Workplace Bullying in Louisiana Academic Libraries: Exploring Worker Status and Demographics

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Introduction

Bullying is a global mire. The phenomenon exists across cultures, societies, and even species (Kinsey et al. 2007; Sherrow 2011; Vidal, Buwalda, and Koolhaas 2011). For people, it causes stress and exhaustion, anxiety and depression, affects job satisfaction and performance, and can even lead to suicide (Namie 2012). It can be found in every corner of our institutions, even the workplace. In academe, "bullying is alive and well" (Sallee and Diaz 2013, 47).

The unfortunate universality of bullying, however, does not imply uniformity. Different people in different contexts experience bullying differently. Its severity and specificity differ across demographic groups, such as gender, race, ethnicity, age, and sexuality. Mirroring society at large, historically marginalized and minoritized groups are the most vulnerable targets of bullying. Academic librarians—independent of individual identity—are subject to a unique set of environmental and social circumstances that are conducive to bullying in the workplace. When individual identity is considered, how do experiences vary? The present study investigates the relationship between workplace bullying as experienced by academic library workers across age, gender, and race, as well as workplace-specific factors, including librarian status, tenure status, and years in the library profession, among a population of Louisiana academic library workers.

The authors of this article utilized both a survey instrument and a definition of bullying from the Norwegian Bergen Bullying Research Group and bullying researchers Einarsen, Hoel, and Notelaers. They define bullying as "persistent exposure to interpersonal aggression and mistreatment from colleagues, superiors, or subordinates," which can include acts of humiliation, threats, exclusion, rumor spreading, or being delegated work that is undesirable, demeaning, or impossible to manage, to name some examples (2009).

Literature Review

The work of Brodsky (1976), Leymann (1990), Einarsen (1999), Keashly, Trott, and MacLean (1994), Namie and Namie (1999), and Westhues (1998) in the 1970s through the 1990s described the negative impact of bullying both on individuals and organizations. Beginning with this work and through the early 2000s, multiple measures and constructs were developed to examine workplace bullying and related phenomena, including counterproductive work behavior, mobbing, workplace incivility, and others (Baird, Hebert, and Savage 2023). While each of these terms describe harmful behaviors that are damaging to both workers and the workplace, they vary in their characterization. For example, mobbing focuses less on physical bullying acts, but rather the psychological harassment of a targeted individual (Leymann 1996). Counterproductive work behaviors (such as withdrawing/being late) may not be carried out with intention to harm, but nonetheless are damaging to the workplace and to workers (Fox and Spector 2005). Workplace incivility includes rude and disrespectful behaviors that do not align with workplace norms and which can eventually escalate into more damaging behaviors (Andersson and Pearson 1999).

A number of frameworks and theories have been identified and used to explain workplace bullying, addressing the complex system, alongside the interrelated roles that individuals, groups, organizations, and societal forces play (Branch, Ramsay, and Barker 2013). For a thorough review of these theories, see Branch et al. (2021).

Forces Impacting Individuals

The bullying literature details workplace stressors as a factor that supports bullying in workplaces (Nielsen and Einarsen 2018; Penney, Martir, and Bok 2017). Academic libraries, which for years have been experiencing defunding, decreased staffing, immense organizational change, role ambiguity, resilience narratives, and devaluing within their broader university organizations, are replete with such stressors (Berg, Galvan, and Tewell 2020; Farkas 2017; J. Kim 2023). This scarcity rhetoric positions time at its center—in short, there is never enough time. And so, academic libraries have embraced "time-saving" ideas, such as demand-driven acquisitions, bite-sized information literacy videos, and 24/7 on-demand chat reference services, under the guise of "transformational change" (Nicholson 2015). Library workplaces structured like businesses result in more competition for resources, increasing friction between individuals, exposure to more organizational stressors, and a corresponding increased risk for bullying behaviors. In this environment, individuals likely experience a loss of trust in their

organization; when an organization does not support and resource its workers, trust erodes and burnout thrives (Nardine 2019).

