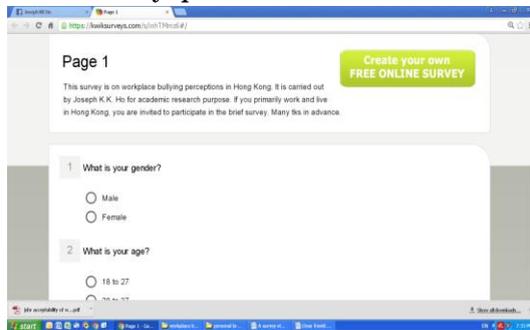
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	Standard Deviation: 19.75 Responses: 89
Question 9: Do you feel that workplace bullying is a common problem in your organization?	Yes, I strongly feel this way: 15 (17%) Yes, I mildly feel this way: 31 (35%) No, I do not feel this way: 35 (39%) No comments/ not applicable: 7 (8%) I don't know: 1 (1%) Standard Deviation: 13.24 Responses: 89
Question 10: Do you feel that workplace bullying is a common problem in your department?	Yes, I strongly feel this way: 9 (10%) Yes, I mildly feel this way: 26 (29%) No, I do not feel this way: 50 (56%) No comments/ not applicable: 3 (3%) I don't know: 1 (1%) Standard Deviation: 18.35 Responses: 89
Question 11: Do you feel that junior employees suffer more workplace bullying than senior employees in your organization?	Yes, I strongly feel this way: 24 (27%) Yes, I mildly feel this way: 29 (33%) No, I do not feel this way: 29 (33%) No comments/ not applicable: 7 (8%) I don't know: 0 (0%) Standard Deviation: 12.02 Responses: 89
Question 12: Do you feel that female employees suffer more from workplace bullying than male employees in your organization?	Yes, I strongly feel this way: 3 (3%) Yes, I mildly feel this way: 18 (21%) No, I do not feel this way: 57 (66%) No comments/ not applicable: 9 (10%) I don't know: 0 (0%) Standard Deviation: 20.73 Responses: 87
Question 13: Do you feel that you have experienced more workplace bullying as a victim over the last 2 years?	Yes, I strongly feel this way: 13 (15%) Yes, I mildly feel this way: 21 (24%) No, I do not feel this way: 50 (57%) No comments/ not applicable: 4 (5%) I don't know: 0 (0%) Standard Deviation: 17.76 Responses: 88
Question 14: Do you feel that your existing organizational policy has provided sufficient anti-bullying measures?	Yes, I strongly feel this way: 4 (4%) Yes, I mildly feel this way: 14 (16%) No, I do not feel this way: 49 (55%) No comments/ not applicable: 11 (12%) I don't know: 11 (12%) Standard Deviation: 15.94 Responses: 89
Question 15: Do you feel that your organization actually implements anti-bullying measures that it formally possesses?	Yes, I strongly feel this way: 5 (6%) Yes, I mildly feel this way: 13 (15%) No, I do not feel this way: 52 (58%) No comments/ not applicable: 9 (10%) I don't know: 10 (11%) Standard Deviation: 17.29 Responses: 89
Question 16: Do you feel that employees in your organization need more training on anti-workplace bullying-related regulations/ rules?	Yes, I strongly feel this way: 24 (27%) Yes, I mildly feel this way: 36 (40%) No, I do not feel this way: 13 (15%) No comments/ not applicable: 15 (17%)

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	I don't know: 1 (1%) Standard Deviation: 11.69 Responses: 89
Question 17: Do you feel that the problem of workplace bullying in your organization will get much worse in the coming 2 years?	Yes, I strongly feel this way: 11 (12%) Yes, I mildly feel this way: 21 (24%) No, I do not feel this way: 40 (45%) No comments/ not applicable: 10 (11%) I don't know: 7 (8%) Standard Deviation: 12.06 Responses: 89
Question 18: Do you feel that the problem of workplace bullying in your department will get much worse in the coming 2 years?	Yes, I strongly feel this way: 9 (10%) Yes, I mildly feel this way: 21 (24%) No, I do not feel this way: 49 (55%) No comments/ not applicable: 9 (10%) I don't know: 1 (1%) Standard Deviation: 16.86 Responses: 89
Question 19: Do you feel that the problem of workplace bullying experienced by you will get much worse in the coming 2 years?	Yes, I strongly feel this way: 6 (7%) Yes, I mildly feel this way: 22 (25%) No, I do not feel this way: 44 (49%) No comments/ not applicable: 11 (12%) I don't know: 6 (7%) Standard Deviation: 14.34 Responses: 89
Question 20: Do you feel that you are interested in learning more on the workplace bullying topic?	Yes, I strongly feel this way: 18 (20%) Yes, I mildly feel this way: 43 (48%) No, I do not feel this way: 12 (13%) No comments/ not applicable: 11 (12%) I don't know: 5 (6%) Standard Deviation: 13.26 Responses: 89

Appendix 2: Online survey questionnaire screen.



Appendix 3: The invitation to participate in the survey on the writer’s Facebook wall.



Appendix 4: The coding scheme for multiple regression analysis on the survey dataset.

