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Nonprofit Employees' Responsibility to Provide Ethical Solutions to Prevent Workplace Bullying

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Walden University
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Abstract

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MPA, Virginia Commonwealth University 2005

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Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

Workplace bullying is not illegal in the United States and is not classified with other forms of harassment, making it hard for organizations to adopt appropriate prevention and solution methods. Human resource employees have been identified as key contributors in preventing workplace bullying in organizations by using ethics-based strategies. The purpose of this case study was to explore the perceptions of human resource employees or employees with human resource duties regarding their responsibility to use duty-based ethical approaches to prevent workplace bullying and the practicality of its implementation. Duty-based ethics formed the theoretical approach for this study. Duty-based ethics, founded in Kantian ethics, involve the basic rights of an individual. In this qualitative study, data were collected by interviewing six human resource employees and employees with these duties from human service nonprofits located on the East Coast. Data were analyzed using inductive and pattern coding, which allowed themes to emerge. Findings indicated participants supported the basic right of employees to work in an environment that used duty-based strategies to prevent workplace bullying and believed they had a role in working with these strategies. The findings from this study could assist employees in their application of duty-based ethics in their organizations. This research may also create positive social change by helping employees with human resource responsibilities identify their roles in preventing workplace bullying and developing ethics-based strategies that can be applied to their organizations. By preventing bullying, costs to the organization and victims can be minimized.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this to my husband and mother. Their love and support kept me going through this process. They were always willing to pitch in and help elsewhere when I needed to focus. They kept me going when this journey felt impossible and believed in me when sometimes I did not believe in myself.

I give a special dedication to my son. I want him to know that everything that went into this process was for him. I want him to know that he can achieve any level of success no matter how hard it seems or how long it takes.

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Table of Contents

List of Tables

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Bullying in the workplace has not been given significant attention by American researchers (Cassie & Crank, 2018). However, Neall and Tucker (2014, as cited in Cassie & Crank, 2018) stated that the phenomenon had increased globally over the last 30 years. According to Vega and Comer (2005), bullying has occurred throughout social history as humans exercise the need for power over one another. Vega and Comer defined the phenomenon as a pattern of destruction used to deliberately demean coworkers or subordinates. Workplace bullying is not illegal across the United States or classified with other forms of harassment, including racial slurs, sexual harassment, and age discrimination. As of 2020, Puerto Rico was the only territory to make workplace bullying illegal. The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of nonprofit human resource employees regarding their responsibility to use duty-based ethical approaches in the prevention of workplace bullying.

Human resource professionals (HRPs) are key partners in preventing workplace bullying situations (Cowan & Fox, 2015). Cowan and Fox (2015) noted that it was essential to have HRPs involved in identifying, understanding, and assisting in managing victims and bullies. Carden and Boyd (2010) argued that human resource teams could use ethics-based strategies to resolve workplace bullying and identified these approaches as duty-based solutions. In this study, I explored the perceptions of human resource employees regarding their responsibility to use duty-based ethical solutions to prevent bullying. I examined these perceptions through interviews with nonprofit human resource employees or employees of nonprofit organizations with human resource duties. This

study was beneficial as it provided the opportunity to explore ethical solutions to bullying from the perspectives of the individuals considered responsible for designing and implementing the means necessary to prevent this behavior. This study also provided insight into whether HRPs had the opportunity to implement duty-based strategies in their daily employment duties.

The primary focus of this study was on duty-based ethics as a strategy to prevent workplace bullying. Duty-based ethics is a prevention-based approach to workplace bullying and is not a method for mitigation. Duty-based ethics strategies focus on the basic rights of an individual, which include a workplace that does not allow verbal abuse or bullying, has policies and procedures applied uniformly, and encourages a positive environment for the benefit of all (Carden & Boyd, 2010). Carden and Boyd (2010) concluded that ethical solutions to workplace bullying were understudied. This study contributes to the body of work by researchers who have examined ethical problem-solving solutions to workplace bullying through the lens of HRPs.

In this chapter, I discuss the background of workplace bullying with attention to the origin of the phenomenon. I present the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, and the theoretical framework based on duty-based ethics. The nature of the study, definition of terms, assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and significance of the study are also provided.

Background

Workplace bullying is a growing social phenomenon. Branch and Murray (2015) stated that 27% of the U.S. workforce have been subjected to bullying. This percentage of

the workforce consisted of individuals who had previously experienced bullying (20%) or were currently being bullied (7%). Additionally, 21% of workers had witnessed bullying. Based on these statistics, Branch and Murray estimated that over half of U.S. employees had some exposure to workplace bullying. Georgakopoulos and Kelly (2017) believed a healthy workplace positively affects an organization's culture, with workplace bullying having the opposite effect. The researchers described workplace bullying as a significant threat to workplace wellness and safety, negatively affecting bystanders and witnesses. Georgakopoulos et al. (2011) described workplace bullying as a systematic problem affected by an organization's culture that permits bullying. Manners and Cates (2016) estimated the cost of bullying in U.S. organizations to be billions of dollars. Cassie and Crank (2018) related these costs to recruitment, training, increased health insurance premiums, worker's compensation, low morale, turnover, and absenteeism. Whereas workplace bullying may be costly for the organization, it is also a cost for the victim. Costs to the victim may include poor health, depression, loss of self-confidence, fear, burnout, fatigue, and in some cases, post-traumatic stress disorder.

Samnani and Singh (2016) suggested that previous research had only approached the antecedents of bullying, focusing on individual or environmental factors but not an integrated approach. Samnani and Singh suggested that antecedents may be related to the target's characteristics, bully's characteristics, and environmental (organizational) characteristics. Georgakopoulos et al. (2011) described several antecedents of workplace bullying, typically coming from the target or the bully, including these two groups' past experiences to define bullying. First, individuals may bully to protect their self-esteem. A

bully could be a supervisor or peer who may feel the need to enhance their importance by making someone else feel inadequate. Second, individuals who bully cannot resolve conflicts without aggression. Georgakopoulos et al. identified three reasons individuals fall prey to bullies: being in an outside group, being an overachiever, and having low self-esteem.

Although it is possible to study workplace bullying through the behaviors of the target and the bully, it can also be examined through elements present in the work environment. Wall et al. (2017) identified the following features that contributed to bullying: (a) a culture dismissive of ethical decision making, (b) a customer-driven environment favoring competition or self-serving behavior, and (c) the inhibition of creativity resulting in employees not taking challenging situations. In addition, Ramely and Ahmad (2017) found that interpersonal interactions within the work environment related to jealousy, competition, and egoism created environments primed for bullying. Ramely and Ahmad also found that poor physical work environments could be related to workplace bullying. Examples of poor physical workspace conditions include cramped and crowded spaces, high temperatures, or any combination of irritating environments.

Workplace bullying is not just a phenomenon of the 21st century; Brodsky (1976) addressed it in *The Harassed Worker*. Brodsky defined harassment as a persistent behavior used to torment an individual. Much like bullying, harassment has the element of persistence over a specific period. Brodsky used the term "target" (p. 2) to identify a person receiving the harassment. Brodsky recognized close interaction as one of the main reasons for harassment and believed that working and interacting together caused conflict

due to "territoriality" (p. 9). Claims of territory apply to individuals who work daily in the same space with the same tools and equipment. The closeness and interaction cause competition for priorities, resulting in conflict. Brodsky provided a detailed description of people subjected to long-term harassment in the workplace, describing them as frustrated and exhausted. Since Brodsky's work, there was limited research until the late 1980s when attention focused on bullying and nonsexual harassment issues (Matthiesen & Einarsen, 2010).

Although Brodsky's (1976) work provided a foundation for understanding and identifying workplace bullying, research continued with Leymann's examination of school bullying in Sweden in the 1980s (Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2007). Considered a groundbreaker in this area, Leymann extended the research to include the workplace. As interest in workplace bullying increased, research expanded to Norway and Finland when the terms "mobbing" and "work harassment" developed (Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2007, p. 839). The expansion of research into the United Kingdom in the 1990s by Adams identified the phenomenon with the term "bullying" (Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2007, p. 839).

Since the initial work, studies on bullying have expanded globally. As workplace bullying research extended throughout Europe, the Namies, a husband-and-wife team, were instrumental in popularizing the phrase "workplace bullying" (Bible, 2012, p. 33) in the United States and founded the Workplace Bullying Institute. The Namies expanded Leymann, Adams, and other European scholars' work to develop the foundation of their

research. They believed the term workplace bullying would be better received by the American public and began their education campaign.

Matthiesen and Einarsen (2010) helped clarify terms for workplace bullying as mobbing, emotional abuse, or harassment. In addition, Matthiesen and Einarsen related the terms to the larger phenomenon of one or more people in the workplace who believed they had been on the receiving end of aggressive behavior outside of their control. The researchers identified workplace bullying as repeated behaviors and actions toward one or more persons. These behaviors include, but are not limited to, social exclusion, ignoring opinions, teasing, spreading rumors, verbal threats, name-calling, withholding work, or public ridicule. Matthiesen and Einarsen believed workplace bullying was deliberate and could be conscious or unconscious, viewing it as a form of aggression. These repeated actions intend to cause the victim humiliation. Gumbus and Lyons (2011) added that bullying behaviors could be verbal and nonverbal. They affirmed that these characteristics needed to be persistent, repetitive, escalate over time, and take place for 6 months or more. Georgakopoulos et al. (2011) identified workplace bullying as a form of psychological violence.

Although researchers have used various terms for bullying interchangeably (e.g., mobbing and harassment), specific actions and examples in the literature identify the circumstances for workplace bullying. For example, Vickers (2011) provided a detailed list of bullying activities, such as social isolation, excessive monitoring, ignoring the target, mocking behavior, withholding information, or depriving one of their duties. In addition, Vickers included finger-pointing, invading personal space, and being ordered to

do work below one's competence level. Vickers believed that, over time, these constant

behaviors create a toxic environment. There is no universal legal definition for workplace

bullying available for examination by the U.S. courts (Weisel, 2016). Puerto Rico is the

only territory as of 2020 that has passed a bill containing a legal definition. Manners and

Cates (2016) found that legal ramifications for organizations were minimal and

concluded that with the change in the nature of the U.S. economy and the increase in

service industries, bullying has become more prevalent.

　　　　According to Tomkowicz and Fiorentino (2017), there is no federal law

prohibiting workplace bullying and described the efforts at the state level as a "strong

grassroots" (p. 19) initiative. Walsh et al. (2019) explained that workplace bullying is

difficult to manage because it is not defined as illegal behavior in most states. Cowan

(2012, as cited in Walsh et al., 2019) affirmed that policies against bullying are not

common in organizations because there is no legal obligation for the employer to prevent

it. With no federal legal ramifications, bullying has been pursued in federal courts

through other legal remedies (Richardson et al., 2016). These remedies are related to

harassment, the Americans Disability Act, the Whistleblower Protection Act, Title VII of

the 1964 Civil Rights Act, or the Fair Labor and Standards Act. Wall et al. (2017)

acknowledged that some organizations have antibullying policies but expressed that more

progress is needed. Wall et al. quoted a survey conducted by the American Management

Association, where the data showed 56% of companies had antibullying policies.

However, the policies were buried in the organizations' codes of conduct or employee

handbooks and not actively enforced. Hollis (2017) stressed that an organization's mention of an antibullying policy was not enough to solve the problem.

An ethical lens may be used to approach the prevention of workplace bullying. Carden and Boyd (2010) called for additional research regarding human resources' ethical function in deterring workplace bullying and suggested a duty-based approach. Duty-based approaches focus on prevention strategies that include employee screening and recruiting, policy design, and training. During a review of literature, I identified a gap in the public policy and administration research related to duty-based prevention strategies in public sector and nonprofit organizations. This study focuses on nonprofits. A gap existed on how these strategies could be developed, implemented, and assessed for effectiveness in a nonprofit organization. In addition to this gap, no analysis has addressed human resource employees and their perceptions of their duties to apply ethics-based strategies to workplace bullying. Mokgolo and Barnard (2019) noted that it was important to examine human resource practitioners' perceptions of bullying to understand the issues in addressing it. Mokgolo and Barnard agreed that more information on these perspectives could contribute to policy and procedural guidelines.

Throughout this study, I sought to better understand how human resource employees perceived their responsibilities and therefore add to the body of literature focused on ethical solutions to workplace bullying. This study is important regarding human resource development as it provides insight into the potential for ethical solutions within nonprofit organizations through this profession. In addition, it may promote discussion regarding the types of duty-based activities that could be incorporated into

human resource employees' current duties, such as assessing the organization's current training for elements of bully awareness or recruitment tactics.

Problem Statement

Walsh et al. (2019) expressed that it was hard to manage workplace bullying because most states had not defined it as illegal behavior. A 2017 survey published by the Workplace Bullying Institute found that 63 million Americans had been affected by workplace bullying (Namie, 2017). In the survey, a person was affected by workplace bullying if directly bullied or a witness. Wall et al. (2017) referred to workplace bullying as a growing epidemic and described it as an "occupational risk for both employees and employers" (p. 108). Despite workplace bullying's effects on the American workforce, there has been no federal guidance or anti-bullying policy established.

According to Carden and Boyd (2010), workplace bullying could be prevented if human resource employees provided ethics-based solutions to the problem. The researchers indicated that employees in human resource departments had the responsibility for designing and implementing these solutions. They focused on three means of duty-based solutions where HRPs could make the most impact: recruiting, policy, and training.

The problem I explored in this qualitative case study was workplace bullying in nonprofit organizations and the responsibilities of HRPs to use duty-based ethics strategies for prevention. I explored the current problem by conducting semistructured interviews of human resource employees regarding how they viewed their responsibility to implement duty-based solutions to bullying and the practicality of implementing these

solutions. I also included nonprofit employees with human resource duties in the study. The types of agencies represented by these employees were smaller agencies from the East Coast.

Purpose of the Study

The current study addressed an understudied area in public policy and administration. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the perceptions of nonprofit human resource employees and employees with human resource duties regarding their responsibility to use duty-based ethical approaches to prevent workplace bullying and the practicality of its implementation. The central phenomenon explored was workplace bullying. I used semistructured interviewing to understand the phenomenon from the human resource perspective. The participants were six nonprofit human resource employees and employees with human resource duties. The types of agencies represented by these employees were from smaller nonprofits on the East Coast. The selection was not representative of the many nonprofits across the country. Participants selected the site from which they participated. I conducted the interviews in my private office using Zoom technology.

I focused on their ideas regarding their responsibility to use duty-based ethical approaches to prevent workplace bullying and the practicality of implementation of this approach. Practicality is related to whether duty-based solutions could be incorporated into the employee's daily responsibilities. In addition, there is the potential for the results of this research to help employees perform human resource tasks, identify their role in preventing workplace bullying, and develop techniques that could be strategically applied

in their organizations. According to Catley et al. (2017), human resource practices regarding workplace bullying are new and require additional investigation.

Research Questions

Two research questions guided this study:

- Research Question 1: How do human resource employees or employees with human resource duties perceive their responsibility to use duty-based solutions to prevent workplace bullying?

- Research Question 2: How can human resource employees use duty-based prevention strategies in their organization to prevent workplace bullying?

Theoretical Framework

Duty-based ethics formed the theoretical framework for this study. Duty-based ethics originated from Kantian ethics, known as deontology, which is grounded in duty and obligation. Kant (1930/1980) argued there are rules in life (ethics) that make actions (duties) necessary. Action is a requirement or act that must be done and viewed as a type of law (Kant, 1785/2002). One performs an action or duty because it is the right thing to do. Through duty, the action becomes a requirement and is done because the person believes in their duty to perform it. Kant believed that the rights of others were sacred and to be respected, and it was a person's duty to respect and maintain the rights of others. In addition, Kant held that all humans were born with moral integrity and the ability to rationalize (Carden & Boyd, 2010). As such, a person, through principle, should respect another's thoughts and actions. Kant further explained that all people have a right

to goodwill or happiness; therefore, individuals have an obligation never to deny others this basic right. One must not affect the rights of another.

Duty-based ethics as it relates to workplace bullying focuses on the basic rights of employees in the workplace. These rights include (a) a place without insults or bullying, (b) just policies and procedures for all, and (c) the promotion of a good environment for all (Carden & Boyd, 2010). The duty-based approach in the workplace emphasizes the duty owed to an employee as their basic right.

Nature of the Study

In this qualitative study, I used a case study approach. Qualitative research allows the topic under investigation to unfold and change during the data collection process (Creswell, 2009). A case study permits exploration and an in-depth analysis of an issue in a real-life situation (Laureate Education, Inc., 2013). In this study, the focus was on the perceptions of HRPs related to workplace bullying in a human service nonprofit organization. Human service organizations "facilitate the fulfillment of human needs, even if there is no human interaction, so that even facilities (for example, a playground) or laws (for example, one preventing family violence) can be considered human services" (Barnetz & Vardi, 2015, p. 2). The case study design allowed me to discover how human resource employees perceived and made sense of their proposed responsibility to use duty-based ethical methods to prevent bullying. The participants' understanding of workplace bullying was defined and constructed due to their experiences in their profession.

In this study, I focused on human resource employees in human service organizations from two states on the East Coast. I conducted interviews with HRPs and employees assigned human resource responsibilities. This included employees in management and generalist roles. As the data collected from case studies are not solely dependent on interviews but obtained from multiple sources, this study included a review of organizational policies, mission and value statements, and standards of conduct. I obtained this information if the participant had permission to share the materials, or I found the information on the organization's public-facing internet site.

