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Strategies to Prevent Employee Turnover and Revenue Losses Resulting from Workplace Bullying

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Walden University

College of Management and Human Potential

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Sylvester Doby Jr.

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
the review committee have been made.

Review Committee
Dr. Michelle Preiksaitis, Committee Chairperson, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Dr. Denise Land, Committee Member, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Chief Academic Officer and Provost
Sue Subocz, Ph.D.

Walden University
2025

Abstract

Strategies to Prevent Employee Turnover and Revenue Losses

Resulting from Workplace Bullying

By

Sylvester Doby Jr.

Research Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

August 2025

Abstract

Workplace bullying is a serious issue that can lead to high employee turnover and significant revenue loss. To maintain a healthy work environment and support their employees, business leaders need to develop and implement effective strategies to prevent bullying. Grounded in the transformational leadership theory, the purpose of this qualitative pragmatic inquiry study was to identify and explore the successful strategies that U.S. business leaders used to prevent workplace bullying. Six business leaders who have successfully implemented strategies to combat workplace bullying were purposively recruited and interviewed using semistructured interviews. The reflexive six-step thematic analysis of the interview transcripts and publicly related documentation revealed two themes: systematic training can prevent bullying, and confidential reporting channels can assist those who have been bullied. A key recommendation is to put bullying-prevention training in place and provide guides towards reporting bullying. The implications for positive social change include the potential for workplace leaders to model ethical behaviors addressing workplace bullying and bootstrap the organizational improvements into their communities, potentially increasing community member work opportunities and improving their overall work-life balance.

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Dedication

I thank God who walked closely with me throughout this journey. I dedicate this study to both my mother and father and thank the Lord for every moment I was allowed to spend with you. To my sisters Linda, Velina, Beverly, and Robin who loved and supported me each in their own way to ensure I remained focused, my three children Marcus, Brittney, and Dantrell, and to my grandchildren Mark Anthony, Mikayla, Marcani, Jordyn, Marki, and Sylvester IV who continue to bring joy to my life each day and remained dear to me throughout this DBA journey.

Acknowledgments

I would not have been able to complete this DBA process without the support of my committee members. Special thanks to my Chair, Dr. Preiksaitis, who remained instrumental, unwavering, and consistent in supporting, encouraging, and guiding me in overcoming obstacles throughout my journey. I thank the participants who took part in this study and Dr. Land for the encouraging feedback.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Project

Background of the Problem

Workplace bullying affects approximately one-third of workers, negatively affecting their health and reducing productivity at work (Hodgins et al., 2020). Bullying can be associated with work, personal, and physical behaviors (Dussault & Frenette, 2015). Bullied workers suffer emotional exhaustion from verbal abuse, public humiliation, and physical attacks; these outcomes pose high risks for the victims and the organization (Garcia et al., 2022). Vranjes et al. (2023) provided empirical examples of workplace environments that supported bullying to the point that bullies became victims. The repercussions resulting from workplace bullying lead to emotional instability for the victims and prevent job satisfaction, contributing to an intention to leave the organization and loss of productivity (Park & Ono, 2017), which is a significant general business problem.

Victims of workplace bullying feel unable to defend themselves against mistreatment from coworkers, especially when leaders in the organization ignore or contribute to the situation (Park & Ono, 2017). Even after leaving an organization, workplace bullying causes lasting effects on employees (Rospenda et al., 2023), leading to negative social implications. Mehmood et al. (2024) found that leaders who create cultures of well-being can help improve employee performance while reducing instances of bullying. Despite awareness of victimization, Otema et al. (2022) uncovered that 62%

of bullying victims who complain to their organization are retaliated against or ignored by their human resource departments.

This background information outlines a general business problem in which workplace bullying impacts the productivity and culture of organizations, particularly when leaders ignore or contribute to the issue. The next section of this study presents the study's focus and purpose statement, explaining how my research can contribute to the body of knowledge and help mitigate the adverse effects of workplace bullying.

Business Problem Focus and Project Purpose

The specific business problem is that some senior managers and business leaders lack effective strategies to prevent or address workplace bullying, resulting in employee turnover and revenue losses. Therefore, in this qualitative pragmatic inquiry study, I identified and explored the successful strategies that U.S. business leaders use to prevent workplace bullying, which have been shown to result in employee turnover and revenue losses. Using a purposeful sampling method, six business leaders who have successfully created strategies to combat workplace bullying were recruited and interviewed. The data sources used in this study were interview transcripts and publicly accessible documentation. In this study, I employed the lens of transformational leadership theory (TLT), developed by Burns in 1978 and 1985, to explore how some leaders have devised strategies that mitigate the adverse effects of workplace bullying, thereby contributing to a positive work environment for their employees.

Research Question

What strategies do business leaders use to prevent workplace bullying to reduce the related employee turnover and lost revenue?

Assumptions and Limitations

Assumptions

Assumptions are the data assumed to be factual before the researcher validates the information (Terrell, 2015). However, Valencia Mazzanti and Freeman (2023) pointed out that researchers often make problematic assumptions, leading to the assumption that individual experiences or evidence extracted from an individual during an interview are valid, when in fact, these are not necessarily representative of the researcher and participant interaction. The researcher's essential role is to ensure that the focus remains on three key elements to demonstrate validity: trustworthiness, authenticity, and credibility (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Therefore, the metaphor of the researcher seeing the theory through a lens is the boundaries a researcher sets for the study and is embedded in assumptions (Valencia Mazzanti & Freeman, 2023). Two essential assumptions were incorporated into the study plan and contributed to potential limitations. First, I assumed that throughout the process, the selected participants were honest with me about their experiences, backgrounds, and answers to my questions. Next, I assumed that using the lens of transformational leadership assisted me in organizing the study, writing aligned interview questions, and analyzing the data. Understanding the elements outlined in the assumptions may enable future researchers to evaluate

organizational leaders' strategies to prevent employee turnover resulting from workplace bullying.

Limitations

Limitations describe the factors outside the study's scope that may alter the generalizability of the results (Terrell, 2015) or, in the case of qualitative research, their transferability. This study's limitations include (a) participants may be reluctant to provide full details about bullying experiences, (b) the smaller sample size may lead to less transferability of the study findings, and (c) the more general focus of the participants' industry and background could limit the findings from more specialized industry transferability. Sperling (2022) explained that providing a private space for one-to-one communication can help make participants more comfortable sharing detailed information, which could help overcome the reluctance limitation.

Being upfront about the study's parameters during the recruitment period could have helped mitigate this limitation. Recognizing these limitations may enable future researchers to better understand the extent to which they can rely on the study's findings. Two potential limitations in the study design existed: geographical location and sample size. Section 4 provides the demographic details of the sample and explains their impact on the transferability of the study's findings.

Transition

Section 1 of this study contains an overview of workplace bullying, its effects on the organization, and the employee's intent to leave. It described the problem, the purpose

of the study, the intended participants and data sources, and the assumptions and limitations. It sets the stage for a qualitative pragmatic inquiry research project that will explore strategies to avoid and overcome cultures of workplace bullying.

In Section 2, the literature review covers the concepts of workplace bullying, turnover intentions resulting from bullying, and revenue impacts from workplace bullying. It provides seminal and current literature about the study's conceptual framework, based on the transformational leadership style and theory. Section 3 outlines the methods and process of conducting the pragmatic inquiry study, including details about recruitment, participants, ethical considerations, data collection, and the analysis process. Section 4 provides the study's findings, results, and implications.

