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Workplace bullying in Finland: Prevention methods and their implementation in Finnish companies

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<p>The purpose of this thesis was to gain deeper understanding to workplace bullying and its prevention in Finland. The main aim was to find out whether the prevention is effective, and if the employees are aware of the policies and procedures.</p> <p>The thesis concludes that while workplace bullying prevention is considered important, and many organisations state that they do not allow workplace bullying in any form, many of the employees were not satisfied with the prevention. The majority of the respondents had not received any information regarding workplace bullying, and they were not aware of any policies or procedures. In some cases, prevention was either insufficient or missing. The results reveal that there are many faults in Finnish workplaces, which calls for better prevention actions and more management practices.</p>	
Keywords	Bullying, workplace bullying, mobbing, harassment, bullying prevention

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1 Introduction

Workplace bullying has been a common topic of discussion and research in Finland for the past couple of decades. Academic interest in the topic arose at the end of 1980s when Heinz Leymann published his first book on mobbing in Sweden. After this, many researchers started researching the topic in Finland and in other Scandinavian countries. Most researchers have focused on explaining workplace bullying as a phenomenon, and many have also proposed ways to prevent bullying in workplaces.

Today, most organisations in Finland appear to have a model on how to act in bullying situations. Workplace bullying is also prohibited under Finnish law, and employers are required to ensure employees' health and safety. Even though there seem to be many different methods to prevent workplace bullying in Finland, it is still a big problem in Finnish organisations. In recent a recent study, over half of Finnish employees (55,3%) reported that bullying or emotional abuse occurs at their workplace, and 7,6% reported continuous bullying in their workplace (Mähönen, 2017). According to European working conditions survey, Finland is also leading the workplace bullying statistics in Europe (EWCS, 2010). Finland's neighbouring countries Sweden and Norway, on the other hand, have been quite successful in reducing bullying.

Although there has been a lot of academic interest on the topic, we know little about how companies manage to prevent workplace bullying in practice. There is little research on what kind of measures have been carried out to combat bullying and how the prevention methods are perceived by the employees. Thus, the aim of this paper is to understand if the prevention methods are properly implemented in the Finnish workplaces. Are the employees actually aware of the prevention?

2 Methodology

2.1 Objectives and scope

The main aim of this thesis is to gain a deeper understanding of workplace bullying and its prevention in Finland. It provides the reader with a survey of the academic literature of the topic, and the legal and practical responses. As the aim was to study workplace bullying in Finland, the main focus is on the research by Scandinavian authors such as Leymann, Einarsen, Vartia and Salin, who have all played an important role in the development of workplace bullying research in Finland.

2.2 Research question

While researching workplace bullying and through the authors own experiences in Finnish companies, it was noticed that in many cases, prevention methods are either missing, or are not properly implemented or communicated to the employees. Many studies have focused on finding out if companies have prevention methods in place, but this alone does not tell much about the real situation since it doesn't reflect whether the employee is aware of the policies. This is also emphasised in a study by Woodrow et al (2014), who argue that it is misleading to just look at HR practices because they are not effective unless implemented effectively. Cowan's research (2011), for instance, revealed that some HR professionals did not even know if they had an anti-bullying policy. This highlights the gap between the intended and implemented HR practices; policies might exist, but they are not always communicated to the employee. This is also emphasized by Salin (2008);

"...for an anti-bullying policy to be successful the text itself - i.e. the very existence of a written statement about the unacceptability of bullying and recommended procedures against it - is not enough."

Thus, to gain a better understanding of the current situation in Finland, a survey was designed to find out employees' experiences in Finnish companies. The aim of the survey was to find out whether the employees receive enough information about workplace bullying, and if the organisations actually implement the prevention methods.

As a result, this thesis will attempt to answer the following two questions:

1. How do Finnish companies prevent workplace bullying?
2. Are the anti-bullying methods effectively implemented?

2.3 Research method

This thesis is based on both primary and secondary data. Secondary data consisted of different publications, books, articles, news reports and the Finnish legislation regarding workplace bullying that was collected to form the basis for this research. Primary data was used to answer the specific research questions, and it was collected in form of a questionnaire. The research methods and results will be further discussed later on in this thesis.

3 Workplace bullying

3.1 Introduction

Workplace bullying, mobbing, and harassment are some of the terms that are used to describe the situation where one employee is directing harmful behaviour to another. Workplace bullying has many different forms and variations, but at the most basic level, it is about the systematic mistreatment of another employee (Einarsen et al. 2010). Workplace bullying is usually defined as "*the repeated exposure to unwanted negative acts where a power imbalance exists*" (Einarsen et al., 1994). Bullying creates feelings of defenselessness in the target and undermines an individual's right to dignity at work (Longo and Sherman, 2007).

Typically, workplace bullying involves an abuse or misuse of power and authority within an organisation (Murray, 2009). Most commonly, bullying is against a subordinate by someone with power and title (Gumbus and Lyons, 2011), but research has shown that managers can also be bullied by their subordinates who have different sources of power over them (Branch et al. 2007). In European studies, the victimisation process of particular targets has been the main focus (Einarsen et al. 2010). However, in some countries, for example in the UK, bullying has been found to be so closely connected with the behaviour of managers and leaders, that the term "bullying" has become rather synonymous with destructive/highly aggressive leadership (Hoel et al. 2009).

3.2 Theoretical background

Although workplace bullying as a phenomenon might always have existed in organisations, the research on the topic began just a few decades ago. Before this, it was rather a taboo in the organisational life. Workplace bullying was first described by an American psychiatrist Carroll M. Brodsky in 1976 in her book *The Harassed Worker*. Brodsky based this book on a study of workers who claimed to have been systematically mistreated at work and described the effects on their health, well-being, and productivity. At the time, Brodsky's research didn't receive much attention and was discovered much later (Einarsen et al. 2010).

The academic interest in this topic initiated in Scandinavia in the 1980s, which was partly influenced by Olweus's research on bullying among schoolchildren in 1987 (Einarsen et al. 2010). In 1986, Heinz Leymann wrote the first Swedish book about workplace bullying called *Mobbing: Psychological Violence at Work*. His research was based on case studies of nurses who had attempted or had committed suicide due to problems at work. Later on, many other research projects were started in Norway (Einarsen), Sweden (Leymann) and Finland (Björkvist and Vartia). The first article in Finland was published in 1989 by Vartia and Lindström (Vartia-Väänänen, 2003). At the beginning of 1990s, interests towards workplace bullying also arose in the UK.

Ever since the 1990s, workplace bullying has been a very popular area of research. Since then, many books, studies, and articles have been published, and workplace bullying was even called "the research topic of the 1990s" (Hoet et al., 1999). After the early 1990s when the research was mostly limited to Nordic countries, the interest in the topic spread to other countries such as Austria, the Netherlands, Italy, and Australia. Some years later, interest also spread to Spain, Turkey and finally, to the U.S. (Einarsen et al. 2010).

As workplace bullying was studied all around the world, the results seemed to be very similar; the same kind of behaviour was spotted in many countries, characterised by long duration and repetitive actions. The affects to the health of the victims were found to be destructive and traumatic, with negative effects also affecting the observers of bullying (Einarsen et al. 2010).

The broadest themes reflected in bullying research are the *workplace and culture*, *changes in the workplace* and *power issues in the workplace* (Branch et al, 2007). Work culture covers topics like leadership, lack of empowerment and group conflict, and work changes refer to increased stress or pressure due to changes in the company (Gumbus and Lyons, 2011). This can, for example, be new technology, mergers or new management. Power issues in the workplace refer to the use of power or its abuse/misuse. This is often part of the bullying situation.

The current research shows that workplace bullying is still a big problem in many organisations. Even though workplace bullying has gone from being a taboo in organisational life before the 1990s to being acknowledged by researchers,

organisations, politicians and the public, the prevalence of the problem has not decreased. Even though human resource professionals and people in management positions are able to introduce policies and procedures to help decrease workplace bullying, the situation in Finland has not improved.

3.3 Terms used

Workplace bullying is also known as "mobbing" or "harassment", but there are no significant differences between these concepts. The concept of bullying is often associated with more aggressive behaviour than mobbing, which is more often used to describe a situation where the victim is systematically harassed for a longer period. Leymann, for instance, preferred the term "mobbing", because he wanted to reflect the fact that the phenomenon between adults is often a subtler form of harassment, yet causing severe symptoms for the target.

3.4 Defining workplace bullying

When it comes to the definition of workplace bullying, there is no uniform definition used all around the world. However, we can take a few examples of how workplace bullying has been defined.

Einarsen and Raknes 1997 (cited in Einarsen et al. 2010 p.6) define bullying with the following sentence;

"Bullying at work is about repeated actions and practices that are directed against one or more workers; that are unwanted by the victim; that may be carried out deliberately or unconsciously, but clearly cause humiliation, offence and distress; and that may interfere with work performance and or/cause an unpleasant working environment."

According to Hoet et al (2010), workplace bullying is generally acknowledged as the "umbrella concept" for different demonstrations of mistreatment. According to Olweus (1987), a person is bullied or harassed when she or he feels repeatedly subjected to negative acts in the workplace. Bullying itself can range from physical violence to name-

calling, rumours, and public humiliation. Usually, the victim is teased/insulted and he or she feels to have few means of retaliation in kind. The victim may also find it difficult to defend themselves against these acts (Einarsen et al. 1994).

Olweus' research (1987) focuses on bullying in the schoolyard and highlights that bullying and harassment shows a difference in the power between the persecutor and the victim. His research also distinguishes "direct bullying" with exposed verbal or physical attacks, and "indirect bullying", which refers to more discreet acts, such as excluding the victim from his/her peer group.

Smith (1999) regards workplace bullying as a management problem for employers. It is becoming increasingly recognised in society, which highlights the need for change in current procedures and policies. Spiers (1996) sees bullying as an abuse of the power relationship between the bully and the target. Randall (1997) defines bullying as *"aggressive behaviour from the deliberate intent to cause physical or psychological distress to others"*. Einarsen et al. (1994) argue that *"Bullying emerges when one or several individuals persistently over a period of time perceive themselves to be on the receiving end of negative actions from one or several persons, in a situation where the target of bullying has difficulty in defending him or herself against these actions"*.

Even though there is no uniform definition of what workplace bullying is, most definitions have the same features; according to many authors, bullying involves **negative acts** that **occur repeatedly and over some period of time**. Often, there is also an **imbalance of power**, and the bullying is **intentional**. In addition, the person being bullied has **difficulties in defending himself**.

3.4.1 Negative acts

Bullying behaviour is considered a negative act, which is meant to cause negative feelings in the victim. The negative acts can be divided into the following categories; personal derogation, social exclusion, work-related harassment, violent threats and intimidation, and work overload (Einarsen and Raknes, 1997).