Definitions of Terms

Duty-based ethics: The basic rights of individuals and what is owed to the individual. Duty-based ethics involve doing what is right regardless of the outcome and include fairness and respect for others (Carden & Boyd, 2010).

Ethics: Rules of conduct or morals that govern the way groups or individuals behave (Carden & Boyd, 2010).

Hostile work environment: A workplace where intimidation, ridicule, insults, and discrimination exist (Bible, 2012). A hostile work environment is further determined by "the frequency and severity of the conduct" and if the individual felt physically threatened or humiliated, rather than simply offended, and that the behavior "unreasonably interfered with one's work performance" (Bible, 2012, p. 40).

Human service nonprofits: An organization where the employees provide services for human needs (Barnetz & Vardi, 2015).

Mobbing: Hostile workplace behavior by one or more individuals toward a defenseless person. (Carden & Boyd, 2010). This term is used to illustrate workers' collective behavior of ganging up on another worker; it can be likened to the similar behaviors of animal groups trying to eliminate a perceived threat (Duffy, 2009).

Target: Individuals on the receiving end of bullying behavior without the appropriate means of defense (Vickers, 2011).

Unlawful harassment: Unwelcomed behavior based on a protective characteristic. Examples of protected characteristics include a victim's sex, race, or disability (Tomkowicz & Fiorentino, 2017). It is behavior considered severe and persistent, creating an intolerable work environment (Lieber, 2010).

Workplace bullying: A type of "status-blind interpersonal hostility that is deliberate, repeated and sufficiently severe as to harm the targeted person's health or economic status. Further, it's driven by the perpetrator's need to control another individual, often undermining legitimate business interest in the process" (Namie, 2003, p. 1).

Workplace incivility: Actions considered "low intensity work behaviors with an ambiguous intent to harm" (Schilpzand et al., 2016, p. 57).

Assumptions

There were several assumptions for this study. I assumed a case study method would be the most appropriate to support the research questions. Yin (2009) stated that a case study is used to contribute to the knowledge of a complex social phenomenon. It allows the characteristics of real-life events to be described. I assumed the case study

method would give me a rich understanding of workplace bullying by interviewing a specific group of individuals. I assumed the method would give the participant the best opportunity to explain their experience or understanding of the phenomenon. Based on the participants' answers, I assumed I would be able to identify appropriate trends from data analysis to answer the research questions. I assumed using a case study in this manner would allow others to learn from the study and make it transferable to like situations.

The theoretical framework of Kantian ethics underpinned this study. The theory's basis is duty-based ethics. Specifically, doing what is right because it is a person's obligation or duty. Duty-based ethics focuses on preserving the rights of an induvial. As duty-based ethics applies to workplace bullying, Carden and Boyd (2010) suggested (a) a workplace free of bullying or insults, (b) policies and procedures that are equally applicable to all, and (c) the promotion of the environmental good of others. I assumed this lens was the most appropriate for the study and would support the research questions. In addition, I made the assumption that workplace bullying involved an ethical resolution that would be better based on prevention rather than mitigation.

I assumed that all human resource employees involved in the study believed they had a responsibility to prevent workplace bullying. I assumed that all human resources employees and those with human resource duties believed that bullying prevention was based on an ethical solution. I assumed all the human resource employees and those with human resource duties operationalized ethics and workplace bullying as explained or defined in this study. I expected that all the participants would describe their true

perceptions of their responsibilities. The last assumption was that all participants had formal training in human resources.

Scope and Delimitations

I selected a population of nonprofit HRPs based on my interest in workplace bullying in the nonprofit sector and the human resource perspective of preventing this behavior. Vickers (2011) suggested that workplace bullying could be more detrimental to public organizations because of their employees' need to assist society. Working conditions for the nonprofit sector are important as poor conditions relate to poor service delivery. I selected individuals with human resource duties or in this profession because they are key stakeholders in advocating workplace bullying prevention methods (Carden & Boyd, 2010; Guest & Woodrow, 2012). Therefore, it is important to understand how human resource employees view their responsibility to prevent workplace bullying.

There were several delimitations in this study. First, this study did not focus on for-profit organizations. Second, individuals who could be bullies were not included, nor were individuals who could be considered targets. Third, I did not include outcome-based ethics in the discussion of bullying prevention. Outcome-based solutions occur when the organization mitigates workplace bullying by performance management or communication (Carden & Boyd, 2010). For example, workplace bullying could be managed through an employee's performance evaluation. Outcome-based approaches address the consequences of an action (Carden & Boyd, 2010). I did not consider specific types of workplace bullying, for example, cyberbullying.

Limitations

There were several limitations to this study. First, it was not generalizable to a larger population of HRPs or organizations. The study was limited to a small number of HRPs and their perceptions of a complex issue. Second, the types of agencies represented by these employees were from a small geographical area and did not reflect the many nonprofits in other areas of the country. Sampling was another limitation of the study. The sampling used in the study was purposeful and convenient: purposeful in that I selected participant populations based on established criteria and convenient in that I used nonprofit listservs to locate and access participants. A fourth limitation was the interview itself. The participants answered the questions based on circumstances they may have been experiencing within their organizations at the time. For example, they expressed there were no instances of bullying in their organization. In a different circumstance, this could have influenced their answers related to culture, leadership support, or solutions they perceived as their responsibility. There was also the potential that the participants did not answer honestly. In addition, some questions needed further explanation, suggesting the participant may not have fully understood the question. Finally, the public health emergency (PHE) was a limitation. The public health emergency caused organizations to temporarily close and pause conducting business. It also caused HRPs to quickly change focus, limiting recruitment or follow-up with potential participants and actual participants.

Significance

Most workplace bullying research has been focused on the antecedents and prevalence of the phenomenon. This study added to the body of literature that relates workplace bullying to ethics by using analysis of the participants' perspectives of ethical approaches to champion appropriate solution strategies. Most specifically, it helps to fill a gap in the research literature that has neglected to explore duty-based strategies in real contexts and settings with HRPs in nonprofit organizations. This study may assist human resource employees and those responsible for human resource duties to understand ethical approaches to workplace bullying and how to apply those approaches in their everyday work responsibilities. This study's findings could help HRPs identify gaps in their organization that inadvertently allow bullying behavior and identify their role in preventing these behaviors. Workplace bullying prevention is essential due to bullying's negative impact and repercussions to the organization and its employees.

Summary

In this chapter, I discussed the background and origin of workplace bullying and established the theoretical framework for the study. I described the purpose of the study, introduced the research questions, and provided the definitions of key terms. I identified the main problem of the study: workplace bullying's existence in nonprofit organizations and the responsibility of HRPs to use duty-basted ethics strategies as prevention. In Chapter 2, I present an in-depth review of the research literature, further establishing the basis and framework for the study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The problem explored in this study was workplace bullying in nonprofit organizations and the responsibilities of HRPs to affect its prevention using duty-based ethical strategies. The 2017 Workplace Bullying Survey results indicated that over 60 million employees had experienced bullying in the workplace (Namie, 2017). Workplace bullying is costly for victims, witnesses, and organizations, but despite this, it continues to exist in organizations. HRPs are strategic partners in providing ethical-based solutions to affect workplace bullying (Carden & Boyd, 2010); however, their responsibilities and roles can be ambiguous. Carden and Boyd (2010) discussed human resource strategies based on duty-based ethics and suggested that training, policy development, and recruitment are responsibilities that could affect bullying. I explored the perceptions of human resource workers regarding their responsibility to use duty-based strategies as prevention tools for workplace bullying. I sought to discover whether the human resource workers participating in this study believed that workplace bullying could be solved using duty-based ethics and viewed it as their responsibility to develop and implement solutions to this problem.

Chapter 2 includes the literature search strategy, with a list of search terms and search engines. I present a discussion of duty-based ethics, human resource management, workplace bullying, and a description of this study's theoretical framework. I used duty-based theory to explore the ethical strategies that could be used in preventing workplace bullying. This theory provided a framework for understanding a duty-based approach to workplace bullying prevention and the role of human resources. I discuss the research

literature related to this study's key concepts and provide a detailed definition of workplace bullying and its impact on victims and organizations. Additionally, I present a review of current U.S. federal and state laws, discuss human resource departments' roles, and describe human resource workers' responsibility to implement duty-based solutions to workplace bullying. This study's findings may help HRPs in nonprofit organizations define their responsibility to use ethics-based strategies to formally affect change.

Literature Search Strategy

I used the following databases to locate literature for the review in this study: ProQuest Central, Google Scholar, Thoreau Multi-Database Search, Business Source Complete, Sage Premier, Sage Journals, PsycINFO, SocINDEX, Sage Encyclopedias and Handbooks, and ProQuest Dissertations and Theses. The search terms and keywords used were *Kantian ethics*, *deontology*, *workplace bullying*, *workplace incivility*, *mobbing*, *workplace harassment*, *workplace ethics*, *human resources and ethics*, *human resources and bullying*, *workplace conflict*, *occupational health*, *duty-based prevention*, *ethical infrastructure*, *nonprofits and workplace bullying*, and *human resource management*. I used a combination of terms to improve results. For example, I used Kantian ethics and workplace bullying, nonprofits and workplace bullying, and duty-based ethics and workplace bullying. The Workplace Bullying Institute's website supplied statistical and demographic data. Most articles used in the study were peer-reviewed. I used research both inside and outside 5 years to establish the background for workplace bullying and key concepts. Research literature related to U.S. nonprofit organizations and duty-based strategies was limited. To address this, I used studies based outside the United States that

were relevant. The Walden University librarian assisted with the literature search strategy to identify current and relevant literature.

Theoretical Framework

Kantian ethics or deontology was the theoretical framework for this study. The theory's focal point is duty-based ethics, which involves doing what is right because it is a person's duty or obligation to do so. Kant (1930/1980) believed that everyone had a right to a good life and good things as provided by nature; therefore, those entitled to enjoy the goodness of nature must not deprive another of the same opportunity. Kant described this obligation further: "God's providence is universal, and I may not be indifferent to the happiness of others. If, for the manner of dishes, I ought not conclude that it is all for me; I may eat but leave some for others to enjoy" (p. 192). Here Kant illustrates that individuals may consume what is necessary but not take from others. A person's obligation and duty are to do their part to allow others to enjoy life and ensure equal rights. Kant explained that nature had created rights for all individuals, which are more important than needs. When considering another person, it is not their needs but their rights that must be preserved. Kant believed that the greatest misery of humankind was not misfortune but injustice.

Carden and Boyd (2010) applied duty-based ethics as defined by Kant to workplace bullying to achieve (a) a workplace free of bullying or insults, (b) policies and procedures that are equally applicable to all, and (c) the promotion of the environmental good of others. These are the basic rights of an employee. Carden and Boyd identified recruitment and employee selection, policy design, and training as three strategic areas

related to duty-based prevention methods. The researchers further identified human resource employees as having a key role in implementing these strategies in the workplace as these employees have a duty or obligation to ensure it is free of bullying. Duty-based ethics, if applied to the workplace, makes this type of bullying a question of ethics, and therefore it has an ethical solution. Using this model, the results or outcomes of ridding the workplace of bullies (e.g., healthy employee relations and reduction in turnover) do not matter. The only consideration or benefit in preventing bullying is that it is the right thing to do. Carden and Boyd concluded that HRPs needed to explore ethical guidelines inside and outside the organization to address workplace bullying. The researchers used the duty-based framework to establish support for human resources to provide ethically based strategies to affect workplace bullying.

Guest and Woodrow (2012) used Kantian ethics to explore workplace bullying as it related to human resource strategies. The researchers advocated using the Kantian perspectives for an employee's well-being, not as a means to an end, but as the end itself. Human resource policy should champion workers' rights and not be the means of achieving organizational goals.

Duty-based ethics was the most appropriate theoretical framework for this study to assist in understanding strategies to prevent workplace bullying from an ethical standpoint. Research in this area helped inform specific human resource duties that could be associated with ethical responsibility. In addition, duty-based ethics helps establish a foundation for ethics-based human resource practices. The research questions built on

this theory provide an opportunity for discussion regarding the perspectives (via interviews) from HRPs.

Literature Review Related to Key Concepts

Research on workplace bullying has been ongoing in the United States and Europe since the 1990s (Hollis, 2017); however, bullying remains a problem in organizations. Workplace bullying not only affects targets and those who witness it; bullying also affects organizations by impacting economic health (Cassie & Crank, 2018). Workplace bullying thrives in hostile work environments and manifests in many forms. These include assigning impossible tasks, personal attacks, rude remarks, gossiping, public humiliation, and excluding victims from social events (Lee & Lim, 2019). As previously discussed, the target is the person who is on the receiving end of bullying behavior. The hostile environment makes employees more focused on protecting themselves than organizational improvements, quality of work, or work performance (Bible, 2012). Bible (2012) suggested that this shift in focus influences organizational performance. Wall et al. (2017) discussed the costs for organizations related to employee turnover, healthcare claims, lost productivity, absenteeism, and potential legal fees. Wall et al. further suggested that workplace bullying could damage an organization's brand and reputation, which occurs when employees leave the organization due to a lack of response to bullying complaints.

Workplace bullying is a power imbalance of one person over another (Branch & Murray, 2015). It can have lasting effects on both the targets and witnesses of bullying. Branch and Murray identified the long-term effects of bullying as panic attacks, low self-

esteem, anxiety, decreased work attendance, and depression. Research also indicates a link between workplace bullying and posttraumatic stress disorder (Branch & Murray, 2015; Matthiesen & Einarsen, 2010). Actions specific to bullying can be both verbal and nonverbal. Bible (2012) provided examples of the behaviors, such as public shaming, dirty looks, rude interruptions, gossip, or silent treatment. Other actions might include name-calling, withholding work from a target, social isolation, threatening one's job, or "interfering with work activities" (Bible, 2012, p. 34.); however, this is not an all-inclusive list.

History of Workplace Bullying

Workplace bullying research began in Sweden in the 1980s with Leymann (Bible, 2012; Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2007), who began studying school bullying and expanded the research to the workplace. Leymann used the term mobbing (as cited in Bible, 2012) to describe workers' hostile treatment. Leymann related mobbing to psychological trauma (Bible, 2012). Duffy (2009) noted that Leymann used the term mobbing to describe a group ganging up on one person. According to Duffy, mobbing is derived from the word "ethology" (p. 243), which describes an animal's behavior when eliminating a threat. Leymann (1990, as cited in Kovacic et al., 2017) described mobbing as "hostile and unethical communication which is directed in a systematic way by one person or a number of people mainly toward one individual" (p. 50). Namie and Namie (2009) explained that mobbing was behavior that lasted over 1 week for more than 6-months. Namie and Namie also noted that mobbing causes significant mental and social distress.

Adams, a British journalist, made the term workplace bullying popular (Bible, 2012). Adams and Crawford, a psychologist, were the first to publish a book addressing bullying. Purpora et al. (2019) noted that Adams and Crawford used the term to define adults terrorized in the workplace. Mokgolo and Barnard (2019) explained that it was after the book's publication that "systematic" (p. 2) research on workplace bullying began. Bible (2012) credited the Namies for introducing the term workplace bullying into American employment law in the 1990s. Their work built on the findings of Leymann, Adams, and other European scholars. The Namies founded the Workplace Bullying Institute, which provides comprehensive sources, training, statistical data, and workplace bullying information.

Mobbing is the term most commonly used in Germany, Scandinavia, and Italy, while the word bullying is the usual reference for the action in English-speaking countries (Kovacic et al., 2017). Though the term has evolved, there is no agreed upon definition for workplace bullying. For example, Namie and Namie (2009) stated that workplace bullying was a "sub-lethal form of workplace violence" (p. 2), which is a persistent and unwanted form of nonphysical mistreatment of an employee or employees. It is behavior instigated by one or more individuals and can be prolonged over time. The behavior is verbal and nonverbal and consists of sabotaging techniques or anything that prevents a person from performing their job duties.

Workplace bullying has four distinct features: intensity, repetition, duration, and power disparity (Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2007). Lutgen-Sandvik et al. (2007) argued that bullying involved a pattern of negative acts and reported that most victims stated they had

experienced several acts of abuse, including general harassment, mistreatment, and emotional abuse. Lutgen-Sandvik et al. suggested that intensity was related to the number of different incidents reported by the victim. Mikkelsen and Einarsen (2001, as cited in Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2007) believed that two or more negative acts against one person were an accurate measure of intensity; however, it was not only the number of acts but also the frequency. Lutgen-Sandvik et al. also found that the actions must occur weekly and agreed that a one-time act would not be considered bullying. Duration refers to the length of time the negative act has occurred, and the research demonstrates that bullying usually happens, at a minimum, over 6 months and can continue longer (Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2007). Power disparity is also important in discussing bullying as the victim feels powerless to fight back or prevent the abuse. Keashly and Nowell (2003, as cited in Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2007) described power disparity as occurring over time with the victim's helplessness a contributing factor.

According to Rhodes et al. (2010), workplace bullying is an intentional act of violence. They also contended that workplace bullying does not have to involve physical violence; it is meant to deprive a person of their freedom. Rhodes et al. argued that workplace bullying is a form of " symbolic violence" (p1.) with undeserved force and is harmful to someone. The intent of the violence is not to cause physical harm; rather, the motive is to inflict emotional distress, intimidation, humiliation, vulnerability, and fear. In addition, Rhodes et al. noted that bullying consists of deliberate, repeated acts and stated that the goal of these actions is to create a material and psychological advantage over another.

Bullying involves both overt and covert behaviors that occur over time (Vickers, 2011). Vickers (2011) supported many of the definitions and features of bullying previously provided. Vickers explained that an important feature of bullying is that no matter the behavior, it is reoccurring and that the bully intends to harm the individual. Vickers described the behavior as attacks that make an individual feel "under siege" (p. 217).

