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The Cost of Workplace Bullying in Irish Universities

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Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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Patrick Rockett

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Walden University
2015

Abstract

The Cost of Workplace Bullying in Irish Universities

by

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MBS, University of Limerick, 2008

BS, Human Resource Management, University of Limerick, 1988

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

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Abstract

Employees who demean and degrade coworkers cost organizations billions of dollars every year. Workplace bullying is a business problem that affects up to 15% of employees, and little empirical research is available to establish the extent of bullying in academia. Bullies flourish in decentralized structures, and universities can be particularly susceptible to bullying behavior because of their decentralized structures of teaching and research that promote the growth of microclimates in segregated silos, from laboratories to small departments. The purpose of this multiple-case, census sample study was to explore the cost-reduction strategies that university human resource (HR) leaders use to manage the consequences of workplace bullying across the 7 universities in Ireland. The conceptual framework focused on power, culture, and leadership, which are central to the discourse on workplace bullying. Data analysis involved using the interpreted interview data that all participants verified for accuracy through the member checking process. Seven themes emerged as the most important to reduce the cost of workplace bullying. Participants identified policy, informal versus formal procedures, and cost as the most important themes pertaining to workplace bullying in their organization. The findings of this study will be a source of valuable information to HR leaders in all Irish universities. In addition, the findings have implications for theory and practice that may help Irish university HR leaders promote positive social change by enabling them to manage the financial and human cost of workplace bullying in Irish universities.

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Dedication

I would like to thank my wife Myra, my daughter Elaine, and my son Ian for their support, encouragement, and forbearance on this doctoral journey. I dedicate this work to them and to my family members who are no longer here to share in my achievement.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

The term *workplace bullying* originated in Scandinavia in the early 1990s as persistent abuse, offense, intimidation, incivility, insult, abuse of power, and punitive sanctions to victims (Paull & Omari, 2015). Workplace bullying causes stress for employees (Carr, Kelley, Keaton, & Albrecht, 2011; Giorgi, Shoss, & Leon-Perez, 2015), and the consequences of workplace stress include lower productivity, high turnover rates, increased staffing costs, and high absenteeism (Akakandelwa & Jain, 2013; Galanaki & Papalexandris, 2013; Vickers, 2015; Walinga & Rowe, 2013). Workplace bullying is morally reprehensible (Guest & Woodrow, 2012), diminishes organizational efficiency and productivity, and costs the economy of the United Kingdom £3.575 billion per year (Boddy, 2011).

In this qualitative multiple-case study, I explored the emergence of the phenomenon of workplace bullying from its Nordic roots to its current designation in Ireland by considering the varied constructs that inform the understanding of the phenomenon. I identified what Irish university leaders need to know about the cost of workplace bullying. I reviewed the development of workplace bullying definitions and I considered the role of legislative provisions on policy development in Ireland. Using qualitative in-depth interviews, I explored the perceptions of human resources leaders of the cause, effect, and cost of workplace bullying in Irish universities and their perceptions of the effectiveness of prevention and resolution strategies, including formal and informal interventions.

Background of the Problem

Workplace bullying is a problem but little empirical research is available to establish the extent of bullying in academia (Giorgi, 2012). Bullying is prevalent in many workplaces, but the university sector can be particularly susceptible to bullying behavior because of some of the distinctive characteristics of academia. Bullies thrive in decentralized structures, and university structures are among the most decentralized of all. The power differential in workplace bullying relationships is a critical component of the phenomenon; bullying involves dominance of one or more persons over another and without such dominance, bullying attempts are unsuccessful (Hall & Lewis, 2014; Horton, 2011; Rodkin, Espelage, & Hanish, 2015).

There is a significant relationship between job satisfaction, turnover intention, and bullying (Ertureten, Cemalcilar, & Aycan, 2013). Workplace stress can result in lower productivity, higher turnover, and health-benefit costs for an organization (Vickers, 2014; Walinga & Rowe, 2013). Organizational leaders need to develop and implement policies, procedures, and protocols to enhance employee well-being and safety. Such affirmative action discourages incivility and bullying behaviors and encourages a positive social-psychological workplace (Geller, 2015; Karam, 2011). Workplace bullying prevention and intervention strategies need to be realistic and achievable and they need to fit with the culture of an organization. Leaders and employees should work together to develop such strategies to ensure that fit. Workplace bullying is a social relationship problem (Swearer, Wang, Berry, & Myers, 2014), and the designers of prevention programs for workplace bullying must be cognizant of the complexity of the relationships between

individuals and interest groups; they also need to consider economic factors. Workplace bullying seldom has a single cause, and the effect that bullying has on victims varies from person to person.

The risk of bullying in the workplace increases due to a number of factors that I considered in this study. Ireland has seven universities, and I examined the workplace bullying policies and procedures implemented in each. To contextualize the study, I also explored the legislative provisions in Ireland that pertain to workplace bullying.

Problem Statement

Employees who demean and degrade coworkers cost organizations billions of dollars every year (Georgakopoulos, Wilkin, & Kent, 2011). Appelbaum, Semerjian, and Mohan (2012a) noted that 1.7 million Americans and 11% of British workers experience bullying at work in a 6-month period, and according to McTernan, Dollard, and LaMontagne (2013), workplace bullying costs an estimated AU\$690 million per year in Australia. The general business problem is that such bullying has negative consequences, including costs, for individuals and for organizations (Appelbaum et al., 2012a). The specific business problem is that some HR leaders in Irish universities have little information about cost-reduction strategies to manage the consequences of workplace bullying.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative, explorative multiple-case study was to explore the cost-reduction strategies that HR leaders at Irish universities use to manage the consequences of workplace bullying. In this study, I ascertained the extent of bullying in

Irish universities and identified the Irish legislative provisions. I used a qualitative research design and interviewed HR leaders in all seven Irish universities. I analyzed the causes, effects, and costs of this behavior. I considered how to improve existing policies and procedures and make them more effective. In particular, I carried out a qualitative multiple-case analysis of bullying policies and procedures in all seven Irish universities to learn about HR leaders' experiences in the application of policy. The findings of this study are expected to be a source of valuable information to university leaders who desire to manage bullying better in their institution.

Nature of the Study

Researchers who embark on a particular piece of work need to decide whether a qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods design is most suitable to their study and which design will answer the research question. The focus of quantitative research was on quantifying the variables of the research problem and making generalizations (Howitt & Cramer, 2011). Quantitative methods are suitable (a) when addressing clearly quantified research questions, (b) when a considerable amount of theory exists, whereby researchers can test hypotheses, (c) when a substantial amount of research exists using quantification, (d) when it is feasible to use appropriate data collection measures, and (e) when the researcher has skills in quantitative methods (Howitt & Cramer, 2011).

Researchers should use qualitative methods to answer the *how* and *what* of a research topic, and in particular (a) when they want to explore a complex research problem in its natural setting, (b) when there is a lack of clarity regarding the research question and theoretical issues, (c) when there is little previous research on the topic, (d) when the

research question relates to the complex use of language, and (e) when participants might feel discouraged using instruments such as multiple-choice questionnaires (Howitt & Cramer, 2011). My research topic was a business problem on which little research exists. The problem of workplace bullying in Irish universities is complex and such research should take place in its natural setting to maximize understanding of the issue. When studying bullying in Irish universities in the field, the research questions may evolve and thus yield rich data.

I used a multiple-case study approach for this study. Case study research includes a constructivist paradigm based on the subjective relativism of truth whereby individuals look for an understanding of their world to give meaning to it (Yin, 2014). While not rejecting the concept of objectivity, researchers use a constructivist approach to learn about participants' view of the problem under investigation. In this multiple-case study, I attempted to understand the shared patterns of beliefs, norms, and cultural mores of Irish university leaders in relation to workplace bullying. A multiple-case study approach can help researchers to discover barriers and areas of dysfunction and to identify areas needing improvement. The findings of this study may provide members of the Irish university sector with a contextual understanding of workplace bullying that refers specifically to this organizational cultural group. A multiple-case study approach enabled me to study the business problem of workplace bullying in Irish universities in context and in real time.

Research Question

In this qualitative multiple-case study, I sought to understand the strategic imperatives that Irish university HR leaders need to reduce costs and manage the consequences of workplace bullying. During my investigations, I considered the varying constructs that inform understanding of the phenomenon. I explored HR leaders' perceptions of workplace bullying in seven Irish universities through analyzing its causes, effects, and costs.

The central research question was as follows: What cost-reduction strategies do Irish university HR leaders use to manage the consequences of workplace bullying?

The associated research subquestions were as follows:

1. How does workplace bullying affect employee performance, absenteeism, and turnover?
2. How do Irish university leaders protect their organization from litigation?
3. How do Irish university leaders protect their employees from workplace bullying?
4. What effect does workplace bullying have on both the organization and the targets of bullying?

Interview Questions

In this qualitative multiple-case study, I asked each HR leader the following 24 interview questions:

1. What are the determining factors used to establish your organization's policy and procedures for dealing with workplace bullying?

2. If your organization has a workplace bullying policy, when and why was it introduced?
3. In general, what might be some of the challenges that you face dealing with allegations of bullying?
4. In your opinion, how have your organization's bullying policy and procedures served to reduce the number of employee complaints of bullying?
5. In your opinion, in what ways have your organization's bullying policy and procedures been effective in preventing or reducing bullying?
6. In your opinion, in what ways have your organization's bullying policy and procedures provided a structured way of dealing with complaints of bullying?
7. In your opinion, what are the advantages and disadvantages of dealing with complaints of bullying informally?
8. What role do a bullying policy and bullying procedures play to provide procedural protection for the organization in the event of a complaint arising?
9. What support does your organization provide for complainants and respondents?
10. How adequate is the support your organization provides for both complainants and respondents in cases of workplace bullying?
11. In your experience, is a formal or informal approach more likely to resolve bullying cases?
12. Is it common or uncommon for employees who made complaints of bullying in the past 5 years to have left the organization for any reason?

13. In your estimation, how long does it take to bring a complaint of bullying to a conclusion, either formally or informally?
14. What are the benefits of mediation in resolving bullying issues?
15. At what stage in the process does your organization use mediation?
16. In general, how effective have you found mediation to resolve issues of bullying and harassment?
17. In your opinion, what role does power play in bullying in your organization?
18. If your organization had to deal with cases of workplace bullying through an institutional third party in the past 5 years, what institution dealt with the cases?
19. If your organization had to deal with cases of workplace bullying through an institutional third party in the past 5 years, under what act was the case taken?
20. What kind of training does your organization provide for managers on how to deal with bullying?
21. What kind of training does your organization provide for all staff on how to deal with bullying?
22. Have you ever evaluated the effectiveness of your organization's bullying policy and procedures? If so, what were the three main findings of that evaluation?
23. In your opinion, what are the costs associated with workplace bullying?
24. Are there matters pertaining to workplace bullying that have not been addressed in this interview that you would like to comment on?

Conceptual Framework

The theories I selected as appropriate to this study related to power, culture, and leadership. These theories are central to the discourse on the business problem of workplace bullying. Bullying behavior is a process of manipulation for power in the workplace whereby subordinates are sometimes subject to demeaning or bullying behavior by managers over time (Einarsen, 1999). Five sources of power prevail in organizations; legitimate power, reward power, coercive power, referent power, and informational power (French & Raven, 1959). Structural drivers such as organizational culture sometimes force targets of bullying to leave an organization (Diekmann, Walker, Galinsky, & Tenbrunsel, 2013). In this study, culture referred to the collective programming of the human mind, which determines the distinctiveness and identity of a group (Minkov & Hofstede, 2011).

The focus of leadership theory is on leadership competencies, behaviors, and performance and the effect these factors have on an organization's performance (McDermott, Kidney, & Flood, 2011). The basis of transactional leadership is mediocrity, while transformational leadership results in exceptional performance (Bass, 1990). The foundation of behavioral theory is the belief that individuals can learn to be leaders, and the foundation of trait theory is the belief that leaders emerge due to innate characteristics (Douglas, 2012). In 1964, Vroom formulated expectancy theory to explain individual decision-making processes based on behavioral alternatives (Manolova, Brush, Edelman, & Shaver, 2012).

Definition of Terms

Definitions of the terms used in this study appear below to clarify their meanings and contexts and to assist the reader in understanding the study. The following terms are specific to the topic of workplace bullying:

Aggression: Aggression is a form of retaliatory behavior by an employee against another employee in an organization, with the intent to cause harm (Hepburn & Enns, 2013).

Mobbing: Mobbing is a group activity in which a number of employees gang up on a target (Davenport, Schwartz, & Elliott, 1999).

Prima facie: Prima facie is a legal term that means certain, self-evident, intuitively knowable, and general (Meyers, 2011).

Reflexivity: Reflexivity is a continuous process of reflection as a resource for dealing with research experiences (Mikkelsen, 2013).

Target: A target is someone subjected to bullying behavior by a perpetrator (Einarsen, 1999).

Workplace bullying:

Workplace Bullying is repeated inappropriate behaviour, direct or indirect, whether verbal, physical or otherwise, conducted by one or more persons against another or others, at the place of work and/or in the course of employment, which could reasonably be regarded as undermining the individual's right to dignity at work. An isolated incident of the behaviour described in this definition may be an affront to dignity at work, but a

once off incident is not considered to be bullying. (Health and Safety Authority, 2001, p. 11)

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Assumptions are facts inextricably associated with research (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010); they are settings that ensure the validity of research (Foss & Hallberg, 2014). I assumed that participants in this study understood the phenomenon under investigation and had appropriate policies and procedures for dealing with workplace bullying in their organization, in compliance with Irish legislation. I also assumed that all HR leaders were honest in their answers and assessment of the effectiveness of their workplace bullying policies and procedures. In an attempt to mitigate my assumptions, I encouraged participants to reflect on the research questions and elaborate on their answers (see Appendix A).

Limitations

This study had some boundaries and weaknesses that may have limited its scope (Akakandelwa & Jain, 2013). The participant pool comprised HR leaders in seven Irish universities, which precluded a significant number of senior executives in the participant universities. The detail and quality of participants' engagement with, and response to, open questions may have been limited because of confidentiality concerns. Finally, as this study was a multiple-case study analysis with a limited participation pool, it was not possible to generalize the findings.

Delimitations

Delimitations affect the general latitude of a study (Vladu, Matis, & Salas, 2012). In this study, I used a qualitative multiple-case study which was concerned only with the university sector in Ireland. The HR leaders constituted the participant pool for the study in the seven Irish universities. They are the custodians of the bullying and harassment policies and procedures in each university. I interviewed an HR leader in each of the seven universities.

Significance of the Study

Contribution to Business Practice

The findings from this study are expected to add to the body of knowledge on workplace bullying; accordingly, the findings may help leaders to bring about positive social change in their organizations. Specifically, the study findings contribute to the discourse on workplace bullying in universities in Ireland. The data obtained for the study could help university leaders to understand a phenomenon that costs their institutions a substantial amount in human capital.