3.4.2 Time period

Most definitions stated that the negative act must be reoccurring; single events are not considered workplace bullying. It is not clearly specified how long the negative acts must continue to be considered bullying, but many researchers have suggested different time periods. Leymann (1996), for instance, suggested six months as an operational definition of workplace bullying. He also argued that bullying should occur at least once a week to be categorised as a *severe form of social stress*. Setting a time frame has proven to be difficult because workplace bullying can vary from being very occasional to very severe and frequent. Einarsen et al (2010, for instance, point out that spreading a rumour can even result in destroying the victim's career, but it does not need to be repeated every week. Setting a time period is also very difficult because most people experience being bullied after a much shorter time than six months. For instance, if someone is being bullied on a daily basis, a couple of weeks could be considered a long time.

3.4.3 Imbalance of power

Another common feature in the definitions of bullying is the imbalance of power; the person being bullied is not able to defend him/herself. The imbalance of power often reflects the power structure in the organisation; in many cases, for instance, the manager bullies the subordinates. In this case, the bully is in a higher position in the company than the victim, and therefore, has more power. The source of power can also be informal, based on experience, knowledge, or support from influential persons (Hoel and Cooper, 2000). This would be the case when long-term employees bully a newly hired employee who does not have any friends or experience in the company. The bullies usually take advantage of the victim's personality or work performance, which indicates the power relation between the two (Einarsen et al. 2010).

Sometimes bullying is also considered a part of initiating a person into a group, which is common especially in the military, universities and in youth organisations, where the "more experienced" publicly humiliate the newbies. In the USA, this is known as "hazing", and it often includes different challenges and humiliation to the victim. Not so long ago, hazing was only considered a prank, but it has now become illegal in 44 states in the USA (Reitman, 2012). This was also common in Finland, known as *mopotus* or *mopokaste*. Nowadays, this is not allowed in most schools in Finland.

3.4.4 Intentional bullying

The intentionality of bullying is also a common feature in the definition of bullying; there must be an intention to cause harm to the target, or else there is no bullying. Intentionality distinguishes bullying from other behaviours such as incivility or thoughtlessness at work (Einarsen et al. 2010).

In most of the European research on workplace bullying, the intent is not considered an essential element of a bullying situation (Einarsen et al. 2010). This is because it is very hard to prove whether the act was intentional or not. The only one who knows this for sure is the bully himself. In addition, bullying behaviour might not always be intentional, but it still causes harm to the victim. For example, if an individual seeks to prove his own superiority, the behaviour might humiliate another person.

Another problem is that the victim is self-identifying, and in some cases, hypersensitivity can result in feelings of victimhood. Someone can also be accused of bullying to achieve the same result as normal bullying. In Finland, for instance, false reports of workplace bullying are quite common. Vartia explains that this is because of the small *power distance* between the employer and the employee in the Nordic countries – the threshold to criticising the boss is quite low (Taloussanommat, 2011). According to Taloussanommat (2011), the employer can also become the target simply because berating the boss, *herraviha* (hatred of the masters) and *purkaus* (complaining about the work) are common in Finnish culture.

3.5 Examples of workplace bullying

Below are examples of behaviour that causes harm to employees and is considered workplace bullying (Työsuojelu, 2017). These include, but are not limited to:

- Continuous threats
- Ignoring the victim
- Laughter directed to the victim
- Malicious messages
- Spreading rumours
- Intimidation

- Criticising one's work
- Undermining one's work
- Isolating someone from the work group
- Sexual harassment

Työsuojelu (2017) also lists examples where the power in the management position is abused. Below are some examples.

- Groundless and continuous interference in the employees' work
- Inappropriate use of power in management position
- Changing the agreed working conditions without a justified or a legal cause
- Unjustified change in the amount or quality of the work tasks
- Giving humiliating orders

To make a clear distinction, below are some examples that are a normal part of a manager's responsibility.

- Manager's justified instruction and orders within his/her operating power
- Management decisions regarding the work and division of labour
- Management's justified interference in one's work
- Giving a remark or a warning for a reason

3.6 Differences between strong management and bullying

Tehrani (2013) explains the differences of strong management and bullying by using low performing teams as an example. This is explained in the table below.

Addressing poor performance in teams	Strong management	Bullying
Performance issue is identified	The identification involves finding the reasons for low performance	No attempt to identify the source of poor performance
The views of the team or individual are sought to identify the causes	Team/individual takes part in looking for the source of problems	No discussion of the cause of poor performance
New standards of performance are agreed on	Standards of performance are set for the team and manager	Standards set without discussion of what would be appropriate
Failures to achieve standards are handled as performance improvement issues	Support is provided to individuals who are struggling. If employees are unwilling to comply, action is taken	Criticism, shouting, teasing and sarcasm are used to deal with the failure
Recognition of contribution	Improvements are rewarded	No monitoring → lack of recognition of improvements

Table 1 Differences between strong management and bullying (Tehrani, 2013)

In the case of strong management, the problem is identified, and support is provided to those individuals who need help or guidance. Poor performance is not considered a failure, but the source of the issue is identified and then fixed. This is rather a learning process. If, however, the employees are not willing to comply with the rules, an action is taken, which might be for instance a warning. This can be considered inappropriate by some but is necessary to make sure that the goals are met.

In the case of bullying, there is no intention to understand the source of the poor performance, and no discussion or help available for the employees. Instead, the poor performance is considered a failure, and the manager criticises and teases the employees instead of supporting them. This causes unnecessary stress to the employees and is clear bullying behaviour. After the incident, there is no monitoring to find out if the situation is getting better, and therefore, the problem continues existing.

4 The nature of bullying

The behaviour involved in bullying situation often include verbal abuse, threats, insults or intimidating and humiliating behaviours, which often happens in front of others. In some cases, bullying can even include physical violence, but most often, the bullying is verbal abuse (Einarsen, 1999). Studies show that bullying is a gradually evolving process, which usually begins with very subtle acts but later escalates into more direct aggressive acts (Einarsen, 1999). Bullying behaviour and the effects seem to be similar, regardless of the age, race or gender (Gumbus and Lyons, 2011).

4.1 Predatory bullying and dispute-related bullying

Einarsen (1999) presented the concepts of *predatory bullying* and *dispute-related bullying* to distinguish the two main situations where bullying behaviour seems to take rise. In the case of **predatory bullying**, the victim has personally done nothing to provoke the bully. In these cases, the victim might accidentally find himself in a situation in which he/she is being bullied. This type of bullying can be associated with Ashforth's (1994) concept of *petty tyranny*, which refers to leaders who use authority in an "unfair" manner, for instance through behaviours including arbitrariness or lack of consideration.

The victim might also be bullied because of belonging to some group, for example, a different ethnicity. In this case, they are not approved by the dominant organisational culture (Einarsen et al. 2003). This shows that people might be bullied simply for being different than others. In some cases, an employee might be bullied because he or she is seen as an easy target, for stress caused by other factors (Einarsen et al. 2003). Here, the target can be considered a "scapegoat" according to Thylefors' (1987) definition – frustration is displaced on someone who is seen to "deserve" it.

Dispute-related bullying, on the other hand, happens as a result of escalated interpersonal conflicts at work (Einarsen, 1999). Conflicts and other interpersonal struggles can be considered a natural part of human interaction, but when they are allowed to escalate, they might turn into bullying. The difference between harmless conflict and bullying is in the frequency and duration of the behaviour (Leymann, 1996), and in the ability of the parties to defend themselves (Zapf, 1999).

4.2 Workplace bullying as a process

Many researchers describe workplace bullying as a process that evolves over time (Einarsen, 2000; Björkvist, 1992; Leymann, 1990). In the beginning, the negative acts are usually very subtle and difficult to notice, but later on, more aggressive acts appear as the bullying escalates (Björkvist, 1992).

Leymann (1990) described the bullying process through four stages; *original critical incident, mobbing and stigmatisation, personnel administration* and *expulsion*. In the first stage, there is a triggering situation that gives rise to the process, most often a conflict over work. This is followed by different negative acts and bullying behaviour in the second stage. In the third stage, the management steps in to handle the problem. During the fourth and final stage, the victim is forced to leave the workplace either directly, or indirectly, by making them leave voluntarily. In Finland, this is often known as *savustaminen* (smoking someone out) – the victim is bullied until they see no other option than leaving. Even though it is the management's responsibility to intervene in bullying situations, the victim is often left without support.

Einarsen (1999), in line with Leymann, identified four stages in the bullying process. Einarsen referred to them as *aggressive behaviours, bullying, stigmatisation* and *severe trauma*. Usually, the negative acts in the first phase are very subtle and difficult to recognise for the victims (Leymann, 1996). This kind of behaviour can be characterised as *indirect aggression* (Einarsen et al. 2010). At the second phase, more direct negative acts are directed towards the victim, leaving him/her humiliated and ridiculed (Leymann, 1990). As a result, the victims become stigmatised and find it difficult to defend themselves (Einarsen, 1999). The victims might also suffer from different stress symptoms and severe trauma.

At the last stage of the bullying process, the victim might become withdrawn and behave erratically (Einarsen et al. 2010). This might cut them off from support from the work environment, which again deepens the victimisation process (Leymann, 1986). Some people might need to stay on long sick-leave and to seek treatment, which leaves them stigmatised. In case they are still employed, they are usually left with no meaningful work or with no role in the workplace (Einarsen et al. 2010). Altogether, the situation

becomes very hopeless for them, possibly even leaving them totally isolated and without a possibility to find another job in the future.

4.3 Lack of intervention in bullying cases

Even though it is the employer's responsibility to intervene in the bullying situation as soon as they become aware of it, the actions taken in most cases seem to be insufficient. According to Leymann, the fourth stage of the bullying process is expulsion – the employee is forced to leave either directly or indirectly. This is the last step of the bullying process, and at this point, the situation has been continuing for a longer time, which shows that there is serious lack of intervention. The lack of intervention is evident in many bullying cases that have been discussed in the media (see Helsingin Sanomat, 2016; Aamulehti, 2016). In the case of Helsingin kaupunki (HS, 2016), the serious bullying continued from 2005 to 2011, until the victims finally resigned in 2011. According to the victims' own words, "they just couldn't continue it anymore", and they were suffering from depression, anxiety, and stress (HS, 2016). This shows that too often the situation is allowed to continue far too long – sometimes until the victims develop serious health problems.

Most often, the victim is the one who leaves. Some are fired while others find themselves unable to continue in the workplace and leave voluntarily, as in the case of Helsingin kaupunki. To avoid these situations, conflicts should be dealt with early on before they escalate into bullying. In some cases, the superiors or HR professionals lack the knowledge and don't know how to deal with the situation. In these cases, the victim is left without any support, and the problem is allowed to escalate. Bullying might also turn out difficult to prove, and the victim might end up with a problematic reputation or even being dismissed. Thus, employees might also be scared to talk about the issue. This shows that there is not enough support for the victims. In addition, in most cases, the bully is left without a punishment and is likely to continue this type of behaviour.