Outcomes of Workplace Bullying

Georgakopoulos et al. (2011) described workplace bullying as a systematic issue affected by an organization's culture. The culture creates an environment conducive to bullying or the expression of bullying. Bullying can occur between coworkers, managers and employees, or interdepartmental individuals. Wall et al. (2017) described bullying as an "occupational risk" (p. 108) for employees and employers. The research literature included in this study reinforces the assertion that bullying has a significant impact on both the victim and the organization.

Wall et al. (2017) acknowledged there were various responses from targets to bullying. However, the most common response was a decrease in productivity, both personal and organizational, due to increased stress levels. Wall et al. also stated that most employees would rather risk their quality of life than put their jobs at risk. Lutgen-Sandvik et al. (2007) explained that targets dread going to work and remain on high alert for the next attack. Gumbus and Lyons (2011) found that victims often felt bad about themselves and describe feelings of embarrassment and being trapped. Gumbus and

Lyons also reported that victims often changed their regular routines to avoid being bullied, including sleep habits or work routines.

Ocel and Aydin (2012) supported the assertion that workplace bullying adversely affected victims and described targets as suffering from depression, fear, anxiety, and low self-esteem. Many of the symptoms equate to those of posttraumatic stress syndrome. Gumbus and Lyons (2011) described victims as withdrawing and feeling timid and weak. Lutgen-Sandvik et al. (2007) noted that targets are prone to alcohol abuse, high blood pressure, and heart disease. In addition, victims also experience issues with interpersonal relationships and functioning in their families. Owoyemi (2011) noted that targets might feel physical symptoms from being bullied, including hair loss, weight loss, rashes, headaches, and even nervous breakdowns.

Branch and Murray (2015) also referenced the effects of bullying on individuals and that exposure to bullying impacts witnesses and targets. Branch and Murray believed these effects could cause posttraumatic stress disorder, poor attendance at work, low self-esteem, lack of productivity, anxiety, and an overall negative sense of well-being. The witness may be concerned with becoming the next target or affected by working in a toxic environment.

Fida et al. (2018) conducted a study focusing on workplace bullying, health symptoms, and interpersonal and organizational counterproductive work behavior. The goal of their study was to understand how being a target contributed to counterproductive work behavior and focused on nurses working in public or private healthcare settings. Examples of counterproductive work behaviors include insulting a coworker about their

job or stealing from the workplace. Fida et al. found an association between being bullied, health symptoms, and misconduct. They described the participants as experiencing three emotions due to workplace bullying: anger, fear, and sadness. As a result of these emotions, the target engaged in counterproductive workplace behavior. Fida et al. noted that the target could engage in behaviors that violated organizational rules. Sadness, however, was not associated with hostile behavior but with adverse health conditions.

Lee and Lim (2019) focused their research on the effects of workplace bullying and coping strategies for targets. They surveyed participants in both Singapore and the United States. Findings from the study demonstrated that workplace bullying had a significant impact on job satisfaction and affective commitment. The more targets experienced bullying, the less satisfaction and commitment the employee had in their job. The study's results did not fully indicate that coping strategies moderated relationships between bullying and job attitudes. Lee and Lim believed their research demonstrated the need for multiple coping strategies to affect job satisfaction.

The consequences of bullying not only include high costs to individuals but to organizations as well. Wall et al. (2017) discussed the costs of bullying's impact on an organization's overall success and profitability and suggested that prevention would help maintain an organization's bottom line. Wall et al. believed turnover costs were the most measurable, but that lost productivity, and employee health issues also had an impact. Bartlett and Bartlett (2011, as cited in Orr & Seter, 2020) found that workplace bullying costs organizations $250 million a year due to absenteeism and lost productivity. Wall et

al. explained that an employee will not leave over one instance of bullying but will remain with the organization. However, during this time, the employee becomes disengaged, and it is this disengagement that leads to the loss of productivity.

An organization's reputation and brand may also be affected by workplace bullying. Wall et al. (2017) described this as an intangible effect and that it is hard to place a value on the costs. Organizations have experienced high costs due to the negative publicity surrounding workplace bullying; however, there is no dollar amount associated with these costs (Wall et al., 2017). Damage to an organization's reputation could impact the ability to obtain skilled employees or a loss of clientele. Wall et al. explained that an organization suffering from a poor reputation would be less productive and experience financial setbacks.

Branch and Murray (2015) also noted the high costs of organizational bullying, stating that poor productivity was due to absenteeism related to stress and anxiety. Branch and Murray further stated there were costs for relocating or retraining individuals who transferred from one team to another or left the organization. For these reasons, they stressed that workplace bullying deserved attention and action.

Prevalence of Workplace Bullying

Wall et al. (2017) described the statistics related to workplace bullying as disturbing. According to the researchers, 27% of U.S. workers have been bullied, and in 82% of the cases reported, the victim lost their job. Branch and Murray (2015) reported that 21% of workers witnessed bullying, and 27% of employees had experienced it. The combination of targets and witnesses indicates that almost half of all U.S. employees

have experienced workplace bullying (Branch & Murray, 2015). Namie (2017) published results of a 2017 national survey, the fourth conducted by the Workplace Bullying Institute. The Workplace Bullying 2017 Survey presented an updated view of the national prevalence of bullying. The results showed 19% of Americans suffered abusive conduct at work, 19% had witnessed it, and 63% were aware that it had occurred. The survey results indicated that 30 million American workers had been bullied or currently experience this at work (Namie, 2017). Namie described the statistics as indicative of an "epidemic" (p. 3). Namie's research showed that 70% of men were perpetrators of abusive conduct, and 66% of the targets were women. When women were the perpetrators, they tended to target other women in 66% of bullying cases. In addition, the survey results indicated that 61% of bullies were bosses, and 33% involved peer-to-peer relationships. The survey results also demonstrated that in 71% of cases, employers acted in a way that caused additional harm to the target, which included favoring the perpetrators' reports, biased investigations, or discrediting the target.

Legal Landscape

Yamada (2015) described the legal landscape of workplace antibullying policies as progressing toward legislation. According to Yamada, other nations have been enacting workplace bullying policies over the last 15 years. Yamada described workplace bullying legislation as not yet part of mainstream American employment law. Weisel (2016) stated that there had been no legal remedies in the courts for workplace bullying. Weisel explained that bullying had been addressed legally using Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1994, civil suits, and administrative law worker's compensation awards.

Despite the effect workplace bullying has on employees and organizations, there has been no federal antibullying law. The efforts statewide have been described as grassroots efforts (Tomkowicz & Fiorentino, 2017). Tomkowicz and Fiorentino found the present legal framework to be inadequate for addressing workplace bullying. Both common law and statutory law do not address status-blind bullying. Tomkowicz and Fiorentino found though there may be some recourse under common law, employee claims were difficult to win in court, and the law was inadequate for addressing the wide range of behaviors associated with bullying.

The Healthy Workplace Bill, originally drafted by Yamada in 2001, was one of the first attempts to address the legislative deficiencies of workplace bullying. Specifically, Yamada designed the Bill to offer legal protections for those experiencing harassment not related to a protected class. Examples of a protected class include race and gender (Tomkowicz & Fiorentino, 2017). By 2003, the Bill was introduced into the California legislature. According to the Workplace Bullying Institute, since its induction, the Bill or a version of it has been proposed in 30 states and two territories. Tomkowicz and Fiorentino (2017) believed although the Bill had not become law, in time it would. They noted, however, that three states had passed related laws requiring training on abusive workplace conduct or offered incentives to organizations with antibullying policies.

Tomkowicz and Fiorentino (2017) explained that the intent of the Healthy Workplace Bill was to prevent an abusive work environment. They defined an abusive work environment as one where the employer or one or more employees intentionally

cause another distress or pain produced by acts of psychological or physical harm.

According to Tomkowicz and Fiorentino, the Bill makes the accuser provide proof of

harm to decrease the number of baseless lawsuits. The Bill holds employers responsible

for an abusive work environment only if "(1) the employer exercised reasonable care to

prevent and correct any actional behavior promptly; and (2) the complainant employee

unreasonably failed to take advantage of the appropriate preventive or corrective

opportunities provided by the employer" (p. 20). As of 2017, three states had proactively

enacted legislation: California, Texas, and Utah. At this time, these states use a

reasonable person standard and do not limit bullying to a specific protected class.

Tomkowicz and Fiorentino described this as recognizing status-blind bullying.

As of this writing, there is still no federal version of the Healthy Workplace Bill.

Puerto Rico has become the first U.S. territory to pass a workplace bullying law. Known

as House Bill 306, the legislation became law on August 7, 2020. Bill 306 gives

employees in the public and private sectors the ability to take legal action regarding

behaviors classified as bullying. The law requires employers to adopt policies and

procedures that inform employees of their rights under the newly enacted law.

Workplaces are required to prohibit all behaviors of harassment and bullying.

Additionally, organizations are required to have procedures that allow for investigation

and response. Namie (2020) noted that the primary purpose of the law was to prohibit and

prevent abusive behavior in the workplace that would undermine an employee's

performance and well-being or threaten the employee's dignity. This is not the original

Healthy Workplace Bill proposed by Yamada in 2001. Namie outlined several

similarities and differences between the two, which included the definition of workplace harassment. Both included the terms malicious, unwanted, repetitive and abusive, arbitrary and capricious, verbal, written, and physical. The definition also included acts that were intimidating, humiliating, hostile, and not suitable for a reasonable person to perform their work. Namie provided the example of House Bill 306's definition of workplace harassment similar to the Healthy Workplace Bill.

Another similarity is employer liability. If employers knew about the behavior and did nothing, they are held liable for the actions of supervisors and other employees. Employers who demonstrated they took immediate action will not be held responsible. Another similarity is the protection offered for opposing and participating in a workplace bullying investigation. Both bills apply to the public and private sectors.

Namie (2020) identified differences between House Bill 306 and the Healthy Workplace Bill. First, House Bill 306 provides a comprehensive listing of what is considered harassment. This list includes damaging expressions and hostile or humiliating comments. Another difference is that House Bill 306 requires consideration of all circumstances. In addition, the Bill requires the organization to adopt and implement rules and policies that eliminate or reduce workplace harassment. It calls for the establishment of investigative procedures and the imposition of sanctions for those violating these policies. Namie suggested this was the section of the new law that was stronger than the contents of the Healthy Workplace Bill. The law requires an employee to exhaust the internal mechanisms for resolution before going outside the organization to obtain representation for legal action. It also allows for mediation. Employers in Puerto

Rico had 180 days to comply with the law's guidelines after the government issued

uniform guidance. Both New York and Massachusetts had bills before their 2019-2020

sessions; however, the COVID-19 pandemic impeded these efforts.

Although the actions of Puerto Rico are a first for workplace antibullying

legislation, it is important to note that recent movements are not widespread, and there is

still no federal legislation. Pastorek et al. (2015) declared that without federal, state, and

local responses to workplace bullying, human resource departments are left to create their

own antibullying policies in their organizations. The lack of a legal mandate often

exposes organizations to expensive litigation concerning workplace bullying.

Human Resources and Bullying Prevention

Rhodes et al. (2010) believed that because of the nature of workplace bullying—it

is meant to hurt another person—it warranted being defined as unethical. Based on the

characteristics and purpose of bullying, Rhodes et al. claimed there was no reason to

discuss or theorize bullying without viewing it through an ethical lens. They stated that

when ethics are considered a part of daily organizational activities, they become linked to

bullying behavior. Rhodes et al. suggested that moral judgment should not be applied to

workplace bullying, but rather the organization should seek ethical solutions. Should

organizations fail to use ethics to address bullying, employees can perceive it as an

accepted form of organizational behavior and a characteristic of the organization.

Carden and Boyd (2010) argued that human resources should use ethical methods

to solve workplace bullying. Ethics are behaviors established through standards of

conduct and moral principles. Business ethics are applied through organizational values

and codes. Human resource practitioners use organizational ethics to determine what to do once those boundaries have been crossed. Carden and Boyd noted that the question regarding ethics and workplace bullying was whether the person(s) had done something immoral in the workplace, including violating organizational norms that subject a fellow team member to interpersonal violence and mental anguish.

Mokgolo and Barnard (2019) believed that HRPs have an important part in preventing workplace bullying; however, they found the human resource perspective limited in the research. In their study, the researchers sought to identify the challenges HRPs faced when addressing workplace bullying. The participants included HRPs from institutions of higher education. Mokgolo and Barnard used semistructured interviews to gather data regarding the participants' experiences. Findings indicated that human resource employees are "involved intricately in addressing complaints related to workplace bullying" (Mokgolo & Barnard, 2019, p. 8).

Although the role of HRPs is important in preventing workplace bullying, they face challenges of role ambiguity, power struggles, lack of authority, and lack of support. Mokgolo and Barnard found that HRPs were under constant pressure to balance the employees' expectations with their responsibility to the organization. They identified four important themes: (a) role ambiguity, (b) power dynamics and lack of authority, (c) negative self-efficacy, and (d) management's responses to bullying. Role ambiguity, the first theme, emerged because HRPs were aware of their commitments to the target and the bully. Mokgolo and Barnard described this as the practitioner's need to listen to both sides of the bullying narrative. Human resource employees find it hard to discern who to

believe, which results in these employees focusing on intent. Mokgolo and Barnard noted that the HRPs often find themselves serving the employee's need and the organization creating a potential conflict. Conflicts arise as targets often accuse their supervisors of bullying.

Mokgolo and Barnard (2019) described power dynamics and human resources' lack of authority as problems in effectively managing workplace bullying. HRPs are often in advisory roles and lack decision-making authority, which further complicates their roles related to bullying. Mokgolo and Barnard described the participants in their study as unable to identify bullying policies in their organizations, often referring to sexual harassment policies instead. This lack of a policy caused the practitioners to be subjective in their solutions to bullying. Mokgolo and Barnard related this inability to negative self-efficacy. Their findings indicated that the lack of policy makes it difficult for human resources personnel to effectively identify and manage situations related to bullying. Participants in the study were unaware of policies in their organization governing bullying, thus making them uncomfortable when trying to manage these situations.

The final theme was management's position on bullying. Mokgolo and Barnard (2019) found that managerial attitude was a key component to human resources' ability to address workplace bullying. They noted that management's "ambiguous position in the workplace bullying dynamic disempowered the human resource employee" (Mokgolo & Barnard, 2019, p. 7) and concluded that effective prevention and resolution could not begin without considering the role of human resources. In addition, addressing bullying is

not possible without examining the role of the HRP. The researchers observed that it was the dilemmas experienced by HRPs in their roles preventing them from being effective. Mokgolo and Barnard demonstrated the need for a comprehensive workplace bullying approach whereby management supports and partners with human resources.

Guest (2017) provided additional research regarding the involvement of human resource teams in providing solutions to an employee's ethical well-being. Guest claimed that if not enforced, organizations would not proactively take on the challenge of using ethical solutions to promote employee well-being. In the study, Guest used Christianson and Price's (2007, as cited in Guest, 2017) definition of workplace bullying, which focused on the quality of the employee's experience and functioning at work. Guest explained that workplace bullying was both psychological and physical. Prevention of workplace bullying could involve both of these areas and, as such, is a responsibility of human resources. Guest stated that one of the purposes of human resources was to ensure employees' well-being and noted a need for more research regarding how HRPs can promote employee well-being.

Catley et al. (2017) found that human resource employees have not found effective workplace bullying solutions. The researchers explained that those in human resources have justified workplace bullying behaviors. Targets are perceived at fault, and behaviors normalized as part of organizational culture. Catley et al. advocated for primary prevention strategies, including antibullying policies, and urged more research on prevention strategies related to human resource management.

Cowan and Fox (2015) similarly argued that human resource personnel perform an integral role in workplace bullying prevention. Their study attempted to establish consistency between how HRPs, victims, and academics conceptualized workplace bullying. Cowan and Fox used surveys listing workplace bullying behaviors that participants, HRPs, rated for frequency. Whereas the researchers believed HRPs had an essential role in bullying prevention, their study found they had difficulties responding to complaints. Difficulties resulted from ambiguous boundaries, guidelines for preventing bullying, role conflicts between human resource personnel within the organization, and criteria for recognizing workplace bullying. Cowan and Fox found that HRPs were on the frontline and change agents for defining policies in their organizations. They also contended that HRPs were obligated to implement high-quality policies against workplace bullying, fulfilling their role as a change agent. Cowan and Fox concluded that HRPs should be part of the conversation of defining workplace bullying. Their research demonstrated that including HRPs in the discussion of conceptualizing workplace bullying is an important step in its prevention.

Cowan and Fox (2015) further contributed to the research on the roles of HRPs by attempting to clarify how they understand their roles in bullying situations. The participants in the study were HRPs from a professional human resource organization. Cowan and Fox found that these HRPs assigned themselves to five roles: trusted listener, objective investigator, management advisor, mediator and trainers, and emotional laborer. This information was important because most of the roles belonging to HRPs in the research literature are related to their interaction with the targets. Cowan and Fox

discussed how HRPs move between these roles when mitigating a situation. For example, the participants stated they moved from the role of listener to an advisor based on their lack of power. Cowan and Fox advised that more research is needed regarding the human resources perspective in the United States and suggested further study on the perspectives of targets, coworkers/witnesses, management, and cross-national research.