In environments where trust is low and stressors grow out of hand, and in which bullying behaviors are not addressed, people learn that bullying is an acceptable behavior and one that may even be helpful to increase individual status and power within an organization. In this environment, the accepted belief becomes that being a bully is personally advantageous and without consequence. Indeed, in some of the earlier library articles about bullying in libraries, bullying (and its cousin, mobbing) were framed largely as an individual or personality problem, de-emphasizing workplace stressors and toxic library work environments (Hecker 2007; Osif 2010). Some even cautioned against informing or involving human resources and unions and instead suggested grassroots organizing with co-workers against bullies (Motin 2009).

While workplace policies and training (e.g., bystander training, civility training, stress management) have been implemented to prevent and combat bullying behaviors (Gardner and Cooper-Thomas 2021), focusing solely on individual responses to bullying situations will fail if unjust structures, workplace environmental factors, and stressors are not addressed (Gillen et al. 2017; Praslova, Carucci, and Stokes 2022).

Groups and Teamwork

Academic library work environments are highly team-based. This influences the creation of groups within the library, revolving around a number of different roles and functions: librarian/library staff, tenured/untenured, management/nonmanagement, public-facing/non-public-facing workers, etc. These groups exist in addition to broader social categories such as race, gender, and age. In-groups and out-groups develop as individuals sort and are sorted. In their discussion of group processes and workplace bullying, Ramsay, Troth, and Branch (2011) propose that in an organization where groups follow social rules that are "pro-social and respectful," the likelihood of bullying decreases, whereas groups that follow negative social rules (e.g., aggression) increases the likelihood of bullying, especially if the group possesses a strong group identification (Ramsay, Troth, and Branch 2011).

Glambek, Einarsen, and Notelaers (2020, 291) investigated the relationship between bullying and what they called non-prototypical versus prototypical work group members and found "exposure to bullying behaviours is significantly more common among non-prototypical work group members as compared to members with prototypically central positions in the group." This significant finding underpins other research pointing to structural inequities. It is not

just bad luck or an individual personality trait that leads to being singled out and bullied; it is also a function of one's insider/outsider status in the workplace social group system (Escartín et al. 2013).

Library Worker Groupings and Demographics

Library and librarian positionality in academe is affected by the tenure practices in higher education. In many institutions, librarian faculty are subject to the same tenure processes and procedures as teaching and research faculty. Tenure affects the power dynamics within the organization, as it creates a parallel hierarchy (tenure versus tenure-track versus nontenure-track) that exists alongside the hierarchy already established by the institution. The relationship between tenure status and workplace bullying experiences is complicated. Although clear power differences exist between tenured and nontenured faculty, bullying in the academic workplace cannot simply be explained through a tenured-as-bully, nontenured-as-target paradigm. A study conducted by Taylor (2012) found that nontenure-track faculty and tenured faculty experienced significantly higher exposure to specific bullying behaviors than tenure-track faculty. The fact that tenured faculty experience significantly higher rates of bullying despite their power status highlights how workplace bullying often manifests outside of traditional conceptions of power in academe. Although subordinate–superior structures are often illuminated in the bullying literature, it is not a universal framework for conceptualizing bullying in the workplace (Keashly and Neuman 2013).

This abstruse dynamic is further complicated in the academic library space, which contains workers of various levels and statuses. Library staff—nonlibrarian workers with no option for tenure—are subject to unique circumstances that affect bullying experiences. In a study of 1,185 university employees, faculty were more likely to identify fellow faculty as bullies (63.4%), whereas superiors were more likely to be identified as bullies by frontline staff (52.9%) (Keashly and Neuman 2013). Although Keashly and Neuman's study is not focused on academic library staff specifically, it is clear that one's status within the organizational hierarchy of academe has an impact on experiencing bullying in the workplace. Indeed, Sasyk notes that academic library staff "often have little agency to respond to acts of incivility, scapegoating, resistance, and poor communication from librarians" (2023, 251).

Any discussion of bullying in the workplace must consider individual and specific contexts. Much like any society, every workplace environment is made up of a complex ecosystem of identities, social norms and expectations, and intersectionalities. Exploring the variety of factors

that make up one's identity—gender, ethnicity, age, etc.—coupled with their workplace identity—time in the profession, job status, etc.—could explain why, in the workplace, some are bullied more, and some are bullied less.