4.4 Conflict escalation process

Most often the triggering situation is a conflict, which then escalates into bullying. Glasl's (1982) model of conflict escalation explains how interpersonal conflicts may turn into bullying. This model is divided into three phases and nine stages which can be seen in the figure below.



Figure 1 Glasl's model of conflict escalation (Glasl, 1982)

According to this model, some conflicts are inevitable, and under certain circumstances, they can even lead to positive outcomes such as learning or innovation (de Dreu, 1997). Nevertheless, when the conflict is allowed to escalate, it might turn into bullying, and to what is called "office wars".

In the first phase of this model, the conflicts are very moderate and there are attempts to cooperate and to resolve the conflict. In the next phases, the interpersonal conflict escalates, and it is harder to solve the problem. The parties become concerned for their reputation and begin to seek support. Finally, lack of trust and aggressive behaviour evolve, with the last stage being total destruction and suicide. These last stages might not be reached in organisations, but in extreme cases, people do commit suicide. This was shown for instance in Leymann's study (1996), which was based on nurses who had tried or had committed suicide after being a victim of bullying.

All of these models illustrate the process nature of workplace bullying and emphasise that bullying begins with a conflict that escalates into bullying, which then becomes more serious over time. As conflicts cannot always be avoided, the most important issue is to

prevent the conflict from escalating into bullying. For preventing the escalation, the roles of all the members of a work unit are very important. They are able to stop the escalation at an early stage, but for reasons such as group pressure or concern for the reputation they most often do not do this (Vartia-Väänänen, 2003). A conflict is also more likely to escalate into bullying due to poor conflict management. In some cases, the manager might take part in the bullying, which makes the situation worse (Leymann, 1996). On the other hand, if the manager neglects the problem, the conflict has time to escalate.

4.5 Gender differences

According to Vartia's research in 1996, Gender or age did not correlate with bullying. Later, similar results were found in Vartia and Hyyti's (2002) research on gender differences in workplace bullying, according to which there were no significant differences between men and women.

Even though Vartia's findings suggested that gender did not correlate with bullying, recent news reports and articles suggest that gender-related bullying is more common than was acknowledged. Sexual harassment has been a popular topic of discussion during the end of 2017 and the beginning of 2018. In October 2017, many women shared their experiences on sexual harassment at work when the #MeToo hashtag spread virally all over the world in social media. In many cases, women actors stated having been harassed by their directors or their managers. In addition to this, Statistics Finland's (2014) study suggests that women are exposed to bullying more often than men; 51% of women and 36% of men reported occasional bullying. However, in a study among business professionals, women reported significantly more bullying than men (12% vs 5%) (Salin, 2001).

5 Origins of workplace bullying

In this section, the author summarises the theoretical literature discussing workplace bullying. In order to understand why there is workplace bullying, it is necessary to take a look at the different models and factors associated with bullying. In particular, the environmental factors such as organisational culture, leadership, and power imbalance are considered in this section.

5.1 Personality view and the environmental view

To explain the causes of bullying, there are usually two views that researchers take; the personality view, and the environmental view. Scandinavian researchers have often focused on the work environment in which the bullying occurs, whereas research in, for instance, the UK, has focused mostly on the explaining it through the personality of the people involved. Some researchers have explained it through the interaction of personal and situational factors (Einarsen, 1999), and some have argued that only one view is the correct one. For example, Leymann (1996) argued that working conditions is the main factor affecting the prevalence of workplace bullying and that the individual characteristics are irrelevant. This way, he emphasised that anyone could become a victim of workplace bullying under the right circumstances.

The personality view focuses on the characteristics of the bully and/or the victim. Some researchers have suggested that there are certain personality features that may make people more vulnerable to bullying. For instance, Coyne, Seigne, and Randall (2000) showed that the victims seem to be more traditional, rigid and moralistic than the others, and highly conscientious. Vartia-Väänänen (2003) proposed that the victims of bullying are often in some way different than others, for example in terms of ethnicity, religion, education or occupation. The difference can even be in the personality of the victim, or in the way they do things. For instance, being braver than others, or having a different style. Zapf and Einarsen (2003) suggested that people who have low self-esteem and who are unable to defend themselves are more at risk. This view is very common in the research of workplace bullying and has received support from many researchers. In Olweus's (1987) study of schoolchildren, very similar results were found; the victims of bullying were more insecure and anxious than the others, and they were often characterised as sensitive, quiet and careful.

The environmental view, also known as “the work environment hypothesis” explains that bullying in the workplace is a result of different organisational factors. Numerous studies have shown that bullying is associated with negative and stressful working environment (Einarsen et al., 1994). The victims of workplace bullying often describe their work environment as highly stressful and competitive (O’Moore et al. 1998) and there is often some form of dissatisfaction with the work atmosphere and the leadership style (Einarsen et al. 1994). Many factors at the workplace can cause occupational stress, which again might increase the risk of conflict, and thus, bullying (Hoel and Salin, 2003).

5.2 Work environment

As explained earlier in this paper, bullying often starts from a conflict. Leymann (1990) explained that the process starts from stress factors related to the work organisation and to leadership, which lead to frustration, letting out one’s feelings, and finally, psychological terror. For instance, employees who feel stressed and are surrounded by a negative working environment may protest, which could result in a response from the superior and in some cases, initiate the bullying process (Hoel and Salin, 2003). A stressful working environment may also initiate interpersonal conflict, resulting in bullying between co-workers. Therefore, to prevent the conflicts, the working environment should be healthy and free from any occupational stress that may cause them.

Numerous work environment factors can increase the risk of conflict and bullying (Hoel and Salin, 2003), and many researchers have attempted to identify these risk factors. In a study by O’Moore in Ireland (1998), the victims described their workplace as lacking a friendly and supportive atmosphere, undergoing organisational changes and having an authoritarian leadership style. According to Einarsen, Raknes and Matthiesen’s research in Norway (1994), particularly role conflict and role ambiguity were found to correlate with workplace bullying. Other risk factors were leadership, the social climate and work control.

In a study by Vartia in Finland (1996) victims and observers of workplace bullying mentioned the following features in their workplace; lack of discussions about goals and tasks, poor information flow, authoritarian way of settling differences of opinion, and

lack of opportunity to influence matters affecting themselves. Einarsen et al. (1994) and Vartia (1996) both showed that both victims and the observers of bullying reported low-quality work environment. As Vartia (1996) compared results between no-bullying and bullying workplaces, she found significant differences. At bullying workplaces, the general work atmosphere was often experienced as *competitive* and *tense*, while at no-bullying workplaces the environment was reported *relaxed* and *pleasant*. At bullying workplaces, differences in opinion were settled by taking advantage of one's authority, while at no-bullying workplaces the problems were settled by negotiating. Other characteristics of the work environment that were found to promote bullying were lack of possibilities to influence matters concerning oneself, lack of mutual conversations about tasks and goals, and poor information flow (Vartia, 1996).

5.3 Organisational culture

Studies of workplace bullying often highlight that in organisations with high levels of bullying, negative and abusive acts were considered permitted (Salin and Hoel, 2011). This is also emphasised by Brodsky (1976) who argues that the incidents of bullying happen in the environment that *allows or rewards* this kind of behaviour. Bullying is seen to be prevalent in organisations where the employees feel that the senior managers allow bullying behaviour (Einarsen, 1999) and new managers often continue this type of behaviour if they see it being allowed or even rewarded. For instance, when the manager gets his way by screaming to the employees, and then gets promoted for good results, this kind of behaviour is implicitly encouraged.

According to Neyens et al. (2007), bullying was also more common in organisations which did not have anti-bullying policies, but Salin (2009) found that having a policy does not indicate what kind of actions organisations take in bullying cases. An organisation might, for instance, have a bullying policy, but still promote bullying behaviour through other behaviours, such as by rewarding or by not punishing bullying behaviour. These behaviours and norms of what is allowed and what is not are deeply rooted in the organisational culture, which tacitly affects the behaviour of the members in the organisation. Thus, to eliminate workplace bullying, the necessity to change the organisational culture arises (Cowie et al. 2002).

To understand why this kind of behaviour can be considered “allowed” in an organisation, it is necessary to first understand what organisational culture is, and how it affects the way employees behave. Every organisation has its own culture, which refers to the beliefs, ideologies, and values that the people within an organisation share (Schein, 1992). This relationship between the culture and the employees is mutual; on one hand the organisational culture provides guidelines and rules to how the employees should behave, and thus affects the way they act, and on the other hand, the way the employees act influences the organisational culture (Tambur and Vadi, 2012). Organisational culture has been defined as *“the way we do things around here”* (Lundy and Cowling, 1996).

Organisational culture is influenced by the national culture of the employees and employers (Tambur and Vadi, 2012). It is born when the members and the environment combine their values and transfer them into the organisation from the external cultural environment. Thus, they create a new culture that can be compared to the national culture. The culture is a mix of different elements including unconscious parts of organisational life and it covers all the functions in the organisation (Schein, 1992). These norms and beliefs affect the way we behave and can sometimes cause us to behave in very strange ways from a business point of view. Therefore, we need to understand these forces to be able to explain different phenomenas in the work organisation, such as workplace bullying.

Managers often speak about having or developing the “right type of culture”, which shows that this has to do with some values that the managers are trying to introduce to the organisation. This also suggests that there are right and wrong types of cultures, which affect the effectiveness and performance of the company (Schein, 2010). This is often measured by how strong the organisational culture is – the stronger the culture, the more effective the organisation.

Despite the statement above, strong culture does not automatically make an organisation effective. As a good example of this is the strong sexist culture that is prevalent in tech start-ups in Silicon Valley. There has been a lot of reporting about the issue recently, and it is also discussed in Ellen K. Pao’s book “Reset” (Pao, 2017), which deals with sexism, racism, and bullying she experienced in the firms she worked for. In

this case, the culture can be considered strong because it is very deeply rooted in the norms of the industry and the behaviour of the employees. However, this culture cannot be considered making the firm more effective, since the culture is driving its key resource – the people - out from the organisation.

How, then, should a strong culture be defined? According to Al-Alawi, Al- Marzooqi and Mohammed (2007), the critical success factors of organisational culture and knowledge sharing are trust, communication between staff, information systems, reward system and organisational structure. In addition to this, many authors stress the importance of shared values and trust. Shared values are what guide employees towards a common goal, and trust, on the other hand, is a key requirement for knowledge sharing and innovation. One of the definitions of culture - "The way we do things around here" – also suggests this: the employees have a common way to work, and they have a shared goal. A weak culture, on the other hand, refers to a culture in which there is little or no alignment with the organisational values, and therefore, control must be applied through procedures and bureaucracy (Cameron & Quinn, 2006).

Because organisational culture determines the values and norms of a company, it strongly affects the behaviour of the employees (Tambur and Vadi, 2012). The culture defines what is and is not accepted in an organisation; for instance, if the values and norms strongly prohibit bullying, it is less likely to happen. Similarly, if the culture allows bullying, it is likely to affect the behaviour of the people. It might even cause us to act in ways that we wouldn't in "normal life".

