

Workplace Trust and Authentic Leadership as Predictors of Work-related Bullying among Staff Nurses

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Abstract

Background: Workplace trust is considered one of the most important factors for organizational success; trust can be achieved by authentic leaders when they are transparent and consistent toward their followers. Authentic leaders could make suitable work environment, where bullying doesn't occur.

Aim: Examine workplace trust and authentic leadership as predictors of work-related bullying among staff nurses. This study was carried out at Zagazig University hospitals, Egypt. For this research, a descriptive research design was used.

Method: A stratified random sample of 403 staff nurses were selected from the aforementioned setting. Three tools were utilized for data collection: Authentic leadership questionnaire, workplace trust survey and negative acts questionnaire.

Results: Proved highly statistically significant positive correlation between workplace trust and authentic leadership ($r=0.853$, $p < 0.001$). Otherwise, workplace trust and authentic leadership were negatively and significantly correlated with workplace bullying ($r=-0.473$ & -0.519 , respectively, $p < 0.001$).

Conclusion: authentic leadership and workplace trust are negative predictors of work-related bullying. Therefore, it is recommended to develop and implement authentic leadership practices a strategy for eliminating work-related bullying.

Keywords: *Workplace trust, Authentic leadership, Work-related bullying, Staff nurses.*

Introduction

Trust is an important part in good-performing employees as well as in organizational relationships. ⁽¹⁾It can be described as having confidence and readiness to perform based on another person's actions, decisions, and words. Relationships based on trust convey feelings of safeness about the future, improves communication and cooperation among colleagues as well as between employees with their supervisor. ⁽²⁾Workplace trust is known as the consistency between individual's perceptions of trust (with regard to organization, immediate supervisor and co-worker) and the individual's subsequent actions. Organizational trust refers to that employees have in the organization itself, as supportive work climate and openness when sharing information while trust in the immediate supervisor is understood as supervisors who listen to employees and appreciate their efforts. On the other hand, trust in the

co-worker is conceptualized as collegial support, honest and appreciations for others work. ⁽³⁾

Authentic leadership fosters subordinates' trust in their leaders. ⁽⁴⁾ It is a recent leadership theory that combines various traits, behaviors, and skills to foster honest and ethical behavior which subsequently creates positive outcomes for leaders, subordinates and organizations. ⁽⁵⁾ It is visualized as the base concept of positive leadership and perceived by followers as true honest to one's self with integrity and high moral norms. ⁽¹⁾

It has four elements; self-awareness, relational transparency, balanced processing and internalized moral perspective; Self-awareness refers to degree to which the leader view self, recognize own strengths and weaknesses, how others see him, and how he influences others while relational transparency refers to

demonstrating leaders' authentic self, their true thoughts and feelings to their followers.⁽⁶⁾ Additionally, balanced processing is degree to which the leader analyzes all relevant information objectively before making a decision. Finally, Internalized moral perspective represents degree to which the leader is guided by internal values that results in decisions consistent with these values.⁽⁷⁾

Authentic leadership plays an essential role in allowing bullying to emerge in the work environment. Nurses are exposed to negative workplace acts that impact negatively on their job satisfaction and their mental and physical health.⁽⁸⁾ It is considered a critical issue in nursing profession. Workplace bullying is defined as attacking, harassing and excluding colleagues socially or attempting to disrupt colleagues' work.⁽⁹⁾ It can lead to high turnover, poor performance, low productivity and low commitment resulting in poor quality of healthcare.⁽¹⁰⁾

Significance of the study: Health care sector comprises a changeable working environment that faces a lot of challenges. Employees in this environment are often overloaded and carry out their work under negative circumstances due to a lack of proper leadership and inability of the employees to remain motivated. Workplace bullying is one of the most significant problems that face nurses in their today's work life.⁽¹¹⁾ On the other hand, trust is a key element in health care organizations; it provides a basis for cooperation and satisfaction among nurses.⁽¹⁾

Nurses in Zagazig University hospitals face a lot of challenges such as limited resources, work pressure and attacking from patients' relatives. Authentic leadership plays an important role in building trust at workplace and decreases bullying. So it is hoped that this research will fill the gap in the body of knowledge about study variables and assist in minimizing workplace bullying.

Aim: Examine workplace trust and authentic leadership as predictors of work-related bullying among staff nurses.

Research questions:

- What are the relationships among workplace trust, authentic leadership and work-related bullying?
- Does workplace trust predict work-related bullying?
- Does authentic leadership predict work-related bullying?

Methodology

Design: To conduct this study, a descriptive correlational design was used.

Setting: This study was conducted at all Zagazig University Hospitals, Egypt, which includes two sectors involving 8 teaching hospitals providing free treatment; divided into two sectors; emergency sector included five hospitals; New-Surgery hospital, Internal-Medicine hospital, Emergency hospital, Delivery and premature hospital and outpatient hospital. El-Salam sector included 3 hospitals; Cardiac and Chest hospital, El-Salam hospital, and Pediatric hospital.

Subjects: Staff nurses working in the aforementioned setting with at least one year of experience.

Sample Size: It was estimated at confidence interval 95%, margin of errors 5.0%, a total population size of 2561 staff nurses, by using formula, provided by Yamane (1967)⁽¹²⁾ [$n = N / 1 + N (e)^2$]; the required sample size was 403 staff nurses. A stratified random sample was used.

Instruments:

Tool I: Workplace trust survey: Developed by Ferres & Travaglione (2003)⁽¹³⁾ to measure the subordinates' trust in workplace (32 items) in relation to three dimensions; organization (11 items), coworkers (12 items) and immediate supervisor (9 items). Responses were measured on five point Likert scale ranged from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.94.