Section 2: The Literature Review

A Review of Professional and Academic Literature

In this qualitative pragmatic inquiry study, I identified and explored the successful strategies leaders use to prevent the adverse effects of workplace bullying. I have organized Section 2 by first providing an overview of the literature on workplace bullying, including the known strategies for avoiding workplace bullying, the implications of workplace bullying, and exploring the topic through the lens of the TLT. I obtained the sources for the literature review from the Walden University Library databases, including ProQuest, ProQuest EBooks, Business Source Complete, Sage Journals, and Google Scholar. The literature review focuses on publications within the previous 5 years, including the seminal theory work on transformational leadership. Table 1 summarizes the resources used for the literature review.

Table 1

Literature Review Sources

Source	2020 and later	Before 2020	Total
Nonpeer-reviewed or books	0	0	0
Dissertations	0	0	0
Peer-reviewed articles	74	13	87
Total	74	13	87
Percentage of total	85%	15%	100%

Conceptual Framework: Transformational Leadership Theory

Leadership has been a focal point of organizations for decades, and management styles have been shown to have a significant impact on employee performance. Burns

(1978) pioneered TLT, and Bass modified Burns' work in 1985. Bass (1985) stated that transformational leaders inspire followers by using five attributes: (a) charisma, (b) idealized influence, (c) inspiration, (d) intellectual stimulation, and (e) individualized consideration. As transformational leadership evolved, Avolio and Bass (1991) developed a full range of leadership models to evaluate the effectiveness of transformational and transactional leadership styles in influencing workplace behavior. At the same time, similar effectiveness attributes vary between transformational and other management styles (DeDeyn, 2021). Using the TLT enables business leaders to provide guidance and a nurturing management style that exhibits a flexible environment when using one or more of the TLT theory's attributes.

Charisma Through Idealized Influence

In some cases, followers seek role models within the organization as guides for enhancing job satisfaction and contributing value to the organization. Managers displaying characteristics such as caring and inspiring exhibit a uniquely caring and inspiring management style, which in turn increases employees' performance levels (Azizah et al., 2021). Establishing a link between employees and leaders is essential for organizational success. Kariuki (2021) found that idealized influence is the charismatic component of the transactional leadership theory. Thus, leaders utilize this attribute to take accountability in inspiring the organization's vision, while adopting a characteristic that followers perceive as a respectable role model. Afshari (2022) found that TLT

yielded positive outcomes in terms of organizational commitment in the Iranian environment, while also positively impacting employee commitment in Australia.

Leaders must ensure they exceed expectations and incorporate ethical concerns in their standards, which are vital elements in how employees see leaders. Chamtitigul and Li (2021) found that ethical processes increase the potential for employees to learn, acquire, and process the message the leader is conveying. This correlates to improved team performance. Inspiring others to be ethical is another motivator for good behavior.

Inspirational Motivation

Inspirational motivation is a leadership characteristic that bridges employee and leader loyalty, enabling leaders to guide employees in the event of errors while using the opportunity for training and sparing the employee from ridicule. Like idealized influence, leaders utilize the inspirational component of the TLT to emphasize the importance of the organization's vision by articulating communication practices that spark employees' excitement, while shifting their focus from self-achievement to the organization's outcome (Kariuki, 2021). Toseef et al. (2022) noted that inspirational leaders elicit higher levels of trust from employees while providing an open door to employee engagement and commitment, thereby enhancing the organization’s sustainability.

Management encompasses an emotional motivation component that organizational leaders incorporate as best practices, enabling them to succeed in all aspects of their role as transformational leaders, thereby establishing organizational advantages and efficiency (Murari & Mukherjee, 2021). Inspirational leaders are

consistent in bridging the gap with the vision of the organization through effective communication practices that allow for employee engagement while navigating the success of the organization along with highlighting employee success.

Transformational leaders promote positive work environments while instilling organizational commitment and enabling employees to motivate themselves to achieve individual and organizational goals. Azmy et al. (2023) highlighted two key variables in a recent study on organizational commitment: an employee's perception of the company and job satisfaction, both of which are crucial for determining whether employees will remain or leave the organization. Allowing employee growth and sustainability, in most cases, provides a positive outlook on the organization's retention while enabling the employee to take an initiative-taking stance on contributing to the overall outcome of organizational success.

Intellectual Stimulation

Intellectual stimulation is a leadership style used by leaders to challenge their employees to expand their problem-solving abilities by breaking away from routine procedures and embracing innovative practices and novel approaches to address unexpected issues during the workday (Thuan, 2020). Yet some companies discourage employees from taking detours and are often placed on strict guidelines in problem-solving processes. In a study concerning intellectual stimulation and employee innovation, the culture in the organization plays a significant role in job satisfaction and employee innovation; low innovation cultures have led to lower job satisfaction as

employees have limited ability to participate in the decision-making process (Endrejat, 2021). Further, the lower job satisfaction resulting from low innovation cultures is transformed into a positive environment when employees have stimulating management as leaders (Endrejat, 2021). Unless conflicts arise with employees' preference for an existing culture, management should adhere to intellectual stimulation if the culture does not support the norms of the environment.

Managers use intellectual stimulation to encourage followers rather than publicly ridiculing them for unintentional errors; intellectually stimulating leaders creatively promote motivating employees to openly seek problem-solving methods that are uncommon yet enable employees to become self-sufficient and play an active role in achieving organizational objectives (Khan, Abdullah, et al., 2020). Leaders who use intellectual stimulation encourage employee input, thereby valuing the employees' opinions and increasing loyalty to the organization. When employees perceive support from management to utilize their knowledge and skills in solving complex problems, leaders increase the likelihood that followers will remain with the organization and become valuable assets, while strengthening both the employees' commitment to the organization and the leaders.

Individualized Consideration

Individual consideration is a characteristic used by leaders who focus on distinguishing aspects of the TLT. Leaders take a step back from the direct approach with employees by assuming the role of trainer, developing employees' roles, and becoming

more successful in the organization. This approach highlights strengths and refines followers' skills (Khan, Amin, & Saif, 2022). Ning and Tantasanee (2023) found that a recent study conducted in Myanmar was driven by a critical element: discovering the strengths of employee empowerment, engagement, and organizational resilience. Five themes uncovered from the study confirm that transformational leadership is the primary driver of employee engagement, empowerment, and organizational resilience, including confidence in making decisions, adherence to organizational policies, commitment, and a healthy and supportive work environment (Ning & Tantasanee, 2023).

While individual consideration is an attribute of transformational leadership, the critical element surrounding the characteristic is the expectations embedded in the leadership style. First, followers must have a clear expectation of their role along with the role of the leader and critical upward communication for effective team performance; role clarity is considered the way individuals understand what the expectation of their role is associated with their job and how the leader is communicating the information (Martínez-Córcoles et al., 2020). Transformational leaders highly regard individual consideration and see each subordinate as a commodity possessing unique qualities, enabling the leader to place the employee in a position for success by assigning tasks geared toward employee strengths (Ding & Lin, 2021).