5.4 Leadership

Organisational culture and leadership are very closely connected. Leaders start the process of creating a shared culture, and leadership is the original source of the beliefs and values in the organisation. Leaders are also responsible for changing the culture if it becomes dysfunctional (Schein, 2010). Managing the organisational culture has been a big topic particularly in banking during the recent years, as leaders have tried to control the risk-taking culture and machismo, which is typical of the sector. Workplace bullying and other inappropriate behaviour are problems that are rooted in the organisational culture, and the leader has the responsibility for setting the right organisational culture.

To this day, destructive leadership has not received much attention from researchers, as it has been considered equivalent to ineffective leadership (Salin, 2011). Hoel et al. (2009) also argued that much of the negative aspects of leadership have been overlooked in the past (Hoel and Cooper, 2000). Effective leadership, on the other hand, has received much more attention. Recent research seems to focus on the importance of leadership styles, and especially tyrannical and laissez-faire leadership styles are often linked to workplace bullying.

According to research, managers are often reported to be the most frequent bullies in the workplace from the point of view of the victims (Rayner et al. 2002). Nevertheless, research has shown that people at all levels of the organisation experience bullying, affecting the managers as well as employees (Hoel et al. 2001). The bullying situation therefore could be manager – employee, employee – employee, manager – manager etc. The bullying can also be conducted within the same hierarchical level, in which case the power imbalance is a result of other factors, such as in the case of hazing, where the bully has more experience or support from the group.

In the past, the focus in the research has been on abusive leadership styles such as abusive supervision, tyrannical approach, and authoritarian leadership style, or styles that include non-contingent punishment. Research has shown that the personal style of leaders might negatively influence the working environment and productivity (Ekvall et al. 2002). Employees who consider themselves as being bullied by their leaders report low satisfaction and different health problems (Skogstad, 1997) Abusive and tyrannical leaders are found to be an important source of stress for employees (Hogan, 1994) and they might cause them to suffer from depression, anxiety, and gastrointestinal and circulation problems (Kile, 1990).

Leaders might also instigate perceptions of bullying without knowing it. Leaders who create a negative or stressful working environment might make the environment more allowing for conflicts between employees, which might lead to bullying. Bullying has also been associated with lack of involvement in decision-making processes and with work environments where employees are afraid of communicating their opinions (Vartia, 1996). In addition, a leader's ability to resolve work-related conflict has been considered one of the biggest differences between bullied and non-bullied respondents (O'Moore et al., 1998)

The quality of leadership seems to be related to the occurrence of workplace bullying (Francioli et al, 2015), and in addition, leadership style seems to be an important situational factor bullying cases. Researchers have found that the bullies seem to report having leaders who are less charismatic (Hepworth and Towler, 2004) and more abusive (Mitchell and Ambrose, 2007). Targets of bullying, on the other hand, tend to report having leaders who are less fair and supportive (Hauge et al. 2011).

5.4.1 Leadership style

Authoritarian or autocratic leadership style has been found to be associated with workplace bullying (O'Moore and Lynch, 2007). Authoritarian leadership style was first identified by Adorno et al. in 1950 who explained that authoritarian leaders are often characterised with fear of being weak. Authoritarian personalities believe in authority and they tend to attack people considered weak or victims (O'Moore and Lynch, 2007). MacGreil (1996) explained that authoritarianism is a very complex personality feature and found that there was a positive correlation with prejudice. Thus, it was stated that education has a significant effect on authoritarianism and that it could even be reduced with education. According to MacGreil's research, people with an authoritarian personality were often strictly disciplined when they were children, which seemed to predispose these individuals to have an inflexible way of thinking and to be concerned with power and status.

Authoritarian leadership style can be considered negative, or even the source of bullying (Vartia, 1996). Particularly in stressful situations, when the managers fail to manage their own feelings and pressure, they might revert to an authoritarian or tyrannical leadership style (Hoel and Salin, 2003). Leaders might rage or shout or show behaviours that can be considered very threatening (Hoel et al. 2009). This can lead to two situations: the employees feel bullied by the leader, or they get frustrated, which increases the chance of peer aggression.

Authoritarian leadership styles can also create a climate of fear, in which criticism and complaining can be considered unnecessary (Hoel and Salin, 2003). The term "petty tyranny" used by Ashforth (1994) refers to this type of "tyrannical" leadership style. Creating this type of climate is not only harmful for the employees, but also for the

company itself. The fear among employees can lead to them being afraid of expressing their opinions, which stops the communication within the organisation harming the innovation and ultimately the whole organisation.

In many of the abusive leadership styles, misuse of power is an important characteristic. Many bullying cases might develop from situations where the leader attempts to control the employees by means of force. Power is necessary to ensure compliance, but it must not be misused. Kieseker and Marchant (1999) identify coercive power as the psychological basis for bullying. They also define workplace bullying as "*that which involves the inappropriate use of coercion*".

Even though the focus has often been on the abusive leadership styles, some weak leadership styles have also been associated with the prevalence of bullying. The laissez-faire style, which is considered a "weak" leadership style, might also increase the prevalence of bullying. In particular, it seems to lead to bullying among co-workers (Einarsen et al. 1994). This happens when the leader does not intervene in bullying, and it is allowed to escalate. In addition to this, the ignorance of the leader might send a message that bullying is allowed, which again affects the organisational culture. This is related to the perceived low costs; the bullies assume that weak leaders do not intervene in the bullying situation, which reduces the risk of being caught (Salin, 2003).

In Finland, the authoritarian leadership style is often referred to as **Management by perkele** – *management by the devil*. This term became famous in Sweden in the 1980s when Finnish companies started acquiring companies there (Risberg et al. 2003). The Swedish employees who seemingly had been used to open dialogue with the managers were shocked by the authoritarian style that the Finnish managers used. Management by perkele was discussed in the research by Vuori & Huy (2016), which received a lot of attention at the time it was published. Their research "how Nokia lost the smartphone battle" explains that Nokia lost its position as the world's leading mobile phone producer because of the climate of fear in the company. The top managers became alienated from the reality as the middle managers only gave them information that pleased them. This affected the product development, and finally, led to the destruction of the company.

6 Consequences and costs of workplace bullying

6.1 Consequences to the victim

Many researchers have linked workplace bullying with health and well-being. Exposure to bullying at work can be seen as a serious source of social stress (Vartia, 2001) which results in different types of symptoms which can be physical and/or psychological. These symptoms include depression, burnout, anxiety, aggression and psychosomatic and musculoskeletal health complaints (Vartia, 2001). The victims often report stress and feelings of low self-confidence, and suicide has been reported as the most extreme consequence of workplace bullying (Leymann, 1988).

More recent research has also found that bullying can be associated with physiological outcomes, including sleep problems (Niedhammer et al. 2009), musculoskeletal complaints (Vie et al. 2012) and symptoms similar to posttraumatic stress disorder, PTSD (Matthiensen and Einarsen, 2004). According to a study by Vartia-Väänänen, prolonged bullying was also associated with depression and cardiovascular disease (2013). Exposure to workplace bullying has been said to be a more devastating problem for employees than all other work stress put together (Einarsen et al., 2010).

Some researchers have studied the importance of duration and frequency of the negative acts (Vartia, 2001). Einarsen et al. (1996) found that the duration of workplace bullying correlated significantly with psychological, psychosomatic and musculoskeletal symptoms. It has also been discovered that the symptoms don't disappear right after the negative acts stop (Vartia, 2001). Bullying at work has for example been found to cause subsequent depression (Kivimäki et al., 2003).

Particularly the way the bullying situation is handled can affect the victim very negatively. Leymann (1990) explains that once the bullying situation is noticed and the management intends to handle the problem, they tend to focus on the prejudices of the victim's work friends. The other individuals in the workplace often assume that the victim's personality is the cause of the problem, which causes the victim to become a marked individual. As a result, the victim is usually expelled from the workplace and might have to stay on long-term sick leave or have psychiatric treatment, which further stigmatises the victim. Therefore, the victim might end up in a situation where he/she cannot find new work (Leymann, 1990).

6.2 Consequences for the organisation and for the society

Apart from the human costs, there are many economic consequences for the organisation. First of all, a person might be getting paid for years without having any real work to do. There are also organisational costs such as long-term absences, early retirement costs, and potential workers' compensation claims. In addition, there is lost productivity, losses in turnover and distraction of witnesses. Bullying at work appears to have effect on the observers of bullying, who reported more health problems than those who worked in a workplace where was no bullying (Vartia, 2001). An opinion piece in *Helsingin Sanomat* (2017) reveals some of the feelings that the observers might face, including shame, anger, and frustration. The writer also felt guilty for not helping the victim, but at the same time was scared of losing his/her job.

According to Smith (1999), there are also behavioural costs associated with workplace bullying, such as poor morale or motivation. These problems will lead to other costs that are harder to calculate such as errors, reduced work quality, absenteeism, poor reputation and poor customer relationships. These are a result from loss of focus and commitment at work (Gumbus and Lyons, 2011). Leymann (1990) argues that the costs of a bullying case can be estimated to amount to between 30,000\$ and 100,000\$ per year. Gumbus and Lyons (2011) also point out that many victims of bullying already left or are considering leaving the company, and that professionals as a personality descriptor¹ leave more frequently. These professionals are the individuals that the companies want to keep, since they are the most important for the company's success and losing them might turn out being very costly for the company.

Consequences to society often include financial costs. According to Di Martino et al (2003), these include medical expenses and costs related to long-term absenteeism and to premature retirement. The amounts depend on the compensation system in the country.

¹ Victims' personality characteristics were determined by the authors based on written descriptions of bullying incidents

7 Workplace bullying in the EU and Finland

7.1 Workplace bullying in the EU

Sweden was the first country to implement legislation to prevent workplace bullying in 1993. After this, many other European countries followed and implemented their own laws. Today, most European countries have laws addressing the problem.

In the EU, workplace bullying is recognised as an offense to human dignity. Article 31 of The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union states that *"every worker has the right to working conditions that respect his or her health, safety and dignity"*. The EU Health and Safety Framework Directive (89/391/EEC) expresses the employer's responsibility, stating that *"The employer shall have a duty to ensure the safety and health of workers in every aspect related to work"*. According to Directives 2000/78 on Equality of treatment, any form of discrimination is treated as harassment when it has the *"purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person and of creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment"*.

Today, the situation regarding workplace bullying differs quite a lot in Europe. Some research has been carried out in most countries, but in general, knowledge and acknowledgment of the issue is still quite low (Vartia-Väänänen, 2013). In Scandinavia, where workplace bullying has been a popular topic of research and discussion for many years, the general knowledge of the problem seems to be much better. Therefore, people from these countries might detect the problem faster.