When leaders motivate and manage their staff to maximize output, they are serving business interests. Given that workplace bullying is a major stressor for employees (Carr et al., 2011) that results in lower productivity, high turnover rates, increased staffing costs, and high absenteeism (Akakandelwa & Jain, 2013; Devonish, 2014; Walinga & Rowe, 2013), it behooves business leaders to understand workplace stress in general and bullying in particular. Workplace bullying costs the U.K. economy £3.575 billion per year (Boddy, 2011), and internationally, organizational leaders spend

billions of dollars each year dealing with the stress-related costs associated with workplace bullying (Burton, Hoobler, & Scheuer, 2012; Spurgeon, Mazelan, & Barwell, 2012). Business performance improves when business leaders reduce absenteeism and increase productivity (McVicar, Munn-Giddings, & Seebohm, 2013).

Implications for Social Change

Through this qualitative explorative multiple-case study, I offer leaders an understanding of the effect that workplace bullying has on employees and on their organizations. This exposition illustrates to leaders why particular organizations become a preferred employer for certain employees (Kossek, Kalliath, & Kalliath, 2012). Management interventions regarding workplace bullying improve productivity and reduce illness and absenteeism-related costs (Wolever et al., 2012). Informed university leaders will be better able to manage inappropriate behaviors strategically and address this business problem before individual employees, who are targets of workplace bullying, take action. The study will be of interest and benefit to other business audiences beyond the target audience, which is the university sector in Ireland. Finally, the findings from the study have potential implications for theory and practice. From a theoretical perspective, I considered the significance of the extent of repetition of bullying acts, the severity of the acts, and whether the role of HR leaders in managing workplace bullying is sometimes contradictory and paradoxical. From a practice perspective, I considered whether the philosophies, policies, and procedures implemented by HR leaders sometimes unintentionally perpetuate bullying in organizations.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The purpose of this qualitative, explorative multiple-case study was to explore what cost-reduction strategies Irish university HR leaders use to manage the consequences of workplace bullying. I conducted a literature review search to source relevant peer-reviewed articles, books, and government publications on the. The focus of my literature review was on research methods, including qualitative research methods and multiple-case study research.

Thus, the following keywords were in various combinations: *bullying, workplace, employee relations, workplace bullying, harassment, managing coworker relations, conflict prevention, whistleblowing, health, depression, leadership, antibullying, job performance, employee attitudes, psychological well-being, aggression, gender, gender role socialization theory, social identity theory, power, deviant behavior, employees' behavior, ethical climate, ethical leadership, problem employees, transformational leadership, working practices, organizational culture, stress, financial and human cost, management control, self-esteem, hazards, occupational health and safety, social networks, compounded bullying, depersonalized bullying, e-harassment, HR policy, management strategies, social media, workplace incivility, employee affect, job satisfaction, and incivility*. I carried out the searches using the following databases: Business Source Complete, Emerald Management Extra, PsychArticles, ProQuest, and Elsevier. The following references were used in this study: 23 books (11.2%), 175 journal articles (85.4%), two government reports (1%), four court cases (2%), and one national news periodical (0.5%). Of the 205 references, 181 (88.3%) were published between

2011 and 2015, and 175 (85.4%) were peer-reviewed journal articles. Of the 175 peer-reviewed journal articles, 161 (92%) had publication dates between 2011 and 2015.

The focus of the research problem was to identify the information HR leaders in seven Irish universities need about the cost and consequence of workplace bullying. In this study, I established the extent of workplace bullying in Irish universities and I identified the Irish legislative provisions pertaining to the management of this behavior. I interviewed HR leaders in each of the seven Irish universities.

To understand and contextualize the research into the business problem of workplace bullying, I conducted a review of published literature. In the literature review, I presented a synopsis of the evolution of research into workplace bullying and an introduction to the Irish legislative provisions for dealing with workplace bullying. Workplace bullying has been happening for many years. Research on workplace bullying commenced in the 1970s. In *The Harassed Worker*, Brodsky (1976) instigated the discourse on workplace bullying. This early scholarly work made a critical first contribution to the body of knowledge on the topic in the United States. Heinz Leymann, a Scandinavian psychiatrist who established the world's first work trauma clinic in Sweden in the 1980s and founded the international antibullying movement, established workplace bullying or mobbing as a suitable research topic in Europe in the 1980s. Leymann continued researching in the field and a decade later published *The Content and Development of Mobbing at Work* (Leymann, 1996).

Internationally, the focus of research into workplace bullying is in the United States, Western Europe, and Australia. An early seminal book published in the United

States on workplace bullying was *Mobbing: Emotional Abuse in the American Workplace* by Davenport et al. (1999). In Britain, Andrea Adams, a renowned journalist, broadcaster, and campaigner against workplace bullying, published *Bullying at Work* in 1992 with Neil Crawford in which she recommended strategies to ameliorate the stress of workplace bullying. The first major study into workplace bullying in Australia was by McCarthy, Sheehan, and Kearns (1995). The first research into workplace bullying in Ireland was by O'Moore, Seigne, McGuire, and Smith in 1998. The Irish government commissioned the Task Force on the Prevention of Workplace Bullying in 2001, which published the *Report of the Expert Advisory Group on Workplace Bullying* in 2005, followed by *Bullying in the Workplace: Survey Reports* in 2007.

A difficulty that arises when studying workplace bullying is that definitions of bullying are different in different countries. Both Scandinavian and German researchers tend to use the term mobbing to describe behaviors that American researchers call harassment. Workers in the United States have legal protection against sexual harassment and from physical hazards. However, employees do not have analogous protection from workplace bullying. In Europe, antibullying legislation is commonplace, enacted in 1993 in Sweden, 1994 in the Netherlands, 1997 in the United Kingdom, and 2002 in Belgium. In Australia, employees who believe they have experienced bullying can apply to the Fair Work Commission for an order to stop the bullying (Byrnes & Arndt, 2014). In Ireland, a number of pieces of legislation and three codes of practice protect employees from workplace bullying. Central to the Irish legislative provisions on workplace bullying is the employers' duty of care toward employees. Ireland's first Safety, Health and Welfare

Act, enacted in 1989 and updated in 2005, stipulates that employers have a duty of care for their workers' psychological, as well as physical, well-being. Government agencies in Ireland have also introduced nonlegislative codes of practice to address the business problem of workplace bullying. The *Report of the Task Force on the Prevention of Workplace Bullying* (HSA, 2001) included a recommendation that workplaces should have a Dignity at Work Charter.

Defining Workplace Bullying

Although researchers have investigated workplace bullying since 1980, they have failed to agree on a definitive definition of the phenomenon (Chirilă & Constantin, 2013). Finding an appropriate, accepted, and precise definition of bullying continues to challenge researchers (Sercombe & Donnelly, 2013). Leymann's definition of mobbing as hostile actions that individually can be innocuous but collectively and over time can be damaging continues to be "the standard definition of workplace bullying" (Chirilă & Constantin, 2013, p. 1175). The most commonly used terms to describe the phenomenon of workplace bullying in Europe are bullying and mobbing; in the United States, however, concepts such as emotional abuse, workplace trauma and aggression, and workplace harassment are the descriptors of such behavior (Chirilă & Constantin, 2013; Nelson et al., 2014). In the United States, harassment can only be proven by victims who are members of a protected status group (Namie & Namie, 2011), but behavior that causes emotional distress for victims may be the subject of criminal proceedings (Eisenberg, 2015).

Konrad Lorenz first used the term mobbing to describe animal group behavior in which a group of smaller animals threatens a single larger animal. Swedish psychiatrist Heinz Leymann subsequently used the word mobbing to describe similar behavior among children and in the workplace. The term bullying implies a threat of physical aggression, although bullying behavior at work rarely includes physical violence. On the contrary, significantly more sophisticated behaviors such as exclusion and social isolation often characterize workplace bullying (Wu, Lyons, & Leong, 2015). Workplace bullying refers to a wide spectrum of conduct ranging from subtle and innocuous incivility to violence (Fox & Freeman, 2011).

Deviant behavior in the workplace ranges from mild incivility to homicide (Namie & Namie, 2011). Workplace bullying is “repeated unethical and unfavorable treatment of one person by another in the workplace” (Boddy, 2011, p. 367). Rudeness, sarcasm, purposely overworking a member of staff, humiliation, and threats or violence are instances of workplace bullying (Boddy, 2011). Workplace bullying also refers to

all those repeated actions and practices that are directed to one or more workers, which are unwanted by the victim, which may be done deliberately or unconsciously, but clearly cause humiliation, offence and distress, and that may interfere with job performance and/or cause an unpleasant working environment. (Einarsen, 1999, p. 17)

Most theorists agree that, although it may be distressing, harmful, or an affront to an individual’s dignity, a single incident of inappropriate behavior does not constitute workplace bullying. The common thread running through all definitions of workplace

bullying is of an aggressor demonstrating repeated mistreatment and incivility toward a victim at work (Appelbaum, Semerjian, & Mohan, 2012b). The dynamic of workplace engagements and exchanges involves complex relationships in which the distinction between acceptable and unacceptable behaviors may be unclear (Swearer & Hymel, 2015). Organizational structure, hierarchy, and resource allocation largely determine the nature of relationships in the workplace. Over a 2-year period, almost half the British workforce experienced unreasonable treatment, 40% experienced incivility, and 75% witnessed mistreatment of colleagues (Robinson, Jones, Fevre, & Lewis, 2012). Social reciprocity is central to the employment relationship (Otto & Mamatoglu, 2015); managers are responsible for managing the employment relationship, and occasions may arise when exchanges can be robust.

There is an important distinction between a supervisor or manager reasonably exercising their legitimate authority at work and an occurrence of bullying. A normal work environment requires managers and supervisors to direct and control how employees perform work, and they are responsible for monitoring workflow and providing feedback to employees on work performance. Supervisors or managers giving feedback to facilitate improved performance or work-related behavior does not constitute bullying; however, supervisors or managers should handle performance problems in an objective and constructive way that is neither humiliating nor threatening. For example, although a member of staff or a trade union may perceive certain management behavior as bullying, the employer may view the same behavior as management's prerogative to manage (Kumar, Jain, & Kumar, 2012). The majority of workplace bullying comes from

line managers (Lutgen-Sandvik & McDermott, 2011). Poor relationships between managers and staff and the absence of appropriate support mechanisms create an organizational climate of conflict (Baillien, Bollen, Euwema, & De Witte, 2014; Leon-Perez, Medina, Arenas, & Munduate, 2015; McVicar et al., 2013).

In Ireland, the authors of the *Report of the Task Force on the Prevention of Workplace Bullying* (HSA, 2001) defined workplace bullying as

repeated inappropriate behaviour, direct or indirect, whether verbal, physical or otherwise, conducted by one or more persons against another or others, at the place of work and/or in the course of employment, which could reasonably be regarded as undermining the individual's right to dignity at work. An isolated incident of the behavior described in this definition may be an affront to dignity at work but a once off incident is not considered to be bullying. (p. 5)

The task force reported that bullying is a learned subtle behavior that manifests in direct, indirect, and sometimes imperceptible forms (HSA, 2001). The task force suggested that perpetrators of workplace bullying might have learned the benefits of such behavior in childhood, which is why the perpetrators replicate the behavior in their working life. The task force authors cited the following indicative types of bullying behavior: undermining an individual's right to dignity at work; humiliation; intimidation; verbal abuse; victimization; exclusion and isolation; intrusion by pestering, spying, and stalking; repeated unreasonable assignment to duties that are obviously unfavorable to one individual; repeated requests giving impossible deadlines or impossible tasks; and implied threats. The 2001 definition continues to be the accepted definition of workplace

bullying in Ireland and this definition has assumed a quasi-legal status by default; although no one has incorporated it into legislation, the definition has appeared in legal proceedings. The definition of bullying in Ireland includes the requirement for the behavior to manifest as repeated and unwelcome hostile actions that undermine an individual's dignity.

Workplace bullying is a feature of organizations in which employees have increased workloads and conflict management is ineffective (Feldt et al., 2013; Fischer & Martinez, 2013). Increased workloads and ineffective conflict management, coupled with poor communication, organizational change, and weak leadership styles, create an environment in which bullying thrives (Almadi, Cathers, & Chow, 2013; Kalliath & Kalliath, 2012; Tambur & Vadi, 2012). Bjørkelo (2013) noted that workplace bullying behavior is different from situations in which two persons of equal strength disagree in the workplace, and Appelbaum et al. (2012a) noted that the essence of definitions of workplace bullying is of “an aggressor displaying repeated hostile behavior toward a victim in a work organization” (p. 341). Instances of hostile behaviors include verbal abuse (e.g., shouting, insulting, and threatening), undermining another's work (e.g., shifting goals without informing the employee, withholding information, and work interference), or belittlement (e.g., criticisms, undervaluing work, and excluding individuals; Brotheridge & Keup, 2005). Meglich, Faley, and DuBois (2012) grouped workplace bullying behaviors into intentionally malicious verbal behaviors, such as crude remarks and threats, and intentionally malicious nonverbal behaviors such as sabotaging or stealing work output, which increase in cruelty over a 6-month or longer duration.

Workplace bullying can be subtle or obvious, but it always involves repeated negative behaviors of aggression, incivility, intimidation, and hostility presented by an individual or group against an individual or group in an unequal power relationship (D’Cruz & Noronha, 2014). Workplace bullying is an ever-increasing problem that results in the victim feeling inferior (Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, & Cooper, 2011). Einarsen et al. proposed specific timings when they defined workplace bullying as repeated offending or socially excluding behavior that occurs regularly (e.g., weekly) and over a period of time (e.g., 6 months).

Methods

I carried out this literature review search to source relevant peer-reviewed articles, books, and government publications on the topic of workplace bullying. Targeted keywords used in the literature review were bullying, workplace, employee relations, workplace bullying, harassment, managing coworker relations, conflict prevention, whistleblowing, health, depression, leadership, anti-bullying, job performance, employee attitudes, psychological well-being, aggression, gender, gender role socialization theory, social identity theory, power, deviant behavior, employees’ behavior, ethical climate, ethical leadership, problem employees, transformational leadership, working practices, stress, financial and human cost, management control, self-esteem, hazards, occupational health and safety, organizational culture, social networks, compounded bullying, depersonalized bullying, e-harassment, HR policy, management strategies, social media, workplace incivility, employee affect, job satisfaction, and incivility. I carried out

literature searches using the Walden Library databases and databases such as Business Source Complete, Emerald Management Extra, PsychArticles, and Elsevier.

Workplace bullying affects up to 15% of employees and has a negative influence on both the targets of bullying and the organizations in which the behavior occurs (Bashir, Hanif, & Nadeem, 2014; Glambek, Matthiesen, Hetland, & Einarsen, 2014; Harrington, Warren, & Rayner, 2015; Johnson, 2015). Workplace bullying affects individuals' work, physical and emotional health, and motivation and results in reduced productivity, increased legal expenses, and consequent organizational cultural and reputational damage (Bartlett & Bartlett, 2011). One direct consequence of workplace bullying is exclusion from the work employers hired employees to do (Berthelsen, Skogstad, Lau, & Einarsen, 2011). Workplace bullying is a precursor to job dissatisfaction and an antecedent to employees deciding to leave employment (Glambek et al., 2014; Kuyper, 2015; Trépanier, Fernet, & Austin, 2015). Previously bullied employees are more critical of others' failure to endure a similar distressing event (Ruttan, McDonnell, & Nordgren, 2015).