Duty-Based Strategy

Carden and Boyd (2010) advocated using duty-based approaches to prevent workplace bullying. Duty-based strategies reflect Kant's theory that all individuals have basic rights (Carden & Boyd, 2010). In this approach, the key to prevention is understanding how workplace bullying affects the rights of others. These basic rights include a safe work environment. Examples of these strategies include implementing policy, training, and recruitment techniques to prevent bullying. According to Carden and Boyd, an organization's policy should define bullying, the purpose of the policy, and how the organization will address it when it occurs. In addition, to be effective, the policy should be consistently enforced and monitored.

Guest and Woodrow (2012) supported the need for a Kantian perspective and using ethical strategies to improve the workplace. However, the researchers recognized that using an ethics-based approach may not be possible in a contemporary organization. Such an approach may not be possible due to the constraints and boundaries of human resources' role. Guest and Woodrow argued that ethics-based strategies help the organization achieve higher performance and positive well-being for employees. One strategy included more support for human resource departments, which can support doing

what is best for the organization and also doing what is best for the employees. Guest and Woodrow explained that to resolve this conflict, all parties, including leaders, should recognize that human resources can represent both management and the employee. By doing so, human resource managers can be a voice for employees.

HRPs are key strategic partners in preventing workplace bullying and should be considered ethical stewards as they are tasked with promoting good for all employees (Guest & Woodrow, 2012). Guest and Woodrow proposed that human resource teams should ensure no harm comes to employees by providing positive work-life quality. Carden and Boyd (2010) noted that human resources could better prevent workplace bullying if the department was diligent in recruiting potential employees. Carden and Boyd argued that new employees were often not always honest in the initial hiring process and suggested that recruiters be careful about checking references and backgrounds before extending the position. According to Carden and Boyd, this is a means to prevent bullying before it impacts the organization.

In a qualitative study by Harris (2015), human resource personnel agreed with hiring the right people to reduce bullying in the workplace but noted there had been no reliable method in their organizations to do this. In addition, Harris found that human resource strategies should include ensuring quality policies are in place to address the good of the workforce. Examples of methods that guarantee a high quality of work-life include freedom from bullying and unacceptable workplace treatment.

Carden and Boyd (2010) argued that a person confronted with an ethical issue evaluates the right and wrong of the situation. They defined ethics as "the rules of

conduct or moral principles that guide individual or group behavior" (Carden & Boyd, 2010, p. 144). Organizational values, behavior guidelines, and codes of conduct are the focus of business ethics. Individuals are expected to behave within these guidelines when challenged with issues in the workplace. When applying an ethical lens to workplace bullying, Carden and Boyd explained that the bullying individual behaves in a manner that is immoral and violates the organization's values, codes, guidelines, and principles. Carden and Boyd further argued that HRPs maintain ethical environments by developing, monitoring, and enforcing ethically-based policies.

Samnani and Singh (2016) described the strategy of creating a positive work climate for employees as a partnership between managers and human resources. The researchers described the partnership as one that could be a proactive (duty-based) strategy. They made suggestions such as identifying employees in the environment with certain types of behaviors working alongside one another. An example would be identifying aggressive personalities and those with low self-esteem who worked together, which would give managers the ability to manage potential conflicts. Though the study did not describe how to recognize individuals as bullies, Carden and Boyd suggested using prescreening surveys to rule out bullying behavior.

Einarsen et al. (2017) provided information on the ethical infrastructure in organizations and considered this a means to make organizational ethics effective. Tenbrunsel et al. (2003) defined ethical infrastructure as "formal and informal systems that each include communication, surveillance and sanctioning components" (p. 287). Einarsen et al. believed that the ethical infrastructure would reinforce the organization's

ethical principles to which employees would be held. In their research, Einarsen et al. linked these principles to workplace bullying and urged organizations to view this as unethical behavior and focus on the formal and informal systems. Formal systems consist of organizational policies, procedures, codes of ethics, and methods for reporting complaints. Informal systems are the social cues of the organization and how those expectations are delivered. According to Einarsen et al., conversation, subtle cues, rituals, or stories can establish expectations. The current study focused on formal ethical infrastructure.

Einarsen et al. (2019) conducted an additional study on organizational ethical infrastructure. Using a resource-based perspective, they examined how available resources could be indicators of the level of ethical infrastructure development. The infrastructure reviewed in the study included policies, training, communications, and sanctions. Einarsen et al. found that high-quality human resource practices were closely related to the organization's ethical infrastructures. Their findings suggested that the presence of high-quality human resource management practices was more effective than financial resources or an organization's size in having an ethical infrastructure. Human resource practices, such as training programs and policies, were indicators of organizations adopting ethical infrastructure to prevent workplace bullying. Einarsen et al. also implied that ethical infrastructure should not be reliant on finances or the size of the organization but the human resource function. This study added to the research literature focusing on ethical infrastructure and the delivery of workplace bullying solutions.

Workplace Bullying and Nonprofit Organizations

I selected nonprofits for this study because these businesses create social change within a community. Fox (2013) noted that nonprofits compete for resources and an ever-increasing demand for service. As a result, the standards for accountability have increased. Resnick and Menefee (1993, as cited in Fox, 2013) stated that the client-practitioner relationship measures this change. According to Fox, this relationship is the conduit for change and human service nonprofits are built on ethical obligation. Frumkin and Clark (2000, as cited in Fox, 2013) described nonprofits as committed to "justice and charity" (p. 74). Because of these organizations' contributions to society, they must have a culture free of hostility and bullying. In addition, an unhealthy work environment has the potential to damage public opinion as nonprofits rely on their reputation and the service they provide to the public. A work environment that contains bullying may also impact the services provided to the community.

Individuals working in nonprofits often make emotional connections to their work (Rhodes et al., 2010). Vickers (2011) believed that public sector environments consist of people who want to make a difference in their work; therefore, the idea of being subjected to workplace bullying and potentially violated by this behavior during work is more disturbing. Vickers described public sector workers as needing emotional self-management; therefore, being subjected to workplace bullying adds another level of strain. Vickers argued that because of workplace bullying, employees respond with social performance, which allows them to adapt to being the target of a bully. Social performance is a means of self-monitoring where the victim acts contradictory to how

they feel. As individuals hide their real emotions, the organization assumes there is no problem or bullying behavior. As noted earlier, prolonged exposure to bullying normalizes the behavior in organizations. Targets become focused on surviving in the workplace. Social performance leads to burnout, emotional deviance, depression, and cynicism (Vickers 2011). For individuals with an emotional connection to their work, the impact of workplace bullying is twice as detrimental. The public seek nonprofits for social support and assistance; when met with individuals suffering from the impacts of bullying, the services provided may be less than desirable. The organization as a whole becomes ineffective at meeting the public's needs.

Kovacic et al. (2017) studied mobbing in nonprofit organizations in Slovenia and found it to be present on a large scale. Improving workplace culture in these organizations is essential to achieving productivity and higher quality work product. Kovacic et al. stated that more research was needed in this area but acknowledged their study was limited to one nonprofit organization. They stressed the importance of resolving mobbing behavior in nonprofits. They believed that improving the work culture would allow employees to focus on the greater good and be more devoted to their work.

Samnani and Singh (2016) discussed workplace climate in their research and suggested that workplaces with power disparities increase bullying opportunities. In addition, organizations with poor policies or practices regarding employees' well-being create environments that can contribute to bullying. Employees in these environments may find it acceptable to take power from others. Samnani and Singh found that the work

environment affects bullying; specifically, a poor "work climate" (p. 546) creates a social imbalance and the possibility of certain employees becoming targets.

Further Research

Carden and Boyd (2010) stressed that more research was needed regarding applying ethical human resource management strategies to solve workplace bullying. In addition to this gap, there has been no analysis regarding nonprofit human resource employees and their view of their responsibility to use duty-based ethical solution strategies. This study explored how these employees viewed these responsibilities and how their perceptions could help provide prevention strategies grounded in ethics. Carden and Boyd suggested that human resource employees are often caught between doing what is right for the organization and what is right for the employee. Without the right support (e.g., leadership), human resource managers may not be able to ensure an ethical environment for employees. The current study is important for organizations that have conditions and environments for bullying to occur. This study may also be a resource for exploring the ethical dilemmas of human resource employees.

Harris (2015) researched the perception of HRPs by examining public accounting firms. Harris found that HRPs believed they had an ethical responsibility to prevent workplace bullying; however, they did not apply a particular approach such as duty-based ethics. Harris suggested that more research in this area and other industries.

Alzola (2018) suggested that human resource managers face ethical dilemmas. Alzola noted that HRPs have a critical role in establishing organizational culture and that their responsibilities establish corporate behavior. Alzola also indicated that HRPs could

integrate ethics into many of the processes related to their jobs. These processes include recruitment and selection, training, and development. Understanding ethics and its application by HRPs could be beneficial and needs additional research.

Summary and Conclusions

There are several major themes relevant to this study expressed throughout the research literature. The first is the consistency of the definition of workplace bullying, which includes duration, frequency, and reception by the victim. Second, the research demonstrates the costly outcomes of workplace bullying for both the victim and the organization. In addition, there is no current federal law prohibiting workplace bullying. Finally, the research demonstrated that human resource teams have a key role in preventing workplace bullying.

The present study fills a gap in the public policy and administration research literature as it provides an assessment of nonprofit human resource employees' perceptions of their responsibility to use ethical (duty-based) strategies to prevent workplace bullying. This study also included participants who are nonprofit managers assigned human resource duties. The research discussed in Chapter 2 identified HRPs as important in preventing workplace bullying; therefore, it is important to understand their views and perceived responsibilities. In addition, the study provides insight into whether ethical strategies could be implemented as a part of daily human resource duties.

In the literature review, I provided an in-depth description of workplace bullying, the current legal landscape, as well as a discussion on ethics and human resources' responsibility to prevent this behavior. A gap exists in the research regarding whether

HRPs have a duty to provide ethical strategies to workplace bullying. The research also does not fully explore how human resource employees view if they have a duty to provide ethical prevention methods. These elements could be key to developing better workplace bullying prevention strategies using human resources.

Chapter 3 provides a discussion on the case study research design and its rationale. Next, I discuss my role as the researcher and the study's methodology. Finally, I address issues of trustworthiness and ethical procedures.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of human resource employees or employees with human resource duties regarding their responsibility to use duty-based ethical approaches to prevent workplace bullying and the practicality of its implementation. By examining the perceptions of HRPs, I achieved an understanding of whether it is possible to incorporate duty-based strategies into human resource employees' daily duties to affect change in their organizations. The solutions identified in this study could be implemented into a formal ethical infrastructure (see Einarsen et al., 2017)

In Chapter 3, I discuss the research design and rationale and my role as the researcher. I present the methodology for this study, including participant selection logic, instrumentation, procedures for recruitment, participation, and data collection. I also provide the data analysis plan and address issues of trustworthiness and ethical procedures.

Research Design and Rationale

Two research questions guided this study:

- Research Question 1: How do human resource employees or employees with human resource duties perceive their responsibility to use duty-based solutions to prevent workplace bullying?

- Research Question 2: How can human resource employees use duty-based prevention strategies in their organization to prevent workplace bullying?

Creswell (2007) explained that qualitative designs are useful when there is only a partial understanding of a phenomenon. In this study, I expanded on the research of Carden and Boyd (2010) regarding implementing duty-based strategies to prevent workplace bullying as the responsibility of HRPs. Carden and Boyd indicated that duty-based strategies and their implementation were responsibilities of human resource personnel. They specifically noted that human resource workers could use recruitment and employee screening techniques to prevent bullying before hiring an employee. In addition, Carden and Boyd suggested that workplace bullying policies and training could serve as duty-based methods to prevent bullying. To understand the participants' perceptions regarding their involvement and responsibilities regarding these strategies, I explored how they defined workplace bullying. In addition, I explored their application of duty-based strategies to prevent workplace bullying, which included how they defined ethics as it related to their responsibilities. In addition to exploring these perceptions, I gained an understanding of how HRPs determined their roles in workplace bullying prevention.

The characteristics of qualitative methodology made this type of research ideal for this study. I had the opportunity to study the phenomenon under review in association with natural and real conditions, unlike those observed in an experiment or test found in quantitative research (see Creswell, 2009). Qualitative research allows the participants to answer questions based on their personal experiences with the topic of study. The personal experiences expressed in this study were those of the participants, human resource employees or those with human resource duties, who worked in nonprofit

organizations. By asking the participants questions regarding their perspectives on their roles, I obtained a first-hand account of their ideas concerning workplace bullying, their perceived roles, and the likelihood that duty-based approaches could be implemented in their daily duties.

Using qualitative analysis allowed me to express the richness and complexity of the emerging issue (see Miles & Huberman, 1994). Qualitative methodology also made it possible to understand the meaning participants in this study ascribed to events, concepts, and assumptions through thick, rich descriptions (see Miles & Huberman, 1994). Themes emerged if the participant could accurately describe their current state and elaborate through the interview process. I used semistructured interviews to allow the participants to explain their experiences in their own words. The participants were able to express the meanings they assigned to workplace bullying and their duty-based responsibilities without interference from me, the researcher (see Creswell, 2009). The participants described how duty-based solutions might be used and if prevention methods could be implemented in their current organizations. Additionally, I had the opportunity to review data from various sources, including interviews, organizational policies, and organizational mission and value statements.

The model for this study was a single case study. Yin (2012) noted that a case study design is the most appropriate when exploring an everyday or common phenomenon. Yin also stated that case study is an effective approach to examine a phenomenon when the research question is exploratory or when the case that has a real-world context. Therefore, a case study was the best choice for this study because this

approach allowed me to focus on a real-world, specific case: the HRP. The unit of analysis was individuals with human resource functions, and the issue was workplace bullying.

Although narrative and phenomenological approaches were options for this study, they were not the most appropriate. Creswell (2013) described narrative research as the pathway whereby the participant tells their story about the phenomenon in question. The purpose of this study was to explore how human resource personnel perceived their responsibility regarding workplace bullying rather than individual stories of workplace bullying. Patton (2002) described the phenomenological approach as focusing on how people make sense of their experiences. The experience is then altered into a person's individual consciousness and shared meaning with others. To achieve this, the researcher must conduct in depth interviews with participants who have experienced the phenomenon.

Grounded theory, according to Creswell (2009), is a technique where the researcher develops a theory of the phenomenon under study that is based or grounded in the participant's view. Further, it involves multiple staged data collection under constant comparison allowing for the emergence of categories. This design was not appropriate for this study as I did not seek to create a new theory from the participants' experiences (see Creswell, 2013). The final qualitative design not considered for this study was ethnography, which focuses on shared experiences of those within a specific culture and has a unit of analysis larger than 20 (Creswell, 2013). I did not select ethnography as this

study focused on a smaller group of participants and not on the work environment culture.

The participants of this case study were six professionals who worked for nonprofit organizations from two states on the East Coast. I collected data using semistructured interviews. In addition, I reviewed the organizations' documents for references to workplace bullying. These documents included related policies, mission and value statements, and codes of conduct. I only reviewed public documents posted on the internet or that the participant had the authority to release.

Role of Researcher

I had multiple roles in this study, which included defining the case and the study's parameters. Additional responsibilities included identifying and recruiting the participants. To recruit participants for this study, I used listservs belonging to nonprofit resource centers. The listservs allow nonprofit employees to sign up for updates and discussions in their field. Participants of the listservs may hold various positions within their organization. Listservs support nonprofit resource centers and provide support for their local nonprofit. I posted my study announcement to the listservs and asked participants to respond to my Walden University email address. In addition, I contacted organizations to ask if they could circulate my study announcement or post it in a public area. I also posted my study announcement to the professional networking site LinkedIn and Facebook organizations. Finally, I used the Walden Participant Pool database to post the study announcement.

I had no personal relationships with any of the participants or organizations. I have been a volunteer in the nonprofit sector for several years and knew of organizations in my local area, which allowed me to identify nonprofits that could assist me by posting my study. In addition, I used an online database to locate nonprofits that might be willing to post my research announcement. My search was specific to human service nonprofits based on the definition in Chapter 1. I identified the participants by their employment or duties in human resources and the types of organizations they supported.

I developed the interview questions and facilitated the interviews. I was responsible for collecting the data from the interviews. I also reviewed relevant documents, such as available policies, mission and vision statements, and codes of conduct. I was responsible for reviewing and systematically analyzing the interview responses and identifying the themes that emerged from the data.

I selected nonprofits because of their mission and purpose in providing resources to communities in need. In addition, there has been limited research on workplace bullying and nonprofit organizations. I selected the topic of workplace bullying because of my interest in healthy work cultures, which I felt needed further exploration. Whereas this could have created bias, I realized the importance of identifying any I might have had and used the methods outlined in the study to mitigate them. These included accurately recording the participant responses to the interview questions, allowing them to review the transcripts of their responses (member-checking), and triangulation.

Methodology

Participant Selection Logic

The study had six professionals with human resource duties as participants. Patton (2002) explained that qualitative studies often rely on small samples. A sample size of 10 was the original goal as I believed this would be enough to reach data saturation where no new concepts or ideas could be obtained from the interviews (see Fusch & Ness, 2015). However, I was able to achieve saturation with the six participants. I used the nonprofit listservs to contact the participants and asked them to contact me via my Walden email if they were interested. Next, I contacted each participant first by email and then by phone to review the study's purpose and the interview process. After the overview of the study, if they agreed to continue, I emailed the participants a consent package. I recruited participants who had roles in human resources related to policy writing, recruitment techniques, and training. The participants had the opportunity to opt out of the study at any time. The geographical area of focus was the East Coast.