The local culture and knowledge of the issue seem to be important issues when considering the attitudes toward bullying behaviour. In some countries, bullying can even be considered acceptable, while in others it is strongly disapproved. To understand the impact of the culture, most researchers have applied Hofstede's framework on cultural dimensions. Power et al. (2009) studied the acceptability of bullying behaviour in relation to Hofstede's cultural dimensions. They found that countries with *high uncertainty avoidance* and *individualism* disapproved bullying most strongly, while *high power distance* countries were more likely to disapprove bullying behaviours when they were performed by someone in much higher position such as their boss's boss. In high power distance cultures, it is common that employees do not question the boss and disagreeing with them can be associated with "losing face".

As a result of the cultural differences, people and organisations function in different ways. Prevention methods should then be based on the cultural characteristics. For instance, countries where the awareness seems to be lower should focus on increasing the knowledge in the society. Cultural factors also play an important role in the way individuals experience bullying, in the way they talk about it, and whether or not they seek for help. This should be reflected in the organisational interventions and guidance procedures.

7.2 Bullying research in the EU

A Focal Point² survey on violence and harassment at work was carried out in 2008 among the EU-OSHA network by the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EASHW). The purpose of this survey was to gain a better understanding to the situation in relation to workplace bullying in the EU. In this survey, the respondents were asked to evaluate if the level of acknowledgment of the issue was at an appropriate level in their country. In this survey, workplace bullying was referred to *"repeated, unreasonable behaviour directed towards an employee, or group of employees by a colleague, supervisor or subordinate, aimed at victimizing, humiliating, undermining or threatening them."*

The results of this survey showed that harassment is addressed officially more often than third-party violence (EASHW, 2008). It was pointed out that legislation doesn't usually define what is meant by bullying. In addition, 13 out of Nineteen Focal Points answered that they thought the level of acknowledgement was not appropriate in their country. The main reasons to why the acknowledgment was not appropriate were;

- lack of awareness
- lack of appropriate tools/methods for assessing and managing the issue
- limited or lacking scientific evidence
- limited or lacking specific regulation
- low prioritization of the issue

² Focal Point is a person in each EU Member State, candidate country and EFTA country nominated by each government and the Agency's official representative in that country. Normally, they are the national authority for safety and health at work. Focal Points provide information and feedback to help support the Agency's initiatives

The prevalence of workplace bullying in the EU was researched by Eurofound's index of ASBs³ in the European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS).

The figure below shows how many workers were affected by workplace bullying in EU countries (EWCS, 2010). It is based on the index of ASBs which includes workers reporting at least one form of harassment of those asked in the EWCS. On average, 14% of employees in the EU28 report harassment at the workplace. Finland, Austria and Czech Republic show the highest percentage, over 20%.

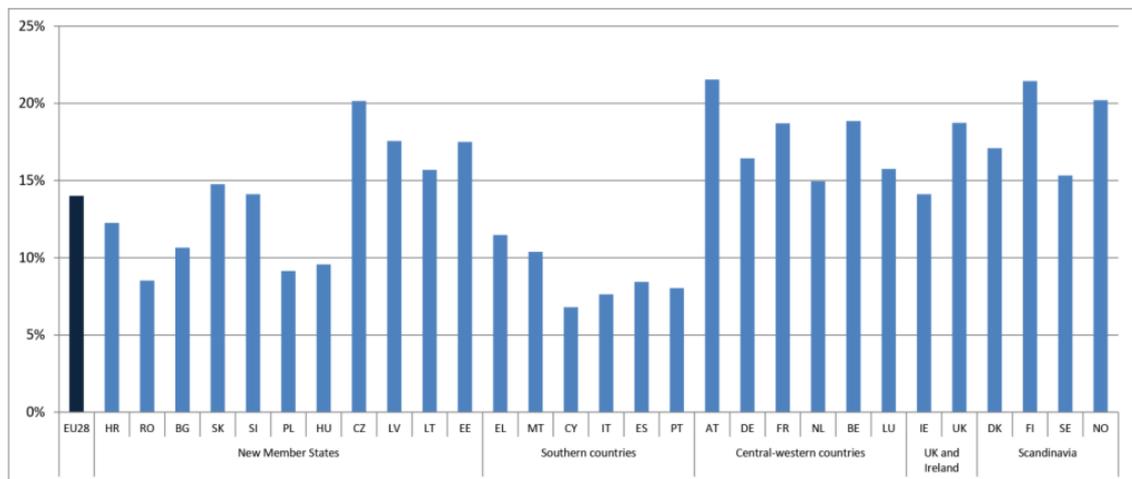


Figure 2 Workers affected by workplace bullying by country (EWCS, 2010)

7.2.1 Variations in the findings

As the figure shows, there is a clear geographical pattern in the prevalence of bullying in the EU. In the Southern countries such as Spain and Italy, the problem is significantly lower than in the Scandinavian or Central western countries. One reason for the differences can be found in awareness of the issue and legislation. Sweden was the first European country to have a legislation addressing workplace bullying in 1993. After this, many other European countries followed and implemented laws addressing the problem.

³ The concept of adverse social behaviour ABS was developed for the Fifth EWCS conducted in 2010 and is used mainly when describing the results of this survey. ASB is an index which is based on six questions from the survey, asking the person if they have experienced unwanted sexual attention, verbal abuse, threats or humiliating behaviour during the last month, or during the last 12 months (EWCS, 2010).

Statistics Finland (2014) explain these differences through the difficulty to measure workplace bullying. Because workplace bullying is understood differently in each culture, there might be great differences in the perceptions of bullying. This is explained through the variations in the translations of the survey; in Finnish, bullying/harassment had been translated to "*kiusaaminen/epäasiallinen kohtelu*". The expression "*epäasiallinen kohtelu*" however is quite mild, which could be translated to "inappropriate treatment" rather than harassment. This is considered a factor that increased the affirmative answers in the survey. In this survey in 2005, the number of people who reported having experienced workplace bullying was 17,2%. In the next survey in 2010, when the survey only included the word "bullying" instead of "bullying/inappropriate treatment", the result fell to 6,2%. Even though this was much lower result, it was still above the EU average.

Another reason for this might be found in the definition of bullying and how it is understood. What is defined as bullying in one culture might not be the same in another culture (Bond, 2004). Bond also explained that the negative effects of bullying are due to the meaning that individuals ascribe to it, which is made up in the cultural context. Thus, people in Finland might have a different meaning for workplace bullying compared to that in Africa. Some countries might also find workplace bullying more acceptable than others. Scandinavian countries, however, share quite similar cultures, and therefore, the differences might be smaller.

In addition to the differences in the perceptions of bullying, the awareness of the problem might also affect the results. According to a study by the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, there was lack of awareness in many of the European countries. Therefore, some people might not even know what bullying is, nor what behaviours are acceptable at work. In Finland, however, the problem is well acknowledged, which might help in recognition of the problem. Because of this, Finnish people might also feel more open about sharing their own experiences.

7.3 Workplace bullying in Finland

Workplace bullying is a big problem in Finnish organisations. According to the latest study, the Working Life Barometer in Autumn 2016, over half of the Finnish employees (55,3%) reported that bullying or emotional abuse occurs at their workplace. In addition, 7,6% reported continuous bullying in their workplace. Workplace bullying also increased significantly during 2010-2012 and has not decreased since then (Mähönen, 2017).

The Finnish Institute of Occupational Health (Työterveyslaitos) has assessed the prevalence of workplace bullying in Finland every three years since 1997 until 2012. In this survey, the respondents were asked whether they were being exposed to bullying at the moment, or if they had been exposed to this type of behaviour before. In 2012, 4% of employees reported being exposed to bullying at the moment, and 13% had been exposed to bullying before, but not anymore. At the moment of the survey, 6% of women and 2% of men reported being exposed to bullying.

In addition to the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health, Statistics Finland has also assessed the prevalence of bullying in Finland. This is done in their "Quality of Life Surveys" (työolotutkimus), in which they have included questions about workplace bullying since 1997. In their report "Changes in the working conditions 1977-2013" (Statistics Finland 2014) they explain that the number of observers of workplace bullying has been increasing in each survey. The biggest leap was between 1997 and 2000 among the findings observed by women, which might have been influenced by the growing public interest towards the topic at the time. Workplace bullying was attracting a lot of public interest especially in 2003, right after the new occupational safety and health law came into force.

8 Workplace bullying prevention

8.1 Theoretical base

There are different approaches used in the prevention of workplace bullying. Usually, these approaches are distinguished by their stage of prevention and level of organisation interventions. The stage of prevention is divided into primary, secondary and tertiary prevention, and the work organisation interventions are divided into societal, organisational, task-level and individual orientation (Vartia-Väänänen, 2013). This can be seen in the table below.

Level of work organisation interventions	Stage of prevention		
	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
Society/Policy level	Laws, regulations, collective agreements	Court case Industrial tribunal	Provision of rehabilitation opportunities
Organisational level	Anti-bullying policies Development of organisational culture Management training Organisational surveys	Mediation Investigation of complaints Handling procedures	Programs and contracts of professional after-care
Workplace level	Risk analysis Training	Training Awareness raising Case analysis, mediation, case resolution	Group recovery programmes
Individual level	Training	Social support, counselling	Therapy, counselling, physical activities, redress

Table 2 Approaches to workplace bullying prevention (Varti-Väänänen, 2013)

The stage of prevention reflects the bullying process. Primary level interventions attempt to reduce the risks in order to prevent the occurrence of workplace bullying in the first place (Vartia-Väänänen, 2013). Secondary interventions aim to reduce, reverse or to slow the progress of the situation by providing the employees with necessary skills. Tertiary interventions aim to reduce the negative impacts once bullying has already occurred, and attempt to restore the individuals' as well as the organisation's health.

At the individual level, the main goal is to change the individual's perceptions, attitudes and behaviours. Depending on the stage of prevention, this can be, for instance, training or counseling. At the group level, the aim is to prevent or reduce the problem by influencing the work environment. Prevention is done by analysing the risks and raising awareness of the issue, and once the problem already exists, by analysing the specific case and by group recovery. At the organisational level, the aim is to develop an organisational culture in which bullying is not accepted, by training and raising awareness of the issue, and by introducing anti-bullying policies. At the society level, the aim is to affect the perceptions of all in the society by introducing laws, regulations and collective agreements. More examples are listed in Table 2.

8.2 Organisational interventions

Workplaces have the main responsibility for the development of working conditions. Employers are legally responsible for ensuring safety and health at the workplace, and organisational factors have an important role in either allowing or disallowing bullying in the workplace (Salin, 2008). It is therefore very important to find what these factors are and to try to reduce or eliminate the issue. To prevent bullying from emerging in the first place, there are some measures that can be taken to develop the organisational culture. Below are some examples of doing this.