If bullying in the workplace is an understudied area, an examination of what demographic factors influence the prevalence, type, and severity of bullying in the workplace is even more so. Although only a portion of workplace bullying studies investigate demographic variables, how these variables are categorized and defined makes it difficult to draw broad generalizations. How researchers define gender, race/ethnicity, and age categories often varies on a study-to-study basis. Studies also vary on the level of inclusivity; for example, gender is often defined on a binary (man, woman). The body of literature is undoubtedly affected by research practices that center the experiences of White, heteronormative workers; nevertheless, some relevant conclusions can be drawn from the existing literature.

In general, the data show women are bullied more than men in the workplace to varying degrees (Hoel and Cooper 2001; Lewis and Gunn 2007; Quine 2002; Salin 2003; 2021). A systematic review of the literature by Feijio et al. (2019) found that of the fifty-one included studies in the review, thirteen showed that women were more likely to be bullied than men, two found no gender associations, and two found men were more likely to be bullied. Moayed et al. (2006) found in their systematic review that only two of seven studies showed gender differences (both found women to be more likely targets). In a 2018 face-to-face interview study of over 4,500 German workers, Lange et al. (2019) found no difference in bullying prevalence across gender. Beyond prevalence, there are differences in the ways workers experience bullying based on their gender. Men are more likely to be bullied by superiors, whereas women experience bullying consistently from supervisors, colleagues, and subordinates (Salin 2003). Women are more likely to report unwanted sexual attention or sexual harassment in the workplace (Salin 2003) as well as receive more insulting messages (Hoel and Cooper 2001). In addition, women in higher-ranking positions are bullied at higher rates than men in these positions (Hoel, Cooper, and Faragher 2001) and, in libraries, men are more likely to bully workers they supervise than women in supervisory roles (H. J. Kim, Geary, and Bielefield 2018). Namie (2021) found women are more likely to bully women in the workplace, whereas Hoel, Lewis, and Einarsdottir (2021) found the opposite. Gender differences in reported bullying exposure may also depend on measurement methodology. Rosander et al. (2020) discovered in their sample of over 1,800 Swedish workers that women are more likely to self-label as bullied, but men are more likely to be labeled as targets of bullying based on the cumulative score of exposure to negative acts in the workplace. This is consistent with previous findings, which

show that when the experience of bullying behaviors is consistent across genders, women self-label as targets of bullying at higher rates than men (Salin 2003). Further complicating gender-specific bullying in the workplace is the matter of distribution across genders and samples. Zapf (2020) found that in an analysis of eighty samples of bullying targets across studies, women were almost twice as likely to be the targets of bullying than men. However, based on further analysis of gender distribution within the total sample, the overrepresentation of women targets is explained by the overrepresentation of women in the sample generally. Furthermore, gender in the present literature is often dichotomized between men and women. This, of course, does not reflect all workers' gender identities. Little research exists on the bullying experiences of transgender, nonbinary, and gender nonconforming workers (Salin 2021). In the United Kingdom and the United States, reports show that transgender workers experience a very high rate of harassment at work, 48% and 90%, respectively (Grant et al. 2011; Trades Union Congress 2017). More specific to academe, Rankin et al. (2010) found that, in their national survey of over 5,000 university students, faculty, and staff, those who identify as transgender are more likely to report being bullied than men or women.

The same study by Rankin et al. (2010) also revealed respondents of color in a university setting were more likely to experience race-based harassment than their White counterparts. In general, people of ethnic minorities, like gender minorities, are more likely to experience exposure to bullying than those of ethnic majorities (Bergbom and Vartia 2021). Bergbom and Vartia's conclusions are echoed throughout the literature (Khubchandani and Price 2015; Lewis and Gunn 2007; Lipscomb et al. 2015; Quine 2002), but the literature is inconsistent in terms of which minority groups are the most targeted. For example, the 2021 Workplace Bullying Institute US Workplace Bullying Survey found that Hispanic Americans were the most frequently targeted (35%) followed by White Americans (30%), Black Americans (26%), and Asian Americans (12%) (Namie 2021). Conversely, Hoel and Cooper (2001) found Asians (19.6%) to be the most frequently targeted ethnic group. In total, the literature surrounding the association between ethnicity and bullying is lacking and inconclusive. In a 2019 systematic review, Feijo et al. identified fifty-one studies that measured workplace bullying, only five of which considered race or ethnicity. Of these five studies, three found associations between bullying and ethnic/racial minority status, one showed no differences, and one found less bullying prevalence amongst non-White workers. In the library space, minority academic librarians face additional impact factors and enabling systems that have been demonstrated to affect low morale, which leads to bullying experiences (Kendrick and Damasco 2019). Freedman and Vreven's (2016) survey of academic librarians and staff found a relationship between race/ethnicity and an

