BULLYING IN THE WORKPLACE AND TEACHER ILL-HEALTH: CAUSE OR EFFECT?

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Education systems aspire to be caring environments intent on supporting and developing their employees. Many state care for the individual within their values statements and to implement it in their teaching and learning environments, as an aspiration. But there is strong evidence of an increasingly managerialist/ accountability environment in the UK (Higham & Earley, 2013), and more widely across Europe (Pont, Nusche, and Moorman, 2008), where accountability and rankings increase stress amongst teachers and senior managers. This affects schools as organisations, with greater sickness absenteeism, bullying, impaired performance and higher turnover rates becoming widespread.

This paper explores the relationship between ill-health and teachers who self identify as being bullied in their workplace; its impact on their personal and professional lives, and the actions they and their managers have taken to address it. During audio-recorded in-depth interviews lasting approximately one hour, 31 of 44 teacher respondents, across all phases and levels of seniority, reported ill-health as either a cause or consequence of being bullied.

We use a social realist perspective (Young, 2008), wherein human agency in knowledge production is acknowledged (Durkheim, 1964), alongside patterns that stretch beyond unique context dependent individual experiences. This enables improved understanding of the social and educational contexts that significantly shape and frame (but do not determine) participants actions, expectations and experiences of ill-health and bullying in schools.

This research is part of a larger study that explores the experience of workplace bullying in schools from different viewpoints. Full findings are intended for a book publication that aims to illuminate key aspects of teacher bullying in schools from multiple perspectives.

References