Power Disparity in Workplace Bullying

Central to the discourse on bullying is the abuse of power. Power relationships are intrinsic to groups because of the social connectedness of group members (Schumann, Craig, & Rosu, 2014). The manner in which people exercise power in an organization influences the incidence of bullying in the organization. Positional power is an important determinant and antecedent for bullies to exercise control over the target (Bartlett & Bartlett, 2011). The perceived severity of bullying depends on the focus of the bullying

behaviors and on the power imbalance between targets and perpetrators (Meglich et al., 2012). The burgeoning literature about the frequency and outcomes of workplace bullying includes little regarding the severity of bullying and the influence the severity of bullying has on the target's interpretation and response to the situation. Information on the severity and effects of bullying would clarify the bullying construct. Bullying actions are in a quadrant adjacent to power disparity according to the typology of Meglich et al. (2012), and this research demonstrated that perceptions of the severity of workplace bullying are dependent on both the bullying behaviors (actions) and the power disparity between targets and perpetrators.

Power creates both temporary and enduring cognitive changes that transform the way individuals assimilate and differentiate their self from others (Voyer & McIntosh, 2013). Such transformation refers to the way in which individuals in positions of power behave as leaders, as well as how followers behave. People's self-construal and perspective play a mediating role to determine the behaviors of powerful and powerless individuals. Organizational culture, structures, and personality traits moderate this relation (Nielsen & Knardahl, 2015; Voyer & McIntosh, 2013), where organizational culture reflects the human condition (Rai, 2011). McKay (2013) proposed the following three fundamental predisposing causes of bullying: individual factors of self-esteem (Zapf & Einarsen, 2011), social factors of standards of injustice (Neuman & Baron, 2011), and organizational factors such as organizational culture and job design (Salin & Hoel, 2011). Power and organizational culture may be intentionally or unintentionally

responsible for facilitating bullying behavior (Zapf & Einarsen, 2011), and Shore (2013) found that organization culture affects employee retention.

Another manifestation of the way in which power operates in workplace bullying is considering employees who, without question and unconsciously, accept and internalize workplace bullying by fellow employees (McKay, 2013). In extreme cases, this unquestioning acceptance of bullying behavior leads targets to believe that they are the cause of the problem (Diekmann et al., 2013). Structural drivers such as organizational culture reinforce this assumption and may convince powerless individuals that a position does not suit them and lead to their exiting the organization because they may see no other option (Diekmann et al., 2013).

Organization Culture

Researchers have formulated innumerable definitions of organization culture, most of which recognize culture as a multidimensional construct that encompasses the rites, rituals, beliefs, and assumptions that populate organizations (Ghinea & Bratianu, 2012; Kochan, 2013). One perspective presents organizational culture as social constructs that reflect meanings, which form commonly accepted definitions of social interactions. In another perspective, culture is a symbolic construct characterized by telling stories about an organization. Symbols have meaning and come from past collective experiences. Organizational culture refers to the values, behaviors, and processes used to conduct business within an organization (Tipu, Ryan, & Fantazy, 2012). Organizational culture influences behavior within an organization and corporate culture serves to reinforce the unifying strengths of a unitary concept of central goals and common

responsibility (Ghinea & Bratianu, 2012). Samnani (2013a) cited Festinger's 1957 cognitive consistency theory whereby individuals look for alignment between their values and behaviors and the values and behaviors of others. Yet another perspective is to view culture in a holistic manner as something that refers to the essence and core of an organization. This standpoint describes the reality of the organization and interdependent considerations such as the experience of working there, how people deal with each other, and expected behaviors. Culture reaches deep in unconscious sources and manifests in superficial practices and codes of behavior. Consequently, because organizations are social organisms and not mechanisms, the whole is present in the parts, and symbolic events become microcosms of the whole. The nature of organizational culture differs from workplace to workplace and is dependent on the employees and the accepted values, policies, and practices in any given workplace (Kochan, 2013).

Management scholars can use social network theory to understand how the pattern of social ties between employees relates to power, leading to both predictable and unpredictable consequences (Sozen, 2012). Sometimes employees who occupy lower positions in organizations, such as junior-level secretaries, can be quite powerful, because of the social networks in which they operate (Sozen, 2012). Secretaries might acquire strong positions of brokerage and network centrality through using their social connections between academic and administrative departments to create various types of dependencies (Sozen, 2012). Secretaries can have high power potential in organizations and those who are aware of their strong positions in a social network can use this for self-interests.

Over time, employees of organizations become more homogeneous and an organizational culture develops. The homogeneity sometimes manifests as employees behaving as perpetrators and accomplices in active corrupt behavior (Campbell & Göritz, 2014). *Group atmosphere* refers to employees' attitude to the environment in which they work, and *team atmosphere* refers to the manner in which members of a work team collaborate or compete with each other along with the degree to which they demonstrate respect for, and commitment toward, one another (Domínguez, 2013). Such interactions between team members, which contribute to team atmosphere, are social processes (Domínguez, 2013), and social processes can mediate the effect of bullying (Cassidy, McLaughlin, & McDowell, 2014). Workplace conflict negatively influences individual performance with consequential negative influence on teams and organizational performance (De Wit, Greer, & Jehn, 2011). Conflict may manifest as disengagement, which reduces individual and organization performance (Leung, Chan, & Dongyu, 2011). Some organizational leaders value and encourage aggressive behavior to achieve organizational goals, and such organizational cultures attract bullies (Brotheridge & Keup, 2005). Individuals who engage in bullying behavior and work in organizations that do not condone such behavior are likely to leave that organization for an organization that is more compatible with their bullying activities (Hood, Jacobson, & Van Buren, 2011).

Successful organizations align employee interests and aspirations with those of the organization (Kossek et al., 2012). The challenge and opportunity for leaders of successful organizations is to create a caring organizational culture that includes valuing employee wellness and rewarding effort (Fischer & Martinez, 2013). Such organizations

develop and manage employees' performance in tandem (Kossek et al., 2012), and employees perform better because of the emotional engagement and because they feel content in the workplace (Amible & Kramer, 2011).

Contextual

Bullying can often emerge when one individual continually retaliates against another for some individually undesirable behavior (Bjørkelo, 2013). Workplace bullying can be person-related, task-related, or a combination of both (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2014). Person-related bullying consists of behaviors such as making insulting remarks, excessive teasing, spreading gossip or rumors, persistent criticism, intimidation, and threats. Task-related bullying includes behaviors such as giving unreasonable deadlines or unmanageable workloads, excessive monitoring of work, and assigning meaningless tasks or even no tasks. Workplace bullying can manifest in any of a wide array of negative behaviors such as snide or demeaning comments, direct insults, intimidation, physical or psychological violence, excessive surveillance, rumor spreading, unequivocal shunning, or even less overt acts such as delegation of meaningless tasks (Samnani, 2013b).

The parties involved in a bullying situation may include the bullies, the targets of bullying, and others with varying degrees of visibility (Brotheridge & Keup, 2005). Simple explanations for the existence of workplace bullying that focus on rotten apples (hostile staff, sensitive victims, and weak managers) or bad barrels that facilitate the rotting process (toxic organizational cultures) are inadequate and fail to take account of a predisposition to bullying, the working environment, and culture (Brotheridge & Keup,

2005). Workplace bullying has traditionally included the individual level where a superior, peer, or subordinate singles out, targets, and persistently harasses a colleague to the point of powerlessness and defenselessness (Einarsen et al., 2011). Bullies provoke victims of workplace bullying to react, but they will only do so if they are not dependent on the perpetrator to carry out their work (Hershcovis, Reich, Parker, & Bozeman, 2012). Researchers have also studied institutionalized or depersonalized bullying, which arises when managers manage processes in the workplace or allocate work in an overly abusive or intimidating manner (D’Cruz & Noronha, 2014).

Causes and Organizational Cultural Context

Although causes of workplace bullying commonly emerge from the aggressor’s personality traits, the antecedents that precipitate bullying are often attributable to the organizational context itself (Appelbaum et al., 2012a). For example, some individuals simply have more frequent exposure to and interactions with potential bullies in their daily work; accessibility and proximity, coupled with attractiveness as a target for bullying, provide potential aggressors with both the opportunity and the motivation to aggress others (Brotheridge & Keup, 2005).

Certain organizational contexts that include a predominant focus on productivity, and a significant degree of competition among workers to achieve and obtain scarce or finite rewards, can lead to situations with bullying behaviors (Samnani & Singh, 2014). In such situations, when those who bully meet productivity targets and obtain rewards, they cause the targets or victims to feel obstructed and frustrated. An organization in which bullying thrives can be a consequence of autocratic leadership (Tambur & Vadi,

2012). Effective leaders provide mechanisms and social systems in their organizations that augment positive employee relations and reduce workplace conflict and bullying (Fernandes & Tewari, 2012). In the absence of such mechanisms and social systems, the employee relations climate tends to be more adversarial and uncivil, which leads to increased levels of conflict, bullying and depression among employees (Stansfeld, Shipley, Head, & Fuhrer, 2012). Ineffective and uncivil leaders create a milieu of stress, conflict, bullying, and incivility in their organizations (DeTienne, Agle, Phillips, & Ingerson, 2012; Mehta & Parijat, 2012; Pilch & Turska, 2015).

Expectancy theory provides a framework for interpreting employee behavior and thereby contributes to the understanding of workplace bullying (Nasri, 2012). According to expectancy theory, employees will behave in a certain way because they feel motivated toward a behavior that yields certain desired outcomes (Ebrahimabadi, Jalilvand, Sharif, Salimi, & Khanzadeh, 2011; Manolova et al., 2012). Leadership is central to the occurrence of workplace bullying (Nielsen, 2013), and an organization in which bullying thrives can be a consequence of autocratic leadership (Tambur & Vadi, 2012).

Participative transformational leadership improves employees' performance, which in turn improves organizational performance and sustainability (Ashraf & Khan, 2014; Zahaeri & Shurbagi, 2012). If leaders curtail negative behavior, they foster positive work environments (Laschinger & Fida, 2014). Bullying that organizational leaders allow to continue unchecked becomes a normalized self-perpetuating workplace behavior that escalates and leads to low staff morale and reduced productivity (Laschinger & Fida, 2014).

The work setting contributes to workplace bullying behavior more than the disposition and personality of the bully does (Mathisen, Einarsen, & Mykletun, 2011). Appelbaum et al. (2012a) found that ethical and transformational leadership styles are the most effective counterbullying strategies available to organizations, while Sheppard, Sarros, and Santora (2013) suggested that in complex globalized organizations, collaborative leadership is the most effective type of leadership. Collaborative leadership creates a positive employee relations climate by developing relationships and networks throughout the organization (Maddock, 2011; Williams, 2012). Researchers have found that HR policy and practice can affect employee attitudes and behavior, which in turn can affect organizational performance. The traditional organization response to workplace bullying is to regard the complainants as the cause of the problem (Vickers, 2012). Policies can be effective in the prevention of bullying behaviors if embraced fully, but the policies have been meaningless when their implementation is poor and they lack local-level support (Woodrow & Guest, 2014). Organizational antecedents to workplace bullying include organizational culture and climate, leadership, job design and work organization, and organizational change (Salin & Hoel, 2011; Yang, Caughlin, Gazica, Truxillo, & Spector, 2014). Leaders of successful organizations develop their employees and promote equity, autonomy, self-reliance, and self-management (Al-Zawahreh & Al-Madi, 2012; Thoroughgood, Hunter, & Sawyer, 2011) to avoid the negative effects on work performance of conflict and stress created by workplace bullying (Zhang, Liu, Wang, & Shen, 2011).

Universities are not immune to the scourge of bullies, and bullying in academia causes stress, depression, reduced self-esteem, and suicidal thoughts for faculty and a dysfunctional work environment for the university (Cassell, 2011). An increasing number of researchers have recognized the extent to which the silo environment endemic in universities facilitates workplace bullying (Zabrodska & Kveton, 2013). Workplace bullying is a significant stressor for targets, and such stress results in occupational dysfunction for employees (Avey, Luthans, Hannah, Sweetman, & Peterson, 2012) and reduced productivity (Karam, 2011). Stress specifically affects job satisfaction and employees' commitment to the organization (Kobussen, Kalagnanam, & Vaidyanathan, 2014; Tanaka, Maruyama, Ooshima, & Ito, 2011). Conversely, removing stressors positively affects the performance of the organization through increased productivity and improved job satisfaction (McVicar et al., 2013). Stressful work circumstances and inadequate job resources facilitate the occurrence of workplace bullying (Van den Broeck, Baillien, & De Witte, 2011). Workers with adequate resources sometimes engage in bullying behavior because they have the freedom to do so (Van den Broeck et al., 2011). Interpersonal counterproductive work behaviors, and Ho (2012) described them as deliberately premeditated and calculated to inflict harm on a workmate and sometimes prevent victims from carrying out their duties. Workplace bullying is an interpersonal counterproductive work behavior that causes severe stress to victims (Tetrick & Campbell-Quick, 2011). Bullying humiliates victims and perpetuates a difficult and unhealthy environment in the workplace (Tambur & Vadi, 2012).

Workplace bullying has a negative effect on both the physical and the mental health of employees, and using prevention and promotion interventions by employers to handle this phenomenon improves both (Tetrick & Campbell-Quick, 2011). The public health model subscribes to preventative rather than reactive strategies by management to ameliorate the negative effects of stressors in the workplace (Mellor, Karanika-Murray, & Waite, 2012). Positive management action to reduce workplace conflict results in improved levels of work-life satisfaction (Cegarra-Leiva, Sánchez-Vidal, & Cegarra-Navarro, 2012; Heaney, 2011) and improved well-being (Greenhaus & Allen, 2011). The effective management of conflict such as workplace bullying and the provision of support mechanisms for employees to cope with bullying improves employee perception of fairness and equity in the workplace and positively influences organizational performance (Rodwell, Noblet, & Allisey, 2011; Tessema, Tsegai, Ready, Embaye, & Windrow, 2014).

Effects of Bullying

Workplace bullying is a major hazard that may have detrimental effects on the psychological well-being and even biological health of victims and others who become involved (Appelbaum et al., 2012a; Lovell & Lee, 2011; Tuckey & Neall, 2014; Jenkins, Winefield & Sarris, 2013). Workplace bullying affects both individuals and organizations (Fox & Cowan, 2014). Individual consequences include posttraumatic stress disorder and depression, while organizational consequences include reduced productivity, absenteeism, staff turnover, and legal costs (Glambek et al., 2014; McCrystal, 2014). Moral disengagement results in lower job satisfaction and increased levels of workplace

bullying, and Claybourn (2011) found that morally disengaged employees were more likely to make a complaint of workplace bullying. Moral disengagement legitimized a cycle whereby the victims of workplace bullying were able to behave in a disrespectful manner toward work colleagues (Claybourn, 2011). Namie and Namie (2011) identified public humiliation as a potential cause of such behavior and gave an example from the University of Virginia of the catastrophic effect of years of bullying by a senior colleague that resulted in suicide.

Significant consequences exist for organizations where workplace bullying occurs, with such deviant behavior in the workplace affecting both individual victims and organizational performance by creating negative working conditions (Muafi, 2011). Workplace bullying demotivates individuals and teams, disenfranchises potential change agents, increases inflexibility, and becomes a cancer for the organization (Branch, Ramsay, & Barker, 2013). Workplace bullying results in increased sickness and absenteeism (Kobussen et al., 2014), as well as a reduction in job satisfaction, productivity, and employees' perception of fairness and equity in the workplace (Mikkelsen, Høgh, & Puggaard, 2011; Valentine, Fleischman, & Godkin, 2015). The effect of organizational change that increases psychological demands on employees' mental health manifests quickly (Smith & Bielecky, 2012).