increased incidence of negative acts in the workplace. Recent qualitative studies report on the hostile community college library environments faced by Black librarians (Oates 2023) and the toxic and racist environments experienced by BIPOC librarians who ultimately decided to leave their academic library jobs (Cunningham, Gus, and Stout 2023). While the correlation between rates of bullying and race or ethnicity warrants further investigation, it is clear that people from ethnic and racial minorities experience negative acts targeted at their race or ethnicity at higher rates than White workers (Sallee and Diaz 2013).

In addition to gender, race, and ethnicity, age as well as the amount of time working in a particular field or institution are important factors when considering the prevalence of bullying in the workplace. Data exist that point toward younger workers experiencing bullying at higher rates than their older counterparts, but results are unclear and inconclusive. Lange et al. (2019) found that amongst a sample of workers between the ages of 31 and 60, younger workers experience significantly more severe bullying from superiors than older workers. These findings are consistent with those of Hoel and Cooper (2001), who identified significant differences between bullying risk for younger and middle-aged workers and that for older workers over a five-year period. However, in the Lange et al. (2019) study, there was no difference in overall bullying experience between age groups, only in terms of severe bullying exposure from superiors, and in the Hoel and Cooper (2001) study, significant differences were only found when results were mapped over a five-year period. Furthermore, of the eighteen studies identified by Feijo et al. (2019) that explored an association between age and bullying, eight found that younger workers were more likely to be the targets of bullying, one found that older workers were more likely targets, and nine found no association. Additionally, only two of these studies measured years of work in an organization, one finding a positive association between more years worked and bullying, and the other finding no difference. For library workers, specifically, Kim, Geary, and Bielefield (2018) found that there was in fact a significant difference between the bullying experiences of workers with respect to age. Their study found two age groups (35–44 years and 45–54 years) are more likely to experience bullying than their coworkers (18–24 years, 25–34 years, 55–54 years, and 65 and older).

There is little literature on the association between length of service in an organization and exposure to workplace bullying. Much of the work in this area has investigated the relationship between length of service and work attitudes, which suggests that as employees spend more time in an organization, attitudinal indicators trend positively (Bal, De Cooman, and Mol 2013; Gibson and Klein 1970). Glambek, Einarsen, and Notelaers (2023) posit a complicated relationship between length of time within an organization and bullying. In their study of over

1,000 Norwegian workers, the researchers identified a mediation effect of job dissatisfaction that links exposure to workplace bullying and turnover intentions (i.e., workers' intent to leave the organization), with the strongest effect applying to short-term employees (two and a half years or less). The researchers conclude that long-term service acts as a resource for resilience when faced with bullying, which also could explain why the literature across age-related workplace bullying leans in the same direction—generally, workers who have spent longer amounts of time in an organization are also older. Additionally, the response to bullying exposure from older workers differs from younger workers—older workers are more likely to take no action in response as opposed to engaging with a coping strategy such as seeking help or avoidance (Jóhannsdóttir and Ólafsson 2004). As is the case with other groups, it is not only important to consider rates of exposure to workplace bullying on a demographic spectrum, but also differences in effects, responses, and outcomes. In academic libraries, Freedman and Vreven (2016) found that there was a critical time during which negative acts increased, namely between four and seven years in the profession. The researchers attributed this finding to the tenure and promotion processes that generally take place during that time.

The opacity of the effects of gender, race, ethnicity, age, and length of service on exposure to workplace bullying is evident. Despite a scarcity of literature in this area, what is clear is that "a vast number of studies show that employees in more vulnerable social groups … report higher rates of workplace bullying and related phenomena, such as workplace incivility and workplace harassment" (Salin 2021, 332). There is no reason to think that academe, libraries, and academic libraries are immune to the influence of identity-specific contexts that affect bullying experiences. Demographically, librarians heavily skew female, White, and to a lesser degree, middle aged (Rosa and Henke 2017; Schonfeld and Sweeney 2017), creating a unique environment that is not reflective of demographic differences across the general population or other workplaces. Academic librarians, specifically, work in an environment that is subject to a number of influences and risk factors that may exacerbate exposure (Baird, Hebert, and Savage 2023).