More recent research conducted by Hidayat et al. (2021) found that TLT is a crucial component in affecting the behaviors of followers to seek individualism surrounding personal goals and embrace overall objectives by focusing on the needs of

the follower through a nurturing style of management that encourages followers to escalate performance levels through trust with leaders and team members. P. M. et al. (2023) pointed out that the success of an organization requires a base that fosters supporting human resources with a positive outlook toward the work environment. The primary construct associated with TLT is how leaders combine exceptional employee and leadership performance with human factors while positioning the employees for success through development and nurturing (Thanh & Quang, 2022). The role of the organizational leaders and their interactions with the employees is pivotal in identifying and addressing the unforeseen problems that arise in the organization.

Business Problem Scholarship Evidence: Workplace Bullying

Bullying is prevalent within most workplaces; 95% of employees report some form of bullying to their employers, and it is a global concern as research shows work environments" encountering workplace bullying include the United States 46.8%, Turkey 40%, India 44%, and Italy 16%. Other parts of Europe reported 3.5% to 10% (Gupta et al., 2020). Özkan (2022) found that the organization's temperament is directly and indirectly affected by the type of leaders interacting with the employees; leaders who display abusive acts towards their employees can negatively impact the organization's performance.

Some researchers have documented the subpar processes in handling workplace bullying within some of the organizations that experience workplace bullying. Neall et al. (2021) noted that approximately 15% of the global workforce is exposed to a form of

workplace bullying, resulting in adverse effects, both mentally and physically. Employees who consistently encounter workplace bullying begin to question the organization's loyalty and trust regarding employee well-being and its ability to suppress the actions contributing to a hostile work environment (Kaur, 2023). Organizations that neglect to take positive steps to address workplace bullying send a message that leaders within the organization have viewed the actions of predators as passive and have shifted the resolution to one of organizational tolerance (Kaur, 2023). However, Özkan (2022) noted that leaders in the organization can influence employee emotions both positively and negatively.

Researchers provided extensive research into workplace bullying and the potential effects on individuals who encountered the abuse. Gupta et al. (2020) found that workplace bullying occurs when predators impose some form of physical or psychological torture and anguish on victims. However, research provides insight for managers and supervisors who display transformational and ethical leadership styles to have stronger and positive influences on employee work effectiveness and turnover decisions (Labrague, 2024).

Some workplace bullying tactics may include hostile communications toward one or more people and abusive behaviors toward weaker individuals who intend to control or infuse harm (Ahmad & Kaleem, 2020). A survey conducted by the Workplace Bullying Institute (2021) found that 49% of Americans encountered some form of workplace bullying, of which 30% were bullied and 19% witnessed workplace bullying (Namie,

2021). A survey from the Workplace Bullying Institute (2021) showed that 67% of victims of workplace bullying risk losing their jobs through termination, being constructively discharged, being convinced to leave for health-related reasons, or potentially transferring to another department in the company. The risks associated with workplace bullying include the possibility of employees suffering emotional distress resulting in exhaustion, thereby causing a decrease in overall job performance (Malik & Sattar, 2020). Transformational leaders can curtail their follower's behavior and provide a positive antidote to unwelcome job demands, excessive workloads, and psychological and physical demands, reducing potential employee burnout (Ågotnes et al., 2020). Yet the number of individuals encountering workplace bullying continues to grow here in the United States also in the United Kingdom.

Workplace bullying is a concerning problem that has lasting effects not only on the individual but the organization as well. Some of the problems employees encounter after constant workplace bullying include musculoskeletal problems. Hodgins et al. (2020) found that employees and witnesses who have direct contact with bullies increased the number of employees affected by approximately 22 to 25% of the organization. Other effects of workplace bullying include decreased job satisfaction, depression, physical health, suicidal tendencies, occupational stress, and psychological concerns while decreasing the employee's well-being. Workplace bullying is a process that takes between 3–6 months to materialize while the employee endures mistreatment like abusive supervision, violence, and constant bullying behaviors (Hodgins et al.,

2020). Vranjes et al. (2022) found the prevalence of workplace bullying affects two out of 10 or 15% of the employees in the organization, with higher percentages in larger organizations indicating the deficiencies in the work environment and highlighting the organization's inability to address the problems with workplace bullying.

The work environment is central to increasing or decreasing harmful activity among employees. Some environments are less stressful than others, therefore reducing conflict; however, the fact remains that the work environment serves as a setting for daily interactions among employees, highlighting the potential for conflicts to arise. When work environments have heightened work stressors, the opportunity increases and prompts employees to seek out activities that break the norms of polite behavior and act on personal conflicts with one another (Zahlquist et al., 2023). Workplace bullies consistently use intimidation tactics to instill fear, harm, or control over another individual (Ahmad & Kaleem, 2020). Busby et al. (2022) noted that even managers can encounter upward workplace bullying, where frontline employees target the manager in a top-down manner, or leaders instigate bullying and target their peers through horizontal and lateral methods.

Workplace bullying is not a problem affecting only frontline employees; no one is exempt from the damaging effects of workplace bullying, and it is also the culprit in devastating the home lives of individuals who experience, witness, or instigate workplace bullying in the work environment. Today, workplace bullying is more prevalent as the problem has taken on new roles and attributes by targets in organizations of any size.

Through research, I have identified types of workplace bullying, increasing the need for organizations to address the problems associated with the growing concerns with workplace bullying. Shukla and Singh (2020) identified and defined nine types of workplace bullying:

- Pressure bullying is behavior altered due to stressful moments.
- Organizational bullying is corporate bullying driven by loss of revenue, inability to adapt to changing markets, and unrealistic business goals.
- Corporate bullying is an employer abusing employees.
- External customers abuse client bullying.
- Pair bullying is a predator who consistently bullies the same target.
- Gang bullying is a group of bullies who consistently mistreat an employee.
- Bullying regulations are a predator forcing a target to follow unauthorized regulations.
- Residual bullying is a target that endures continuous bullying after the first predator has left the environment.
- Cyberbullying is when predators use electronic communications to harass targets.

Literature and anecdotes have shown that when bullying is present in an organization, employees tend to disengage and plan for their next career move.

Business Topic Scholarship

Employee Intent to Leave

Earlier research showed that employees and the organization suffer from hostile workplace bullying. Employees may experience emotional distress, leading to exhaustion and a decline in job performance (Malik & Sattar, 2020). Workplace bullying has played a significant role in employees deciding whether leaving an organization would prevent the individual from enduring further intimidating tactics from co-workers. Said and Tanova (2021) conducted a study to find how workplace bullying affected the employees' intent to leave the organization because of the reduced ability to focus on job performance and satisfaction along with eroded resources often leading to employee emotional exhaustion by impeding mindfulness.

The potential drawbacks associated with negative interactions between predators and victims in the workplace pose high risks for victims and the organization. Some employees have characteristics or tendencies that may signal vulnerability, prompting predators to approach and escalate confrontations while increasing the risk of workplace bullying (Reknes et al., 2021). Jalali et al. (2020) pointed out that employees who endure consistent workplace bullying take on a sense of job insecurity, feeling their job is no longer valued, leaving the employee emotionally depleted. Employee's intention to leave an organization because of workplace bullying is not new. Researchers have shown how workplace bullying affects the employee's well-being, mental stability, feeling helpless, low self-esteem, and higher absenteeism, increasing the employee's intentions to leave

the organization (Ahmad & Kaleem, 2020), prompting the employee to lose faith in the organization, feeling that the company has abandoned its commitment to employees suffering from workplace bullying.