- Orienting employees when they join the company
- Making sure the employees are integrated to the company
- Making sure the goals are clear to everyone
- Clear division of labour and responsibilities
- Regular development discussions with employees
- Regular meetings with the employees
- Leadership style that supports the work

- Training management skills
- Continuous monitoring of the workplace

8.3 Workplace bullying policy

As early intervention is important, monitoring the environment is particularly important in the prevention strategy (Mathieson et al. 2006). Regular discussions and employee surveys are one way to do this. In order to have so-called "zero-tolerance" for bullying, general awareness of the issue must be increased. The employees should understand what appropriate work behaviour is, and what behaviour is not allowed in the workplace. To do this, many researchers have recommended the use of anti-bullying policies in the workplace (For example, Mathieson et al. 2006; Richards and Daley, 2003). The employer is responsible for creating these policies.

Workplace bullying policy is the employer's statement of intent, summarising the processes as regards to bullying in the organisation (Rayner and Lewis, 2011). Anti-bullying policy should include a clear statement from management stating that all kind of bullying is unacceptable, a definition of the behaviour that is regarded as bullying and reference to relevant legislation and responsibilities of management and employees (Vartia-Väänänen, 2013). The policy should also clarify the responsibilities of everyone involved and give guidance on how to deal with bullying for the victims as well as for the observers and managers. It should also include information on support mechanisms, complaint procedures and measures to prevent bullying and to evaluate the policy (Vartia-Väänänen, 2013).

The policy must also be well communicated to the employees in order for it to be effective. Even though many organisations might have an anti-bullying policy or other prevention methods in place, if the information is not well communicated to the employee, there will not be any benefit from having the policy. The policy is helpful only when the employee knows it exists and understands that workplace bullying is not allowed in the organisation. Therefore, the policy must be integrated to the company's processes; for instance, in the training, communications and in the induction of a new employee (Vartia-Väänänen, 2013). Richards and Daley (2003) also emphasise the importance of including the staff in the process of developing and implementing the policy. When the whole organisation is involved in the process, the employees will at the

same time increase their awareness of the issue and help them understand the content of the policy.

In addition to having an anti-bullying policy, it is important that the managers and employees know how to handle bullying situations. As discussed earlier, weak leadership and failure to stop the conflict from escalating can be considered risk factors for workplace bullying, and therefore, it is important that the managers are prepared to confront this type of situations. According to Salin (2003), raising awareness in the organisation can also encourage employees to combat workplace bullying.

8.4 Workplace bullying in Finnish law

Finnish law on workplace bullying is covered in the Employment Contracts Act 55/2000 (*työsopimuslaki*), and in the Occupational Safety and Health Act 738/2002 (*työturvallisuuslaki*).

8.4.1 The Employment Contracts Act

Chapter 2 in the Employment Contracts Act defines the employer's obligations. According to this Act, employer's obligations include:

Improving the employer/employee relations and relations among the employees, making sure that employees are able to carry out their work, and to further employees' opportunities to develop themselves so that they can advance in their careers (1§)

Treating all employees equally (2§)

Ensuring occupational safety and health to protect employees from health hazards as provided in the Occupational Safety and Health Act (3§)

8.5 The Occupational Safety and Health Act

The Occupational Safety and Health Act (No. 738/2002) (*Työturvallisuuslaki*) determines the employers' and employee's duties. According to this Act, workplace bullying which manifests itself as inappropriate treatment and harassment (*"epäasiallinen kohtelu ja häirintä"*), which weakens the functioning of the work unit, harms the work, and causes risks to the psychic and physic health of the employees. The employer's responsibility is to prevent bullying behaviour by available means, and to immediately interfere in the situation when bullying behaviour is detected.

The new Occupational Safety and Health Act came into force on 1.1.2003, which replaces the old Act from 1958 (299/58). The new Act requires the employer to interfere in situations where employees' health is at risk due to inappropriate treatment.

8.5.1 Duties of the employer

The duties of the employer are laid down in sections 8§, 9§, 10§, 13§, 14§, 16§ and 28§ of the Safety and Health act. According to this Act, employer's duties include:

Continuously monitoring and developing the working environment, preventing and eliminating the creation of hazards, and adopting the necessary safety measures by available means (8§).

Having a policy of action in order to promote safety and health and discussing it with the employees and their representatives (9§).

Analysing and identifying the hazards and risk factors caused by the work that have effects on employees' safety and health. If the employer does not have the adequate expertise, he/she shall use external aspects (10§).

Taking into account the physical and mental capacities of the employees when designing and planning the work (13§).

Giving necessary information on the hazards and risk factors of the workplace and ensuring that the employees have the necessary skills to prevent harassment (14§).

In case of placing another person to represent him/her, the employer's duty is also to make sure that the substitute is sufficiently competent, he/she has received adequate orientation to the duties and that he/she also otherwise has enough capabilities for attending the duties. (16§).

Taking action to remove the hazard from the workplace once becoming aware of the matter (28§).

8.5.2 Duties of the employee

Employee's duties are covered in Chapter 4, sections 18§ and 19§. Employees duties include:

Following the orders and instructions given by the employer and observing such care that is necessary for maintaining a safe and healthy working environment. Employees must also avoid such harassment and other inappropriate treatment of other employees which causes hazards and risks to their safety and health. (18§)

Informing the employer and the occupational safety and health representative of defects in the working conditions or methods. They must also try to eliminate such faults according to their skills (19§).

9 Research

As a part of this thesis, a questionnaire was designed to collect employees' experiences on workplace bullying, and information about how the companies where they work intend to prevent workplace bullying. The main objective was to find out if the employees were aware of workplace bullying policies or reporting procedures, and if the workplace has provided them with some information about workplace bullying.

9.1 Research method

The target group of the study was everyone currently employed in Finland. The aim was to collect as many responses as possible, but since the author had no real control over the number of responses she decided to aim for at least 30 responses. The data was collected with an online questionnaire because this was considered a relatively quick and efficient way of obtaining data from a large sample of people. Considering the objective of the thesis, doing the research in just one company would not have given a very broad perspective since it would have described only one company's way of doing things. By obtaining answers from individuals of different ages who work in different industries and differently sized companies, the responses are more universal, and they give more insight to the situation in Finland. Interviews were not chosen for the same reason.

The questionnaire included both closed and open-ended questions, and thus, it is a **mixed method research**; a mix of quantitative and qualitative research methods. This method was chosen because of the nature of the research – the aim was to collect both numeric data that can be statistically analysed, and the respondents' opinions about their company's prevention methods. Quantitative method is a more traditional type of research, which utilises quantifiable data that can give insight to larger sample populations, and it is used to answer questions about relationships between variables. Qualitative method, on the other hand, intends to answer questions by explaining and understanding the phenomena (Cottrell & McKenzie 2010). Quantitative method allows us to analyse "how many" and "how much", while the qualitative method allows the researcher to understand the attitudes that quantitative research can't answer to, such as "how" and "why". Thus, the qualitative research captures more insight to the phenomena.

9.2 Questionnaire design and data collection

The questionnaire was designed with Google Forms. It included a cover letter (**Appendix 1**) and 26 questions (**Appendix 2**) that were divided into three sections: background information, questions about workplace bullying and questions regarding the workplace. The finished questionnaire was shared on social media, using Facebook and LinkedIn. It was published on 28th March 2018, and it was open until 18 April 2018. Thus, the respondents had a total of 3 weeks to answer the survey. Altogether, 70 responses were collected.

The data obtained in the questionnaire was analysed using Excel and SPSS. The background variables were analysed using the descriptive frequencies function, and the tables were then modified in Excel.

9.3 Research ethics and reliability

So that the results of this study can be considered valid, the measurement procedure must be reliable. To obtain maximum reliability, the author intended to collect as many responses as possible and to make sure that the questionnaire is easy to understand by writing clear instructions for answering the questionnaire, and by explaining what the research is about.

Before publishing the questionnaire, it was also tested various times. The aim of this was to find out how long time it takes to answer the questionnaire, and whether some questions were unclear. Some questions were modified based on the findings. The answers obtained at this stage were deleted before publishing the final survey.

Anonymity was highlighted in every step of this research. It was clearly stated in the cover letter of the questionnaire, and also in the posts in social media. This was considered very important because the topic is quite sensitive, and most people would not like to share their experiences with their own name.

10 Results

The majority (78,6%) of the respondents were female, 18,6% were male and 2,9% respondents answered "other/prefer not to answer". The majority of the respondents (68,8%) were 21-30 years old, 11% were 31-40 years old, and 8,6% were 20 and under. 4,3% were 51 and over and 2,9% were between 41-50 years old. 41,4% of the respondents had worked in their current job for 1-3 years, and 37,1% had worked for less than 1 year. 8,6% had worked between 4-6 years or between 7-10 years. 4,3% had worked in the company for more than 10 years.

78,6% of the respondents worked in the private sector, while 21,4% worked in the public sector. Most of the respondents (44,3%) worked in smaller companies with 1-50 employees, 25,7% worked in companies with between 51-250 employees, and 30% in companies with more than 250 employees. The majority (88,6%) of the respondents were not in a managerial position.

10.1 Workplace bullying

The respondents were provided with the following definition of workplace bullying.

"Bullying at work is about repeated actions and practices that are directed against one or more workers, that are unwanted by the victim, that may be carried out deliberately or unconsciously, but clearly cause humiliation, offence and distress, and that may interfere with work performance and/or cause an unpleasant working environment."

They were then asked whether they were familiar with the concept of workplace bullying based on the definition. 88,6% of the respondents were familiar with the given concept of workplace bullying. Most of the respondents considered that there was nothing to add to the definition, but some also considered that health problems should be included in the definition.

"Bullying also causes stress which may lead to health problems"

"It can also cause depression and anxiety issues in private life"

n=70		n	%
Gender	Female	55	78.6
	Male	13	18.6
	Other/Prefer not to say	2	2.9
Age	20 or under	6	8.6
	21-30	48	68.6
	31-40	11	15.7
	41-50	2	2.9
	51 or over	3	4.3
Years worked	Less than 1 year	26	37.1
	1-3 years	29	41.4
	4-6 years	6	8.6
	7-10 years	6	8.6
	More than 10 years	3	4.3
Sector	Private	55	78.6
	Public	15	21.4
Size of the company	1-50 employees	31	44.3
	51-250	18	25.7
	More than 250 employees	21	30.0
In a managerial position	No	62	88.6
	Yes	8	11.4

Table 3 Questions regarding respondents' background information

Most of the respondents had experiences with bullying behavior. Altogether, 20% had been bullied, 22,9% had witnessed someone else being bullied, and 20% had both been bullied and witnessed someone else being bullied. Thus, 44 of 70 (62,9%) respondents had faced bullying in their workplace. 1 respondent stated having bullied someone else, and 35,7% did not have any experiences with bullying behavior.

n=70	n	%
I don't have experiences with bullying behaviour	25	35.7
I have been bullied	14	20.0
I have been bullied and I have also witnessed bullying	14	20.0
I have bullied someone else	1	1.4
I have witnessed someone else being bullied	16	22.9
Total	70	100.0

Table 4 Questions regarding experience with bullying behaviour

Those respondents who had experienced workplace bullying in their current workplace continued to answer some questions about their experience. 79,5% of the respondents who had had experiences with workplace bullying stated that the behavior was repeated. 20,5% stated that it was a single incident, in which case it would not be considered workplace bullying in theory. The respondents were then asked if the victim had received support. 40,9% stated that the victim did not receive support, 38,6% stated that the victim received support, and 20,5% answered "I don't know". They were also asked whether the employer took actions to resolve the situation. 56,8% answered that the employer did not take any actions to resolve the situation. 36,4% answered that the employer did take actions, and 6,8% chose the option "I don't know".

n=44		n	%
Did the victim receive support	I don't know	9	12.9
	No	18	25.7
	Yes	17	24.3
Did the employer take any actions to resolve the situation	I don't know	3	4.3
	No	25	35.7
	Yes	16	22.9

Table 5 Questions regarding support for the victim

The respondents were then asked how they felt about the way the situation was handled at their workplace. Some of them were happy with the way the situation was handled.

