

ANONYMOUS ABUSE: DESCRIBING STUDENT ENCOUNTERS WITH WORKPLACE BULLY TYPES

ASHLEY L. AIRES, BSN STUDENT

LAURA DZUREC, PHD, RN, PMHCNS-BC, ANEF

BARBARA J. PATTERSON, RN, PHD, ANEF



Widener University

Faculty Disclosure

- Ashley L. Aires, BSN Student
 - Laura Dzurec, PhD, RN, PMHCNS-BC, ANEF
 - Barbara J. Patterson, RN, PhD, ANEF
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- No conflicts of interest
 - No sponsorship or commercial support
 - Employer: Widener University, Chester, PA, USA

Session Goal and Objectives

- The learner will be able to
 - ▣ recognize types of bullying behaviors that are difficult to spot by virtue of their clandestine nature.
 - ▣ describe the frequencies reported by students regarding the occurrence of each of the five bullying types under study.

Background

- ◆ Bullying crosses racial, gender, age, socioeconomic, and religious boundaries, as bullies level their affronts at subordinates, peers, and superiors in workplace organizations.
- ◆ Workplace bullies often act covertly, sometimes posing as colleagues interested in the welfare of the people they are, in fact, targeting.
- ◆ By using formally assigned workplace roles, bullies can change the rules by which they act to gain and maintain power over others.

Purpose



To assess students' experiences with aggressive, savior, martyr, victim, and/or expert bullies

Methodology

- ◆ Design: Exploratory
- ◆ Human subjects approval
- ◆ Researcher developed online survey using Survey Monkey™
- ◆ 51 Junior and senior baccalaureate nursing students
 - ▣ Mid-Atlantic private university
 - ▣ No additional demographics collected

Methods: Instrument (10-item)

- ▣ Students indicated whether or not they had encountered the type of bully
 - 5 specific bully types
 - ▣ Aggressive
 - ▣ Savior
 - ▣ Martyr
 - ▣ Victim
 - ▣ Expert
- ▣ Responses – yes/no
 - If yes, in what type of setting
 - Any additional information about the encounter

Methods: Data Analysis

Content and thematic analysis

- ◆ frequencies, settings, and characteristics of student encounters with five bully types
- ◆ description of their narrative perceptions.

Hermeneutics

1. description (data)
2. reduction (themes)
3. interpretation (meaning)

Quantitative Content Analysis

288 junior and senior students accessed by email

Response rate = 17.7% ($N=51$)


Encounters

| Bully Type | Percent Observed (Yes responses) |
|------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Aggressive bully | 31.37% ($n=16$) |
| Savior bully | 4% ($n=2$) |
| Martyr bully | 18.75% ($n=10$) |
| Helpless bully | 22.92% ($n=12$) |
| Expert bully | 56.25% ($n=29$) |

Qualitative Thematic Analysis



- ◆ Three independent readers
- ◆ Hermeneutic process
- ◆ Informed evidence base



Themes Characterizing What Students Shared

Location: where the bullying happened (*n*=33)

| | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| Social settings | class and library |
| School | College |
| high school | roommates |
| with friends and | sim lab |
| family | work force |
| clinical | |

Bullies' Asocial Behaviors ($n=11$)

Inconsistencies ($n=1$)

“She acts like the victim in front of my coach but acts completely different in front of others of me”

Not open to suggestions ($n=6$)

“...their way or the highway”

Put others down ($n=4$)

“...always telling others they were wrong and correcting them on everything”

Reflection on response to bully: “I’ve been put down” (*n*=10)

Bought the bully’s argument (*n*=2)

“make you feel as though you won’t be a good nurse”

Recognized personal emotion (*n*=3)

“...make you feel bad and give in to them”

“Made me feel stupid” (*n*=4)

“I undermined myself” (*n*=1) (bully as savior)

Interpretation



Respondents' primarily recognized expert bullies in this academic context.

This suggested a complex environment characterized by **COMPETITION**.

Key Statement

“YES, it feels like this is how a majority of the nursing class acts towards each other. Rather than forming friendships, everyone is competing for who can get the best grades, internships/externships, and best clinical experiences. Not many are willing to share or help their fellow students.”

Implications—Questions Remain



Does nursing school have to be like this?

How can faculty and students learn to address bullying behaviors?

How can we help each other learn to provide support rather than rivalry?



THANK YOU—Questions?