I. Gender

Female: 1

Male: 2

II. Age group

18 to 27: 22.5

28 to 37: 32.5

38 to 47: 42.5

48 to 57: 52.5

58 to 67: 62.5

68 or above: 72.5

III. Education background

Not yet a degree-holder: 1

Finished University Undergraduate Degree study: 2

Finished Master Degree study: 3

Finished Ph.D. Degree study (or equivalent): 4

IV. Job status

Not working at all: 1

Work part-time: 2

Work full-time: 3

V. Years of working experience

Less than 3 years: 1.5

More than 3 years up to 6 years: 4.5

More than 6 years up to 9 years: 7.5

More than 9 years up to 12 years: 10.5

More than 12 years: 13.5

VI. Employing organization type

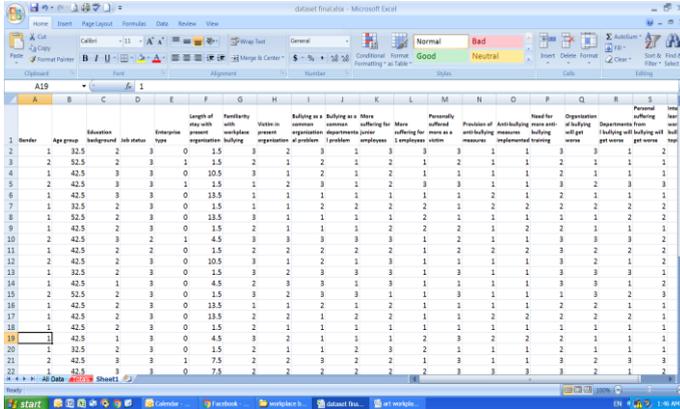
Commercial (yes): 0

Non-commercial (no): 1

VII. Intensity of feeling

- No, I do not feel this way: 1
- Yes, I mildly feel this way: 2
- Yes, I strongly feel this way: 3

Appendix 5: Survey dataset converted into numerical values.



Appendix 6: Excel report on regression analysis for formula 1 (the y variable is “being a victim in present organization”).

SUMMARY OUTPUT

<i>Regression Statistics</i>	
Multiple R	0.530782917
R Square	0.281730505
Adjusted R Square	0.066249657
Standard Error	0.644978875
Observations	40

ANOVA				
	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>
Regression	9	4.895067527	0.54389639	1.307450324
Residual	30	12.47993247	0.41599775	
Total	39	17.375		

	<i>Coefficients</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>t Stat</i>	<i>P-value</i>
Intercept	3.864434461	1.769708633	2.18365577	0.036942062
Gender	-0.106245618	0.259448619	-0.4095054	0.685078065
Age group	-0.008248924	0.016302396	-0.5059946	0.616558673
Education background	-0.063727439	0.213137736	-0.2989965	0.767004227
Job status	-0.809526127	0.503355105	-1.6082605	0.118253038
Enterprise type	0.1255197	0.342546621	0.366431	0.716615215
Length of stay with present organization	-0.002342918	0.026715912	-0.0876975	0.930699922
Familiarity with workplace bullying	0.345005676	0.144145831	2.39344888	0.023149454
Provision of anti-bullying measures	0.01372391	0.373138687	0.03677965	0.970904352
Anti-bullying measures implemented	-0.009964716	0.382202117	-0.0260718	0.979372689

Appendix 7: Excel report on regression analysis for formula 2. (the y variable is “interested in learning workplace bullying”).

SUMMARY OUTPUT

<i>Regression Statistics</i>				
Multiple R	0.678580737			
R Square	0.460471817			
Adjusted R Square	0.190707726			
Standard Error	0.583367617			
Observations	40			

ANOVA				
	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>
Regression	13	7.551737799	0.58090291	1.70694259
Residual	26	8.848262201	0.34031778	
Total	39	16.4		

	<i>Coefficients</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>t Stat</i>	<i>P-value</i>
Intercept	0.284858421	1.808930938	0.15747335	0.876088384
Gender	-0.023497322	0.237110176	-0.09909875	0.921819983
Age group	0.007056205	0.015125289	0.46651704	0.644730836
Education background	-0.024235414	0.211839354	-0.11440468	0.909795914
Job status	0.118632914	0.493817785	0.24023621	0.812031232
Enterprise type	0.12104134	0.33429219	0.36208246	0.720216802
Length of stay with present organization	0.006542816	0.024494711	0.26711136	0.791490756
Familiarity with workplace bullying	0.195798742	0.147182687	1.33031096	0.194967437
Provision of anti-bullying measures	0.08167489	0.19610005	0.41649602	0.680465446
Victim in present organization	-0.00437901	0.244196502	-0.01793232	0.98582975
Personal suffering from bullying will get worse	0.354903454	0.220483964	1.60965654	0.119549002
Departmental bullying will get worse	-0.232391038	0.207334804	-1.12084914	0.27259851
Organizational bullying will get worse	0.355955825	0.282795758	1.25870284	0.219322798
Bullying as a common organizational problem	0.029556759	0.279878208	0.10560579	0.916705685