Workplace Bullying Through an Irish Legislative Lens

Bullying is a significant issue in the workplace in Ireland. To address this issue, the Irish Government established a Task Force on the Prevention of Workplace Bullying and an Expert Advisory Group on Workplace Bullying in 1999 and 2004, respectively. In

addition, leaders at the Economic and Social Research Institute commissioned two surveys on the issue of bullying in the workplace in 2001 and 2007. According to the 2001 Economic and Social Research Institute report, one in 14 Irish workers reported they had experienced bullying at work, and findings from the 2007 report put the incidence of workplace bullying at almost 1 in 13, with higher rates reported for female employees. Knowledge of these findings has led to increased public awareness of bullying in Ireland and to initiatives for tackling bullying in the workplace.

The legal framework for dealing with bullying in the workplace in Ireland is far from straightforward. Employers who strive to avoid successful legal actions against them for bullying in the workplace report difficulties understanding and complying with the law. In this section of my literature review, I focused on the development of the legal framework to cope with workplace bullying regarding common law, legislation, and codes of practice through an Irish lens.

In Ireland, under common law, an employer must take reasonable care for the health and safety of employees. If an employer fails to take reasonable care to protect employees' health and safety and an injury ensues, the employer can be subject to an action for personal injuries, which includes psychological as well as physical injury. According to common law, employers may be liable for the acts of their employees, clients, or customers. Every employer is required to provide safe systems of work free from bullying and harassment. The employment contract implies this duty of care, and breach of this duty may result in an employee bringing a claim for breach of contract in addition to a personal injury claim. Four pieces of primary legislation all deal, directly or

indirectly, with bullying in Ireland: (a) Employment Equality Acts 1998 to 2012, (b) Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005, (c) Industrial Relations Acts 1946 to 2004, and (d) Unfair Dismissals Acts 1997-2007, as amended. In addition to the four pieces of primary legislation, the following three codes of practice deal directly with bullying:

- Code of Practice for Employers and Employees on the Prevention and Resolution of Workplace Bullying (HSA Code of Practice 2007).
- Code of Practice Detailing Procedures for Addressing Bullying in the Workplace (Industrial Relations Code of Practice 2002).
- Code of Practice on Sexual Harassment and Harassment at Work (Equality Authority Code of Practice 2002).

Employment Equality Acts 1998 to 2012. Bullying and harassment are two separate issues, and harassment does not constitute bullying as defined in Ireland. According to the 2002 HSA Code of Practice, bullying is legally distinct from harassment, because membership of any distinct group is not the basis of bullying behavior. Harassment includes a requirement that a victim be a member of one of nine protected categories of persons as set out in equality legislation. The nine protected categories are gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race, and membership of the Traveler Community.

Definitions of sexual harassment and harassment on the nongender grounds of discrimination appear in Section 14A of the Employment Equality Acts 1998 to 2012, which provide that

- references to harassment are to any form of unwanted conduct relating to any of the discriminatory grounds;
- references to sexual harassment are to any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature, which violates a person's dignity and creates an intimidating, hostile, and degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for the person; and,
- such unwanted conduct may consist of acts, requests, spoken words, gestures or the production, display or circulation of written words, pictures or other material. (p. 12)

The definitions do not place any limitation on the type of conduct against which an individual might complain, although complainants must provide evidence of the conduct they are alleging they were subject to in order to establish, on the balance of probabilities, prima facie evidence of discrimination. Section 15 of the Employment Equality Acts renders an employer liable for the acts of employees undertaken in the course of employment, whether the acts occur with the employer's knowledge and consent or not. Employers can avoid liability by proving that they took reasonable steps to prevent the particular act of discrimination or that type of act.

Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005. The provisions of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 amended the earlier Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 1989 to provide further protection for employees in their place of work. The enactment of this act clarified the responsibilities of employers, the self-employed, employees, and various other parties in relation to safety and health at work. The act also

prescribed the role and functions of the HSA and the specific enforcement measures and penalties that may apply for breach of occupational safety and health.

In the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005, lawmakers placed an onus on employers to prevent improper conduct and behavior. The purpose of this additional provision is to prevent workplace bullying and any other behavior that has the potential to endanger the safety, health, and welfare of employees at work. Since the amendment of the act in 2005, employers must implement bullying and harassment prevention procedures for the first time. The notion of improper conduct, referred to in Section 8, does not include a definition in the act. Under common law, however, employers have a general duty of care toward employees, with six specific duties for employers identified, some of which overlap with Safety, Health and Welfare at Work obligations. These duties are that an employer must provide a safe system of work; an employer must provide a safe place of work; an employer must provide safe equipment, machinery, and plant; an employer must engage competent employees and a safe number thereof; there is a duty on the employer to implement rules of conduct so that employees can work in a safe manner; and an employer should inform employees of dangers with which the employees might reasonably not be familiar.

An employee taking a personal injury action under common law must establish that the employer breached the duty of care and that the reasonably foreseeable consequence of that breach caused the injury or damage. If an employer has knowledge, or should have knowledge, employees are bullying, harassing, or sexually harassing other employees, the employer faces liability for the wrongful acts of said employees. In such

circumstances, under Irish law, the employer is responsible for protecting employees within the workplace. Although an employer has a general duty of care to employees, in common law cases, the employee will have to prove that there was an injury, that the injury was foreseeable, and that the employer caused the injury by acts or omissions.

The statutory duties of an employer in respect of the safety, health, and welfare of its employees are in Section 8 of the act. In Section 8(2) of the act, the relevant duties of employers are as follows:

1. Managing and conducting work activities to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the safety, health, and welfare at work of his or her employee.
2. Managing and conducting work activities to prevent, so far as is reasonably practicable, any improper conduct or behavior likely to put the safety, health, and welfare at work of his or her employees at risk.

According to Section 8(2[h]) of the 2005 act, employers must determine and implement the safety measures necessary to ensure the safety, health, and welfare of their employees. The employer must first carry out a risk assessment to identify hazards and then prepare a safety statement, as per Sections 19 and 20 of the 2005 act. Section 13(1[e]) of the act includes the obligations placed on employees, such as the requirement not to engage in improper conduct or behavior that is likely to endanger one's own safety, health, or welfare at work or that of any other person.

The duties of employers appear in the 2005 act by reference to what is reasonably practicable. Reasonably practicable means that an employer has exercised all due care by implementing the necessary protective and preventive measures, identified the hazards,

and assessed the risks to safety and health likely to result in accidents or injury to health at the place of work. This definition imposes a high standard on employers, who must demonstrate that they have taken all reasonably foreseeable steps against risk. The High Court considered the relevance of the health and safety legislation to a claim for occupational stress in the case of *McGrath v. Trintech Technologies Limited and Trintech Group Plc* (2004). In this case, the High Court judge found that the health and safety legislation in force at that time protected psychiatric health and protected employees from psychiatric injuries in the workplace. The judge stated,

It is undoubtedly the case that the general duties imposed by the Act of 1989 extend to the protection of the psychiatric health of employees and comprehend the obligation to provide assistance and measures which safeguard the employee against psychiatric injury induced by the stress and pressures of the employee's working conditions and work load.

A judge also expressly referred to statutory health and safety obligations in the case of *Quigley v. Complex Tooling and Moulding* (2008) when the judge found that employers have an obligation to protect their employees from mental injury, that is, stress, harassment, and bullying in the workplace. In the case of *Sweeney v. The Board of Management of Ballinteer Community School* (2011), the judge imposed liability on an employer for a breach of duty in respect of health and safety at common law and under statute. In this case, the plaintiff had a history over the previous 3 years of absence from work because of work-related stress. The judge held that the school principal had known, or ought to have known, that this history rendered the plaintiff vulnerable to some form

of mental illness such as a nervous breakdown. The judge stated that the employer owed the plaintiff a direct duty of care, as her employer, both at common law and by virtue of the provisions of the Safety Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005, to take reasonable care to prevent her from suffering mental injury in the workplace as a result of being harassed or bullied by other employees, if the employer knew or ought to have known that such was occurring.

The concept of penalization emerged in health and safety law under Section 27 of the 2005 Act. Penalization refers to any act or omission by an employer, or a person acting on behalf of an employer, with respect to any term or condition of any employee's employment. This includes any act by an employer that disadvantages an employee. Examples of penalization include suspension; lay-off; dismissal; demotion or loss of opportunity for promotion; transfer of duties; change of location of place of work; reduction in wages or change in working hours; imposition of any discipline, reprimand, or other penalty (e.g., a financial penalty); and coercion or intimidation. The definition is broad and encompasses any act or omission by an employer or person acting on an employer's behalf, affecting employees to their detriment with respect to any term or condition of their employment. In applying Section 27, the officers of the Labor Court have made it very clear that there must be a causal connection between the conduct of the employee, which is most commonly the existence of a complaint under the 2005 act, and the imposition of a detriment by the employer.

Industrial Relations Acts 1946 to 2004. The primary purpose of the Industrial Relations Acts 1946 to 2004 was to establish the institutional mechanisms for the Irish

system of industrial relations, namely, the Labor Relations Commission, the Labor Court, the rights commissioners, joint labor committees, and joint industrial councils. Under this act, the Labor Court may consider the effects of workplace bullying relating to workers' conditions of employment, which is presented as a trade dispute. The general basis for a claim is that a trade dispute must exist. A trade dispute is a dispute between employer and employee about the employee's terms and conditions of employment. The findings of the Court have always been that because bullying affects an employee's conditions of employment it therefore falls within the definition of a trade dispute. The Executive of the HSA takes the view that enforcement of bullying claims should be under the Industrial Relations acts and not health and safety legislation. The Industrial Relations acts provide mechanisms whereby an employee can bring a claim of bullying or harassment to a rights commissioner or directly to the Labor Court.

Under the Industrial Relations acts, an employee can bring a claim to a rights commissioner in relation to any dispute. For instance, an employee may take a claim for loss of earnings arising from a dismissal. The rights commissioner can only issue a nonbinding recommendation in relation to such a claim. Either party may appeal that recommendation to the Labor Court. Section 13(9) of the 1969 act provides that the decision on appeal of the Labor Court binds parties to the dispute. Section 20(1) of the Industrial Relations Act, 1969 provides for an employee or a number of employees to request the Labor Court to investigate any dispute on condition that the employee agrees that the recommendation will bind him or her, although the recommendation is not enforceable against the employer.

The Industrial Relations Act 1990 established the Labor Relations Commission that also has authority to investigate a dispute. In circumstances where the Labor Relations Commission feels satisfied that no further effort on its part will resolve the dispute, it may ask the Labor Court to investigate and make a recommendation. However, such recommendations are not legally enforceable. The sections of the Industrial Relations Acts 1946 to 2004 under which an individual may seek redress for workplace bullying from the Labor Court are Sections 13(9), 20(1), and 26(1).

Section 13(9) of the Industrial Relations Act, 1969. Under this section, the Labor Court hears appeals of decisions of rights commissioners before in relation to trade disputes. The recommendation of the Court binds the parties to the dispute. Although binding on the parties, the recommendation is not legally enforceable.

Section 20(1) of the Industrial Relations Act, 1969. Section 20(1) of the act provides for an employee or a number of employees to request an officer of the Labor Court to investigate any dispute. The majority of bullying cases taken to the court are under this section. A worker involved in a trade dispute may request an officer of the court to investigate the dispute. Under this section, the worker must agree for the recommendation to bind him or her. The recommendation, however, is not enforceable against the employer.

Section 26(1) of the Industrial Relations Act, 1990. Under this section, when an officer of the Labor Relations Commission has investigated a dispute and that officer feels satisfied that no further progress is possible to resolve the dispute, either party may

request an officer of the court to investigate the dispute and issue a recommendation. The recommendation is not legally enforceable.

Unfair Dismissals Act 1977–2007. Victims of bullying may seek redress under the Unfair Dismissals Acts 1977-2007 if they have been unfairly dismissed from their employment. The provisions of these acts only apply where there is a dismissal. Under normal circumstances, an employer who terminates an employee's employment may be subject to an unfair dismissal claim. In such circumstances, the employer proactively terminates the contract of employment. However, a constructive dismissal claim under the Unfair Dismissals Act 1977–2007 arises where employees terminate their employment but allege that the employer's conduct toward them was sufficiently inappropriate and serious that the resignation was a dismissal. Many of the same provisions in relation to unfair dismissal claims apply to regular and constructive dismissals insofar as the individual must bring the claim within 6 months of the alleged dismissal and the maximum award remains 2 years' gross remuneration. The difference between actual dismissal and constructive dismissal cases rests on where the burden of proof lies. In a typical unfair dismissal claim, the act deems the dismissal unfair, and the onus is on the employer to prove otherwise. In a constructive dismissal claim, however, the employee bears the burden of proving that the resignation was a dismissal.

There is no code of practice under the Unfair Dismissal Acts 1977–2007 and the redress available to a dismissed employee under this act is reinstatement, reengagement, or compensation (up to a maximum of 2 years' salary). The Employment Appeals Tribunal has heard many claims in which employees alleged that their resignation was a

result of the bullying behavior of fellow employees and that the employer failed to adequately deal with the issue. The decision of the Employment Appeals Tribunal in *Allen v. Independent Newspapers (Ireland) Limited* (2001) was that Allen, a crime correspondent with Independent Newspapers, had been constructively dismissed. Allen received the equivalent of 78 weeks' remuneration.

Codes of Practice

Although there is legislative protection from workplace bullying for employees in Ireland, employees may also benefit from the protection of three codes of practice. The three codes of practice for workplace bullying are as follows:

- Labor Relations Commission Code of Practice: This code details procedures for addressing workplace bullying (S.I. 17 of 2002).
- Equality Authority Code of Practice: This code deals with sexual harassment and harassment at work (S.I. 78 of 2002).
- HSA Code of Practice: This code deals with the prevention and resolution of workplace bullying (2007).

Both the Labor Relations Commission and the HSA codes relate to workplace bullying, whereas the Equality Authority code relates only to harassment. Considerable similarities exist between the substantive content of all three codes, including their definitions of bullying and harassment. All three codes oblige employers to develop and implement a policy and procedure for dealing with and resolving complaints of workplace bullying. Although these codes do not have direct legislative effect, failure to comply with the codes will significantly disadvantage an employer's defense of a

complaint of bullying. All three codes require the presence of both an informal and a formal procedure for resolving complaints of bullying.