Organizational Cost

The cost resulting from workplace bullying leads to a decline in productivity and effective time management, while increasing organizational risks, requiring intervention, and damaging reputations. Mismanagement contributes to the cost of workplace bullying's irritating side effects (Osier, 2021). Other costs associated with workplace bullying, if management continues to look the other way, include diminished productivity, increased negative interactions, and a fight for power between predators and the weaker individuals in the work environment (Osier, 2021).

Workplace bullying significantly strains organizations due to higher turnover rates, damaged reputations, lower productivity, creativity, and increased risks and costs (Osier, 2021). In one year alone, most organizations neglected to acknowledge the cost of workplace bullying, but the occurrence was considered an uncommon factor. Muazzam et al. (2020) noted that workplace bullying is a significant factor in companies experiencing lost talent, underperformance, increased absenteeism, decreased organizational commitment, and higher turnover rates. Workplace bullying remains a persistent issue that can lead to significant costs for organizational leaders who fail to address the warning signs.

Laws Surrounding Workplace Bullying

Workplace bullying is a concern that continues to manifest itself here in the United States and abroad. Most lawmakers ignore laws that police bullying because a precise definition is not universal. Countries outside the United States are taking strides in the right direction, enacting laws to curtail workplace bullying. Gregersen (2017) found that countries like Norway have taken the lead in legislation to ensure employees have protection against workplace bullying by introducing the Working Environment Act in 1977. The Working Environment Act holds companies liable for not taking precautions against workplace bullying. Norway revised Section 19.1 of the Working Environment Act in 2012 to include the obligation of employers to avoid harassment (Gregersen, 2017).

Dr Namie (2021) founded the Workplace Bullying Institute in 1997. Namie worked tirelessly in the United States, lobbying for a similar set of laws and proposing them to Congress and in many states as a potential way for bullied workers to have recourse and support. David C. Yamada, a Suffolk University Law Professor, has written the Healthy Workplace Bill. He, along with lobbyists, successfully introduced the bill throughout the United States; however, the bill is consistently opposed by well-funded business leaders and human resources lobbyists (Workplace Bullying Institute, 2021). Until the government actively takes a stance and implements laws that address workplace bullying, organizational leaders and workers are still defenseless, with alternative and meaningless methods that will protect the victims.

Transition

Section 2 presented a literature review encompassing the concepts of workplace bullying, turnover intentions stemming from bullying, and the financial impacts of workplace bullying. It also provided seminal and current literature about the study's conceptual framework, based on the transformational leadership style and theory. Section 3 outlines the methods and process of conducting the pragmatic inquiry study, including details about recruitment, participants, ethical considerations, data collection, and the analysis process. Section 4 provides the study's findings, results, and implications. I addressed the potential for positive social change throughout this study, especially in Section 4.

Section 3: Research Project Methodology

Project Ethics

Conducting research requires incorporating ethical values into participant interactions; therefore, the researcher must practice active decision-making skills that protect the parties involved with the study (Lenton et al., 2021). A key component in obtaining approval from the institutional review board (IRB) was to ensure I explained how I would safeguard the participants who are taking part in the study by adhering to the three elements outlined in *The Belmont Report* for ethical standards: (a) practicing respect for the participant's autonomy, (b) identifying potential threats to the participant and taking the necessary steps to prevent problems that could harm the participant as a result of the research, and (c) using unbiased practices in the selection of participants at the individual and social level (Pritchard, 2021). According to Lenton et al. (2021), the researcher manages the well-being of the participants during the study; conducting ethically sound research is paramount in protecting and minimizing the potential risks for the participants involved. The Walden IRB approval number I received was #09-25-24-0982895.

Trust is vital when researchers interact with participants to gather documentation. Taking precautions to avoid diminishing trust with participants is critical because the risk factors may trigger their willingness to take part in the research when they feel their vulnerability is compromised (Tubig & McCusker, 2021). A consent form was provided to participants and signed by them before the interview process. Participants were

afforded (a) voluntary participation with an unfettered right to withdraw at any time, (b) an explanation of the minimal risk level associated with this study, and (c) a description of the participant's benefits for participating (in this study, no direct benefits).

In my current role as a manager, I support ethical standards when interacting with employees on personal matters and situations that involve some form of abuse or unnecessary conflicts with coworkers. My communication skills enable continuous growth in managing daily interactions with employees, while developing solutions that benefit both the employee and the organization. The interactions enable me to incorporate a broader range of communication processes when interacting with multicultural individuals, thereby presenting unbiased opinions while suppressing the urge to prejudge before gathering the necessary information to make a practical decision.

I ensured the data collected was confidential by conducting the interviews individually and securing each participant's interactions at the end of each interview. I maintained the participants' identities by using a naming format for each participant and the data collected. I identified and secured the data for each participant separately on a password-protected computer that is accessible only to me. The equipment used to collect data, such as computers, recording devices, and written notes, is kept secure by using computers with password protection, ensuring that all participants' data remains protected from compromising situations that may jeopardize their identities. Upon completion of the study, I will delete the remaining documentation from computers, shred the documents, and destroy the recorded material after 5 years.

Nature of the Project

Using a qualitative pragmatic inquiry approach, I evaluated the strategies that business leaders use to prevent workplace bullying, aiming to reduce related employee turnover and lost revenue. Emmel (2013) found that pragmatism is akin to pluralism, making the design readily adaptable to address and solve problems. Meanwhile, researchers accomplish pragmatism by presenting questions that enable the researcher to apply methods that fit the questions asked.

The qualitative pragmatic inquiry approach enabled me to use the data compiled from the experiences of six participants who have developed strategies to combat (i.e., prevent and stop) workplace bullying and how those strategies have prevented employee turnover and reduced revenue losses. Metcalfe (2008) pointed out that pragmatic inquiries involve drawing on past experiences and addressing a problem through a combination of those who have experience with the identified problem and those who implement innovative solutions to resolve it. The qualitative pragmatic approach is appropriate for interacting with participants who have developed processes that minimize employee encounters with workplace bullying or, if they were, implement successful employee coping strategies that encourage employees to remain in the company.

Population, Sampling, and Participants

Population

The population for this qualitative study consisted of United States managers who have developed strategies to prevent and address workplace bullying. The total number of

these individuals is unknown, although the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2024) reported that approximately 10.5 million managers work in the United States.

The qualifying parameters for being selected included that (a) they had created strategies to prevent or stop workplace bullying, (b) they were familiar with strategies designed to prevent turnover and reduce costs, (c) they worked in the United States, and (d) they self-reported as a transformational leader.

Sampling

In this pragmatic study, I employed a purposeful sampling method. The pragmatic approach to workplace bullying enabled me to focus my inquiry on real-world examples and aligns with the premises of purposeful sampling (Emmel, 2013). Furthermore, a smaller sample size also aligned with the pragmatic paradigm, which emphasizes practicality and efficiency (Metcalfe, 2008).