Research Question

Are there relationships between experiencing workplace bullying and librarian status, tenure status, years in the profession, age, gender, or race?

Methods

Population and Sampling

The eligible population included library workers over the age of 18 years who worked at one of the forty higher education institutions in Louisiana accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) but excluded student workers and graduate assistants (SACSCOC 2022).

The authors created an approximated census sample by collecting the names and emails from the institutions' public-facing websites; when this information was unavailable, the authors requested the information from the libraries. The authors collected information from thirty-nine of the eligible institutions, a total of 636 names.

Because of employee turnover, some directories may have been inaccurate. It's also possible that some directories did not list all employees. The study also excluded the author working at a Louisiana university.

This study was approved by the Louisiana State University Institutional Review Board (Study no. IRBAM-22-0123) and by the Montclair State University Institutional Review Board (Study no. IRB-FY21-22-2541).

Data Collection

The authors used Qualtrics, an online survey application, to distribute recruitment emails and to administer the survey. Unique links were used, but responses were anonymized. Respondents' names, email addresses, and IP addresses were not recorded.

Instrument

The authors received permission from the Bergen Bullying Group to use the Negative Acts Questionnaire—Revised (NAQ-R) (personal communication from Ståle V. Einarsen, March 16, 2022). NAQ-R is widely used in bullying studies (Escartín et al. 2021), has a high level of internal consistency, and has been validated (Einarsen, Hoel, and Notelaers 2009). It also has the advantage of being used in several studies of libraries and workplace bullying (Freedman and Vreven 2016). The authors included several demographic questions following the NAQ-R (Baird, Hebert, and Savage 2023).

Data Analysis

Data were exported into SPSS. Data from participants who responded to fewer than twenty of the first twenty-two NAQ-R items were deleted as were data from participants who did not respond to question twenty-three of NAQ-R. Data are reported in aggregate. In addition, when the number of responses to certain demographic questions was small enough that participants could potentially be identified, data were consolidated in some of the response choices. These items are noted in the Results section.

Results

The authors looked for relationships between experiencing workplace bullying and librarian status, tenure status, years working in a library, gender, race, and age using the chi-square test (or Fisher's exact test when cross-tabulations included cell counts less than five) and found no statistical significance pointing to a relationship between being bullied and each of these independent variables other than years working in a library, perhaps because of the small sample size. Nonresponses and "prefer not to answer" responses were excluded from the analysis.

Reporting the frequency of bullying in cross-tabulations for groups, even in the absence of statistically significant relationships, provides valuable documentation. In addition, reporting statistically insignificant findings is in alignment with the call in the Hong Kong Principles to "value complete reporting" (Moher et al. 2020, 5). Biases against publishing null results extend beyond the sciences into the social sciences (Franco, Milhotra, and Simonovits 2014), and those against the publication of negative results have also been identified as contributors to questionable research practices (O'Boyle, Banks, and Gonzalez-Mule 2014).

Response Rate

The recruitment message was delivered to 615 eligible subjects. The survey opened on March 17, 2022, and closed on April 28, 2022. After removing incomplete responses as reported in the Data Analysis section, the study included data from 140 respondents (22.7% response rate).

Additional details about survey distribution and descriptions of respondents' institutions are detailed in the authors' 2023 article.

Librarian Status

The majority of respondents (65.9%) identified themselves as librarians (table 1). ACRL 2020 dashboard data indicates librarians account for 47% of academic library staff (excluding student assistants) in Louisiana, so the ratio of librarians to staff is not representative of the actual ratio of librarians to staff in Louisiana (American Library Association 2022). A chi-squared test does not reveal a statistically significant relationship between librarian status and experiencing workplace bullying, X^2 (1, N = 138) = .146, p = .702.

Table 1. Librarian Status

Are you classified as a librarian at your institution?	No, not bullied	Yes, any amount of bullying	Total
Yes	69	22	91
No	37	10	47
Total	106	32	138

Tenure Status of Librarians

Of the respondents who identified themselves as librarians, twenty-six were tenured, twenty-eight were tenure-track, and thirty-six had no option for tenure (table 2). One respondent's answer was uncategorizable and was not included in the analysis. A chi-squared test does not reveal a statistically significant relationship between tenure status and experiencing workplace bullying, X^2 (2, N = 90) = .713, p = .700.