There is no statutory definition of bullying in Ireland. However, the same definition appears in the HSA and Industrial Relations codes of practice. The HSA Code of Practice became law under Section 60 of the 2005 Act. It is a guide prepared by HSA Ireland for employers and employees and provides practical guidance for employers regarding their ongoing duties under Section 8 of the 2005 Act. Failure to follow the HSA Code of Practice is not an offense in itself, but the HSA Code of Practice is admissible in the event of criminal proceedings under Section 61 of the 2005 act. An employer would find it difficult to defend a personal injuries claim in respect of bullying if the employer had not followed the HSA Code of Practice. The definition of workplace bullying under the HSA Code of Practice is as follows:

Workplace bullying is repeated inappropriate behaviour, direct or indirect, whether verbal, physical or otherwise conducted by one or more persons against another or others at the place of work and/or in the course of employment, which could reasonably be regarded as undermining the individual's right to dignity at work. An isolated incident of the behavior described in this definition may be an affront to dignity at work but, as a once off incident, is not considered to be bullying. (HSA, Code of Practice, p. 5)

The HSA Code of Practice includes a nonexhaustive list of behaviors that are examples of bullying, including exclusion, insults, and intimidation. The HSA Code of Practice also includes an attempt to clarify what is not bullying at work. The dynamic of

workplace engagements and exchanges involves complex relationships in which the distinction between acceptable and unacceptable behaviors may be unclear. Managers are responsible for managing the employment relationship and sometimes exchanges between parties to that relationship may be robust. Managers reasonably exercising their legitimate authority at work do not constitute an occurrence of workplace bullying. Managers and supervisors must direct and control how employees perform work and they are responsible for monitoring and providing feedback on work performance. Feedback that supports improved performance or improved work-related behavior does not constitute bullying; such feedback if provided objectively and constructively is legitimate management action and is a specific responsibility of management. According to the code of practice, bullying at work does not include reasonable and essential discipline arising from the good management of the performance of an employee or justifiable actions taken regarding the safety, health, and welfare of employees. For further clarity, the code of practice includes an example of an employee whose performance is continuously at a level below required targets and who may feel threatened and insecure in the work. The HSA Code of Practice states that this in itself does not constitute bullying.

The HSA Code of Practice confirms that bullying at work can involve people in many work situations and at all levels, including (a) manager or supervisor to employee; (b) employee to supervisor or manager; (c) one employee to another or group to group; (d) customer or business contact to employee; and (e) employee, supervisor, or manager to customer or business contact.

The HSA Code of Practice provides the following list of factors known to signal a risk of bullying at work:

- high turnover of staff, high absenteeism, or poor morale;
- employment tenure such that a bully may regard new, casual, or contract employees as easier targets than permanent employees;
- hierarchies that might involve, for example, technical or nonprofessional employees answering to professionally qualified employees, which can sometimes present higher levels of bullying;
- changes in the workplace that can increase the risk include change in ownership, new manager or supervisor, introduction of new work performance measures or of new technology or internal reorganization;
- management in the workplace, particularly workplaces that do not have an effective management system, which respects persons and monitors and supports work relationships;
- personality differences including petty jealousies, personal biases, or taking advantage of vulnerable or less street-wise individuals;
- gender or age imbalance in the workplace may make bullying more likely; and
- other factors include the composition of the workforce, interface with the public, history of tolerance of unacceptable behavior, lack of or inadequate procedures or disregard of procedures for dealing with bullying.

The Code of Practice for the Prevention of Workplace Bullying (2002) outlines procedures for preventing, identifying, and coping with allegations of bullying in the

workplace. However, even though the code of practice has been in use since 2002, it is still not a binding instrument. A breach of the code is admissible in evidence against an employer in proceedings concerning alleged personal injury because of a complaint of bullying.

Summary and Transition

Section 1 was an introduction to this qualitative explorative multiple-case study on bullying in Irish universities. Workplace bullying results in a reduction in productivity, low morale among employees, and absenteeism. The objective of this research was to explore the cost-reduction strategies that Irish university HR leaders use to manage the consequences of workplace bullying. I ascertained the extent of bullying in the Irish university sector, and I identified the Irish legislative provisions for the management of workplace bullying. I explored the perceptions of HR leaders regarding the cause, effect, and cost of workplace bullying in Irish universities, and I explored leaders' perceptions of the effectiveness of prevention and resolution strategies for workplace bullying, including formal and informal interventions.

The term workplace bullying, which originated in Scandinavia in the early 1990s, refers to persistent abuse, offense, intimidation, incivility, insult, abuse of power, and punitive sanctions toward victims. In this qualitative multiple-case study, I attempted to identify what Irish university leaders need to know about the cost of workplace bullying. I appraised the development of workplace bullying definitions and I considered the role of legislative provisions on organizational workplace bullying policy development in Ireland.

In Section 1, I specified the research method and design for my study and I identified the population for my research. I also conducted a review of the literature pertaining to workplace bullying, and I detailed the conceptual framework for the study. In Section 2, I describe the research method, population, data collection tools, techniques, reliability, and validity. In Section 3, I provide a summary of the study, and I present interpretations and analysis of the interviews conducted. I also make recommendations for action and considered the application of the study to business practice, implications for social change, and further research. Finally, I conclude this study with reflections, summary, and conclusions.

Section 2: The Project

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative, explorative multiple-case study was to explore the cost-reduction strategies that HR leaders at Irish universities use to manage the consequences of workplace bullying. In this study, I ascertained the extent of bullying in Irish universities and identified the Irish legislative provisions. I used a qualitative research design and interviewed HR leaders in all seven Irish universities. I analyzed the causes, effects, and costs of this behavior. I considered how to improve existing policies and procedures and make them more effective. In particular, I carried out a qualitative multiple-case analysis of bullying policies and procedures in all seven Irish universities to learn about HR leaders' experiences in the application of policy. The findings of this study are expected to be a source of valuable information to university leaders who desire to manage bullying better in their institution.

Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher was critical to the reliability, validity, and efficacy of the research. Researchers will exert undue influence on studies if they allow their personal views to influence the collection, interpretation, or presentation of data. Researchers must be cognizant of their personal background, values, and biases and consider how these could affect their interpretation of the data (Creswell & Miller, 2000). The way researchers organize and make sense of research experiences shape their process of theorizing and the actual production of knowledge in a research field (Mikkelsen, 2013).

Reflexivity is an important strategy that enables researchers to analyze and understand their potential bias (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Reflexivity is a required but neglected aspect of shadowing, and spect-acting as a new term will require researchers to take reflexivity more seriously, thereby opening up emancipatory possibilities in the field (Gill, 2011). I employed Chenail's (2011) strategy of interviewing the researcher to identify bias, to establish the adequacy of the questions and data collection, and to discover my feelings about the research problem. The psychological characteristics of the researcher and the interactions between researcher and participants give rise to bias. Early in the research process, researchers must acknowledge and describe their beliefs and biases in relation to the research topic to allow readers to understand their position. As the study proceeds, the researcher must isolate those biases. This validity procedure involves using the lens of the researcher but a lens that is positioned within the critical paradigm where individuals reflect on the social and cultural forces that shape their interpretation.

Researchers can use several options for incorporating reflexivity into a narrative account. Fieldwork is always intersubjective, and as such, the research site emerges out of the coconstruction of the relationship between researcher and participant (Gill, 2011). The audience, mindful of the participation mode of reflexivity while engaged in research, needs to judge a researcher's claims to reflexivity and consider that the researcher may not be in control over his or her own reflexive writing (Mahadevan, 2011). I considered processes among three groups of stakeholders, namely, the researcher, the field, and the audience, as well as their interrelatedness. I escalated the participation mode of

reflexivity to the level of writing, thereby offering a fully conceived view on reflexivity that acknowledged the influence of the field and the audience in my reflexive writing.

In this study, I observed Howitt and Cramer's (2011) general principles of beneficence and nonmaleficence, fidelity and responsibility, integrity (accuracy, honesty, and truthfulness), justice (equality of access to the benefits), and respect for rights and dignity. I also ensured that participants and the institutions they represent remain anonymous, that proceedings are confidential, and that all data associated with the study remain protected (Howitt & Cramer, 2011). I endeavored to remove all possibilities for bias from this study, took every possible step to identify any potential for unconscious bias in both the researcher and the participants, and behaved in an ethical manner, regardless of the dilemmas that arose.

Participants

Ireland has seven universities each governed by and operates under the aegis of the Universities Act, 1997. Authority for the affairs of each university is vested in the Governing Authority of that university in accordance with the Universities Act, 1997. A small sample is perfectly acceptable in a case study (Molenberghs et al., 2014). I hope to achieve 100% response from HR leaders in all seven Irish universities. The participants for this study constitute a census sample. In census sampling, researchers choose participants for a specific purpose, and the rationale for census sampling for this multiple-case study is to work with a specific group to answer research questions regarding workplace bullying in Irish universities. Homogenous census samples are suitable for participatory syntheses (Suri, 2011). The HR leaders responsible for employee relations

from each of the seven Irish universities constitute the population for this study. I decided to include all universities in Ireland in this study to provide a comprehensive account of the degree and cost of workplace bullying in each institution. The participants in this study were HR professionals with knowledge and experiences with which I am familiar, as I work in the university sector. I was able to build a professional working relationship with the study participants in accordance with recommended practice (Swauger, 2011). The seven HR leaders whom I identified to participate are all senior executives who are responsible for employee relations in their respective universities. The participants contribute to the strategic and operational management of the HR function in their university.

Research Method and Design

In this doctoral study, I researched how widespread workplace bullying is in Irish universities. I ascertained what the legislative provisions are to cope with this behavior, and I attempted to identify what information Irish university leaders need regarding the cost of workplace bullying. Finally, I described and assessed the Irish university HR leaders' response to this phenomenon.

Method

I used a qualitative research method in this study and I interviewed HR leaders in all seven Irish universities to establish the causes, effects, and costs of bullying behavior. Researchers should use qualitative methods when they want to explore a complex research problem in its natural setting, when there is a lack of clarity regarding the research question and theoretical issues, when there is little previous research on the

topic, when the research question relates to the complex use of language, and when participants may feel discouraged by the use of instruments such as multiple-choice questionnaires (Howitt & Cramer, 2011). Workplace bullying is a complex issue about which there is little research in Ireland and is most effectively explored in its natural setting, so I have opted to use a qualitative method.

Research Design

Qualitative research typically begins with the identification of a problem. The resolution or attempted resolution of the problem forms the goal of the research. To keep within the framework, I have formulated a purpose statement that includes the objectives I hoped to achieve. This statement informed the research design I adopted. The five forms of qualitative research are ethnography, phenomenology, case study, narrative, and grounded theory, each of which has systematic data collection and analysis procedures. I considered the five approaches for my research and because ethnography, phenomenology, and case study approaches are especially suited to doctor of business administration research, I concluded that neither narrative research nor grounded theory was suitable for my area of interest.

Narrative research is suitable for exploring lived and told stories in text or discourse format and is particularly suitable for biographical studies and studies of oral histories (Yin, 2014). Narrative research is time consuming because the researcher must develop intimacy with the participants over time. The primary goal of grounded theory is theory building by creating new theory (Howitt & Cramer, 2011). Researchers develop grounded theory in isolation from existing assumptions and theoretical frameworks. I

concluded that neither narrative research nor grounded theory research was suitable for my study.

The focus of phenomenology is on gaining an understanding of what groups of individuals share when they experience a particular phenomenon (Yin, 2014). In a phenomenological approach, researchers study the business problem in a manner that provides an understanding of what the study participants have in common regarding the experience of a particular phenomenon (Yin, 2014). Phenomenology is largely descriptive of the effects of a phenomenon, and its focus on groups and individuals makes it suitable for understanding occurrences in organizations (Yin, 2014).

The focus of ethnography is on describing and interpreting a culture-sharing group. Gill (2011) highlighted the emerging relationship between researcher and participant in the interpretative process, but Butcher (2013) contended that researchers must account for such reflexive intersubjectivity in ethnography and recommended that organizational ethnographers and qualitative researchers recognize that this ethical consideration has consequences for practicing and reporting fieldwork. Many similarities exist between ethnographic and case study approaches to research, although the former has a cultural focus and the focus of the latter is on making sense of the issues. Case study research is particularly germane in providing an understanding of precise organizational phenomena in context, and the chosen design is largely dependent on the nature of the questions asked.

Researchers use case study approaches to provide analyses of the dynamics of social phenomena that explain the functionality or dysfunctionality of behaviors and

processes in an organizational context (Howitt & Cramer, 2011). The focus of the research question in this doctoral study was specific behaviors in the workplace and the consequent responses to them. Such cases are suitable for qualitative methodologies. The researcher operationalizes the strategy for collecting and analyzing data that might answer the questions through methods appropriate to the design (Bazeley, 2013).

I researched a business problem that has been the subject of little research in Ireland to date. Workplace bullying in Irish universities is a complex problem best studied in its natural setting to maximize its understanding. When researchers study topics such as bullying in the field, the research questions may evolve and change to produce rich data. I decided that a multiple-case study design was the most appropriate design for this study and believe that such a design yielded rich data. In this multiple-case study qualitative analysis of bullying policies and procedures in Irish universities, I considered how to improve existing policies and make them more effective by exploring the experience of HR leaders in the application of such policies.

Population and Sampling

The target population for this study was the HR leaders in each of the seven universities in Ireland. The purpose of this qualitative, explorative multiple-case study was to explore which cost-reduction strategies Irish university HR leaders use to manage the consequences of workplace bullying. Human resources leaders are responsible for developing and implementing their organization's policies and procedures in relation to workplace bullying. Researchers find it difficult to obtain a meaningfully large and representative sample for research that requires recruiting respondents from a hard-to-

reach target population (Truong et al., 2013). The participants in this study were a homogenous census sample which is particularly suitable for participatory syntheses (Suri, 2011). My target population was easy to reach for me, and consequently I achieved 100% response from the HR leaders in all seven Irish universities in this multiple-case study analysis. Thus, I clearly described the respondents' real-time perspectives on this business problem and identified the information that Irish university leaders need regarding the cost of workplace bullying both individually and sectorally.

Draper and Swift (2011) noted that in qualitative research, a sample size of between five and 25 is adequate for data collection. The participants are policy makers in each of the seven Irish universities. Because an HR leader in every Irish university was interviewed, sampling and sample size were not a concern. I conducted interviews in a private meeting room in a hotel. I gave each of the seven universities and their respective HR leaders pseudonyms to protect their identity and to preserve anonymity. I labeled the universities from U1 to U7 and the corresponding HR leaders from P1 to P7. The findings of my study may be of interest to business and higher education institution leaders, both nationally and internationally, who wish to reduce the costs and manage the consequences of workplace bullying.

Ethical Research

I applied to the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for approval to conduct my study, which, upon granting approval, issued an approval number 09-14-15-0415258. The purpose of an IRB is to ensure research proposals comply with acceptable professional and legal U.S. standards (Abbott & Grady, 2011). In compliance

with acceptable ethical standards, I sought informed consent from all participants in advance of my study. I ensured I protected the participants' individual and institutional identity by designating a unique alphanumeric code to the participants and the universities. I informed the participants that the interview was voluntary and they could terminate it at any stage. I did not offer any incentives to the participants, but I did offer them a copy of the completed study.

Researchers must engage in ethical decision making, and I underpinned my study with the following guiding principles by Howitt and Cramer (2011): beneficence and nonmaleficence, fidelity and responsibility, integrity (i.e., accuracy, honesty, and truthfulness), justice (i.e., equality of access to the benefits), and respect for participants' rights and dignity. I made every reasonable effort to ensure the research is bias free and I was mindful of the language I used when writing up my findings (Howitt & Cramer, 2011). I will keep transcripts and recordings of interviews behind a secure firewall and password-protected server. To protect the identity and rights of the participants and the institutions, I have encrypted and password-protected all documents; after 5 years, I will shred all paper documents and I permanently delete all electronic data.