Participants

I recruited six participants for this study and achieved data saturation after completing the individual interviews. See Appendix A for the Invitation to Participate. First, I built a rapport with the participants, ensuring that strict protocols regarding confidentiality and anonymizing the data were followed when organizing and presenting the collected data. To ensure data saturation, I continued to re-evaluate the collected data until no additional themes emerged. Once the sixth interview was concluded, and no new data emerged, I confirmed data saturation was met with my chair, and I discontinued the data collection process (see Fofana et al., 2020).

Data Collection Activities

As the primary data collection instrument, I used a semistructured interview protocol, following specific processes when collecting data for this study. I collected data using open-ended questions during audio-recorded phone or Zoom/Teams interviews. I verified each participant's responses by listening to the audio recordings and reviewing my journal notes. At the end of each session, I transcribed the audio recordings and compared them to my notes, ensuring that I accurately interpreted the participants' responses. Mazhar et al. (2021) pointed out that several primary data collection methods can be conducted through several processes: Observing, interviewing, and questionnaires for example. By using semistructured interviews, I received real-time knowledge of information and became the primary source for the data collection process. I provided each participant with an overview of the invitation to participate protocol, which outlined the processes for conducting the semistructured interviews and confirmed the participant's acknowledgment of the interview process and understanding.

Most researchers use semistructured interviews because the process allows the participants to freely express their experiences and unique ideas, enabling researchers to extract authentic information directly from the source (Li et al., 2019). Therefore, I developed interview questions to evaluate effective strategies for combating workplace bullying, employee turnover, and revenue loss.

I compiled notes and used an audio recorder to ensure accuracy in the information obtained through the interviews and transcribed the information. To enhance the study's

credibility, I planned to employ member checking to verify the reliability and validity of the data collected during the interviews. However, after each interview, the participants and I confirmed the validity of the data collected by revisiting each interview question and participant response, and we agreed that I would not conduct further follow-up, in appreciation of my participants' valuable time. Santos et al. (2017) defined member checking as a process conducted during qualitative research to ensure that the researcher accurately interprets and understands the data collected from participants, based on their viewpoints, thereby preventing research bias. The audio recordings provided verbatim accuracy of the full interviews conducted and therefore, were a valid depiction of the data collected from the interviews. The following interview questions served as the basis for my approach to the conversations with participants, and the full interview protocol is provided in Appendix B.

Interview Questions

1. What situations have you experienced where you witnessed or were a leader when workplace bullying occurred?
2. What did you do in response to that (or those) situations?
3. What strategies have you implemented to prevent workplace bullying?
4. What processes did you put into place to measure or determine that the strategies worked?
5. What was the impact of combating workplace bullying on the turnover rates in organizations where you implemented these strategies? What about revenue?

6. What strategy have you seen to be the most successful in preventing workplace bullying?
7. What strategy have you seen to be the least effective in preventing workplace bullying?
8. What challenges did you encounter when implementing strategies to prevent workplace bullying?
9. What did you do to overcome the critical challenges experienced when implementing strategies to prevent workplace bullying?
10. What employee reactions to implementing these strategies do you recall?
11. What, if there are any, control measures did you use to determine the levels of workplace bullying?
12. What impacts on any organization's culture would you say workplace bullying has?
13. Without giving any personal identifiable details, what examples of situations can you describe where you saw your strategies prevent or stop workplace bullying?
14. What impact did your strategies for ending workplace bullying have on employee retention or organizational revenue?
15. What additional information can you provide about your strategies to prevent workplace bullying?

Data Organization and Analysis Techniques

Organizing the data included audio recordings, written notes, and a personalized journal. In addition to audio recordings, I used a naming format for each participant after completing each interview to protect their privacy. Audio recordings during the semistructured interviews were vital in confirming the interactions with each participant and the notes taken from each interview. Petric et al. (2021) noted that audio recordings can help address concerns such as memory loss and reinforce what the participant conveyed during an interview. Organizing the recording was crucial for accurately identifying the participants and ensuring that the data was applied to the correct individual. I developed interview questions to uncover potential themes to answer my research question: What strategies do business leaders use to prevent workplace bullying, employee turnover, and revenue losses?

After each audio-recorded phone interview, I categorized the data using a naming convention. Using a naming format ensured the data collected was specific to each participant and the data collected; identify (I) interview, (PA1, PA2, PA3, PA4, PA5, and PA6) participant ID, (DDMMYYY) interview date, and (00:00) time of the interview (as described by Pickard, 2013). I stored the data collected from the semistructured interviews on a password-protected computer accessible only to me and my committee if requested. After 5 years of completing the study, I will destroy the recorded material, erase the remaining documentation from computers, and shred the remaining documentation.

Data Analysis

I used data-source triangulation to combine the multiple data types in this study (interview transcripts, written notes, and publicly accessible documents). Carter et al. (2014) noted that in-depth individual interviews (IDIs) are one of the most powerful tools for exploring topics through semistructured interviews and gaining insight into an individual's firsthand experiences, along with the flexibility that IDIs offers the researcher. Nielsen et al. (2020) noted that employing multiple processes enhances rigor and research potential. Yin (2017) found that researchers can increase the quality of the research by incorporating four principles in the data collection process: (a) use more than one source for collecting data, (b) maintain a database containing information gathered throughout the study that encompasses notes, initial assessment of the collected data, and results from fieldwork, (c) maintaining a chain of evidence, and (d) proceeding with caution in secondary data collection choices when obtained through online sources. Online secondary data collection poses disadvantages, including a lack of credibility and issues with copyright. It may be unreliable or inaccurate; therefore, using online sources considered authentic or dependable, such as books, company website information, up-to-date journals, e-journals, government records, and filings, can alleviate the pitfalls associated with online data collection (Taherdoost, 2021).

Because I extracted data from six 30–45-minute semistructured interviews, I used Braun and Clarke's (2024) method of reflexive thematic analysis reporting guidelines (RETARG) to analyze the data. Byrne (2022) noted that reflexive thematic analysis is

particularly suitable for researchers who extract data from individuals who can provide insights into real-life experiences. Campbell et al. (2021) noted that reflexive thematic analysis comprises six key factors: understanding the data collected, developing a coding system, identifying themes, evaluating potential themes, establishing a naming convention, and preparing a report.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability

Reliability ensures the researcher aligns the study with the methodology and how the methods are applied and implemented by questioning the consistency of the research method (Rose & Johnson, 2020). Singh et al. (2021) noted that dependability is closely related to reliability; researchers must establish an audit process or written procedures throughout the research to maintain the link between dependability and reliability. Using semistructured interviews encompasses strict guidelines outlined in the invitation to participate (see Appendix A) to ensure consistency during the data collection process, and reliability and dependability align with the methods used in this study. By taking notes and audio recordings throughout the interview, I was able to strengthen the reliability and dependability of this study.

I intended to use member checking to confirm the reliability and validity of the data collected during the interviews by using the three steps established by Santos: (a) provide a copy of their specific interview transcript to each participant, (b) provide each participant with a copy of emerging themes interpreted from their interview, and (c)

provide each participant with a draft copy of a research report (Santos et al., 2017). However, after each interview, the participants and I confirmed the validity of the data collected by revisiting each interview question along with the participant's response, and I was able to eliminate the need to provide the participant with a copy of the transcript to review over 72 hours. I determined that my interpretation of the data collected from the participants was accurate, reliable, and dependable.