"Room for improvement, but ok"

"It was taken seriously"

"It was handled fast and fair"

"It was handled great way. Another employee talked with both and the they agreed the dispute"

"I think it was handled well. Superiors were already aware of the problem and after I reported on it their response was swift."

"It was handled good"

Many of them, however, were not happy with the situation.

"It lasted way too long. It could've ended earlier if the victim stepped up sooner."

"Top management did not take it seriously enough"

"It took too long. They didn't take it seriously until over time more people shared their stories about the same person"

"The situation was handled poorly, there were discussions regarding bullying, but it did not improve anything as bullying continued"

"It was handled incorrectly. Instead of supporting the victim, the victim was blamed."

"Ignored and therefore condoned. Everyone knew."

"Nobody did nothing, because the bully is the boss."

"Bad, could not do anything."

"Really poorly"

"Very poorly"

"Nobody cared and i was ashamed"

"Bad, because the boss was the bully so..."

"Employer didn't take enough actions to solve this situation. Bullied person changed workplace and bully stayed at the job."

The respondents were also asked what they thought was the reason for the bullying. Altogether, 32 comments were provided. In particular, lack of management actions or poor management skills was stressed in many comments:

"I believe bullying happens if it is allowed to happen. When there are no consequences it won't stop, and Finnish managerial culture is soft when it comes to bullying - they just rather say: "s/he just is like that, don't pay attention to them" which does not solve anything"

"Poor management skills"

"Lack of management from HR."

Other comments mentioned stress, high workload, the bully's insecurity or jealousy, cultural differences, personal issues, victim being different than others, the need to blame someone and will of control.

"Bully's workload, stress, mental illness (?)"

"the victim allowed such thing to happen. We're all adults at work and we should never allow anyone to treat ourselves like shit. Step up."

"Often young female professionals are underestimated. Maybe they are threat or just plain jealousy."

"In one case the person was insecure about her own knowledge and that's why tried to put people down. And in the other case the person was suffering from too much work and was mean to many people because she was too tired of everything."

"Kiusattu henkilö on ollut "erilainen" kuin muut. Ärsyttävä ehkä joidenkin mielestä."

"Jealousy. Insecurity"

"Cultural difference and male ego and feeling superior to women"

"In the particular experience that I saw above, they did it because they were frustrated with their own product's failure and "needed" to blame someone."

"I think that the main reason is the non-functioning chemistry between the bully and the victim. The bully might also be insecure or jealous. There is always a possibility that the bully isn't really aware how their actions affect another person."

"Insecurity, one's own nature/ character and bad management which can enforce, allow or begin such type of behaviour"

"Jealousy and will of control"

"Jealousy"

"Easy target, young age. Also, the boss is very sexist and bullies all the women and talks perverted thing to them. So, the boss himself is the problem."

"In this case I believe it was the need to feel important and better. The bully in question continued to brag about how good of a worker she was and tried to make us new hires look and feel bad. I didn't associate with this person outside of work, but I heard she didn't behave like that with friends and family."

"Someone picked always the easiest tasks."

"Arrogance, stress"

"I am not Finnish and i was a student. The first incident was frustration over communication. The second was blatant discrimination over the fact i am not Finnish and therefore do not speak like a Finn."

"Racism"

"I was new, much younger and too enthusiastic and kind"

"When someone does badly their job or is different, then talking behind back starts."

"I think the main reasons are jealousy and personal issues which are expressed by bullying others at work."

10.2 Questions regarding the workplace

All the respondents were asked if the employer had provided them with information about workplace bullying. Only 16 respondents (22,9%) had received information about workplace bullying. 54 (77,1%) had not received any information about workplace bullying. These 54 respondents were then asked if they wished to have received information. 66,7% answered yes.

		n	%
Has your employer provided you with information about workplace bullying? n=70	No	54	77.1
	Yes	16	22.9
If you answered no, do you wish to have received information about workplace bullying n=54	No	18	33.3
	Yes	36	66.7

Table 6 Questions regarding information about workplace bullying

Those 16 respondents who had received information were then asked when they received the information. Most of them had received information at the beginning of their employment relationship or as a part of the onboarding process. Some said that they had seen the information by themselves, for instance in an infographic in the common spaces or in the intranet. The respondents were then asked how happy they were with the amount and the content of the information they received. The average was 3,5.

All the respondents were then asked if they were aware of a written internal workplace bullying policy and procedures. 68,6% were not aware of a policy, and 71,4% were not aware of any procedures. In addition, 47,1% considered that the policy and procedures were not properly implemented in the workplace. 18,6% considered that they were properly implemented, and 34,3% answered "N/A".

The respondents were also asked whether they received some training regarding the company policy and the procedures. 42 (60%) respondents answered that they had not received any training. 9 (12,9%) had received training only regarding the policy, and 5 (7,1%) only regarding the procedures. 6 (8,6%) had received training regarding both the policy and the procedures. 8 (11,4%) answered "N/A".

n=70		n	%
Are you aware of any written internal workplace bullying policy	No	48	68.6
	Yes	22	31.4
Are you aware of any written internal workplace bullying reporting procedures	No	50	71.4
	Yes	20	28.6
Are the policy and procedures properly implemented	N/A	24	34.3
	No	33	47.1
	Yes	13	18.6
Did you receive training regarding the company policy/procedures	N/A	8	11.4
	No, I did not receive any training	42	60.0
	Yes, regarding both the policy and the procedures	6	8.6
	Yes, regarding the policy	9	12.9
	Yes, regarding the procedures	5	7.1

Table 7 Questions regarding policy and procedures

Next, the respondents were asked whether they knew how to act if they or someone else were being bullied in their workplace. The majority (71,4%) considered that they know how to act in a bullying situation. The respondents were also asked whether they knew what the consequences for the bully were in their workplace. 61,4% did not know what the consequences were.

At the end of the questionnaire, the respondents were asked what workplace bullying prevention methods they hope to see in their workplace. This question was optional, and altogether 39 comments were provided.

Many comments stressed the need for better management, clear policies and procedures and prevention actions. More support, and a friendly working culture were also considered important.

"Actions against it if it happens"

"There should be a strict zero policy for bullying but also the employer should find out the reason for bullying. Like in one case the reason was almost burn out, so then the bully should also get some help."

"Clear policy, which includes definition, process when it occurs and consequences."

"Perhaps general publicity to raise awareness how common bullying is today."

"More clear procedures to know how to act in bullying cases."

"Taking it seriously and actions should be long term not just saying stop the behaviour and nothing changed"

"A committee meant to represent the employees. I'm not sure the name of the committee."

"I hope that the matter is been taken seriously. That's the starting point. Also support for the both parties is crucial, for the bullying to stop."

"Anonymous whistleblower function"

"Establishing a welcoming and friendly working culture at the office."

Many respondents also wanted to have more openness and more discussions regarding workplace bullying:

"It would be brought forward and talked about. Not much training was provided in any company policies."

"Talk openly about this topic and make people act always if they see something!"

"At least open discussion"

"Talking and listening"

"Conversation"

"Some conversation beforehand"

More consequences for the bully was also mentioned in the comments;

"Warnings and ultimately extension of work relation." (termination)

"I hope my boss get some consequence about what he's done to me and others from up above and I hope he'll learn his lesson"

"If the bullying keeps going, employer and all upper bosses should talk very serious at her/him. They should offer some other position at workplace that bullier and bullied wouldn't have to work together. "

In general, more information regarding workplace bullying was considered important:

"More visible and readily available information in both Finnish and English. The information was there (and may still be) but it is not in an easily accessible Place. It was healthcare professionals who informed the victim about it not the workplace."

"There should be more information available about the rules and about how to act in a bullying situation."

"Employer should tell about how to act if bullying occurs and who to contact. Employer should encourage employees to talk about bullying if it occurs."

"Bosses would tell more about bullying, and what happens if here is bullying."

"The managers should also be prepared to handle such situations. "

I don't know if bullying can be really prevented because it really is all about the person itself, not so much the surroundings or position. But it can be made easier to approach superiors in matters like this, with open door policies and such.

"Employer should tell about how to act if bullying occurs and who to contact. Employer should encourage employees to talk about bullying if it occurs."

"Clear verbal and written instructions about how to act if someone has experienced or witnessed bullying. Also, clear rules on how to behave towards colleagues."

"I think students need more support from their student tutors and the director of the placement. We are not aware of the workplace policies/reporting structures for the practice places. And often reporting to our student tutor does not help the situation. "

"I just wish people would confront each other like grown-ups."

The responsibility of other employees was also mentioned in the comments:

"Strong management reaction to bullying and consequences (oral/written warnings, further steps etc.) but also everyone else taking responsibility in the workplace, not only management. Say something if you see something."

The respondents were also asked whether they were happy with the situation regarding workplace bullying in their company, and if they would change something in their workplace. Some simply answered yes, some no, and some stated that they didn't know what to think about it. Many comments were provided.

"It's obviously good, because seems bullying is nonexistent in the company. Everybody's acting friendly with each other."

"At my company there is no bullying, so I'd say yes"

"No I don't, people who should be taking care of these kind of things, should be talking to their employees privately, at least couple of times in a year."

"We haven't ever discussed this topic at work, so maybe we should. I haven't faced any bullying."

"There is no prevention atm"

"I don't think that the bosses really know how to react when employees tell about bullying."

"I think they should follow up once you make the complaint. You need to know something has been done"

"As far as I know there are no methods for this. This has never even been discussed in the company that I have heard of. So yes, I would change the fact that this should be brought forward and to everyone's attention."

"Workplace bullying should be addressed more"

"There seems not to be any prevention. There should always be, but in my view, it should then be authentic. Should it exist without being authentic, it would do more harm than good and underestimate the issue of bullying at work"

"Bad, not communication at all. I wish they took this matter more seriously."