Table 2. Tenure Status of Librarians

Tenure Status	No, not bullied	Yes, any amount of bullying	Total
Tenured	19	7	26
Tenure-track	23	5	28
No option for tenure*	27	9	36

Total	69	21	90

*Responses that indicated "adjunct" as the status were merged with "no option for tenure" responses.

Gender

Approximately 17% of men, 38% of individuals identifying as non-binary/other, and 25% of women reported being the target of bullying (table 3). A chi-square test of independence was performed to evaluate the relationship between gender and experiencing bullying. The relationship between these variables was not statistically significant, X^2 (2, N = 136) = 1.736, p = .420.

Table 3. Gender

Gender	No, not bullied	Yes, any amount of bullying	Total
Man	29	6	35
Non-binary/other*	5	3	8
Woman	70	23	93
Total	104	32	136

*"Prefer to self describe" and "nonbinary" responses were combined and reported as "non-binary/other" to safeguard the privacy of respondents.

Race

Approximately 14% of non-White respondents and 25% of White respondents reported being the target of bullying (table 4). A chi-square test of independence was performed to evaluate the relationship between race and experiencing bullying. The relationship between these variables was not statistically significant, X^2 (1, N = 133) = 1.379, p =.240).

Table 4. Race

Race	No, not bullied	Yes, any amount of bullying	Total
Non-White*	19	3	22
White or Caucasian	83	28	111
Total	102	31	133

*Responses other than "White or Caucasian" were combined and reported as "Non-White" to ensure the privacy of respondents.

Age

The percentage of respondents reporting any amount of bullying varies widely by age; for example, 40% of respondents between the ages of 35 and 39 identify as having experienced bullying, but no respondents between the ages of 55 and 59 report experiencing bullying (table 5). The results of a Fisher-Freeman-Halton exact test ($p = .518$) do not indicate a statistically significant association between age and experiencing bullying.

Table 5. Age

Age	No, not bullied	Yes, any amount of bullying	Total
25–29	9	2	11
30–34	11	2	13
35–39	9	6	15
40–44	24	4	28
45–49	8	5	13
50–54	14	4	18
55–59	6	0	6
60–64	14	5	19
65 or older	7	3	10
Total	102	31	133

*Ages responses for ages 65 and older were combined to ensure the privacy of respondents.

Years Working in a Library

The results of a Fisher-Freeman-Halton exact test (p = .055) do not indicate a statistically significant association between the number of years working in a library and currently being the target of bullying. It is notable, however, that 41% of the twenty-nine respondents reporting four to seven years of working in a library reported experiencing bullying (table 6).

Table 6. Years Working in a Library

Years working in a library	No, not bullied	Yes, any amount of bullying	Total
0–3	17	1	18
4–7	17	12	29
8–12	15	5	20
13–20	32	5	37
21–30	17	6	23
31 or more	9	3	12
Total	107	32	139

Discussion

Librarian Status

Librarians and other academic library workers reported almost the same rate of workplace bullying, approximately 24% and 21% respectively, and a chi-squared test does not reveal a statistically significant relationship between librarian status and experiencing workplace bullying, X^2 (1, N = 138) = .146, p = .702. However, as mentioned in the results section, the number of librarians responding to the survey was disproportionately higher than the reported ratio of librarians to library staff in Louisiana academic libraries. The lower response rate for

nonlibrarian workers is a signal that this population needs additional research. In many libraries, nonlibrarians, especially library paraprofessionals, have a higher rate of work alienation which Sasyk (2023) links to the power disparity between paraprofessionals, librarians, and administrators, limiting the former's agency to respond to negative workplace experiences, which suggests nonlibrarian workers may be more vulnerable to workplace bullying.

Tenure Status

Although a chi-squared test does not reveal a statistically significant relationship between tenure status and experiencing workplace bullying, X^2 (2, N = 90) = .713, p = .700, the data suggest further investigation is warranted. A larger percentage (27%) of tenured librarians and librarians who have no option for tenure (25%) reported being the target of bullying than tenure-track librarians (18%). This suggests Parme and Pajewski's (2023) argument that tenured librarians use incivility to maintain their feeling of exclusivity and that targeting of tenure-track librarians is ingrained in the hierarchy of academic librarians should be revisited, as well as the findings summarized by Keashly that point to tenured faculty being more at risk of being the target of bullying (Keashly 2021).