Validity

Validity refers to the accuracy of the findings between the researcher and the participant, thereby confirming the themes or interpretations of the research and the ability to impact people's lives. It also involves taking precautions to address the study's quality, credibility, and reliability (Rose & Johnson, 2020). Some researchers determine the trustworthiness of qualitative research as dependability, credibility, confirmability, and transferability (Morse, 2015). Validity refers to the steps the researcher takes to evaluate and ensure that the data accurately accounts for the participants' experiences within and beyond the immediate context (Ahmed & Ishtiaq, 2021).

Credibility

I used some of the best practices in the sampling and data collection processes to prove the credibility of this study. According to Johnson et al. (2020), these processes include incorporating rational decisions for sampling, establishing data saturation, adhering to ethical research principles, member checking, conducting continuous interactions and evaluations with participants, and triangulating data sources. Candela

(2019) noted that member checking would involve recruiting one or more participants to verify the accuracy of their information. The member checking also ensures consistent participant interaction during the interview phase.

Transferability

Transferability refers to the extent to which the findings of a study can be applied to other locations, populations, industries, or organizations (Morse, 2015). Singh et al. (2021) noted that although the barrier of generalizing findings between cultural contexts with transferability and qualitative studies exists, researchers can mitigate the problems by using similar samples and methods in different contexts and collecting data from multiple sources to enhance the validity of their findings.

Using the interview protocol (see Appendix B), I conducted six semistructured interviews in the United States. Before each interview, I provided an overview of the interview process to discuss the procedures for safeguarding the collected documentation throughout the study. I achieved data saturation when I noticed redundancy in the verbal responses to the open-ended questions by multiple participants. In qualitative research studies, transferability is provided by giving the readers enough information about how the researcher conducted the study (method, design, process, analysis method, participant selection, and background) so that the readers can determine the extent to which the findings may transfer to a new population. Therefore, transferability is assessed accordingly by being transparent throughout the study.

Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the researcher's strategies to audit the process throughout the study and researchers collaborating on their interpretations of the findings and neutralizing the collected data; however, in qualitative research, most researchers see the world through their cultural lens and increase the potential for unconscious biases towards the study (Singh et al., 2021). I used a naming format as described by Pickard, 2013 along with a coding system that links the data collected during the interview process with each participant. I set up a database for each participant, explicitly coded as follows: (I) interview, participant ID (PA1 through PA6), date (DD/MM/YYYY), and time of the interview. Participants in this study played a crucial role in verifying the accuracy of the information presented (Fofana et al., 2020), ensuring that I have accurately interpreted the data and provided a clear and concise summary of the synthesized findings.

Data Saturation

Another phase in qualitative research is data saturation, which signifies that the data collection efforts have ended when no new data appears during the interview, thus indicating that saturation has been achieved (Fofana et al., 2020). To ensure data saturation, I continually re-evaluated the collected data to identify any additional themes that may have been overlooked.

To achieve saturation, I interviewed six participants from small to medium-sized companies in the United States who had developed and encountered workplace bullying and its effects, ensuring the preliminary sample size was suitable for this study. I

triangulated the data using multiple data sources: audio-recorded phone interviews, written notes, and audio recordings. There was no publicly accessible documentation available for the participants and the companies they were associated with. I continued questioning new participants until I found no new data appeared during interviews, I discontinued the data collection process and concluded data saturation was achieved.

Transition and Summary

Section 3 outlines the methods and process of conducting the pragmatic inquiry study, including details about recruitment, participants, ethical considerations, data collection, and the analysis process. Section 4 provides the study's findings, results, and implications. I addressed the potential for social change throughout this study, especially in Section 4.

Section 4: Findings and Conclusions

Presentation of the Findings

In this qualitative, pragmatic inquiry study, I identified and explored some of the successful strategies that U.S. business leaders employed to prevent employee turnover and revenue loss resulting from workplace bullying. The six purposively selected participants resided in various locations throughout the United States, including California, Florida, Rhode Island, and New Jersey. Using a predetermined coding system, I assigned each participant a unique identifier, ranging from P1 to P6, along with the date, time, and duration of the interview. Example: P1, 12/13/2024, 6:33 pm, 45 minutes.

I interviewed six business leaders who had successfully created strategies to combat workplace bullying and minimize employee turnover and revenue losses. These strategies enabled me to address the overarching research question for this study: What strategies do business leaders use to prevent workplace bullying, thereby reducing related employee turnover and lost revenue? Using the reflexive thematic analysis approach pioneered by Braun and Clarke's (2024) RETARGS, I identified two themes: (a) systematic training provides awareness of bullying, and (b) offering confidential reporting channels to prevent and end bullying. The identified themes align with the conceptual framework of TLT, where management provides employees with the tools to accomplish their goals through a nurturing and safe environment. In addition, the findings were confirmed or contrasted to existing literature on the topics of workplace safety, bullying, and the TLT.

Theme I: Systematic Training Provides Bullying Awareness

Continuous training in workplace bullying consisted of HR managers, frontline managers, and employees. Lassiter et al. (2021) pointed out in a recent study that leadership, training, and people involved in workplace bullying were key players in understanding and maintaining awareness of workplace bullying, and further noted that leaders must be committed to leading by example, protecting all parties involved with workplace bullying, and maintaining confidentiality. Gardner and Cooper-Thomas (2021) noted that training for workplace bullying is a systematic process, and the undertaking of this process must be accepted organizationally from a top-down perspective, while recommending that trainers may include anyone within the organization. Training may include subjects ranging from definitions of bullying, expected behavior, policy, and reporting processes for employees to emotional self-management, conflict resolution, and stress management for targets (Gardner & Cooper-Thomas, 2021). The interviews with the six participants allowed me to confirm the importance of systematic training, as noted in their responses (Table 2).

Table 2

Participant Comments Supporting Theme 1

P#	Comment
1	That training on its own is something that does not work out so well. I want to make it clear that training is important, so people understand and identify workplace bullying when it occurs and feel comfortable reporting it as either a target or a bystander. Training is a critical part of the strategy to ensure people are aware of what workplace bullying looks like in the real world.
2	To increase awareness and education, we provide training to employees and managers on what constitutes bullying and the behaviors that are unacceptable in the workplace. Bullying is not acceptable at all. We increased awareness through training workshops with visual learning, along with internal communications, to educate the workforce about the impact of workplace bullying and the importance of reporting the problem. This is because individuals who encounter bullying may be inclined to avoid bringing attention to themselves.
3	Providing training for the organization will help create awareness and discover bullying in the workplace while highlighting the offenses and potential penalties. Creating a safe response system that includes the organization responding promptly to workplace bullying issues.
4	Providing workshops and online resources offered a safe method for reporting workplace bullying cases confidentially, enabling individuals who were targets, as well as bystanders, to bring attention to the problems associated with workplace bullying and potential bullies in a comfortable manner. The confidential method allowed the victim to avoid any negative repercussions while investigations moved forward.
5	One of the most effective methods for combating workplace bullying is the implementation of training programs. The program served as a constant reminder for every employee to know the steps they could take if they encountered or witnessed workplace bullying resulting from physical or verbal mistreatment by another employee. Employees were less intimidated and felt more comfortable reporting matters concerning workplace bullying.
6	Training and awareness of leaders and management are key, and they need to be part of the solution instead of waving their hands at an issue because they do not think it rises to a severe enough level. A challenging aspect of all this is that many employees do not report issues of bullying or harassment (less than 50% do due to fear of retaliation). Therefore, unless management is engaged with the workforce, these issues may be improperly handled or not addressed at all until people resign.