Data Collection

Data collection is central to all research activity, and imprecise data collection can affect the integrity of research results (Boateng, 2012). Researchers can collect data for case studies through interviews, direct observation, documentation review, archival records review, and analysis of physical artifacts (Yin, 2014). Researchers should use qualitative methods when they want to explore a complex research problem in its natural

setting, when there is a lack of clarity regarding the research question and theoretical issues, when there is little previous research on the topic, when the research question relates to the complex use of language, and when participants may feel discouraged by using instruments such as multiple-choice questionnaires (Howitt & Cramer, 2011). I am researching a business problem that has been the subject of little research internationally and no research in Ireland. The problem of workplace bullying in Irish universities is a complex issue that needs studying in its natural setting to maximize understanding of it. When studying this topic in the field, the research questions may evolve and change to produce rich data. In Section 2, I described the data collection instruments, the data collection and organization technique, and the data analysis technique for this qualitative explorative multiple-case study.

Instruments

The purpose of this qualitative explorative multiple-case study was to explore the cost-reduction strategies that Irish university HR leaders use to manage the consequences of workplace bullying. I used a qualitative research design and I interviewed HR leaders in all seven Irish universities to answer important questions concerning bullying in their places of work. I analyzed the issue through questions on the causes, effects, and costs of this behavior. Pastore, Carr-Chellman, and Neal (2011) cited a number of data collection instruments including the interview, which is the chosen instrument for this study. Researchers use face-to-face in-depth interviews to gain an understanding of a subject by affording participants the opportunity to expound on their experience of dealing with that phenomenon (Giorgi, 2012). Applebaum (2012) noted that face-to-face interviews

facilitate a superior investigation of a phenomenon, whereas H. J. Rubin and Rubin (2012) stressed the importance of open-ended questions in semistructured interviews. Data gathered through interviews will guide emergent data collection (Bazeley, 2013). Jonson and Christensen (2010) noted the limiting effect of interviews in respect of the number of participants who may participate in the research because of time constraints.

I interviewed the HR leaders from all seven Irish universities in a private interview room, asking open-ended questions to identify themes. The questions were structured to elicit information about whether Irish universities have a policy and procedures to handle workplace bullying, to determine the views of HR leaders regarding the efficacy of such policies, and to explore the experience of HR leaders in the application of such policies.

Data Collection Technique

I collected data for this study by conducting face-to face semistructured interviews. Participants were therefore able to elaborate and expand on their experience of the phenomenon under investigation (Giorgi, 2012). Rubin and Rubin (2012) highlighted the importance of in-depth semistructured interviews, borne along by the seamless flow of questions, to explicate a phenomenon. I used semistructured interviews to identify the information that Irish university leaders need about the cost of workplace bullying. The participants in this study were a homogenous census sample, which is particularly suitable for participatory syntheses (Suri, 2011). Through purposive sampling, I contacted all seven Irish university HR leaders responsible for employee relations by e-mail to request their participation in my study. After participants agreed to

take part, I scheduled interviews by telephone. In advance of conducting interviews, I provided the participants with the list of questions that I intended to ask so they could prepare. I explained to participants that the list of questions was not exhaustive and that I may ask further questions as a result of their responses. I also informed participants that I would audio record the interviews to ensure accuracy (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). I used an Olympus DM-901 4GB Stereo Voice Recorder to record the interviews because I am familiar with this recording device and have used it previously. After the interviews were complete, I transcribed each audio recording and sent the relevant transcript to each participant to confirm its accuracy. I created a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet to label and catalog participants' responses and arranged to retain the recordings and transcripts on a secure firewall and password-protected server for 5 years.

In advance of starting the interviews, I inquired whether participants have any queries regarding the consent form or if they required any clarifications regarding their participation in the study. To assure participants that the interviews are confidential, I advised them that I will redact all individual and institutional names and replace them with alphanumeric codes. Before commencing the interviews, I ensured participants have signed and dated the consent form (see Appendix B). I conducted each interview in a private dedicated meeting room in a hotel, and each interview lasted 2 hours to afford each participant sufficient time to provide an adequate amount of pertinent information for my study.

Data Organization Techniques

Protecting participants' confidentiality and anonymity is essential in research, and I ensured anonymity and confidentiality for all participants by assigning a code to each participant (Gibson, Benson, & Brand, 2012). The principle of confidentiality and informed consent protects the rights of each participant and minimizes the risk of harm (Gibson et al., 2012). I organized the transcribed data collected from the interviews in a Microsoft Word document. I maintained the data from the interviews and all other written records for all participants on a secure firewall and password-protected server (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). I encrypted and password protected all documents and I will permanently delete them from the server after 5 years (Fein & Kulik, 2011).

Data Analysis Technique

The process of data analysis in qualitative research involves converting data to themes by applying codes that lead to a clearer understanding of the data (Yin, 2014). Pattern matching, explanation building, time-series analysis, logic models, and cross-case synthesis are means of analyzing data in qualitative studies (Yin, 2014). After I conducted the interviews and collected organizational documents related to workplace bullying, I analyzed both sets of data to answer my research questions.

I protected participants' individual and institutional identities by attributing a unique alphanumeric code to each participant and each institution. I labeled each of the seven HR participants as P1 to P7 and each corresponding university as U1 to U7. A coding process involves organizing chunks of data into categories that explain the phenomenon under investigation (Brent & Slusarz, 2003). Yin (2014) highlighted the

importance of code segments to signal significant emerging patterns. Three important components of coding are open coding to connect codes to segments of the transcript, axial coding to connect codes to develop themes, and selective coding to compare the main themes (Brent & Slusarz, 2003). I employed thematic analysis to analyze textual data. Banister et al. (2011) highlighted the importance of accurately interpreting and analyzing data in qualitative case studies.

I completed a review of all interviews before I proceeded with data analysis to ensure the credibility of data (Draper & Swift, 2011). Data analysis for this study was participatory, and I involved the participants in the interpretation process. I checked the accuracy and interpretation of the data with the participants through ongoing dialogue using member checking. Following the review and organization of the data in NVivo software, I performed a detailed analysis of the data to identify themes and relationships. NVivo is computer-based qualitative data analysis software used to code and categorize qualitative data.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability and validity in qualitative research are measures of research quality and rigor (Banister et al., 2011). Reliability in research is about the capacity to measure a phenomenon consistently and dependably (Bruce, Pope, & Stanistreet, 2013), and qualitative rigor is a fundamental aspect of qualitative research (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). Qualitative rigor establishes trust and confidence in a research study and facilitates replication with further research samples. The following four tests are common to all

social science research methods to establish quality: reliability, construct validity, internal validity, and external validity (Yin, 2014).

Reliability

In qualitative research, the researcher adopts an exploratory, descriptive, and interpretive approach, as opposed to a confirmatory, explanatory, and nomothetic one, to provide explanations of phenomena under study in their natural environments (Sousa, 2014). Reliability in research is a direct consequence of processes that produce consistent and dependable results that a researcher may replicate (Street & Ward, 2011). The trustworthiness of a research method pivots around the distinct and rigorous description of the methodological steps in the research process; this includes the topic under study, the appropriateness of the participant sample, the research questions, and the data collection and analysis techniques (Sousa, 2014).

Multiple-case study research includes an opportunity for detailed comparisons in diverse situations using multiple data sources (Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013). Houghton et al. (2013) used Lincoln and Guba's 1985 framework of credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability to which they added triangulation, peer debriefing, member checking, audit trail, and reflexivity as effective strategies to establish procedural rigor in research. I employed these strategies to achieve procedural rigor in this multiple-case study and to ensure a consistent data collection process and technique (Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2013).

Validity

Validation of findings in research accentuates trust and confidence in the process and outputs of research (Jeanty & Hibel, 2011). The fundamental tests to establish validity are construct validity, internal validity, and external validity (Yin, 2014). Researchers must address the validity of the research design through internal and external validity checks to ensure they assess all measures for objectivity, reliability, and validity (Howitt & Cramer, 2011). In combination with reflexivity, I will adopt several strategies to ensure the reliability and validity of the data collected during interviews.

Four forms of triangulation are methodological, investigator, theoretical, and data triangulation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Methodological triangulation involves gathering data using more than one method, investigator triangulation involves gathering and interpreting data using more than one researcher, theoretical triangulation involves several theoretical perspectives to interpret the data, and data triangulation involves gathering data from multiple sources. In this study, data triangulation from the interviews and policy documents was the most appropriate validation process. I checked the accuracy of the data, including the interpretation of the data with the participants, using member checking through ongoing dialogue (Morales & Ladhari, 2011). I validated the quality of the data during the interview process through ongoing member-checking with the participants. The member-checking process helped me achieve data saturation and it enabled me to verify the accuracy of my understanding of the study. I requested the participants to review my interpretation and synthesis of their answers to the interview

questions and determined from them if I needed to add any further information. I continued this member-checking process until no further new data or theme appeared.

Following triangulation, I presented negative or discrepant information that runs counter to the themes to present different perspectives. I tested my own tolerance for contrary findings by asking a peer to review the preliminary findings. To enhance the accuracy of the data, I used peer debriefing, which involves a third party reviewing and interpreting the data collected (Morales & Ladhari, 2011). For the peer-debriefing process, I audited and reviewed the study, considered the themes that emerged, and presented the different perspectives in a holistic format appropriate to a qualitative multiple-case study.

Interviewing researchers is a means of identifying bias and a method to assist them in discovering their feelings about the research problem under investigation (Chenail, 2011). I undertook such an interview for this study and I enlisted a colleague to assume the role of the interviewer. This was not a pilot study; rather, it was a mechanism to help me identify my biases. Both parties assumed roles as if in the field to conduct a full-scale recorded interview using the research questions. I used the recording to review the interview for adequacy of the questions, to gather data for the study, and to reflect on my own feelings and biases on the research problem. Chenail (2011) listed the benefits of interviewing the researcher as helping to do the following:

- Identify personal feelings arising during the questioning.
- Develop a better appreciation for the challenge of sharing all one knows about a topic.

- Make overt perspectives that might bias the researcher in the study.
- Learn the value of patience in the interviewing process.
- Gain an appreciation of feelings of heard and not heard.
- Appreciate the vulnerability of the participant.
- Identify a priori assumptions about the participants.

Howitt and Cramer's (2011) principles of beneficence and nonmaleficence, fidelity and responsibility, integrity (accuracy, honesty, and truthfulness), justice (equality of access to the benefits), and respect for people's rights and dignity underpin the validity of this study. Researchers must identify and understand their bias and assumptions (Yin, 2014), and to this end, I employed several strategies when conducting my research. Researcher characteristics and interactions between researchers and participants may give rise to biases. Types of researcher interaction biases include reactions to psychological characteristics of the researcher, reactions to physical characteristics of the researcher, race, gender, age, other characteristics, and reactions to perceived background characteristics of the researcher. An important strategy to understand researcher bias is reflexivity, in which the researcher critically analyzes potential biases. The audience should see this claim to reflexivity in a study (Mahadevan, 2011), so I engaged in reflexivity as an ongoing practice for the duration of my study.

Summary and Transition

The objective of Section 2 of this qualitative explorative multiple-case study was to explore the cost-reduction strategies that Irish university HR leaders use to manage the consequences of workplace bullying. In this study, I ascertained the extent of bullying in

the Irish university sector, and I identified the Irish legislative provisions pertaining to the management of workplace bullying. I explored the perceptions of HR leaders regarding the cause, effect, and cost of workplace bullying in Irish universities, and I explored the leaders' perceptions of the effectiveness of prevention and resolution strategies for workplace bullying, including formal and informal interventions.

The term workplace bullying, which originated in Scandinavia in the early 1990s, refers to persistent abuse, offense, intimidation, incivility, insult, abuse of power, and punitive sanctions to victims. In this qualitative multiple-case study, I attempted to identify what Irish university leaders need to know about the cost of workplace bullying. I also appraised the development of workplace bullying definitions and I considered the role of legislative provisions on organizational workplace bullying policy development in Ireland.

In Section 1, I specified the research method and design for my study, and I identified the population for my research. I also conducted a review of the literature pertaining to workplace bullying, and I detailed the conceptual framework for the study. In Section 2, I described the research method population, data collection tools, techniques, reliability, and validity. In Section 3, I provide a summary of the study and I present an interpretation and analysis of the interviews conducted. I also make recommendations for action and considered the application of the study to business practice, implications for social change, and further research. Finally, I conclude this study with reflections, summary, and conclusions.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

The purpose of this qualitative explorative multiple-case study was to explore the cost-reduction strategies that Irish university HR leaders use to manage the consequences of workplace bullying. In Section 1, I specified the research method and design for my study, and I identified the population for my research. I also reviewed the literature on workplace bullying, and I detailed the conceptual framework for the study. In Section 2, I described the research method population, data collection tools, techniques, reliability, and validity. In Section 3, I now provide (a) an overview of the study, (b) a presentation of the findings, (c) a description of applications to professional practice, and (d) the implications social change. In addition, this section encompasses (e) recommendations for further action (f) reflections, (g) a summary, and (h) the conclusions of the study.

Overview of Study

In this qualitative explorative multiple-case study, I explored the cost-reduction strategies that Irish university HR leaders use to manage the consequences of workplace bullying. I collected data for this study by conducting face-to-face, semistructured interviews with an HR leader from each of the seven Irish universities and by reviewing each university's bullying policy and procedures. Participants were able to and expand on their experience of the phenomenon under investigation in the face-to-face interviews. I used semistructured interviews to identify the information that Irish university leaders need about the cost of workplace bullying. The participants were a homogenous census sample, which is particularly suitable for participatory syntheses (Suri, 2011).

Data triangulation from the interviews and policy documents was the most appropriate validation process in this study. I checked the accuracy of the data with the participants, including the interpretation of the data, using member checking through ongoing dialogue (Morales & Ladhari, 2011). I also validated the quality of the data during the interview process through ongoing member checking with the participants. I asked the participants to review my interpretation and synthesis of their answers and I continued this member-checking process until no further new data or themes appeared.

After I completed the member-checking process and reviewed the bullying policy and procedures in each university, I achieved data saturation. I imported interview data and policy data into NVivo 10 software to identify and classify themes from my data. Based on the main research question for this study, the data analysis of participants' responses, and the analysis of each university's bullying policies and procedures, I identified seven emergent themes from the data: (a) policy, (b) challenges, (c) informal versus formal procedures, (d) prevention, (e) designated contact persons, (f) power, and (g) cost.

Presentation of Findings

The central research question for this study was as follows: What cost-reduction strategies do Irish university HR leaders use to manage the consequences of workplace bullying? I used semistructured interviews to gain an understanding of the cost-reduction strategies that Irish university HR leaders use to manage the consequences of workplace bullying. In addition to semistructured interviews, I also reviewed each university's bullying policy and procedures to triangulate and confirm interview data. I scheduled

each semistructured interview in a private meeting room, and the interviews lasted less than 2 hours.

The theories I selected as appropriate to the conceptual framework for this study were on power, culture, and leadership. The theories are central to the discourse on the business problem of workplace bullying. Bullying behavior is a process of manipulation for power in the workplace whereby subordinates are sometimes subject to demeaning or bullying behavior by managers over time.