Through volunteer work with nonprofits, I was aware of several local organizations with a human service element. I contacted the human resource representatives or senior leaders to request permission to post an announcement describing the study. In addition, I used the online database GuideStar to locate additional nonprofits that might be willing to post my research announcement study. GuideStar provided basic information regarding nonprofits in my area that included addresses, mission, service area, and financial data, which provided insight regarding the

organization's size. Using GuideStar was also important to verify whether the participants represented established nonprofits.

Instrumentation

Semistructured interviews were the primary source of data collection. These consisted of open-ended questions supported by the research literature discussed in Chapter 2, including Carden and Boyd (2010) and the research questions. I used an interview protocol (see Appendix) as suggested by Creswell (2013). The protocol included the participant's professional specialization and the participant's role in the nonprofit organization. It also included questions that focused on the interviewees' experience with the phenomenon of workplace bullying and their role as an HRP. I created the interview questions to explore the topic of study (see Patton, 2002), but I also used them to investigate other areas during the interviews with probing questions. The questions were reviewed in advance by HRPs in similar industries, who helped to establish the validity of the questions. Their responses were not a part of the study. My research committee also reviewed the questions.

I recorded the interviews using a high-definition tape recorder or web-based Zoom audio. I notified the participants that I would record the interviews; however, if they wished to decline, they could do so as outlined in the consent form. There were no participants who refused to be recorded. Yin (2014) noted that recording responses is preferable to notetaking, allowing for a higher degree of accuracy. After transcription of the responses, the participants had the opportunity to review the transcripts and determine their accuracy.

Yin (2009) advised using multiple data sources; in a case study, this is often beneficial. In addition to interviews, I obtained and reviewed the available organizational policies, mission and value statements, and codes of conduct. The documents were either provided by the participant or found on the internet. I only received documents if the participant had the authority to release them. These provided me with information regarding current policies and the organization's tone regarding interpersonal behavior. Using multiple sources allowed me to gain insight into the culture of the participants' organizations and the practicality of duty-based strategies.

Recruitment and Participation

In qualitative research, it is common to recruit a small number of subjects with knowledge of the phenomenon under study. For this case study, I selected participants who had knowledge and experience in human resources and human resource job duties employed by a nonprofit organization. I used two sampling techniques: purposeful and convenience. Purposeful sampling is appropriate when the researcher assumes the information to be obtained by the participant will be relevant to the study. Patton (2002) called this "information-rich" (p. 46) because of the participant's knowledge or expertise in a subject. Convenience sampling is applicable when the potential participants are available to the researcher. Patton described this method as easy to access cases. Cases are the main unit of analysis (Yin, 2012). For this study, the main unit of analysis was nonprofit human resource employees or employees of nonprofits with human resource duties. I used listservs to locate individuals with human resource duties and experience. The listservs did not provide me with names or positions but were a vehicle for me to

post to a group that could easily access the announcement and respond. Though I did not

know if the potential participants had knowledge of workplace bullying strategies, I

expected them to have a basic understanding of employee rights and organizational

treatment of employees (e.g., rules regarding sexual harassment, disability, race, or age

nondiscrimination). Not all nonprofit organizations have designated human resource

departments; with this knowledge, I expanded my participant criteria to employees who

performed human resource duties as a part of their jobs.

Yin (2012) discussed using analytic generalization for a case study with smaller

populations. Analytic generalization is the use of the study's theoretical framework to

extend its logic to a similar situation. For this study, the findings could not be generalized

to a larger population of nonprofits or HRPs; however, the theoretical framework and

discussion could be extended to those organizations and professionals with similar

qualities. The findings could promote discussion of how human resources employees

might respond in a similar organization or with similar duties when confronted with

workplace bullying challenges.

Yin (2012) described a two-step process that assisted me in generalizing the

findings of this study. The first step involved demonstrating how these shaped the

relationships of the study's themes. A goal of this study was to demonstrate the ideas,

feelings, and opinions of HRPs toward using duty-based ethics to solve workplace

bullying. Some of the areas explored were the participants' definitions of workplace

bullying, duty-based ethics, and their perceptions of their responsibilities. These were

potentially formed by their role in their department, size of the organization, and work

experiences. The second part of analytic generalization concerns applying the theoretical foundation of the study to similar situations outside of the study (Yin, 2012). This included similarly sized organizations, services (human service organizations), and participant duties. Using analytical generalization, I made a reasonable prediction of how human resources employees expressed their feelings and perceptions about the research question in like circumstances.

Data Collection

Data collection began after I received Instructional Review Board (IRB) approval from Walden University (# 10-09-19-0254525). I selected interviews to collect data as this method allows for exploring human experience (Seidman, 2013). Yin (2014) noted interviews as a common data collection method in case studies and considered them guided conversations. Interviews provided the participants with opportunities to assign meaning to their experience as they described workplace bullying (Seidman, 2013). Based on Yin's description of an interview as fluid, I used semistructured interviews, which allowed the themes to emerge. The interviews took approximately 30 to 60 minutes; the location was convenient to the participant, and I conducted these in a private office. I used Zoom audio technology. I based the interview protocol on the study's research questions and the literature regarding duty-based ethics and duty-based solutions discussed in Chapter 2. Volunteer HRPs with whom I am acquainted, but not participating in the study, reviewed the questions to ensure that they would effectively identify relevant information. My research committee also reviewed the questions.

The review of organizational documents was also a part of the data collection process as content analysis. Documents consisted of human resource policies and organizational mission and value statements. Document submissions were made voluntarily by the participants with their permission; other documents reviewed in this study were public-facing (accessed via the internet) and related to the organization. I used the documents to gain insight into the organization's culture and an expectation of employee behaviors.

Data Analysis Plan

I conducted data analysis to establish themes and patterns. The primary sources of data were interviews and organizational documents. I used NVivo to create notes and code for patterns in the participants' responses. To analyze the organization's documents, I used content analysis, a systematic method to describe qualitative data (Schreier, 2014). Using this method, I developed a coding framework to focus my review of the data on the research questions. By using content analysis, I was able to provide an assessment of the documents as they related to the research questions or the participants' descriptions of their work environment. I used pattern coding to review the documents for themes, which included organizational culture expectations and employee behavior expectations.

I coded the participants' interview responses to identify themes and patterns. Codes are a means to attach tags or labels to data and categorize and arrange information derived from the study (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The nature of this study was explorative, and I did not know what to expect before data collection; therefore, I did not precode but used inductive coding (Saldana, 2016). Creswell (2007) advised that

although predetermined codes can be helpful, it is important to allow themes to emerge. I also used pattern codes in this study, which helped identify themes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Both coding methods helped me identify relevant themes in the data. I used my notes to detect links between the data and my thoughts regarding the data. The management software NVivo was helpful with coding and identifying themes.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Patton (2002) affirmed that research should be truthful, reliable, and supported by findings. According to Patton, it also requires neutrality in that the researcher should not manipulate data to serve their needs. In addition, the researcher should not begin by trying to prove a specific point or validate a perspective. In this study, I reported the participants' interview responses verbatim and did not draw conclusions or make interpretations. The participants had an opportunity to review their interview responses (provided in transcript format) before coding to ensure accuracy. To achieve neutrality, I allowed the total picture of the inquiry into workplace bullying and the nonprofit HRPs' perspectives to unfold throughout the semistructured interviews (Patton, 2002). Though I used a theoretical foundation, I was not testing hypotheses related to duty-based ethics.

Creditability

The first issue of trustworthiness is credibility or internal validity. According to Patton (2002), the credibility of a study can be damaged when shaped by the bias(es) of the researcher. Patton noted that this could occur intentionally or unintentionally. In this study, to remove bias, I used several strategies. First, I used member checking; once I had conducted the interviews and transcribed the responses, I sent the transcripts to all

participants to review for accuracy. Creswell (2013) described member-checking as an

opportunity for the participants to view the credibility of the findings and the

interpretations of the data collected. Member-checking should not inconvenience the

participant; however, it allows them to view the information and verify the data were

accurately recorded and transcribed. This helps capture errors that could skew the data.

Second, I made sure the participants felt comfortable responding to the interview

questions, which helps ensure the participants' credibility. I expressed to each that I

would only use their answer in this study, and the data would be kept confidential. I

expressed this during the initial contact and reiterated it at the interview. This was

important in this study as the participants discussed their perceptions. Third, I had

volunteer HRPs review the interview questions. Any inconsistencies or confusing

questions were reviewed and revised. In addition, my dissertation committee reviewed

the questions.

Transferability

Transferability can be substituted for generalization in a qualitative study (Patton,

2002). Transferability occurs when contexts (situations) are similar. Because they are

similar, the results can apply to a comparable context (Patton, 2002). For this study, I

used rich, thick descriptions to make this determination. The descriptions will allow the

research to be replicated in another setting and provides detailed written descriptions of

the phenomenon under study (Creswell, 2013). I gathered rich data through interviews,

which included descriptions by the participants of their duties and the organizations they

represented. In addition, the participants described workplace bullying and duty-based

ethics. The interview questions were open-ended so that the participants could elaborate and explain their answers to the interview questions thoroughly. I used probing questions as needed to create an open dialogue.

Dependability

Dependability refers to the replication or reliability of a study. Yin (2014) believed the best way to achieve dependability was to thoroughly document the study's protocol and the steps taken in the research process. Chapter 3 contains the methodology for this study. Chapter 4 outlines the data analysis process and includes coding methods and how themes emerged. The Appendix lists the interview questions. The Walden Qualitative Dissertation Checklist provided a good resource for documenting methods needed for dependability. Using this documentation, I was able to include all needed elements in the dissertation.

Confirmability

Confirmability refers to whether the results of the study can be corroborated by others. Korstjens and Moser (2018) noted that confirmability requires researcher neutrality and that interpretations need to be objective and based on data. I achieved this by documenting this study's results, whereby the reader can follow my analysis and conclusions. I used the participants' words, verbatim, in my presentation of the study's results. In addition, I related the terms and ideas vocalized by the participants back to the literature for support. My notes and information were documented in NVivo and maintained on a password-protected thumb drive.

Ethical Procedures

Participation in the study was voluntary. At any time during the data collection process, the participant could withdraw. However, like most case studies, this one focused on human affairs, and there was a need to conduct the study with sensitivity and respect for the participants' needs (see Yin, 2014). All participants received an email explaining the study's purpose, that it was strictly voluntary, and there were minor risks associated with the study. Attached to the email was the consent form, modeled after the example provided by Walden and approved by the IRB. The form also contained information regarding the length of time I will keep the data after the study was complete. The participants returned the email with the acknowledgment, "I consent." This agreement indicated the participants' understanding of the study and consent to the interview. The package also informed the participant of how I would use their information in this study.

I saved all data and study-related materials to a password-protected thumb drive. I stored the consent forms in a PDF file on the thumb drive. I uploaded the audio recordings onto a computer file, which I transferred to the thumb drive. I took all notes by hand and stored them in a locked file cabinet along with the thumb drive. I will destroy all paper and electronic files after 5 years. I am the only one who knows the identity of the participants.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of human resource employees or employees with human resource duties regarding their responsibility to use

duty-based ethical approaches to prevent workplace bullying and the practicality of its implementation. Another goal of the study was to provide a better understanding of the role of HRPs based on their responses to the interview questions. This case study focused on the real-life experiences of participants expressed in semistructured interviews. My responsibility included recruiting participants, conducting the interviews, and analyzing the data. In addition, I reviewed the documents of the organization to understand its culture. In this chapter, I discussed recruitment, data management, data analysis, managing issues of trustworthiness, and the ethical procedures used in the study. In Chapter 4, I present an in-depth analysis of the results of the study.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of human resource employees or employees with human resource duties regarding their responsibility to use duty-based ethical approaches to prevent workplace bullying and the practicality of its implementation. As a result of the data analysis, I identified areas where HRPs may have an opportunity to implement duty-based prevention methods in their daily duties and the support needed for success. In addition, I was able to obtain their perceptions related to the definition of workplace bullying and their responsibilities related to duty-based solutions. The following research questions guided this study:

- Research Question 1: How do human resource employees or employees with human resource duties perceive their responsibility to use duty-based solutions to prevent workplace bullying?

- Research Question 2: How can human resource teams use duty-based prevention strategies in their organization to prevent workplace bullying?

I asked a series of open-ended interview questions to obtain the participants' perspectives.

In this chapter, I provide the research setting and demographics for this study, followed by a discussion regarding data collection and analysis. The chapter also covers evidence of trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Finally, I present the results of this study.

Setting

I conducted interviews via Zoom, with the participants selecting their locations. I conducted the interviews from my private office. I preferred face-to-face interaction; however, only the audio feature on Zoom was used during the interviews. I recorded the audios on my personal computer and uploaded each to a password protected thumb drive. In the transcripts and notes, I used pseudonyms for each participant to protect their identities and provide confidentiality. I stored all information on a password protected thumb drive. I informed all participants that participation was voluntary in the consent form.

Demographics

The participants interviewed were classified as HRPs or nonprofit professionals with human resource responsibilities and employees of human service nonprofits. The participants were from two states on the East Coast. Table 1 lists the role of each participant and the types of duties they performed as a part of their role. These duties are closely related to duty-based activities based on Carden and Boyd's (2010) research.

Before the interview, I called each participant to describe the study and consent process. The call also provided me with the opportunity to assess the participant's fitness for the study. All participants had some experience and knowledge of the roles of HRPs and the daily duties associated with these roles.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Participant	Position	Duties	HR employee
Participant A	HR director	Recruiting, hiring, training, onboarding, termination, performance management, compliance	Yes
Participant B	HR generalist	Recruiting, onboarding, customer service	Yes
Participant C	HR administrator	Payroll, employee relations performance management, benefits, coordinate recruiting, job descriptions	Yes
Participant D	Supervisor	Recruiting, telephone screening, resume review	No
Participant E	Program manager	Recruiting, interviewing, training	No
Participant F	HR specialist	Staff development, engagement, organizational learning	Yes

Data Collection

Once I received approval to conduct the study from Walden's IRB, I began the recruiting process. I did not use a single organization or partnership with an organization to reach my goal of 10 participants for this study. I was not studying the actions of one organization with a single human resource department. I contacted the nonprofit organizations' leadership or human resource representative to ask if they could post my study announcement. Only one organization responded to the request and asked that I contact them at a later date, which I was unable to do due to COVID-19; therefore, I used social media and professional listservs to try and contact participants. I posted the

research announcement to LinkedIn and professional Facebook groups; however, this did not generate interest. I posted the study to the Walden Participant Pool, which also did not yield participants.

I used two professional listservs; they were both specific to the east coast states they represented. I posted the research announcement using my Walden email address; I asked those interested in the study to contact me via this address and not respond directly to the listserv post. Once the participants contacted me, I sent each an email to set up a 15-minute call to describe the consent process and the study. After receiving the consent forms, I scheduled the interviews. Through the posting of my research announcement on the listservs, I recruited seven participants. I received all seven consent forms; however, one individual did not follow through with the interview.

I conducted the interviews from January 16 through April 17, 2020. The length of the interviews varied, with some lasting only 30 minutes, though I allotted the participants 45 to 60 minutes as indicated on the consent form. The length of the interviews depended on how much information the participant shared in their response. I used Zoom because face-to-face interviews were not possible. One interview had to be conducted by phone as the participant did not have access to Zoom, and I recorded the interviewee's responses using a voice recorder. I originally scheduled this participant for a face-to-face interview, but due to the public health emergency (PHE), we could not meet. I uploaded the audio onto my personal computer and saved it on a password-protected thumb drive.

I used semistructured interviews with open-ended questions. The questions were supported by the literature discussed in Chapter 2 and designed to help answer the research questions. I used an interview protocol as suggested by Creswell (2009). I also asked the participants standard questions related to their duties and their role in their organizations (see Appendix). The only deviation from these questions was to clarify information or statements made by the participants. For example, I asked Participant D to clarify their thoughts about using duty-based solutions in the daily programming: "In your environment, some of the duty-based solutions, how could they be used in your profession?"

I did not use the names of the participants in this study to protect their privacy. I stored the information on a password-protected thumb drive. The information will be stored for 5 years, after which I will destroy the thumb drive through pulverization. My notes associated with the interviews are stored in a locked file cabinet to be shredded after 5 years.

At the beginning of each session, the participant received an overview of the interview process and was advised when the recording began. I asked questions, listened to, and recorded the responses from the participants. During the interviews, each participant spoke openly about their experiences and provided thoughts on their roles within their organization, human resources, and workplace bullying. When concluding the interviews, I asked each participant, "Is there anything else you would like to add regarding your responsibility to provide duty-based solutions to workplace bullying?" Most summarized their final thoughts related to workplace bullying. For example,

Participant E commented that the bullying of children was more prevalent than the workplace bullying of adults. Participant B stated that bullying was not discussed enough.

There were changes to the data collection process from those originally planned. The interviews took less time than estimated and were based on the amount of information the participant shared. Recruiting participants took longer than expected, as did the time to complete the interviews. The first interview began in January 2020, and I conducted the last interview in April of 2020. The participants were from several organizations. I often had to wait several days or weeks for individuals to respond to my study announcement and to coordinate scheduling. In addition, in the middle of data collection, there was a PHE, which potentially impacted participants' responsiveness. For the convivence and safety of the participants, I used Zoom to conduct the interviews.

Content analysis was also a part of the data collection process. I asked the participants to share their organizational codes of conduct, ethics, or policies regarding employees. This was voluntary and only done if the participant had permission to provide the information—some did not do so. I used public-facing documents that included the mission or value statements of the participants' organizations. I did not identify the names of the organizations.