Note. P = participant; # = the identifier ensuring the participant's confidentiality.

Training is a critical factor in changing negative processes within an organization and is implemented by transformational leaders who manage the implementation of quality management (Frihastama & Hermanto, 2022). Islam et al. (2023) found that 10-20% of organizations experience various problems associated with workplace bullying, including employee turnover. Thus, most of the negative results can be minimized through regular sessions on workplace ethics and empathetic behavior.

P1 explained that some organizational leaders create a toxic environment if they ignore bullying, while employees feel that management is not supporting their psychological safety when workplace bullying is not addressed. P4 indicated that workplace bullying has forced some employees to request transfers to another department, while some employees left the company altogether. P2 described that some of the adverse effects of workplace bullying include emotional and psychological impacts coupled with stress, anxiety, and self-doubt. Therefore, it is essential to ensure managers and employees are routinely trained on what constitutes workplace bullying and the behaviors that are unacceptable in the workplace.

Previous research has demonstrated that workplace bullying has detrimental effects on an organization's performance levels, contributes to employee career failure, and is a primary contributor to adverse consequences for individuals, groups, and organizations (Ndagi & Ali, 2024). Anasori et al. (2023) pointed out that researchers have continuously linked poor employee performance, creativity, and increased psychological distress to workplace bullying, which brings severe personal, organizational, and societal

effects. P5 confirmed that workplace bullying impacted employees when they felt disengaged from work activities, were uncomfortable participating in employer activities, and did not feel they belonged on the team. P6 indicated that workplace bullying can be a subtle action that employees take against one another, using aggressive behaviors to cause problems for their targets.

Findings from the interview data supported the idea that training is an effective way to provide information about changes in the organization, surrounding safety, policy updates, and updates on ethical issues, as well as information on employee well-being. In the six interviews conducted, each participant agreed that combating workplace bullying could lead to a reduction of employee turnover and costs. I noted four elements of similarity, which were best summarized by P6's comments and suggestions as follows:

- Business case to leadership on why this matters, and what costs happen if we neglect to act; these costs can vary and differ for each employer, but time lost/wasted for replacing employees is usually the biggest.
- If leadership is not going to have the heart to participate or care, then the strategy will fail.
- Management training on what to be aware of, again, usually rolled into harassment training. The training focuses more on initiative-taking issues rather than reactions, which is why engaging employees throughout the day is so crucial.

- Per company policy, reporting procedures for employees when these things happen and are not caught/seen by management, investigate, and address promptly with all parties. This resulted in disciplinary action being taken by the employer if the claim is found to be legitimate.

Previous literature explained that organizations should incorporate programs that are mental-health friendly and include resilience factors that enhance psychological well-being to minimize the stressors associated with workplace bullying (Anasori et al., 2023). This seemed to align with what the participants had found in their experiences.

Theme 2: Offering Confidential Reporting Channels to Prevent or End Bullying

My study findings outline the importance of providing employees who have or are experiencing workplace bullying with a confidential channel to report predators who are exercising workplace bullying tactics. Researchers have conducted several studies that demonstrate adverse effects, including deficient performance, employee retention issues, and a decline in initiative-taking safety measures (Hasan et al., 2024). Azmy et al. (2023) highlighted two key variables in a recent study on organizational commitment: an employee's perception of the company and job satisfaction. Without having both a positive perception and job satisfaction level, employees will often begin planning to exit their organization. Allowing employee growth and sustainability, in most cases, provides a positive outlook on the organization's retention while enabling the employee to take an initiative-taking stance on contributing to the overall outcome of organizational success. As noted earlier, P. M. et al. (2023) pointed out that the success of an organization

requires a base that fosters supporting human resources with a positive outlook toward the work environment. The participants' responses during interviews confirmed the previous literature's findings and contributed to the determination of Theme 2 in my study.

Table 3

Participant Comments Supporting Theme 2

P#	Comments
1	I want to emphasize that training remains important, as it enables people to recognize and identify bullying when it occurs and feel comfortable reporting the situation, whether they are a target or a bystander.
2	Awareness campaigns comprise workshops, visual learning materials, and internal communications to educate the workforce about the impact of bullying and the importance of reporting incidents.
3	Reporting is the best; not reporting the problem is a red flag, indicating that the individual witnessing the situation is either unaware of what they are witnessing or is afraid someone will know they reported the situation and is fearful of being exposed.
4	Through workshops, training sessions, and online resources, employees are encouraged to report workplace bullying, ensuring that their communications are confidential. This protects the witness and targets, keeping employees who report the problem away from fear or danger.
5	Everyone needs to be aware of workplace bullying and receive ongoing education on the topic, so we know how to deal with this type of situation.
6	According to the policy, established reporting procedures for employees when they witness or encounter workplace bullying instill confidence in the employee, knowing that management will investigate and address the situation promptly with all parties. This will result in disciplinary action being taken by the employer if the claim is found to be legitimate.

The reporting theme identified during interviews with participants in this study confirmed the link to the Burns (1978) TLT framework, outlining the transformational leader's ability to provide employees with an open-door policy that encourages employee engagement. Ning and Tantasanee (2023) identified transformational leadership as the

primary driver of employee engagement, empowerment, and organizational resilience: confidence in making decisions, adherence to organizational policies, commitment, and a healthy and supportive work environment.

During the interviews, each participant agreed in one way or another with the findings of Huang et al. (2022) that when reporting matters of workplace bullying in the organization is generally low, the impacted employees are unsatisfied with the organization's handling of workplace bullying complaints, the complications in reporting to management is disengaging, or when adequate reporting methods are almost nonexistent, bullying can lead to significant workplace disruptions. Similarly, I found that most of the participants were responsible for establishing reporting processes for workplace bullying. P1 indicated that toxic cultures are created when workplace bullying cases are ignored, creating a perception that employees are not valued. P2 wished the organization had established training and reporting mechanisms earlier to spare the employees who endured workplace bullying and provided them with an outlet to seek help. P3 and P4 noted that employees found other ways to cope with the bullying by moving to other departments or leaving the company. In contrast, P5 noted that no policies were available to assist employees in dealing with workplace bullying. Finally, P6 stated that the reporting procedures for employees who witness or encounter workplace bullying instill confidence in them, knowing that management will investigate and promptly address the situation with all parties. Two factors recently uncovered by Vijayakumar and Rajagopal (2024) included the processes that protect those who report

workplace bullying through confidential methods that provide anonymity and recurring training on workplace bullying.

During the interviews, each participant conveyed their thoughts on the importance of reporting. P1 emphasized the need for ongoing training to ensure that people understand and identify bullying when it occurs and feel comfortable reporting the situation, regardless of whether they are a target or a witness. P2 noted that it is essential to reiterate training, so individuals remain aware of the dangers of workplace bullying and feel comfortable reporting cases. P3 said that reporting is the more effective path and should be comfortable identifying and reporting what they encounter or witness. P4 stated that individuals should not feel intimidated by reporting workplace bullying, and P5 and P6 agreed that reporting procedures are in place to protect those who report the issue, giving them confidence that management will address the problem effectively.