Microclimates can thrive in segregated silos from laboratories to small departments in the university environment of teaching and research. The environment creates ongoing opportunities for bullying behavior. The concepts of academic freedom and collegiality may be subject to manipulation and misuse by the bullies of academia, and a robust hierarchical power structure and modus operandi that can exacerbate an already difficult working environment may support such manipulation. Power in academia permeates all relationships, and bullying behavior is a process of manipulation for power or privilege whereby subordinates are sometimes subject to demeaning or bullying behavior by managers over time (Einarsen, 1999).

The participants in this study were a homogenous census sample. Through census sampling, I was able to access relevant information by contacting all seven Irish university HR leaders to secure their participation in my study. I considered how to improve existing policies and procedures and make them more effective, and I analyzed the bullying policies and procedures in all seven Irish universities to learn about HR

leaders' experiences in the application of policy. Through census sampling and member checking, I achieved data saturation (Walker, 2012).

Policy

All seven Irish universities have a policy and procedures for dealing with workplace bullying, which the institutions introduced between 1999 and 2003. This period coincided with an increasing interest in workplace bullying in Ireland and the emergence of stronger protective legislative provisions. The participants concurred that the primary motivation for developing policies and procedures for dealing with workplace bullying was a combination of legislative compliance and following guidelines as they emerged. These two motivating factors emerged in parallel and complemented each other as awareness and recognition grew nationally for the need for clear mechanisms, rules, and definitions for dealing with workplace bullying. Participants also concurred that there was a simultaneous increase in the need for mechanisms for dealing with negative behavior and promoting positive behavior in the workplace as momentum shifted toward decreasing tolerance of workplace bullying. All participants agreed that their policy and procedures for dealing with workplace bullying provided a clear structure for dealing with complaints of bullying.

The late 1990s and early 2000s were the period cited consistently as when the change in national policy began to crystallize. However, the participants did not agree that any one piece of legislation or nationally published guideline was the single motivating factor in the development of their policy and procedures for workplace bullying. Some participants cited the requirement to provide a safe place of work under

health and safety legislation to be of primary importance, whereas others stressed the significance of reputation and their wish for others to see them as a good employer.

All the HR leaders indicated that legislative compliance and national guidelines such as codes of practice were motivating factors in developing a policy and procedures for dealing with workplace bullying. They all also noted that input into the development of the policies came from trade unions, employer representatives, legal advisors, and health and safety publications.

Challenges

Participants reported that the main challenges in dealing with bullying are a combination of definitional issues in terms of employees' understanding of what constitutes bullying and their willingness to make a complaint coupled with the shock of respondents having allegations levied against them. The HR leaders also face challenges in instilling confidence in the parties to the complaint that the complaint and the process will be fair and effective. The juxtaposition of understanding the nature of bullying; the shock of someone labeling them a bully; and the fear, anger, and anxiety of entering into an investigation process creates a cauldron in which already strained relationships can become toxic. All participants acknowledged the significant challenge for HR leaders to manage the juxtaposition of emotion and uncertainty that requires skills of understanding, diplomacy, and emotional intelligence.

P4 cited the greatest challenge as ensuring that employees have confidence in the process of dealing with complaints of bullying, and P2 mentioned the fear of reprisal as a challenge. P2 also highlighted the stigma associated with name tagging as a bully for the

respondent and the difficulty for the complainant in having to continue to work with the alleged bully. P6 cited the unwillingness of some complainants to put their complaint in writing, although all participants stated the processing of a bullying only occurs when the complaint is in writing and references the specific occurrences of bullying along with naming any witnesses to the behavior.

Informal Versus Formal Procedures

All participants agreed that using informal procedures to address complaints of workplace bullying is the preferred option, as the informal procedures have more advantages than the formal procedures. Participants considered the informal procedures to be quicker, less onerous, and more likely to be successful than the formal procedures. All participants held the view that the amount of time invested in formal procedures is disproportionate to a successful outcome. Participants accepted that informal resolution of workplace bullying issues facilitated the repair of damaged relationships, saved time and money, and resulted in long-term solutions. However, P6 expressed the view that the likelihood of a successful outcome using informal procedures was dependent upon the nature of the complaint, the length of time the bullying behavior has been happening, and the parties involved.

Prevention

The primary objective of prevention strategies for workplace bullying is to create a workplace environment in which no one tolerates bullying, and if it should occur, management should recognize it and act upon it. The first step in establishing an effective prevention strategy involves securing the commitment and involvement of all partners in

the organization to a workplace that is free from bullying. An effective prevention strategy is a cooperative and consultative partnership between employers and employees with regard to the health, safety, and welfare of employees at work. The role and responsibility of HR leaders in developing an effective bullying prevention strategy is pivotal. Participants in this study considered that widespread consultation and the participation of staff at all levels of the organization in the development of workplace bullying prevention initiatives are key determinants not only of the acceptance of such initiatives but also in their success. Such consultation results in an open, involved, committed, and participative approach to prevention initiatives and helps employers identify the extent of workplace bullying and the local concerns of employees.

Workplace bullying prevention strategies need to fit with an organization and be realistic and achievable. Participants in this study strongly believed that the best people to decide how to develop these strategies are managers and employees working together. Human resource leaders need to be cognizant of the complexity and dynamics of relationships between individuals and interest groups in organizations when developing prevention programs for workplace bullying. When considering a prevention strategy for workplace bullying, economic considerations are always a factor. However, while economic factors are important, they are not the only factors, and even if the cost of prevention is less than the cost of bullying for organizations, the cost is not the sole determinant for the introduction of bullying prevention programs.

The authors of the Expert Advisory Group Report on Workplace Bullying (2005) recommended that prevention strategies for workplace bullying should include both

active and passive prevention. Passive prevention refers to education and training interventions, public awareness, and the availability of documentation, and active prevention consists of early intervention by management, the role of the employer's safety statement to identify and codify organizational responses to workplace bullying, and the role of structures and hierarchy within the organization.

The authors of the Task Force on the Prevention of Workplace Bullying (2001) suggested that a prerequisite for an effective antibullying policy is a working environment that involves actively discouraging bullying. All participants in this study noted the importance of ensuring managers receive training in social skills, including communication, conflict resolution, leadership, stress management, and team building. A further requirement is to ensure employees are aware of the effect of workplace bullying and of the redress available through training interventions in the event they are a victim. Human resource leaders have a responsibility to raise awareness of workplace bullying among staff, clarify management's position in relation to bullying, and provide clear guidelines for how to report and manage incidents. It is important at the early stage of developing preventative strategies for management to state that bullying is unacceptable, to indicate its commitment to an environment that is free from bullying, to note the importance of reporting incidents of bullying behavior, and to demonstrate a commitment to follow-up actions on incidents of bullying behavior.

The participants used a variety of strategies to promote awareness of their organization's attitude toward workplace bullying, including training and information sessions, staff meetings, staff bulletins, intranet, informal discussion groups, and trade

union meetings. The HR leaders also promote awareness at induction training for new employees and when engaging contractors. Participants highlighted the requirement for ongoing training and awareness programs for all staff with respect to workplace bullying. A further requirement is for a regular and robust auditing of the effectiveness of policies and the introduction of new policies or the amendment of existing policies as required. All seven Irish universities have policies and procedures for dealing with workplace bullying, but management does not always review or amend them regularly, and I found that a training and awareness program was available for staff in only two of the seven Irish universities. Irish university HR leaders need to consider introducing a strict regime of policy review to ensure policies are current in the application of best practice. They also need to provide regular training and awareness programs for staff.

The authors of the Task Force on the Prevention of Workplace Bullying (2001) proposed that employers should consider developing a dignity at work charter in which employers put in place specific awareness-raising and training initiatives for employees with regard to workplace bullying. Four of the seven participants indicated that they did not have a training program on workplace bullying in place at their university for managers. However, only two participants provided dignity and respect training for all other staff. The absence of appropriate awareness-raising and training initiatives for staff in Irish universities is a gap that Irish university HR leaders ought to consider addressing in view of the recommendations from the Task Force on the Prevention of Workplace Bullying.

Designated Contact Persons

Allowing a victim of bullying to navigate through the difficult process of initiating a complaint of workplace bullying without adequate support demonstrates a significant management failure. The authors of the HSA (2007) code recommended that employers must appoint at least one designated contact person with whom employees may consult for information and for reflecting on next-step strategies. The role of a designated contact person is a voluntary role of facilitation, and this person is the first point of contact for someone who believes someone is bullying them. The designated contact person has a listening brief and acts as a point of reference for both the complainant and the respondent.

The designated contact person does not have any other role in the complaint procedure and is not an advocate or a representative for either party. The designated contact person has a significant role to play in advising employees of the informal and formal procedures in place for dealing with workplace bullying complaints. All participants in this study extolled the value and the virtues of designated contact persons in ameliorating the effect of workplace bullying in their university.

Power

All participants considered the role of power and the abuse of power in workplace bullying. Power relationships are intrinsic to groups because of the social connectedness of group members (Schumann et al., 2014), and the manner in which people exercise power in an organization influences the incidence of bullying in Irish universities. All

participants viewed positional power as an important determinant and antecedent for bullies to exercise control over a target of workplace bullying.

Organizational structure, hierarchy, and resource allocation are key determinants of the nature of relationships in the workplace. There are circumstances, particularly in academia, when employees may be dependent on a member of faculty for promotional opportunities, and participants observed that this dependency power is susceptible to abuse. This power rests with those who have control over scarce resources, and the dependency rests with those who require these resources. Participants perceived how these controls create power differentials in organizations, which may provide opportunities to abuse power. These opportunities, according to participants, may translate into bullying behavior.

Participants stated how the possession of power tends to influence those in positions of power and how their perception of themselves and others may change because of this ownership. The transformed metamorphic effect of power can lead a person in a position of power to believe that normal rules of behavior do not apply to them, which provides an opportunity to abuse power, which may manifest in tolerating acceptable levels of bullying behavior that permeate the organization. According to participants, the manner in which people exercise power in an organization can directly affect the level of bullying in that organization.

Costs

Aside from the effect of workplace bullying on victims, which is significant, there are practical business reasons why organizational leaders must take workplace bullying

seriously. The costs associated with this behavior are significant for organizations. The general business problem for this study was that workplace bullying has negative consequences, including costs, for individuals and organizations (Appelbaum et al., 2012a). Employees who demean and degrade coworkers cost organizations billions of dollars every year (Georgakopoulos et al., 2011). Appelbaum et al. (2012a) noted that 1.7 million Americans and 11% of British workers experienced bullying at work in a 6-month period, and according to McTernan et al. (2013), workplace bullying costs an estimated AU\$690 million per year in Australia. Workplace bullying is morally reprehensible (Guest & Woodrow, 2012), diminishes organizational efficiency and productivity, and costs the economy of the United Kingdom £3.575 billion per year (Boddy, 2011).

All participants mentioned the high financial and personal cost of workplace bullying for their organization and cited increased absenteeism, lower productivity, higher turnover, diminished staff morale, and increased health-benefit costs as direct effects of workplace bullying. P4 cited one case of workplace bullying that had direct costs of €60,000 before considering the secondary costs on the organization and other employees. The individuals bullied, the organizations in which the bullying occurs, the extended family of the victims of workplace bullying, and the state bear the costs of workplace bullying.

All participants concurred that the cost of workplace bullying is enormous. These costs are both direct-effect costs and indirect-effect costs that occur from a trickle-down or disruptive ripple effect. The direct-effect costs include two different types of lost or

misdirected work hours. First is the management time and effort consumed in addressing what can be time-consuming issues when dealing with complaints of bullying. Related to this is time management expended on dealing with indirect effects, as the disruption caused by workplace bullying often affects coworkers. Workplace bullying is a major stressor for employees (Carr et al., 2011) that results in lower productivity, high turnover rates, increased staffing costs, and high absenteeism (Akakandelwa & Jain, 2013; Devonish, 2014; Walinga & Rowe, 2013). Workplace bullying costs the U.K. economy £3.575 billion per year (Boddy, 2011), and internationally, organizational leaders spend billions of dollars each year dealing with the stress-related costs associated with workplace bullying (Burton et al., 2012; Spurgeon et al., 2012). One participant noted that there could also be damaging reputational costs either locally or nationally depending upon the fallout from the occurrence of alleged bullying in the workplace.

The most celebrated Irish case of constructive dismissal relating to work-related stress injury because of bullying is the Employment Appeals Tribunal decision in *Liz Allen v. Independent Newspapers* in 2001. In this case, Ms. Allen, a journalist with Independent Newspapers, claimed a colleague was ignoring her and refusing to communicate with her. She also claimed that her manager behaved in an antagonistic and impatient manner toward her. Ms. Allen resigned her position with Independent Newspapers and claimed constructive dismissal. The tribunal upheld her claim and awarded her IR£70,500 compensation. The ruling of the Tribunal was that the treatment she received undermined her confidence and health to such a degree that she could not tolerate her working environment and had no other option but to resign.

All participants emphasized the effect of workplace bullying cases on individuals, teams, and the organization. The reputational damage that accrues because of the publicity surrounding some cases was also a concern for some participants. According to the participants, most cases of workplace bullying take over 6 months to resolve. Therefore, the costs continue to accrue for the organization over that period, and in some cases, the process damages relationships beyond repair and departments become dysfunctional. All participants noted that academic managers failed to understand the importance of developing and sustaining positive relationships among their staff. P5 captured the sentiment expressed by all participants:

They don't get it from the top down; and if they got it, by God because of the intellectual horsepower they have, if they could just work on the relationship bit, all of us would be in the top 50 universities in the world. . . . I wish they [swear word redacted] got it.

The view expressed by P5 was shared by all participants, but the passion with which P5 expressed it encapsulated the real cost of the business problem of workplace bullying in Irish universities.

Applications to Professional Practice

The intent of this research was to explore the cost-reduction strategies that Irish university HR leaders use to manage the consequences of workplace bullying. The findings of this study are a source of valuable information to university leaders who desire to manage bullying better in their institution. Specifically, the study findings will contribute to the discourse on workplace bullying in universities in Ireland.

Irish university leaders may find the data obtained for the study will help to understand a phenomenon that costs their institutions a substantial amount in human capital. Given that workplace bullying is a major stressor for employees (Carr et al., 2011) that results in lower productivity, high turnover rates, increased staffing costs, and high absenteeism (Akakandelwa & Jain, 2013; Devonish, 2014; Walinga & Rowe, 2013), it behooves business leaders to understand workplace stress in general and bullying in particular. Organizational leaders endeavor to motivate employees to maximize productivity and output, and when employees suffer from workplace stress associated with workplace bullying, they are unable to function effectively and fulfill their working responsibilities (Avey et al., 2012). Business performance improves when business leaders manage workplace bullying by reducing absenteeism and increasing productivity (McVicar et al., 2013). If Irish university HR leaders manage workplace bullying behavior effectively, they will improve their organization's effectiveness because business performance improves when business leaders reduce absenteeism and increase productivity (McVicar et al., 2013). The use of both formal and informal procedures to deal with complaints of workplace bullying is a critical decision for HR leaders, and the choice of which intervention is most effective is case dependent.