Data Analysis

The main data sources included audio recordings, transcripts, handwritten notes, public-facing documents, and any documents submitted by the participant. I transcribed the audio recordings of the interviews using Temi, a speech recognition software. I listened to the audio recordings while comparing them to the transcripts for accuracy. I

sent all participants their transcripts in an email and gave them time to review the information for accuracy. Only two responded with minor corrections. There was no need to schedule a follow-up call for clarification.

Creswell (2013) stated that the data analysis process consists of organizing the data and redesigning it into themes. This is done through coding and then condensing codes. The process used was most closely related to the process suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994). These steps include (a) writing margin notes, (b) writing reflective passages, (c) noting patterns in the data, and (d) making contrasts and comparisons (Miles & Huberman, 1994). I took notes and created memos that I input into NVivo to make connections to the research questions. I only included cases with information that did not identify the participants. A case in NVivo is a unit of observation that allows the researcher to connect the study's different characteristics or components (Jackson & Bazeley, 2019). This allowed me to group the study's demographics and make connections and descriptions of the participants. I created a note in NVivo titled Major Themes and documented the themes by coding the uploaded transcripts. I arranged the coded transcripts in the memo under categories.

Once I created the notes and memos in NVivo, I began coding using a two-step process. Saldana (2016) defined coding as "a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language or visual data" (p. 4). According to Miles and Huberman (1994), coding is also analysis. I derived the codes from the interviews and content analysis and put these into nodes (see Jackson & Bazeley, 2019).

The first step in the process was inductive coding; I did not use predetermined codes. Inductive codes are obtained from a subset of questions (Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008). I arranged the codes into multiple categories based on commonalities in the interview responses. This step assisted me in identifying similar responses that applied to the research questions. Saldana (2016) suggested that this is the best form for exploratory research because it is data driven and allows for the emergence of the codes. Initially, there were over 20 parent codes of the data, for example, human resource duties and workplace bullying definition.

Miles and Huberman (1994) stated that initial coding should be followed with secondary or even tertiary coding. In secondary coding, patterns and themes began to emerge from the data. After inductive coding, in the second step in the coding process, I applied pattern coding from the list of established codes. Saldana (2016) defined pattern coding as an aspect of the data that appears more than twice and is consistent. Looking for patterns, I was able to identify themes from the data and reduce the coding list to those that best supported answers to the research questions. There were seven parent codes from which themes emerged: (a) perception of ethical duties, (b) organizational culture, (c) workplace bullying definition, (d) human resource ethics profession, (e) implementation, (f) perception of responsibility, and (g) prevention initiatives. Four parent codes contained subcodes. Participant perceptions included the subcodes implementation of duties, role, and support. Human resource ethics profession subcodes were ethical responsibility, ethical standards, and ethical standard defined by participant.

Prevention initiatives contained the subcodes for prevention organization and prevention professional.

I conducted content analysis using pattern or themed coding. Two main themes emerged from the content analysis: culture and value statements and defined company policy. Within these themes were statements related to integrity, inclusion, compassion, and accountability, in addition to expectations of employees' conduct.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

Patton (2002) stated that for research to be useful, it needed to be credible and cannot serve the researcher's interests. To address credibility in this study, I used several strategies. I tested the interview questions with two HRPs from nonprofits with whom I was familiar. Originally, three agreed to participate in mock interviews; however, only two participated. I read each of the interview questions, and the HRPs answered these based on their experiences. The participants in this process provided insight into whether the interview questions were clear and reasonable or needed reevaluation. The participants assisted in rewording questions that may have been unclear. I used this information to improve the interview process.

After reviewing the responses and feedback from the volunteers, I completed a short analysis of the interview questions, which I did not include in the study. My dissertation committee reviewed the questions and provided feedback and an evaluation of the subjectivity of the questions. I adjusted all questions based on this feedback before the interviews.

I also established credibility in this study by sharing the interview transcripts with the participants, which provided them with the opportunity to review these for accuracy. If the participants felt any information was misrepresented, I informed them that they could discuss this with me. Only two responded with minor feedback or corrections.

Transferability

Lincoln and Guba (1985, as cited in Patton, 2002) referred to transferability as generalizability. According to Yin (2009), generalizability is whether the study's findings will extend outside the immediate case study. More specifically, in case studies, the researcher should consider analytical generalization (Yin, 2014). Analytical generalization takes the analysis beyond the case at hand to a higher level or the reason why the study is important. This study achieved a level of generalization through the emergence of rich themes from the participants' responses to open-ended questions. Rich, thick descriptions allow the reader to transfer the information to another setting (Creswell, 2013). The results of this study could be transferred to similar human resource nonprofit employees and organizations.

Dependability

Dependability refers to whether the study can be replicated by another researcher. I document the methodology for this study in Chapter 3 and discuss the data analysis in this chapter, including how codes and themes emerged. The Appendix attached to this study provides the interview questions. The Walden Qualitative Checklist was a resource for documenting the methods needed to ensure dependability.

Confirmability

Confirmability in qualitative research concerns the corroboration of the results. I achieved this by providing an extensive record of the results of the study, whereby the reader can follow my analysis or conclusions. I used the words, verbatim, of the participants. In addition, I related the terms and ideas expressed in this study to the research literature. My notes and information are documented in NVivo and maintained on a password protected thumb drive. Finally, I minimized bias and prejudices in my analysis through the NVivo coding process.

Results

This study's findings were the result of analysis of the data collected from the semistructured interviews of six nonprofit HRPs or nonprofit employees with human resource duties. In addition, I conducted a content analysis using documents from the participants' organizations. I coded the data using NVivo to identify themes that supported the research questions. Below are the themes identified with each research question.

Research Question 1

The first research question that guided this study was, "How do human resource employees or employees with human resource duties perceive their responsibility to use duty-based solutions to workplace bullying?" The themes that emerged related to this question included (a) definition of workplace bullying, (b) current prevention initiatives, (c) perception of ethical duties, (d) perception of responsibility, and (e) human resource ethics profession.

Definition of Workplace Bullying

According to Namie (2003),

Workplace bullying [is defined] as "status blind" interpersonal hostility that is

deliberate, repeated and sufficiently severe as to harm the targeted person's health

or economic status. Further, it is driven by the perpetrators' need to control

another individual, often undermining legitimate business interests in the process.

(p. 1)

All participants expressed various forms of this definition. For example, Participant A

defined workplace bullying in terms of staff treating other staff in an "inappropriate

way." Participant A described these acts as "random or based on anything specific like a

protected class." This participant also believed a bully to be a person who "deliberately"

makes another uncomfortable for no reason. Participant A's perspective was consistent

with the definition as they believed that bullying is consistent behavior, not a single

incident:

I mean, it would be anything where staff would be treating each other in an

inappropriate way. You know, whether it be random or based on anything specific

like a protected class. You know, like anything, where someone is making another

person uncomfortable deliberately for no good reason. And kind of [*sic*] doing it

consistently. Not even, I mean, I guess you could, you could bully somebody

once, and that would be, that would be bad too.

Participant B defined bullying as a person who is rude, mean, or hostile to a

coworker. Participant B believed that bullying materialized in various ways, including

being controlling. Participant B noted that it could be a coworker doing the bullying or a subordinate being bullied. Participant B suggested that people do not always know that they are bullying or a victim of bullying:

I think that actually shows up in a lot of different ways. I think they [*sic*] shows up obviously in the very out loud, and you know, people are just straight-up rude and mean or . . . hostile to their coworkers. And it shows up in different ways. I think it shows up also in ways where people are kind of like quietly manipulative. Other [*sic*], either of their coworkers, their subordinates, and to a point where people don't necessarily even realize that they are . . . bullying or are being bullied.

Participant C offered a definition of bullying that stipulated it needed to be continuous. Specifically, Participant C noted that a bully is "someone just constantly biliterate [*sic*] belittling someone they work with. Just, you know, constantly after them and biliterate [*sic*] or belittling them and laughing at them and whatever." Participant D characterized workplace bullying:

I think I would define it as, give me a minute trying to get it into words. I think they would define it as somebody, an individual that doesn't get the ethics and wants to control and climb up the ladder. Even though in nonprofits, there's not much of a ladder, but someone that's very aggressive in their duties and thinks they're better than everybody else.

Participant E commented that workplace bullying is "behavior where someone is using their power or privilege to, like, change someone's behavior or their attitude or the

productivity in a way that is not related to their actual actions or productivity." Further, Participant E said the behavior was not "professionally based." Finally, Participant F defined bullying as a behavior that exists "within a traditional power dynamic that allows for any kind of mistreatment basically. I know that's vague."

Though the participants did not share a universal definition for workplace bullying, there were several commonalities. First, two of the participants used the word "constant" to represent bullying behavior. Other words included power, hostility, aggression, and belittling. One participant stated that bullying could be between coworkers or subordinates. Another noted that the behavior is considered bullying if it negatively impacts someone and related this to decreased productivity. One participant implied bullying involved a protected class or the act could occur one time. These concepts are slightly different from the definition of workplace bullying: workplace bullying involves more than a protected class, and the behavior must be consistent. Table 2 provides a comparison of the words used to describe workplace bullying by the participants and the words used in association with or to describe bullying in the literature presented in the current study.

Table 2

Terms Related to Workplace Bullying

Words from participants	Words from literature
Consistent	Consistent
belligerent	verbal
negative	nonverbal
loss productivity	subordinate
belittling	peer
subordinate	deliberate
peer	unconscious
inappropriate treatment	power
uncomfortable	dominance
deliberate	work interference
hostile	intimidation
rude	hostile
mean	escalatory
control	rude
lack of ethics	
aggressive in duty	
power	
privilege	
unprofessional	

Current Prevention Initiatives

The discussion of current initiatives is important as it helps identify what may be expected of HRPs or individuals with these duties. Prevention initiatives are divided into two categories. The first is related to the human resource profession and the second to the participant's organization. The responses varied among participants related to this theme.

Participant A stated that in the human resources profession, there is beginning to be more awareness and training regarding bullying. The participant said that sexual harassment and harassment generally had been issues for a long time with training

provided to address them. Participant A believed there needed to be more mindfulness of

the problem and described an increase in bullying overall. The participant expressed that

there is a greater "sensitivity" in human resources and in the workplace due to the

increase in society:

> I know that there is more awareness of it now, and there's training for it that you
>
> can do. You know, and there's probably a fine line between, you know,
>
> workplace bullying, and there's, you know, there's of course, there's sexual
>
> harassment, and there's harassment in general so that harassment has been, you
>
> know, long a long-time issue and [in] workplaces. So, there's a lot of training
>
> around that. I think that there's a little bit more awareness [of bullying in general]
>
> than workplace bullying because there seems to be an uptick of bullying just in
>
> the society in general. So, I think there's a sensitivity in HR and [the] workplace
>
> because of that too.

> In Participant A's workplace, there was not a bullying policy. The participant

stated the organization had a code of ethics and competencies, which described

acceptable employee behavior. The participant noted that there were policies on

harassment and a hostile work environment and explained that the current policies might

evolve into antibullying policies, but this was not currently the case:

> We do not have a workplace bullying policy per se, but we have protocols in
>
> place to set the workplace environment. It's like sort of set expectations for
>
> agency culture and workplace environments. We have a . . . code of ethics that we
>
> talked about earlier. We have agency competencies, which is [*sic*] very specific

on what kind of behavior and appropriate, you know, appropriate workplace behavior is. We have policies in place about harassment, you know, any sort of harassment, and we definitely have policies in place about a hostile work environment, which, you know, that's pretty much the HR term for bullying, really. I don't [know], they might be turning [it] into more like an antibullying policy, but right now that we have the more traditional policies.

When asked what preventative measures were in place for bullying in the human resource profession, Participant B said that they did not know. The participant referenced occasional articles written by those in the profession but felt that most of the emphasis was related to youth bullying:

Honestly, [I] don't know. I mean, I feel not like in within the organizations like SHRM [Society for Human Resource Management] and other professional organizations. You know, there's always, there's occasionally, you know, there'll be people, you know, writing articles or . . . doing these seminars and stuff on how you can prevent it and how you can recognize that. But as a national [problem], like I think the focus on bullying is really more on youth, and you know, like that.

Participant B noted there was a policy on harassment and how to file a grievance in their organization; however, there was no specific mention of workplace bullying in the policy. The participant also referenced a wellness committee that addressed certain topics once a month. The participant stated that once, interpersonal relationships were

covered but not explicitly bullying. Interpersonal relationships are relationships between employees in the workplace. Participant B further commented"

> We do have a general policy that says, you know, like workplace bullying and harassment and all that is, you know, inappropriate, and this is how you can address that and file, you know, if you have needed a grievance, a grievance procedure and all that. But it's all very, like most policies are very clinical and with the onus on the recipient of the bullying or the harassment to deal with it.

Participant B believed the policy might include a reference to workplace bullying but, upon review, retracted the statement. The participant provided me with the policy, and it did not specifically reference workplace bullying.

Participants C, D, and E gave similar responses when asked about bullying initiatives in their profession. Each participant stated these did not exist. Participant D said that I was the first to mention bullying: "No. Nope. You're the first to mention this to me. That's why I wasn't sure how helpful I could be to you. We do have sexual and unlawful harassment policies, but we don't have anything about bullying." Participant E also referenced that there were more initiatives related to children rather than adults.

> Yeah, that's really interesting from an outdoor education standpoint because there are tons of antibullying initiatives largely in youth-serving organizations focused on youth bullying in youth. I think that's—I don't think that that's the same focus for workplace bullying among coworkers in my industry. I don't think that we really have worried about bullying other adults very much.

Participant F believed workplace bullying was debated more often and described various mediums in which it has been addressed:

I feel like workplace bullying is becoming more discussed. Like, I feel like I'm seeing more articles around it and more like webinars and trainings around it. And I feel like there's also been just more conversation around things that either tie into workplace bullying or are like workplace bullying adjacent. Like I feel like there's more conversations around abusive power and like basically how to deal with a manager who is micromanaging or harmful.

Participant C believed it would be easy to add to a harassment policy as a preventive measure. However, the participant stressed that their organization had not experienced bullying, so they did have to address it:

I mean, I think that it would be easy enough to add bullying to harassment [policies], but I don't know if bullying's considered unlawful harassment. But yeah, we haven't had to deal with it. So, you know, we don't have it.

Participant D was not able to identify measures or policies in their organization to address bullying. Participant E's responses were much the same for their organization as for the profession. The focus was on youth rather than adults:

At my organization, we've had staff training on bullying. It's been part of our staff training for a couple of years focused on kids bullying each other and also . . . we have a teenage program, so . . . it also talks about the teenagers and how their bullying can be different. But we don't yet focus specifically on adults bullying other adults in the workplace.

Participant F expressed that conversations about bullying were happening in their organization:

So, I know that, and this is maybe more true of my own organization than others, but I know that organizations, in general, are really kind of trying to step up when it comes to at least sexual harassment training and reporting and conversations. And the same is true of our organization. And those trainings and conversations for us led to a lot of conversations around workplace bullying just because I feel, and I think the organization to some extent, feels that there is a lot of similarity there in-so-far as what makes sexual harassment or workplace bullying possible is kind of all the same. So, I think . . . the conversation is really kind of overlapped a lot in a way that was interesting.

Finally, Participant F stated that their organization had an employee handbook with a separate section that addressed bullying and abuse of power. This information was not provided to me for verification. Participant F said, "Yes, we have an explicit [policy]. I mean, it's within our employee handbook, but it's an explicit section about workplace bullying and abusive power that's separate from a section on harassment."

Perception of Ethical Duties

The perception of ethical duties was related to the role of the participant in using duty-based strategies to prevent workplace bullying. Perceptions of ethical duties included a discussion of human resource duties in general and the participant's specific ethical duty. This theme emerged because the participants shared similar responses to questions in this area. Participant A stated, "I mean for me your [*sic*] ethical HR behavior

would be approaching every single person . . . the same in the same way. Being very consistent making sure that staffs' needs are met in a respectful way and treating everybody equally." Participant A also offered,

> Holding things in confidence. I keep saying that, but that's a huge part of HR.
> And then you know for. . . this agency and hopefully a general, you know, one of
> the biggest things that HR is, is trying to develop people. And that is something
> that we . . . do day in and day out and kind of drives [success] . . . if you have a
> workforce that you're developing and business, your business can develop that
> much more.

> Participant B noted that ethical duties are related to confidentiality and

maintaining impartiality as well as applying rules fairly:

> And apply rules and policies and all that. . . . Often times people expected them be
> applied in a fair and equal way. However, I prefer to say that they should be
> applied in a fair and equitable way.

Participant C shared a similar response by stating fairness, standing up for what is right, and confidentiality are important ethical duties:

> Fairness, treating everyone the same, making very few if any exceptions to policy.
> Being aware of adverse impacts, making managers aware of adverse impacts,
> confidentiality again, and . . . following through and doing what you say you're
> going to do and standing up for what's right.

> Participant D stated that reviewing the core values of the organization was an

ethical duty. Participant E responded that it is important to ensure employees have an

understanding of organizational policies and procedures. The participant also reflected on confidentiality as an aspect of ethical duties and referenced protecting staff from sexual harassment, bullying, and micromanagement—making sure policies protect the people of the organization. Participant E implied that human resources had a duty to protect the organization, but it should not be at the expense of the employee:

> I think the ethical responsibilities for people working with human resources are to, like, honestly inform the employees and make sure the employees have a clear understanding of the policies and procedures, their rights, and their benefits that they should get. I think there's a confidentiality aspect to HR [human resources] where obviously you . . . have access to some privileged information at times. I guess those are the two main ones that I can think of.