The study's findings confirmed the identified themes through interviews, highlighting the importance of continuous, systematic training and reporting practices for addressing workplace bullying. Through updated literature, I expanded the TLT conceptual framework for combating workplace bullying and reducing cost and employee turnover by identifying the participants' management styles and how leadership styles aligned with the conceptual framework for this study. The training environments established by all participants, P1 through P6, encompassed processes that fostered avenues for individuals who encountered workplace bullying to approach their supervisors with confidence that their concerns would be appropriately addressed. P1

emphasized the importance of creating a work environment where a culture of trust enables employees to raise concerns directly to their manager or Human Resources without hesitation. P2 and P3 emphasized the importance of providing a nurturing and positive culture with open lines of communication, where employees feel comfortable approaching management. P4 chose the path of collaborative environments with open communication among employees, allowing for training mechanisms that enable employees to identify workplace bullying problems while emphasizing the importance of respect and cooperation. P5 established a program called *Stand Up,* which served as an empowering tool for employees to use when speaking out against workplace bullying. The program was established for employees to feel comfortable bringing attention to the predators who practice bullying in the workplace. Finally, P6 pointed out that one of the key aspects of a transformational leader is the need to influence the behaviors of their employees for the better, rather than just assigning tasks. The conceptual framework of TLT is a management style that fosters positive change within the organization (Qi et al., 2022) and aligns with the reporting theme.

Business Contributions and Recommendations for Professional Practice

The findings of this study enabled me to uncover two key themes: (a) providing systematic training promotes bullying awareness, and (b) offering confidential reporting channels can prevent or end bullying. These themes aligned with the conceptual framework and the exhaustive literature review. While workplace bullying training may be a systematic process, it may also include subjects ranging from definitions of bullying

and expected behavior to policy, reporting processes for employees, and emotional self-management, conflict resolution, and stress management for targets (Gardner & Cooper-Thomas, 2021). Another key element of successful methods for combating workplace bullying is an open line of communication that enables employees to report unethical practices without fear of ridicule or threats to their well-being due to reporting activities related to workplace bullying. Thus, the responsibility of confidential reporting stems from transformational leaders initiating communications with HR managers to ensure that the well-being of individuals who report workplace bullying is at the forefront. Responsibility is not a management-only process. Everyone in the organization is empowered to take ownership in combating workplace bullying and ensuring everyone contributes to a positive and safe work environment.

Implications for Social Change

The implications for positive social change from this study extend beyond the corporate setting. Business leaders can contribute to the social responsibility within the neighboring communities through outreach programs that educate the people on the negative effects resulting from workplace bullying. Miao et al. (2025) pointed out that organizations in the past, focused primarily on the corporate setting and employee safety in the workplace, but found employees to be noticeably appreciative and took ownership in achieving the organizational goals while displaying since of pride in their work. Thus, a social change recommendation is for leaders to foster an environment within their communities that mimics ethical behaviors at work.

Business leaders who establish strategies to address workplace bullying can curtail the damaging and costly effects of workplace bullying, like reduced production, absenteeism, negative health-related issues, and decreased morale. Business leaders can focus on promoting growth and on safe and healthy environments where the people in the community trust and support the organization as well. This helps bootstrap the organizational improvements into the community in which it operates, potentially increasing work opportunities for community members and improving overall work-life balance.

Management encompasses an emotional motivation component that organizational leaders incorporate as best practices, enabling them to succeed in all aspects of their role as transformational leaders, thereby establishing organizational advantages and efficiency (Murari & Mukherjee, 2021). The strategy to reduce employee turnover resulting from workplace bullying by senior managers can provide stability, reduce employee turnover, and result in an improved work-life balance for employees.

Recommendations for Further Research

Future researchers can expand on the findings of this study by focusing on the study's findings regarding training and support through reporting mechanisms. More importantly, by identifying additional strategies successful business leaders can use to minimize or eliminate workplace bullying, perhaps more positive work environments could become normalized.

Future researchers could consider recruiting that may be in different roles other than senior management and use larger sample sizes for increased transferability. Quantitative studies soliciting feedback from employees about how they would prefer to be supported and round out the findings from this study. While this study's outcome could enhance leaders' knowledge in organizations experiencing employee turnover and revenue loss because of workplace bullying, evaluating the successful strategies to reduce bullying could enable organizational leaders to improve performance and revenues by reducing employee turnover costs resulting from workplace bullying.

Conclusion

The potential drawbacks of the negative interactions between predators and victims in the workplace pose high risks for victims and the organization. Workplace bullying has a damaging effect on approximately one-third of workers who experience the phenomenon, either through direct contact or by witnessing its actions over time, which can cause adverse effects on an individual’s health, in addition to reduced productivity within the organization (Hodgins et al., 2020). While the findings in this study may not eliminate workplace bullying, business owners can take measures that reduce the negative impact of the phenomenon on potential victims.

TLT is a proven driver for combating workplace bullying through a nurturing style of management that enables employees to feel comfortable, empowered, and trust in the organization. Organizational leaders have the daunting task of maintaining ethical standards and rely on frontline managers to assist them in managing these tasks. While

frontline managers play a vital role in enforcing standards, they are the primary contact for employees to report their daily activities upward, including problems with coworkers, complaints, performance issues, and other job-related tasks. Nevertheless, these tasks are larger than relying solely on frontline managers; combating workplace bullying is the responsibility of the organization, and accountability is essential for the organization to address the workplace bullying phenomenon. Training and reporting processes must be highlighted in every aspect of the company, with key performance indicators that enable change to ensure the training and reporting mechanisms remain current. Everyone in the organization must play an active role in ensuring employee well-being remains intact.

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Appendix A: Invitation to Participate

There is a new study about workplace bullying that could help business leaders better understand the strategies associated with preventing workplace bullying. For this study, you are invited to describe your experiences in creating and implementing strategies to prevent workplace bullying.

About the study:

- One 30–60-minute phone interview that will be audio recorded (no videorecording).
- Participants will receive a visa gift card for taking part in the study.
- To protect your privacy, the published study will not share any names or details that identify you.

Volunteers must meet these requirements:

- They have created strategies to prevent or stop workplace bullying.
- They are familiar with strategies designed to prevent turnover and reduce costs.
- They work in the United States.
- The individual is self-reported as a transformational leader.
- They are 18 or older.

This interview is part of the doctoral study for Sylvester Doby Jr., a DBA student at Walden University. Interviews will take place during the months of November and December 2024. Please reach out to Sylvester Doby Jr. to let the researcher know of your interest. You are welcome to forward it to others who might be interested.

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

I will interview six participants and collect data using nine open-ended questions. I will provide an overview of the interview protocol to each participant and look for their acknowledgment of the process and understanding. The interview protocol consists of the following steps as noted in the (Walden University DBA Doctoral Study Rubric and Research Handbook, February 2019).

1. Introduce the interview and set the stage.
2. Paraphrase as needed.
4. Ask follow-up probing questions to get more in-depth.
5. Introduce a follow-up interview and set the stage.
6. Share a copy of each question.
7. Bring in probing questions related to other information that you may have found, and note the information must be related so that you are probing and adhering to the IRB approval.
8. Walk through each question, read the interpretation, and ask: Did I miss anything? Or, What would you like to add?
9. Wrap up the interview by thanking the participant.