Informal Procedures

Although causes of workplace bullying commonly emerge from the aggressor's personality traits, the antecedents that precipitate bullying are often attributable to the organizational context itself (Appelbaum et al., 2012a). Managers are responsible for managing the employment relationship, which on occasions may be robust. The

traditional organization response to workplace bullying is to regard the complainants as the cause of the problem (Vickers, 2012). The informal procedure for dealing with workplace bullying is a problem-solving approach aimed at attempting to ensure the behavior that caused the initiation of the complaint, if established in fact, stops and the restoration of working relationships. In the informal procedure, managers should assess the allegation and address the issues surrounding it using agreed-upon procedures in a consistent, systematic, transparent, and unbiased fashion and seek to have an intervention addressing the issue in place as soon as practicable. The overriding objective for having an informal procedure entered into with the consent of both parties is to restore a harmonious employee relations climate over the medium to long term. The desired outcome from an informal procedure may be an agreed set of rules of engagement between the parties in which there is agreement around the method or style of interaction between employees in the future. A manager unrelated to the parties or events surrounding the complaint should conduct this process. However, in small organizations with limited internal structures, the services of an independent external expert may be necessary. Both parties to the conflict should receive support as required, including counseling, training, or any other appropriate support. Where a complaint is vexatious, the matter should proceed through the disciplinary procedures.

Formal Procedures

The formal procedure is a prescribed investigative approach to determine the facts and the credibility or otherwise of a bullying complaint. A formal procedure begins if an informal procedure cannot resolve the complaint of bullying or if the bullying behavior

persists following the informal procedure. To initiate the formal procedure, the complainant must make a formal complaint outlining the details of the alleged bullying behavior, including dates and the names of witnesses where possible. Management should advise both the complainant and the respondent of the objectives of the formal process, the procedures to follow, the time frame involved, and the possible outcomes. Both parties should receive an assurance of support as required throughout the process and should receive a copy of the organization's policy and procedures for workplace bullying.

If the result of a complaint is an acknowledgment of bullying behavior as a health hazard, organizational leaders must eliminate the risk of the bullying behavior continuing or occurring later. Therefore, the complaint also becomes a disciplinary matter, and the employer should follow the appropriate disciplinary procedures. Employers have a duty to respondents to ensure that both parties to a conflict and all others involved are aware if they find no wrongdoing. Employers have a duty to ensure there is no victimization in these circumstances. The HSA (2007) recommended that all bullying policies should have an appeal procedure. Another independent party should carry out the appeal, and an employer should append the grounds and outcome of the appeal to the investigation file. The effect of a formal investigation process to a workplace bullying conflict on all parties and the peripheral divisive fallout to the wider work team is significant and needs further attention. Both parties to the conflict and the wider team should receive support as required, including counseling, training, or any other appropriate support. Where a

complaint emerges as vexatious, the matter should progress through the disciplinary procedures.

Implications for Social Change

Findings from this research may facilitate a positive impact on social change. Through this qualitative explorative multiple-case study, I offer leaders an understanding of the effect that workplace bullying has on employees and on their organizations. Management interventions regarding workplace bullying improve productivity and reduce illness and absenteeism-related costs (Wolever et al., 2012). This study may contribute to social change by enabling an improvement in employees' psychological well-being and a reduction in employees' physical ill health (Walinga & Rowe, 2013). Informed university leaders may be better able to manage inappropriate behaviors and address this business problem before individual employees who are targets of workplace bullying take action. This study may be of interest and benefit to other business audiences beyond the target audience, which is the university sector in Ireland.

Knowledge gained from this study may lead to an opportunity for social change by informing HR leaders how workplace bullying can result in lower productivity, higher turnover, and health-benefit costs for organizations (Vickers, 2014; Walinga & Rowe, 2013). A significant relationship exists between job satisfaction, turnover intention, and bullying (Ertureten et al., 2013). Organizational leaders need to develop and implement policies, procedures, and protocols to enhance employee well-being and safety. Such action discourages incivility and bullying behaviors and encourages a positive social-psychological workplace (Geller, 2015; Karam, 2011).

The public health model subscribes to preventative rather than reactive strategies by management to ameliorate the negative effects of stressors in the workplace (Mellor et al., 2012). Knowledge gained from this research may empower HR leaders to engage in positive management action proactively to reduce workplace conflict that results in improved levels of work-life satisfaction (Cegarra-Leiva et al., 2012; Heaney, 2011) and improved well-being (Greenhaus & Allen, 2011). The effective management of conflict such as workplace bullying and the provision of support mechanisms for employees to cope with bullying improve employee perceptions of fairness and equity in the workplace and positively influence organizational performance (Rodwell et al., 2011; Tessema et al., 2014). In addition, an evaluation of the effectiveness of training programs to assist managers to deal with workplace bullying could increase the effectiveness of an organization's bullying policy and could contribute to the organization's competitiveness.

Recommendations for Action

Human resource leaders can proactively assist their organizations by managing conflict behavior such as workplace bullying. Workplace bullying occurs in organizations in which employees have increased workloads and conflict management is ineffective (Feldt et al., 2013; Fischer & Martinez, 2013). Increased workloads and ineffective conflict management, coupled with poor communication, organizational change, and weak leadership styles, create an environment in which bullying thrives (Almadi et al., 2013; Kalliath & Kalliath, 2012; Tambur & Vadi, 2012). It is incumbent on HR leaders, therefore, to manage workloads and deal with conflict effectively.

Effective leaders need to provide mechanisms and social systems in their organizations that augment positive employee relations and reduce workplace conflict and bullying (Fernandes & Tewari, 2012). In the absence of such mechanisms and social systems, the employee relations climate tends to be more adversarial and uncivil, which leads to increased levels of conflict, bullying, and depression among employees (Stansfeld et al., 2012). Ineffective and uncivil leaders create a milieu of stress, conflict, bullying, and incivility in their organizations (DeTienne et al., 2012; Mehta & Parijat, 2012; Pilch & Turska, 2015).

Recommendations for Further Research

I recommend that researchers conduct studies to explore problems related to workplace bullying not covered in this study to address the limitations and delimitations of my study. From the early studies on the topic of workplace bullying in Scandinavia to the present day, the multiplicity of definitions of workplace bullying continues to pose a challenge for comparative analysis. The diverse manifestation of bullying in a wide range of different behaviors exacerbates this challenge. Most theorists agree that, although it may be distressing, harmful, or an affront to an individual's dignity, a single incident of inappropriate behavior does not constitute workplace bullying. The common thread running through all definitions of workplace bullying is of an aggressor demonstrating repeated mistreatment and incivility toward a victim at work (Appelbaum et al., 2012b). I propose that the requirement for the behavior to be repeated fails to acknowledge the effect of a significant single incident that could damage the target and the organization and by definition still not be labeled as workplace bullying. There is scope for further

research into the effect of significant single-incident behaviors, especially such behaviors that involve a power imbalance.

The legislative framework regarding workplace bullying presents a complex and evolving challenge for both employers and employees, with much of the relevant Irish case law, codes of practice, and legislation appearing within since 2000. However, legislation and case law support the effective use of a robust policy and procedure for dealing with bullying claims. In this study, I focused on developing the legal framework to cope with workplace bullying regarding common law, legislation, and codes of practice through an Irish lens.

The duties of employers that appear in the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 reference what is reasonably practicable. Reasonably practicable means that an employer has exercised all due care by implementing the necessary protective and preventive measures, identified the hazards, and assessed the risks to safety and health likely to result in accidents or injury to health at the place of work. This definition imposes a high standard on employers, who must demonstrate that they have taken all reasonably foreseeable steps against risk. It is necessary to prove an injury or damage was foreseeable in a common law personal injury case. An employee taking a personal injury action under common law against an employer must not only establish that the employer breached the duty of care but that such breach caused the injury or damage complained of and that such injury or damage was a reasonably foreseeable consequence of that breach. The requirement of foreseeability in the case of bullying and harassment is problematic, as it is difficult to predict the effect of workplace conditions, workload, and

other factors on individual employees. Employees react differently to conflict and bullying and while some employees may robustly defend themselves against bullies, others may have a predisposition toward capitulation in similar circumstances. Although an employer may attempt to use this as a defense against a claim, it is unlikely to succeed. I propose that researchers explore the efficacy of such a line of defense in the Irish courts.

An effective strategy for preventing workplace bullying is one of a cooperative and consultative partnership between employers and employees with regard to the health, safety, and welfare of employees at work. The HSA (2002) code of practice on the prevention of workplace bullying is prescriptive in describing the format of a bullying policy that should contain both informal and formal procedures for resolving workplace bullying issues. In this study, I established that all seven universities have a workplace bullying policy and procedures.

The HSA (2002) Code of Practice on the prevention of workplace bullying includes a recommendation that workplace bullying policy should include both informal and formal procedures for resolving workplace bullying issues. All participants indicated their preference to embrace informal procedures to deal with allegations of workplace bullying. The HSA (2002) Code of Practice includes a recommendation to use the informal approach as the most effective means of dealing with workplace bullying and the least stressful for all parties. According to the HSA (2002) Code of Practice the formal investigation process is more adversarial and more stressful than the informal process, because while formal investigations may be successful in apportioning blame,

they have no role in restoring workplace relations, and they may actually lead to further conflict by creating divisions in the workplace. These divisions emerge because the investigative process encompasses witnesses, evidence, submissions, and responses to achieve the goal of determining where blame lies. This process is divisive and may exacerbate relationships that are already fractious because of conflicting evidence from the protagonists. The consequence is that, irrespective of the outcome of the formal investigation, both the alleged target and the alleged perpetrator will struggle to return to a normal working relationship following a formal investigation. Evidence-based research does not support this view, but it is the view expressed in the HSA (2002) Code of Practice, and it is also my view. Creative and innovative approaches to resolve workplace bullying are necessary at the earliest possible stage and as local as possible before the conflict escalates to a formal procedure. There is scope for further research into the effectiveness of formal and informal procedures for managing complaints of workplace bullying.

The cause of workplace bullying continues to be a matter of debate in the literature, possibly because of the absence of a universally accepted definition of bullying and the tendency for definitions to be culturally dependent. Another reason may be the complex nature of bullying, stress, and conflict. Managers are responsible for managing the employment relationship, and sometimes exchanges between parties in that relationship may be robust. Further research into the significance of situational, organizational, and socioeconomic risk factors is necessary with respect to workplace bullying.

Reflections

My doctoral study journey was challenging, and it is the greatest achievement of my life. Although it was challenging, it was also an edifying and insightful journey of self-actualization and self-realization; in short, it was a source of pride and achievement. The topic for this study arose from my desire to explore the cost-reduction strategies that Irish university HR leaders use to manage the consequences of workplace bullying. I hope the findings and recommendations of this study are a source of valuable information to university leaders who desire to manage bullying more effectively in their institution.

When I started this doctoral journey, I did not have any preconceived notions about the findings. Nevertheless, I mitigated any potential personal bias by using member checking during the data collection phase. The member checking afforded the participants the opportunity to correct errors of fact and errors of interpretation and gave them the opportunity to challenge both the transcribed data and my analysis of the emergent themes. I continued the member-checking process until no further new data or theme appeared. Workplace bullying costs the U.K. economy £3.575 billion per year (Boddy, 2011), and internationally, organizational leaders spend billions of dollars each year dealing with the stress-related costs associated with workplace bullying (Burton et al., 2012; Spurgeon et al., 2012). Therefore, the case to explore the cost-reduction strategies that Irish university HR leaders use to manage the consequences of workplace bullying was compelling. The process of addressing the research question involved a journey from the Nordic beginnings of research into the phenomenon of workplace bullying and to the exploration of bullying policies in Irish universities while considering

cause, effect, cost, legislation, and prevention and resolution strategies. In this study, I answered my central research question and the associated subquestions. I also identified further research opportunities that may add to the body of knowledge on the phenomenon of workplace bullying. Furthermore, I identified some significant applications to professional practice and implications to social change.

Summary and Study Conclusions

The purpose of this qualitative explorative multiple-case study was to explore the cost-reduction strategies that Irish university HR leaders use to manage the consequences of workplace bullying. In Section 1, I introduced the qualitative explorative multiple-case study on bullying in Irish universities. Workplace bullying results in a reduction in productivity, low morale among employees, and absenteeism. I ascertained the extent of bullying in the Irish university sector, and I identified the Irish legislative provisions for managing workplace bullying. I explored the perceptions of HR leaders regarding the cause, effect, and cost of workplace bullying in Irish universities, and I explored leaders' perceptions of the effectiveness of prevention and resolution strategies for workplace bullying, including formal and informal interventions.

The term workplace bullying, which originated in Scandinavia in the early 1990s, refers to persistent abuse, offense, intimidation, incivility, insult, abuse of power, and punitive sanctions toward victims. In this qualitative multiple-case study, I identified what Irish university leaders need to know about the cost of workplace bullying. I also appraised the development of workplace bullying definitions and considered the role of

legislative provisions on organizational workplace bullying policy development in Ireland.

In Section 1, I specified the research method and design for my study, and I identified the population for my research. I also conducted a review of the literature pertaining to workplace bullying and detailed the conceptual framework for the study. In Section 2, I described the research method, population, data collection tools, techniques, reliability, and validity. In Section 3, I provided a summary of the study, and I presented interpretations and analysis of the interviews conducted. I also made recommendations for action and considered the application of the study to business practice, implications for social change, and further research. Finally, I concluded this study with reflections, a summary, and conclusions.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

1. What are the determining factors used to establish your organization's policy and procedures for dealing with workplace bullying?
2. If your organization has a workplace bullying policy, when and why was it introduced?
3. In general, what might be some of the challenges that you face in dealing with allegations of bullying?
4. In your opinion, how have your organization's bullying policy and procedures served to reduce the number of employee complaints of bullying?
5. In your opinion, in what ways have your organization's bullying policy and procedures been effective in preventing or reducing bullying?
6. In your opinion, in what ways have your organization's bullying policy and procedures provided a structured way of dealing with complaints of bullying?
7. In your opinion, what are the advantages and disadvantages of dealing with complaints of bullying informally?
8. What role do a bullying policy and procedures play to provide procedural protection for the organization in the event of a complaint arising?
9. What support does your organization provide for complainants and respondents?
10. How adequate is the support your organization provides for both complainants and respondents in cases of workplace bullying?
11. In your experience, is a formal or informal approach more likely to resolve bullying cases?

12. Is it common or uncommon for employees who made complaints of bullying in the last five years to have left the organization for any reason?
13. In your estimation, how long does it take to bring a complaint of bullying to a conclusion, either formally or informally?
14. What are the benefits of mediation in resolving bullying issues?
15. At what stage in the process does your organization use mediation?
16. In general, how effective have you found mediation to resolve issues of bullying and harassment?
17. In your opinion, what role does power play in bullying in your organization?
18. If your organization had to deal with cases of workplace bullying through an institutional third party in the past five years, what institution dealt with the case(s)?
19. If your organization had to deal with cases of workplace bullying through an institutional third party in the past five years, under what Act was the case taken?
20. What kind of training does your organization provide for managers on how to deal with bullying?
21. What kind of training does your organization provide for all staff on how to deal with bullying?
22. Have you ever evaluated the effectiveness of your organization's bullying policy and procedures? If so, what were the three main findings of that evaluation?
23. In your opinion, what are the costs associated with workplace bullying?
24. Are there matters pertaining to workplace bullying that have not been addressed in this interview that you would like to comment on?