Perception of Responsibility

The perception of responsibility was based on the question regarding whether or not the participant believed it was their role to provide duty-based solutions to workplace bullying. Participant A stated that it was not specifically their role to do this, but human resources had the responsibility to establish the foundation. The participant also noted that it was everyone's duty to take on this obligation and identified management as having a key role: "I mean I think, I think that the policies and procedures and the infrastructure might come from HR, but it's absolutely everybody's responsibility to facilitate that and make sure that that's the reality. Especially management."

When asked about having an ethical responsibility to provide solutions, Participant A stated they believed they had that role: "Yeah, I do. I don't think I could; I

couldn't handle working somewhere where that wasn't a priority." Participant B believed in having a role that provided duty-based solutions and thought this was a responsibility of the human resource team. However, the organization may not view those with this role as providing this type of solution.

> I see myself as like a part of that role because being part of the . . . human resources team, you know, I think that . . . people like people assume that you're going to be there as a support to them to help them with those types of issues. I think from an organization standpoint—I don't really have a role in that because that's not, that's like not my [role] in terms of actually initiating and managing like that. They don't see that as my role personally.

Participant C expressed they would like to have a role in the implementation of duty-based solutions. However, the solutions would need to be approved by the organization's executive director before implementation: "Well, I would see my role as recommending [duty-based policies to] them, and you know, if they're approved by the executive director then implementing them." Participant D did not clearly state a belief that they had an ethical responsibility to provide duty-based solutions. The participant spoke about the responsibility related to communication training and explained this is more important in the employee training process than in hiring:

> I think my role is pretty important. I think I have a lot of impact in that position in my organization because I would say I see that impact less in the hiring process but much more in the training process where all of our staff go through at least one training with us. And I think that training is probably the most impactful way

to communicate, like, what our mission and values are organizationally and how we expect people to treat each other and also treat the kids. And so as one of the people who plans this training and leads the training, I do think I have an influential role in that aspect.

Participant F explained their role in the implementation of duty-based strategies to prevent bullying as small because of its place on the organizational chart. Participant F commented, "My role is pretty small cause I'm on the . . . lower end of the totem pole as far as my department is concerned." Participant F stated that their role was to "internalize the duty of care." Participant F said that they could not make decisions but felt that speaking up was their contribution to prevention. The participant also believed it was their responsibility to give employees the opportunity to discuss their experiences:

Like obviously, I'm not the director. Like I can't really make a lot of decisions, but that doesn't mean that I can't notice things happening or speak up or give people spaces to . . . talk about what they're experiencing. And also to push back against leadership in my department. Like, I'm really lucky that I have a director who listens to feedback from her staff, and I feel like it's my duty to speak up if she has missed something or if she's just not aware of something and something's going on that she needs to be made aware of. Especially because I am safe to do that. I think it's absolutely part of my duty of care.

Human Resource Professional Ethics

Human resource professional ethics is based on the participants' responses regarding human resources as a profession. From this category, several subtopics

emerged, including ethical responsibility, ethical standards, and ethical standard participant definition. The participants' descriptions were consistent with their previously described perceptions of their professional ethical duties.

Ethical responsibility was based on what the participant believed a human resource personnel's overall ethical responsibility might be. There is not an established definition in the profession; however, the participants described what they believed were human resource responsibilities. Participant A believed part of the responsibility of an HRP was to "approach every single person in the same way." The participant noted that consistency, ensuring staffs' needs are met in a respectful way, and treating everyone equally were also responsibilities. Participant A further described this as holding "things" in confidence, developing people, and treating people appropriately.

Participant B described their ethical responsibility as maintaining employee confidence, acting impartially, and that there cannot be a perception of impropriety. Participant B believed it was human resources' responsibility to maintain relationships that were nonbiased. Participant B further described that it was important to build good relationships with others in the organization, which allowed for feedback regarding behavior. They also stated that HRPs have the responsibility to apply policies and procedures fairly and equally.

Participant C's responses supported statements made by participants A and B that confidentiality is one of the responsibilities of human resources. Participant C agreed maintaining fairness and treating everyone the same was an ethical responsibility. This statement matches the comments from other participants regarding impartiality.

Participant C also stated that part of the responsibility of HRPs is "doing what you say you are going to do and standing up for what is right."

Participant D noted it was the ethical responsibility of human resources to review the core values of the organization. Participant E believed the responsibility of human resources was similar: inform employees of its policies, including employee rights and benefits. Participant E also referenced confidentiality as being a key responsibility of HRPs. Participant F noted it was important to protect staff, defending employees over the interest of the organization. Participant F also spoke about shielding staff from mistreatment and referenced sexual harassment, bullying, and micromanagement.

Research Question 2

The second research question was, "How can human resource employees use duty-based prevention strategies in their organization to prevent workplace bullying?" The participants' interview responses addressed this question and demonstrated how they believed workplace bullying initiatives could be implemented in their organizations and the type of support human resource employees would need to implement these duties. The participants' responses provided insight on if the prevention strategies would be practical. The themes that emerged included organizational culture and participant implementation.

Organizational Culture

Organizational culture emerged as a theme from analysis of the interview data. Each participant spoke about their organization's culture or organizational culture in general as it related to the prevention of workplace bullying and the perception of whether they could implement duty-based solutions to workplace bullying. Participant A

used terms to describe the culture of their organization as one of "zero tolerance" for bullying and a "culture of care." Participant A described that in their organization, an employee understands what is tolerated before they are hired and the type of agency they will be working for:

> I think you can do that even in a job description. We have a bullet in our job description that says we . . . have a culture of care. So, you know, before you even like contacted us, [it is known] what kind of agency that you're coming into.

Participant A believed that there would be support in their organization to implement duty-based initiatives for workplace bullying: "I think, you know, if they felt that I felt that it was necessary, they would support it. I think what we have in place right now is pretty effective." Participant B made more general statements related to organizational culture, describing it as having the potential to create an environment for bullying through ineffective policies:

> And I think that, I mean obviously, and then I think there's also sometimes ways where the organization itself actually bullies its employees into doing it. Whether it's by creating policies that don't work well or in the way that policies are implemented that they don't necessarily [work well].

Participant C expressed that the organization to which they belonged exhibited flexibility and a lack of bureaucracy that could support implementation of workplace solutions:

> I do sort of a little bit of everything and have the flexibility to recommend things like that. I don't have a huge bureaucracy that I have to go through or anything

like that, so we don't have much [*sic*] resources. There's a lot of flexibility,

though, which I like. And I think, you know, this is definitely something that . . .

we could do, and I'm interested in, you know, what your results [of the study] are.

Participant D described their organization's culture as one of open

communication. They explained that it was small with the ability to address certain

behaviors quickly. Participant D also described an open-door policy where

communication and concerns can be presented to leadership for resolution: "It's . . . about

that communication and keeping it open and keeping it really real." They added,

> There is a core group in there. I'm included in that group of who should we have
>
> as guest speakers. So, at that time, I believe it's in January, we come together and
>
> discuss . . . topics that we should hit this year because what we're seeing [in]
>
> trends and that type of stuff. And nobody's mentioned bullying because we may
>
> not have such a . . .need. You know, just how grateful is that?

Participant E agreed that an organization's culture was important in addressing

employee behavioral concerns. They described culture as a strength and stressing that it

can be leveraged to build and explain acceptable behavior:

> I think there's a lot of preventative things that can happen. In my industry of
>
> outdoor or like summer camps, I would say [in] many organizations their biggest
>
> strength is their culture. And that culture is like summer camps. So, it felt like [a]
>
> very powerful feeling for some people. And so, I think intentionally building your
>
> culture about what is an . . . acceptable behavior with both your campers and your

staff. In a setting like that where staff are working so closely for a long period of time with kids, their behavior is so influential.

Finally, Participant F described a positive culture as an environment where speaking up is encouraged. Participant F stated,

Luckily not terribly. Yeah, I would say not to. I think that's kind of been the benefit so far for me of working in nonprofit HR. Not that nonprofits are like ethically perfect or anything. But I think working in corporate HR would be a really different experience, and I don't think I would have as much space to voice a lot of the things I get to voice because of the place that I work.

The participants remarked on organizational culture in general. This included the culture's role in workplace bullying or the organization's cultural characteristics. Participant A agreed that leadership is needed to reinforce changes or support workplace bullying initiatives. Participant B stated that a culture has to be created that allows employees to feel safe to report infractions. Participant F noted that there were characteristics related to culture that "allows for things to happen" and believed it was the responsibility of the members of the organization to review characteristics of the culture that allow bullying.

Participant Implementation

Participant implementation is related to two concepts: first, whether the participant believed duty-based strategies could be implemented in their current environment, and second, the support that would be needed to implement duty-based prevention strategies.

Participant A believed duty-based solutions would be feasible to implement in the daily operations of the organization. To do this, Participant A stated that the support of leadership would be needed, and again, mentioned that they have an ethical duty to implement this in their day-to-day duties:

I would see that might be questionable, you know; I feel like it would be my ethical duty to address the situation and make sure everyone feels comfortable. So yeah, I think it's, it's my day-to-day . . . ethical duty to make sure, keep a pulse on the agency and make sure that we're where we say that we are [and] where we should be.

Participant B did not believe they had a daily role in the implementation of workplace bullying prevention strategies. From an organizational standpoint, the participant noted that they did not have a role. When asked to expand on this, the participant offered some insight. To affect change, they would need organizational leadership support with a time and people investment.

I would say that as an organization, we would need like the lead. Okay. Leadership's like buy-in support to say like, "Hey, this is something . . . we want to invest time and resources in." And I think . . . even more so like investing the time in it . . . can be more important than like resources in terms of funding or anything like that. Even . . . saying like, "We're going to dedicate time for people to be able to, you know, discuss this, find solutions, share information, all of that kind of thing." And . . . actually have the time to invest in engaging in that

conversation as opposed to like, "Oh, just send an email, tell everybody not to bully each other." Like, you know what I mean? . . . I think there's that difference.

Participant C believed that their role involved suggesting solutions to workplace problems concerning bullying. Once approval was received from the organization's leadership, implementing the solutions. To be successful, Participant C stated only the "okay" would be needed. At this time, the participant felt it was their responsibility to do research and put the plan together for implementation.

Participant D referenced attending leadership classes in which they had the ability to discuss topics relevant to the workplace. These included coaching, mentoring, and leadership. The participant stated that information in these areas is provided to the attendees and recommendations are made. The participant did not address what specific support would be needed for the successful implementation of workplace bullying prevention measures.

As referenced, Participant E expressed an important role in implementing duty-based solutions. The participant described the solutions as focused less on recruiting and more on training and being one of the people who plans and implements the training; therefore, this area is where they have the most influence. The participant believed support from leadership was present in their organization.

Finally, Participant F described their role as small in implementation of workplace strategies but that they could make suggestions to management. The participant described having been involved in the training of staff and expressed that training was a key step in bullying prevention. Participant F stated that they intended to be involved in training and

curriculum development in the future. They noted that to be successful, leadership needed to be aware of "their issues with power and . . . educated about power dynamics" would be needed for success. The participant offered that leadership that does not consider the well-being of their employees would hinder these efforts: "I think this is true in general; just like of all organizations. I think having a leadership team that is self-aware of their own issues with power and that are educated about power dynamics [are important for success]."

Additional Observation

In the interviews with the participants, I made an observation that was not directly related to the research questions but emerged from the discussion of human resources and ethics within the profession. The participants were not able to identify a universal definition of ethical standards for the human resource profession. Either the participant stated there was no code of ethics for human resources or they were not aware of one. Participant A stated,

I mean, I don't know of any standard code of ethics for HR professionals. There's certainly not one in my agency other than our general code of ethics. Not saying that that doesn't mean that there isn't one, but not one that I'm familiar with.

Participant B thought there "probably" was a specific ethical standard for human resources but stated they were not able to identify a list of ethics.

I think so. Like, you know, if you were to go nationally to like, you know, national organizations and all of that in through training and certifications and all that, I think that that there probably is. I wouldn't say that it's, I mean, it's not

like, you know, in medicine, like medical practitioners have like, you know, the

Hippocratic oath or something like that I don't think I can point to and be like,

this is the list of like the HR ethics.

Participant C stated that they thought there was a common ethical standard: "I

think so. . . . I think when you're in HR, . . . you walk a fine line . . . you're an advocate

for employees, but you're also consultants." Participant D stated that they could not

identify a single ethical standard for the profession specifically, but one existed in their

organization. Participant E, a nonprofit manager with human resource duties, noted that

for outdoor education, "Yes. I would say in my profession there is a definition of ethics.

And when I'm thinking about my profession, I'm thinking of outdoor education."

Participant F expressed their perspective:

I don't know it off the top of my head if we do. I almost feel like we wouldn't

know. Like it's not, it's not like social work or something like that where it's

really ingrained in the definition. . . . I feel like so many different HR teams work

really differently.

Whereas participants could not identify a universal definition for human resource

ethical standards, they expressed common features of what ethical standards should

include. For example, keeping information confidential was identified by three of the

participants. Another feature was impartiality, as it related to a third party listening to an

employee and mediating when necessary.

Content Analysis

I completed a content analysis of documents submitted by the participants or publicly available on the organization's website. I reviewed documents of five organizations, which consisted of mission and value statements, a code of conduct, and organizational policies. Not all documents for all organizations were available or submitted by the participants. The documents reviewed did not contain statements specifically related to workplace bullying. The documents had two distinct purposes: value and culture statements and policy statements. The value statements were related to what the organization's leadership established as a core belief. Culture statements included what the organizations had implemented and expected of its employees. The policy statements included procedures and discipline expectations. Value statements from Organization A noted a commitment to honesty, compassion, justice, trust, and respect. The statement also celebrated individuality. Organization C's statement was a value statement and supported the organization by demonstrating empathy and respect. The document described the organization's commitment to their clientele. Organization D's value statement claimed that integrity, uncompromising values, and servant leadership were important. It also stated that its culture valued shared success and rather than individual gain. Organization E established ethical principles in its code of business ethics and conduct, which contained terms that suggested expectations of ethical behavior and protecting employees against inappropriate behavior.

Only one participant shared two policies (from Organization B); however, neither referenced workplace bullying. One policy addressed a harassment free environment and focused on protected classes. This was demonstrated in their definition of harassment:

> The verbal, nonverbal, or physical conduct that denigrates, belittles, or puts down an individual or shows hostility, distaste, or aversion toward that individual based on that individual's age, gender, race, color, national origin, religion, creed, disability, veteran's status, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, or any other unlawful consideration or participation in a protected activity.

In this policy, the organization expressed no tolerance for retaliation. The second policy referred to the organization's standard of conduct and focused on expectations of behavior. The policy statement included a requirement for employees to conduct themselves in a favorable manner. Employees must also adhere to the organization's values and federal, state, and local laws and regulations related to the company's operations. This did not specifically reference workplace bullying.

Summary

I conducted this case study to explore the perceptions of human resource employees or those with human resource duties regarding their responsibilities to use duty-based ethical approaches to prevent workplace bullying and the practicality of implementation. Carden and Boyd (2010) identified duty-based ethical strategies related to human resource practices as effective in preventing workplace bullying. This exploration allowed me to gain insight from these professionals regarding duty-based approaches.

The participants in the study were six HRPs or professionals with human resources duties employed in human service nonprofits. I used semistructured interviews to obtain in-depth responses to obtain answers to the research questions. I systematically analyzed the data for themes, which included (a) definition of workplace bullying, (b) current prevention initiatives, (c) perception of ethical duties, (d) perception of responsibility, (e) human resource ethics profession, (f) organizational culture, and (g) participant implementation.

In Chapter 5, I present a detailed evaluation of the findings. This includes a comparison to the existing research literature and their relationship to the theoretical framework. I also provide insight regarding the limitations of the study and recommendations and implications connected to the results.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Research supports the role of human resource employees as key partners in the prevention of workplace bullying. Cowan and Fox (2015) noted that HRPs are instrumental in the work environment. Other researchers indicated that HRPs have a significant role in building and implementing strategies for bullying prevention. Cowan and Fox described the roles of human resources as fundamental in defining workplace bullying. Alzola (2018) argued that human resource practices establish the foundation for corporate behavior. Alzola also noted that human resource employees and departments have a prominent role in establishing an ethical workplace culture and implementing ethics into many practical aspects of human resource duties. These duties include training and development, job design, recruitment, and employee selection.

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the perceptions of human resource employees or employees with human resource duties regarding their responsibility to use duty-based ethical approaches to prevent workplace bullying and the practicality of its implementation in their organization. This research may help employees performing human resources tasks identify their role in preventing workplace bullying and develop techniques that can be applied to their organizations for this purpose. Catley et al. (2017) argued that the role of human resources in workplace bullying was still new and requires additional investigation.

The following research questions directed this study:

- Research Question 1: How do human resource employees or employees with human resource duties perceive their responsibility to use duty-based solutions to prevent workplace bullying?

- Research Question 2: How can human resource employees use duty-based prevention strategies in their organization to prevent workplace bullying?

The themes that emerged from the participants' responses to the semistructured interviews included (a) definition of workplace bullying, (b) current prevention initiatives, (c) perception of ethical duties, (d) perception of responsibility, (e) human resource ethics profession, (f) organizational culture, and (g) participant implementation. The themes aligned with and assisting in answering the research questions.

In Chapter 4, I presented in-depth summaries of six interviews with human resource employees, supervisors with human resources duties, and managers with human resource duties from nonprofits. All participants were responsible for the human resource functions in their organizations. In this chapter, I provide an interpretation of the results of this study and a comparison with the research literature and how they align with the theoretical framework. I will discuss the seven themes that emerged supporting the research questions. In addition, I note the limitations of the study, recommendations, and implications. Lastly, I reframe the aim of the study and its findings, and its potential for social change value.