Gender

The data suggest there is no statistical significance between workplace bullying in academic libraries and gender. This lack of a statistically significant relationship is not surprising considering the mixed findings of the systematic reviews of Moayed et al. (2006) and Fiejo et al. (2019). It also confirms Lange et al.'s (2019) qualitative study which did not find a difference in the prevalence of bullying between men and women. The relationship between gender and workplace bullying in academic libraries merits special attention because of its complicated dynamics. Despite the predominance of women in library work, in academic libraries, men are disproportionately represented in management positions (DeLong 2013; Martin 2015). Research in other sectors indicates that women are more frequently the targets of both vertical (supervisors and subordinates) and lateral (coworkers) bullying than men (Salin 2003) and are also more frequently the targets of bullying even when they are in higher-ranking positions in their organizations (Hoel and Cooper 2001).

The number of respondents who identified as non-binary or who preferred to self-describe their gender was very small. Existing research indicates that this population experiences higher rates of workplace bullying (Grant et al. 2011; Trades Union Congress 2017). A higher response

rate or a larger population sample could reveal that the higher rate of bullying experienced by transgender, nonbinary, and gender-nonconforming people is also true for academic library workers.

Race

The data collected in this study suggest there is no statistical significance between workplace bullying in academic libraries and race, which is in opposition to the conclusions of Bergbom and Vartia (2021). One explanation for this discrepancy may be that the current study's data could be misleading. Libraries are known to be predominantly White workplaces (AFL-CIO 2023; Public Library Association 2021; Rosa and Henke 2017; Schonfeld and Sweeney 2017; Vinopal 2016). Given the historical underrepresentation of non-White voices in library literature, it could be posited that this study has the same problem, but without knowing the ratio of White to non-White academic library workers in the state of Louisiana, it is impossible to know whether the response rate of non-White academic library workers is proportional to the total percentage of non-White academic library workers in Louisiana. If the response rate ratio does not match the ratio of the total population of academic library workers in Louisiana, the relationship between workplace bullying and race may be hidden.

Age

Although the results of a Fisher-Freeman-Halton exact test (p = .518) do not indicate a statistically significant association between age and experiencing bullying, the data suggest a need for closer examination. The largest percentage of respondents (21%) to this question were between 40 and 44 years of age, but only 14% of these respondents reported some amount of bullying. In contrast, respondents between the ages of 35 and 39 made up 11.2% of the respondents, but 40% of them reported some amount of bullying. This seems to track with studies (Hoel and Cooper 2001; Lange et al. 2019) that suggest younger workers experience more workplace bullying than their older coworkers, but the lack of statistical significance is in line with Feijo et al.'s (2019) systematic review which revealed that of eighteen studies, half found no association between age and being the target of workplace bullying. The question should be revisited with a larger population to reexamine whether ageism plays a factor in workplace bullying, with either the younger or older population being targets.

Years Working in a Library

The data show there is no statistically significant relationship between the number of years working in a library and currently being the target of bullying. The length of service and its relationship to workplace bullying is understudied in general, and it is hard to draw conclusions about these results. Although the difference is not statistically significant, 41% of workers with four to seven years of library experience self-labeled as being the target of workplace bullying; reported rates dropped for those working more than seven years. This could be an example of Glambek, Einarsen, and Notelaers's (2023) hypothesis that the length of service in an organization is positively associated with resilience when experiencing bullying. In other words, workers may have learned coping skills to mediate a certain amount of impact from negative acts. It also echoes Freedman and Vreven's (2016) finding that those working in a library for four to seven years' experience more exposure to negative acts in the workplace compared to those who have worked more than twenty-one years.

Limitations

The results of this study may be limited by biases inherent to any self-report measure. The very personal nature of the questions may have led to over- or underreporting. Respondents may have been prompted to answer as a chance to share their negative experiences at work or may have been reluctant to share their negative experiences due to worries about their privacy despite reassurances. The phrasing of some of the questions (e.g., the use of "other" as an option instead of simply using "prefer to self-describe" for tenure status) could have been viewed as marginalizing.