"Prevention is poor and all actions towards improving it should be started"

"No. I don't find people feel comfortable approaching their superiors (or higher up management) to resolve issues. I find they are intimidated and don't want to appear bad "in the eyes" of management."

"More information and supportive atmosphere would help the situation"

"It feels like employer doesn't really care about the issue. It's something that people don't talk about, not even when it's happening."

"No, it is nonexistent, and we are a AAA company. Anonymous whistleblower function."

"There aren't any prevention actions in place. Those should be established first."

"Guide ppl what to do if bullying is noticed"

"Change my boss"

"We should have training about this, so no it's not good. I think it is there, but we do not talk about it"

"It's zero tolerance so it's good."

"I think due to the small size of our team (6 people), the relationships between the team members are quite close therefore there is little room for bullying to take place without someone noticing it. The best measures in our case are preventive, not reactive."

"It is better than it was a few years ago."

"I would say that there is nothing done about bullying prevention at the moment - there are no rules, no information available, and no reporting procedures. I think that most employers only pay attention to the issue once something has already happened, when it is too late."

"Maybe we could talk this more openly"

"Bosses should do something about it. They don't do anything"

"No, the situation is not good. I would fire the boss immediately."

"Still don't know about prevention, but the handling of the situation was well executed."

"Other employees were heard, and the bully received two warnings before they were promptly fired when the unwanted actions didn't stop. Our superiors wanted to maintain a good work environment for us all to work in. Firing the bully was a last resort but, in my eyes, justified and much needed."

"If bullying would happen, our boss would take action and start preventive measures"

"There is no prevention at all. I would change it so that the employer lifts the topic up to consideration"

"I can't fully answer, because there was nothing done to stop the bullying at my last practice placement. I was told to put up with it as it was a shorter placement. It is not a good situation for students to be in when they cannot report unethical behavior or discrimination. I think the company policies in our workplaces don't always apply to us at students, but our school policies don't apply to the workplaces. So, we are stuck with no resolution or support."

"I would train people how to handle situations without shaming the one making a mistake"

"No, it is not, you can't say anything if you wanna keep your job Then again I am quitting soon"

"More information about it and make it stop as soon as possible."

"No, it's not good. I would change that bosses would talk about it more."

"We don't mention this at all in our company and i think we should"

"Mielestäni yrityksessämme pitäisi puhua enemmän työpaikkakiusaamisesta ja sen ehkäisemisestä. En ole koskaan kuullut yrityksessämme edes puhuttavan työpaikkakiusaamisesta."

"Idk. I probably just quit and find a better job"

"For the moment there is not bullying in my workplace but there was a while ago and it took way too many years until bosses reacted to it. Bullying should be taken more seriously, and it would be good to organize different kind of events during the year where all can get together and have some fun to keep the atmosphere good."

10.3 Discussion

The majority of the respondents had experienced bullying in some form. The comments revealed that in most cases the situation was ignored, not taken seriously, or it was handled poorly. In many cases, it had lasted for a long time before anything happened. In one case, the victim was the one who was forced to leave while the bully stayed, and in another case, the victim was blamed for the situation.

This research revealed many faults in Finnish workplaces. In many of these cases, the employer did not take any actions to resolve the situation, and the comments showed that the bullying situations were handled poorly. Some respondents felt that nobody did anything to improve the situation. In most cases, workplace bullying was not discussed at the workplace: most of the respondents had not received any information about workplace bullying, and the majority was not aware of the policies or procedures. In

some cases, the respondents felt that prevention was nonexistent, and actions and consequences were missing.

Many respondents explained that there was no prevention: workplace bullying was not discussed at work, there was no information available, and people did not know how to handle bullying situations. This is important to prevent these situations from emerging in the first place. If the situation has already been allowed to escalate, it is much more difficult to remove from the workplace. Many respondents also hoped for more open discussions about bullying. Some respondents also explained that they were scared to talk about the issue because they do not want to look bad in the boss's eyes. Some respondents also considered their bosses intimidating and would not feel comfortable turning to them in a bullying situation.

All in all, there is much to improve in Finnish workplaces. More information about workplace bullying should be provided as early as possible, and there should be more open discussion about the topic. Clear policies and procedures are needed, and they should be properly implemented in the workplace - the workplace should make sure that the employees are aware of them. Training should also be provided to both the employees and managers to make sure that everyone knows how to act in bullying situations. In addition, everyone should take the issue more seriously, and other employees should also recognize their responsibility in reporting a bullying case if they become aware of it. Not reporting such a situation is also a serious misconduct. Consequences for the bully should also be stressed more, because this raises the costs of bullying behaviour. In order to have zero tolerance of bullying, the company should commit to having a culture that prohibits bullying.

Although this study was fairly narrow in its scope, it offered some important insight to the current situation in Finland. It shows that having a policy is not enough, but what really counts is the implementation and the communication with the employees. The employees should be considered an important source of information for understanding what the company is doing good, and where it still has to improve. Thus, the author believes that the employees should be listened to more to build a culture that truly forbids bullying.

Since the sample size in this research remained quite small, the results cannot be held representative, but rather directional. Thus, to gain more insight to the situation in Finnish companies from the employees' point of view, another larger scale research is recommended.

11 Conclusions

The purpose of this research was to gain deeper insight into workplace bullying prevention in Finland. It seems that workplace bullying is still a big problem in Finnish organisations, and it is a problem that is often overlooked. Too often the victim is forced to leave rather than the bully, and the bullies often don't face the consequences they should. In some cases, bullying has even continued for several years. This is also evident in many bullying cases that have been discussed in the media.

It was noted that workplace bullying is most often rooted in the culture of the organisation. If an organisation has a culture that strongly prohibits bullying, the culture will eventually push the bullying behaviour out from the organisation. If, however, the culture allows bullying, it is more difficult to remove from the organisation. To change the toxic culture, the leaders need to coach the managers to provide a safe workplace where people do not feel intimidated. This will not only make the people satisfied with the organisation, but it will also bring the best business results - "A healthy employee is a productive employee".

To fight workplace bullying in Finland, it is necessary to raise awareness of the issue, to make sure that the responsible people in companies understand how to deal with the issue and to provide the employees with enough information early on when they join the company. This requires more discussions at work, more management interventions and raising the costs for the bullies. Sometimes, the bullies don't even notice that they are doing something wrong, and when they face no consequences, they are implicitly encouraged to continue such behaviour. Therefore, early intervention is required. The sooner workplace bullying is detected and addressed, the easier it is to remove the problem from the workplace. Since workplace bullying is often a result of poor working environment, it can also be prevented by making sure that the work is well organised, that everyone knows their roles and tasks and that employees get along with each other. Stress and too long working hours can also increase the risk of interpersonal conflict, and therefore, it is necessary to make sure that the amount of work is reasonable and to invest in a stress-free workplace.

Workplace bullying is an issue that should be addressed more in Finnish organisations. As employees, we also have the responsibility to make sure that we treat others with

kindness and respect and support each other when it is needed. By working together, we can build healthy work environments where everyone feels safe and happy.

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Appendix 1 – Cover letter for the questionnaire

Dear reader,

My name is Kirsi Varis, and I'm a business management student at Helsinki Metropolia University of Applied Sciences. I'm currently working on my bachelor's thesis about workplace bullying and its prevention in Finland. The aim of the thesis is to find out how companies in Finland intend to prevent workplace bullying, and how well the prevention methods are implemented. As a part of the thesis, I wanted to gain deeper understanding to the current situation in Finnish companies from employees' point of view. Therefore, your contribution is very important, and I would really appreciate it if you would kindly answer this questionnaire.

This questionnaire is targeted at everyone who is currently employed in Finland. It takes approximately 5-8 minutes to complete, and all the answers will be totally anonymous. If you have any questions regarding the questionnaire, please contact:

Kirsi.varis2@metropolia.fi

Thank you very much for your contribution!

Sincerely,

Kirsi Varis

Appendix 2 – Questionnaire

Background information

1. Gender

Female

Male

Other/Prefer not to say

2. Age

20 or under

21-30

31-40

41-50

51 or over

3. How long have you worked in your current job?

Less than 1 year

1-3 years

4-6 years

7-10 years

More than 10 years

4. In what sector do you currently work?

Public

Private

NGO

Other

5. What is the size of the company?

1-50

51-250

More than 250 employees

6. Are you in a managerial position?

Yes

No

Workplace bullying

Below is one definition of workplace bullying

"Bullying at work is about repeated actions and practices that are directed against one or more workers, that are unwanted by the victim, that may be carried out deliberately or unconsciously, but clearly cause humiliation, offence and distress, and that may interfere with work performance and/or cause an unpleasant working environment."

(Einarsen and Raknes, 1997)

7. Based on this definition, are you familiar with the concept of workplace bullying?

Yes

No

8. In your view, is there anything missing from this definition?

Workplace bullying can be verbal, physical, social or psychological abuse by a person or a group of people in the workplace. Bullying behaviour includes, but is not limited to:

- Continuous threats
- Ignoring the victim
- Laughter directed to the victim
- Malicious messages
- Spreading rumours
- Intimidation
- Criticising one's work
- Undermining one's work
- Isolating someone from the work group
- Sexual harassment

9. Have you experienced or observed bullying in your current job?

I have been bullied

I have witnessed someone else being bullied

I have been bullied and I have also witnessed bullying

I have bullied someone else

I don't have experiences with bullying behaviour

10. Was the behaviour repeated or was it a single incident?

Repeated

Single incident

11. Did the victim receive support?

Yes

No

I don't know

12. Did the employer take any actions to resolve the situation?

Yes

No

I don't know

13. How did you feel about the way the situation was handled at your workplace?

14. There can be many different causes of bullying. If you have experienced or observed bullying, what do you think was the reason for this?

Questions regarding the workplace

15. Has your employer provided you with information about workplace bullying? (e.g., what is workplace bullying, how it can be identified and prevented)

Yes

No

16. If you answered no, do you wish to have received information about workplace bullying?

Yes

No

17. When did you receive information about workplace bullying?

18. On a scale from 1 to 5, how happy are you with the amount and content of the information you received?

19. Are you aware of any written internal workplace bullying policy?

Yes

No

20. Are you aware of any written internal workplace bullying reporting procedures?

Yes

No

21. Would you consider that the policy and procedures are properly implemented in the workplace? Are the employees well aware of them?

Yes

No

N/A

22. Did you receive any training regarding the company policy and the procedures?

Yes, regarding the policy,

Yes, regarding the procedures

Yes, regarding both the policy and the procedures

No, I did not receive any training

N/A

23. Do you know how to act if you or someone else was being bullied in your workplace?

Yes

No

24. Do you know what are the consequences for the bully in your workplace?

Yes

No

25. What kind of workplace bullying prevention methods do you hope to see in your workplace?

26. Overall, do you consider that the situation regarding workplace bullying prevention is good in your company? If you could, would you change something?