Interpretation of the Findings

Carden and Boyd (2010) stated that HRPs should incorporate ethics-based strategies into human resource functions to prevent workplace bullying. To achieve this,

the researchers advocated for a duty-based approach. This study builds on the duty-based

strategies discussed by Carden and Boyd and includes organizational policy

development, recruitment and selection, and employee training as human resource duties.

These approaches are closely related to formal ethical structures (Einarsen et al., 2017).

Formal ethical structures are a part of an organization's ethical infrastructure or response

related to controlling an employee's ethical behavior. The duty-based approach to

workplace bullying is a strategy of prevention for the greater good of an organization and

not driven by measurable outcomes. Carden and Boyd claimed that the rights of

individuals regarding workplace bullying should include an environment that does not

allow verbal abuse or bullying, has policies and procedures applied uniformly, and

encourages a positive environment for the benefit of all (Carden & Boyd, 2010). These

basic rights are grounded in the ideas of Kant, who claimed that all humans have moral

integrity and can reason and rationalize (Carden & Boyd, 2010). Duty-based approaches

are grounded in prevention strategies and not mitigating employee behavior.

Definition of Workplace Bullying

The participants in this study expressed their perspectives regarding their role in

these prevention strategies. The voices of the participants and the themes that emerged

support the basic right of employees to work in an environment that uses duty-based

prevention strategies. In addition, the themes identified the role the participant might

have in implementing or facilitating these strategies in their organizations. As stated, the

participants believed they had a role in working with duty-based strategies to prevent

workplace bullying. Before the participants made this determination, they provided definitions of workplace bullying. According to Namie (2003),

> Workplace bullying [is defined] as "status-blind" interpersonal hostility that is deliberate, repeated and sufficiently severe as to harm the targeted person's health or economic status. Further, it is driven by perpetrators' need to control another individual, often undermining legitimate business interests in the process (p. 1).

According to Johnson et al. (2015), there is no legal definition for workplace bullying, which contributes to the inability to define the terms used to describe it. This has implications for creating effective policies for an organization. Johnson et al. implied a consensus, for this definition impacts the HRPs' ability to affect workplace bullying. The researchers also found that the terms workplace bullying and harassment are often used interchangeably, which causes confusion identifying the behaviors and makes prevention strategies challenging to create and implement. Although the participants of this study did not all share the same definition of bullying, there were similarities in their answers. For example, the participants repeated the terms using power and consistent behavior. One participant said that bullying affected productivity, which is a cost to the organization. Wall et al. (2017) described that the effects of bullying on victims often lead to high turnover and lost productivity. The same participant also stated there is a negative impact on the bullied individual; however, they did not expand upon the impact. This links the effects of workplace bullying on the victim to costs to the organization.

Although the participants' definitions were not always consistent, their comments related to the effects of bullying or its impact suggested familiarity with the basic

constructs of bullying and how it is problematic. Cowan and Fox (2015) advocated including the human resources' perspective in the definition of workplace bullying, therefore creating effective policies and strategies. Based on this study's results, HRPs from nonprofits could add this aspect to the research literature by defining workplace bullying and their responsibility to use duty-based ethics strategies. The participants also discussed the practicality of implementing ethics-based strategies in their organizations.

Perception of Ethical Duties and Standards

The participants identified what they believed to be the ethical responsibilities of human resources and a standard definition of ethics in the human resource profession. There was no standard definition of ethics identified by the participants related to the profession, but there was commonality in the terms. For example, the participants used the words fairness, impartiality, and employee protection when applying policies. One participant stated that it was a duty to care for employees. This is closely related to the expectations of duty-based ethics, which promotes care for employees because it is the right thing to do regardless of outcomes. Other terms that helped define ethical standards were advocacy and integrity. Although the participants could articulate their considerations for an ethical standard in the HRPs, they stated they were not aware of a set of universal standards for the profession. Alzola (2018) supported this consideration in research that explored ethical deficits in human resources, describing it as a field prominent in moral dilemmas.

Perception of Responsibility

Carden and Boyd (2010) stated that HRPs had an important role in delivering duty-based ethical solutions to prevent workplace bullying. Overall, the participants' statements implied they believed they had some role in providing these solutions; however, they did not express that they believed they had the key role in these opportunities. The participants reflected on their current roles in their organizations. Participant A said that everyone in the organization had a role in delivering these solutions, not just human resources. The participant believed that the "policies, procedures, and infrastructure might come from HR." Einarsen et al. (2017) found that an organization's ethical infrastructure was related to successfully managing workplace bullying. The participant also expressed that management had the largest role in preventing workplace bullying; however, they felt it was their ethical duty to provide solutions day-to-day to prevent bullying.

Participant B acknowledged their belief in their role in delivering duty-based solutions but did not feel that management shared the same vision. The participant related this to their position in the organization. The participant further identified strategies that could be used in prevention. These included introducing policy during the employee's onboarding (i.e., introducing a new employee into the organization) and training concerning workplace bullying. Participant D spoke in general about their role. It could be implied that they accepted a role in implementing ethical solutions, which included staff training regarding workplace bullying. Participant E described having the most significant role in the delivery of duty-based solutions. Participant E identified their role

in training and its significant impact on workplace bullying, supporting research by Carden and Boyd (2010). Participant F also recognized their contribution in implementing duty-based solutions in the workplace but identified it as small. The participant described speaking up when they saw problems in the work environment and described their role as helping victims come forward when they experience bullying and creating safe spaces. Participant F also offered support for employees within their duty of care, which supports Kant's (1930/1980) theory of duty-based ethics.

Carden and Boyd (2010) defined three types of duty-based solutions: policy-making, training and recruitment, and employee selection. These are the areas where HRPs can deliver specific duty-based solutions. The participants identified specific human resource duties related to one of these categories where they might be effective in implementing solutions. Participant A referenced that policy and infrastructure established by human resources might help prevent bullying. Participant B identified onboarding, in a person-centered way, to make employees feel valued and safe as the area where they might deliver duty-based solutions. The participant also expressed that onboarding included recruiting. Participant C recognized training as a method to affect workplace bullying. Like Participant C, Participant D believed training would be the area where they would have the most influence. Participant E and F also identified training, which was the duty-based solution identified by the participants where they could have the most influence on preventing workplace bullying.

Organizational Culture and Implementation

The participants believed support from the organization and leadership would help them successfully implement change in the workplace environment. Most participants believed they had the support to implement change. Shier et al. (2019) conducted a study addressing the culture of workplace safety. The participants emphasized the importance of cultural openness. They described this as a culture where employees could question their superiors openly and safely. A culture of openness also included an environment where an employee could safely report incidents without fear of retaliation. Shier et al. also found that management could cultivate an environment of openness by discussing bullying with employees. Furthermore, the culture of openness allows an employee to understand the importance of safety in the workplace. Shier et al. found that any inappropriate response from management would legitimize workplace bullying. The study's participants spoke positively of their organizational culture and identified zero tolerance elements for the poor treatment of fellow employees.

Catley et al. (2017) addressed the work environment in their study and found that this and HRPs' understanding of the organizational environment impacted bullying management. Based on the participants' comments in the current study, all had an understanding of their workplace environment, the level of potential tolerance of workplace bullying, and support for introducing prevention methods. The participants' understanding of the culture and their perceptions of their roles in bullying management helped them visualize the possibility of implementing antibullying strategies.

The themes that emerged from the content analysis implied support for statements made by the participants. The information in the documents suggested organizational cultures that supported environments that treated employees fairly. Content analysis also supported the participants' statements regarding their perceptions related to their organizations' ethics and cultures. For example, one participant explained that when someone is hired, they are aware of the organization's culture and what behaviors are not tolerated. The participants believed that in their workplace cultures, it would be practical to establish methods for bullying prevention in their daily responsibilities. Reviewing these documents gave credit to those statements.

The documents contained statements related to the organization's culture and values but did not have statements that addressed workplace bullying. As stated previously, one organization had a policy specifically related to harassment, but it was not status-blind. Revision of organizational policies and value statements can include duty-based policies that address workplace bullying. There is an established organizational structure that can include measures to prevent workplace bullying. The documents I reviewed indicated that formal ethical infrastructures existed in the organizations (see Einarsen et al., 2019). Ethical infrastructure is a means for establishing behavior in an organization and the consequences of unethical behavior.

Limitations of the Study

Generalization

Generalization was one limitation of this study. Polit and Beck (2010, as cited in Maxwell, 2013) stated that generalization is the ability to extend the results of a particular

study to that of other individuals, settings, or times. This case study's findings cannot be generalized to the human resource profession or the nonprofit community. First, not all participants worked in the same type of human service organizations. Second, the participants may have been at different levels in their careers; several participants were HRPs. Two of the participants were in leadership roles. Their positions and experiences impacted how they viewed their responsibilities and if the implication of duty-based approaches would be practical. Other participants in this study were not HRPs but had human resource duties assigned to them.

External generalizations cannot be made regarding the profession or other nonprofit organizations. The participants were limited to a small geographical region and not inclusive of HRPs across the United States. The nonprofits that employed the HRPs were not representative of all nonprofits in size, mission, or the many nonprofits across the country.

Sampling

Sampling was another potential limitation of this study. The sampling methods were purposeful and convenient: purposeful in that participant populations selected were based on established criteria and convenient in that I used nonprofit listservs where participants were accessible. This allowed me to connect with leaders or employees in the nonprofit sector, but it made the population specific. The six participant sample size also is a limitation. The small sample size limits the ability to generalize the findings.

Interviewing

Although most of the participants' responses were closely related, interviewing was another limitation of the study. First, there was a chance the participants might not have answered the questions honestly. Second, the participants' interpretations of the questions could have affected their responses. In some cases, I had to explain or clarify the questions. Additionally, the participants answered the questions based on circumstances they may have been experiencing within their organizations at a particular time. All participants stated there were no instances of workplace bullying in their organizations. These experiences had the potential to affect their answers.

Public Health Emergency

The final limitation of this study was the public health emergency related to COVID-19. I conducted parts of this study during a time when the virus was taking a serious toll on American lives and livelihoods. This made conducting this study difficult for several reasons. The participants had a sudden shift in their availability as they worked toward managing the emergency personally and for their organization. The public health emergency caused organizations to temporarily close and pause conducting business. It also caused HRPs to quickly change focus, limiting recruitment or follow-up with potential participants and actual participants.

Recommendations

I conducted this study to contribute to the research related to nonprofit HRPs and their duties to prevent workplace bullying in a nonprofit setting. Whereas there are numerous studies related to workplace bullying prevention, this study focused on the role

of HRPs in nonprofit organizations. I selected nonprofits because of their mission to serve the public's human needs and the potential impact bullying has on this type of workplace. This study provided insight into nonprofit HRPs' perspectives on their role, but more research is needed to make further conclusions. For example, studies need to be conducted in collaboration with nonprofit organizations and their human resource personnel. Research also should be done in affiliation with the SHRM. These affiliations could help establish best practices and consistencies for all HRPs. Members of SHRM would have access to supporting materials for managing strategies related to workplace bullying.

Another potential topic for research would be relationships between the profession's standard of ethics and the professional view of providing ethical strategies for workplace bullying. Research should also include outcome-based prevention approaches to workplace bullying, focusing on mitigation strategies (Carden & Boyd, 2010). According to Carden and Boyd (2010), these methods include performance management, communications, and metrics. HRPs could provide their perceptions regarding their role in providing outcome-based solutions.

Further research is needed regarding bullying prevention to assess the effectiveness of duty-based strategies within an organization (e.g., workplace bullying policies). As Johnson et al. (2015) noted, there is no legal definition of workplace bullying; without this definition, there is confusion within the organization. Organizations often use the terms harassment and workplace bullying interchangeably, which, mistakenly, creates the perception that harassment policies legally protect an employee.

Workplace bullying is not illegal across the United States or classified with other forms of harassment, including racial slurs, sexual harassment, and age discrimination. As of 2020, Puerto Rico was the only territory to make workplace bullying illegal.

Implications

It is estimated that workplace bullying affects 63 million American employees (Namie, 2017). Manners and Cates (2016) estimated the cost of bullying in U.S. organizations to be billions of dollars. Initiating change in organizations to prevent bullying has been a challenge. The effects of workplace bullying can be found in any workplace and have proven to be detrimental to American employers and employees. Tomokowicz and Fiorentino (2017) found no federal anti-bullying law and only a grassroots attempt at the state level despite the effects on employees. Workplace bullying is a status blind form of workplace aggression. However, with no federal guidance, workplace bullying has been pursued using legal remedies related to harassment, the Americans Disability Act, the Whistleblower Protection Act, Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, or the Fair Labor and Standards Act. Puerto Rico, as of late 2020, has been the first to adopt a legal definition. The impact of workplace bullying on the American workforce calls for a formal ethical infrastructure. As described by Einarsen et al. (2019), a formal ethical infrastructure includes the organizational policies, training, and communications which establish acceptable behaviors. This ethical infrastructure can be applied beginning at the federal government level, expanding to state and local levels. Beginning at the federal level allows all public sector organizations at all levels to benefit from uniform guidance. Adding workplace bullying to the public policy and

administration discourse gives protection to all American workers. Public policy advocacy can act as the catalyst to begin the work needed at the federal government level. For organizations, such as nonprofits, uniform guidance provides structure and potential clarity for strategy. The clarity that is needed to establish duty-based solutions to workplace bullying and clarify human resource responsibility.

Though this study is limited by generalization, there are implications for positive social change. This study contributed to the body of research related to nonprofit HRPs and duty-based workplace bullying solutions. It helped identify and clarify human resource responsibilities associated with duty-based solutions. The duties identified in this study can help establish the daily responsibilities of HRPs in the areas of recruitment, training, policy, and employee selection that can prevent workplace bullying in nonprofit organizations. Implementing duty-based strategies can reduce the cost of bullying for nonprofit organizations and individuals considered targets.

Several strategies could be introduced into the workplace as a result of the findings of this study. First, some strategies could build on current human resource practices, creating practical tools for duty-based prevention. For example, HRPs could consider expanding and implementing resources related to employee screening. Human resource recruiters could consider expanding the use of behavioral-based interviewing or communication skills assessments. These assessments are useful before an individual enters the organization. They provide recruiters with an indication of whether a potential employee is prone to bullying behavior. In addition, it would be useful to update human resource training to include a definition of workplace bullying and how to recognize it.

Also, this study could assist the SHRM and other professional organizations with providing resources to assist human resource employees in defining their roles related to bullying situations. This could include webinars for professionals, white papers, and the development of human resource job aids.

In this study, the participants indicated the need to define or identify ethical standards for HRPs. Each participant told me they were not aware of a basic set of standards. The findings presented in the study could assist with initiating conversations in the field to either develop a set of ethical standards or publicize existing standards for HRPs. Having ethical standards understood by all involved further helps identify the roles of HRPs in ethical workplace dilemmas, which in this study was workplace bullying.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of human resource employees or employees with human resource duties regarding their responsibility to use duty-based ethical approaches to prevent workplace bullying and the practicality of its implementation. This research could assist employees performing human resource tasks identify their role in preventing workplace bullying and techniques that could be applied in their organizations. Catley et al. (2017) argued that the role of human resources in workplace bullying was new and required additional investigation. Gupta et al. (2020) explained that employees have differing levels of awareness of workplace bullying and workplace bullying policies. This awareness also includes ways to confront bullies. The researchers stressed the need for human resource employees to design and shift the

awareness of training programs on workplace bullying and anti-workplace bullying policy. Their discussion supports research suggesting that human resource functions are key for policy-based prevention (duty-based). Gupta et al. further stressed the need for implementation of training for all managers and supervisors. In addition to policies, human resource practitioners would also be key in using assessment tools for detecting personality traits, which is another duty-based strategy.

The results of this study imply that participating nonprofit human resource workers or nonprofit employees with human resource duties felt a sense of responsibility for using duty-based solutions to affect workplace bullying. The participants believed that more discussion on workplace bullying needed to occur within their profession. The participants' responses implied they felt a sense of responsibility and that they had a role in workplace bullying prevention. Overall, the participants felt they should provide duty-based solutions to workplace bullying. The participants were able to identify their roles in training, policy development, and the interviewing process. They discussed the importance of a positive organizational culture and leadership to support the implementation of duty-based strategies. Most participants believed they were in a culture that would support implementing duty-based solutions. Similar studies are needed to explore the various roles HRPs can assume in providing and implementing bullying solutions. Studies should also focus on the types of duty-based solutions human resource personnel feel would be most effective and practical.

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Appendix: Interview Protocol

Participant Code Name:
Role in Facility:
Specialization:

1. What is your role in HR/organization?

2. What would you define as core HR duties?

3. Does your profession have a definition of ethics?

4. In your profession, what are the basic ethical standards?

5. Do they differ from your personal ethical standards?

6. What about your organization's ethical standards?

7. What would be considered ethical responsibilities for HR?

8. How do you define workplace bullying?

9. What are some initiatives currently under way in your profession to address bullying?

10. Does your organization have a policy that addresses bullying?

11. If so, how is this policy disseminated to employees?

12. How can ethical solutions (duty-based) be used to prevent workplace bullying?

13. Does your organization currently have anything in place to prevent or address

    bullying?

14. What do you perceive as your role in providing ethical solutions to workplace

    bullying?

15. What support from leadership would you need to be successful?

16. How could such solutions to workplace bullying be implemented in your daily HR duties?

17. Is there anything else you would like to add regarding your responsibility to provide duty-based solutions to workplace bullying?