The low response rate means that results are not generalizable to all academic library workers within Louisiana. Different environments in other regions and states could produce dissimilar results. Furthermore, since we do not have demographic information for the population of Louisiana library workers, we do not know if the demographics of respondees mirror the overall demographics of the population of library workers in Louisiana.

The limitations of restricting the study to a single state were acknowledged by the authors before the start of the project. Focusing on one state with a moderate number of academic libraries was intentional; the authors wanted to pilot the study on a smaller population to identify problems before undertaking a similar study with a larger population.

The responses gathered were overwhelmingly from White and mostly female librarians. This is reflective of the demographic profile of libraries, which a recent Department for Professional Employees AFL-CIO report (2023) described as 82% White and predominantly female (82.2%

of librarians are female and 78.5% of library assistants are female). The small population combined with the lower response rate is problematic and limits the analysis that can be performed as well as the overall usefulness of the data. The authors are publishing this data despite this limitation to make them available to be used in larger meta-analyses. A larger population or an increased response rate could significantly alter the findings.

Future Work

The library profession needs more quantifiable, comprehensive information on workplace bullying at all regional levels, as well as across the spectrum of library workplaces (e.g., public libraries, special collections, school libraries, etc.). It also requires that quantitative data be more consistent, inclusive, and comprehensive. Comprehensive national demographic data on library workers is not easily accessible, a problem that has also been identified in the literature on diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in libraries. A national census of library workers in the United States, such as that conducted in Canada (Canadian Association of Professional Academic Librarians CAPAL Advocacy Committee 2019), would benefit researchers greatly. As the present literature highlights, there is a large degree of inconsistency in the ways demographics are measured across studies of workplace bullying. Gender is often bifurcated, racial and ethnic categories ill-defined, and age groupings variable. For researchers to draw concrete conclusions that are generalizable across studies, the literature must find a way to reconcile these differences. In addition to quantitative data, more qualitative literature is needed to capture the full breadth and depth of workplace bullying, its risk factors, and its outcomes across libraries.

The present study did not investigate the role of sexual orientation in a workplace bullying context. Although less literature on this subject exists when compared to other demographic categories such as race or gender, findings in this area echo those in other areas that demonstrate minority groups are at a higher risk of workplace bullying exposure than their coworkers from majority groups (Hoel, Lewis, and Einarsdóttir 2021; Rankin et al. 2010; Salin 2021). In a planned future study, the authors intend to include questions regarding sexual orientation in the demographic portion of the survey instrument. They also plan to include a question about union membership. The relationship between union affiliation and workplace bullying is another understudied area, complicated further by differing laws, rules, regulations, and relationships between workers' unions and university administrations across the United States and abroad. Even within the same state or same library, academic librarians and library staff may fall within different workers' unions or may not have the option to join a union at all

(Hoover 2022). Whereas the managerial literature highlights that bullying is undoubtedly counterproductive (Seifert 2021), it cannot be denied that the power dynamics between workers and management, in both unionized and nonunionized environments, play a role in workplace bullying in academic libraries. Additionally, the present study did not collect job titles of respondents or persons who bully. A future study could collect this additional information.

Conclusion

Bullying is dependent on, and a product of, context. Individual, societal, and environmental factors all play a role in bullying experiences in the workplace. While the workplace environment surely impacts bullying, contexts that exist beyond the workspace—demographic differences, culture norms, societal structures of power—cannot be divorced from how bullying is experienced differently by workers from differing backgrounds and frames of reference. To fully understand workplace bullying, researchers must center the experiences of workers from historically marginalized backgrounds. To do this, we must fully and methodically survey our populations rather than relying on convenience samples. The complexity of the academic library workplace only helps to further the ambiguity surrounding workplace bullying and its root causes and effects, specifically for library workers from historically underrepresented populations. Even in the absence of statistically significant relationships, reporting the relationships between frequency and demographics is valuable given that this data has not been reported elsewhere. This study's data adds to a growing body of literature that explores the interrelations of personal and environmental contexts and the experience of bullying, but to fully understand the phenomenon, much more work must be done. To solve the problem of bullying in the academic library workplace, we must first fully understand the problem at hand. Only then can practical, effective solutions to workplace bullying be adequately developed and implemented.

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