Tool II: Authentic leadership questionnaire: Divided into two parts; firstly: personal characteristics of staff nurses. Secondly: Authentic leadership questionnaire: developed by Avolio et al., (Bento and Ribeiro, 2013)⁽¹⁴⁾, consists of 16 items, grouped under four domains; transparency (5 items); moral/ethics (4 items); balanced processing (3 items) and self-conscience (4 items). Responses measured on five point Likert scale, from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.96.

Tool III: The Negative Acts Questionnaire-Revised (NAQ-R): Developed by Einarsen et al., (2009)⁽¹⁵⁾ to measure negative acts at workplace (22 items), grouped under three subscales; work-related bullying (7 items), person-related bullying (12 items) and physical intimidation (3 items). Responses measured

on five point Likert scale, from 1(not exposed at all) to 5 (highly exposed). Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.90.

Fieldwork: Data collection started in April till end of May, 2019. The researcher clarified the aim of the study to nurses either individually or through groups. Each nurse was given a chance to complete the questionnaire under guidance of the researcher. The questionnaire took about 20-30 minutes to be completed.

Pilot study: It was carried out on 40 staff nurses (10% of the study sample), selected randomly and excluded from the main research sample to ensure clarity and applicability of the tools, and estimating time needed for completing questionnaire, the required adjustments were done.

Validity: After translation of the tools into Arabic; face and content validity was done by a jury of experts (5 professors) from the academic nursing staff at Zagazig University. According to their opinions, all required modifications were done.

Statistical analysis: It was performed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS), version 21.0. Data were presented using descriptive statistics in form of frequencies and percentages for categorical variables while means and standard deviations for continuous variables. Pearson correlation used for assessment of the inter-relationships among variables. Multiple Linear regressions used to assess the prediction effect.

Results

Table 1: Personal Characteristics of staff nurses (n=403)

Personal Characteristics	No	%
Age in Year:		
• ≤ 25	115	28.5
• 26- ≤ 35	198	49.2
• > 35	90	22.3
Mean ± SD	29 ± 5.7	
Years of Experience:		
• ≤ 5	8821.8	
• 5- <10	12130.1	
• > 10	194 48.1	
Unit :		
• Medical-surgical	288	71.5
• ICU	115	28.5
Gender:		
• Male	93	23.1
• Female	310	76.9
Marital status:		
• Single	113	28.04
• Married	290	71.96
Educational qualification		
• Bachelor	107	26.6
• Technical institute	210	52.1
• Diplome	86	21.3

Table (1) shows majority of staff nurses were female and working in medical-surgical units(76.9 %, & 71.5% respectively), their mean age was (29 ± 5.7). Additionally, about half of them worked more than ten years (48.1%).

Table 2: Distribution of Study Variables' Mean Scores as Reported by Studied staff nurses (n=403)

Variables	Maximum Score	Mean	±	SD	Mean Score %
I. Workplace trust					
• Organizational trust	55	35.61	±	9.29	64.74
• Supervisor trust	45	29.26	±	5.66	65.02
• Co-worker trust	60	43.74	±	8.74	72.90
Total score of workplace trust	160	109.35	±	21.02	68.34
II. Authentic leadership					
• Transparency	25	16.29	±	4.07	65.00
• Moral / Ethics	20	13.79	±	3.55	68.95
• Balanced Processing	15	10.59	±	2.32	70.60
• Self-conscience	20	13.66	±	3.32	68.30
Total score of authentic leadership	80	54.33	±	11.14	67.91

Variables	Maximum Score	Mean	±	SD	Mean Score %
III. Workplace bullying					
• Work-related bullying	35	21.63	±	4.51	61.80
• Person-related bullying	60	30.65	±	8.06	51.08
• Physical intimidation	15	7.58	±	3.04	50.53
Total score of workplace bullying	110	59.87	±	13.94	54.42

Table (2) demonstrates that, the highest mean score of workplace trust domains was for co-worker while the lowest was for organization (72.9 %, & 64.74%, respectively). Concerning authentic leadership, the highest score was for balanced processing while the lowest

was for transparency (70.60%, & 65.00%, respectively). As regards workplace bullying, the highest score was for work-related bullying and the lowest was for physical intimidation (73.04%, & 72.96%, respectively).

Table (3): Correlations between study variables as reported by staff nurses (n=403)

Variables	Workplace trust		Authentic leadership	
	R	p	R	p
Authentic leadership	0.853**	0.000		
Workplace bullying	-0.473**	-0.047	-0.519**	0.000

** Highly statistically significant at $p < 0.01$

Table (3) displays highly statistically significant positive correlation between workplace trust and authentic leadership ($r=0.853$, $p < 0.001$). Additionally,

workplace trust and authentic leadership were negatively and significantly correlated with work-related bullying ($r=-0.473$ ** & -0.519 ** respectively, $p < 0.001$).

Table 4: Regression Analysis to Study the independent factors affecting Workplace bullying among staff nurses (n=403)

Variables	R	R ²	Unstandardized coefficient		t	Sig.
			β	Std. Error		
Workplace trust	0.439	0.193	-0.297	0.030	-9.793**	0.000
Authentic leadership	0.520	0.271	0.582	0.089	-6.525**	0.000

** Highly statistically significant at $P < 0.01$

Table (4) confirms that, workplace trust and authentic leadership were negative predictors of work-related bullying; workplace trust was responsible for 19.3 % of the variation in workplace bullying ($R^2 = 0.193$, $p = 0.000$). Likewise, authentic leadership was responsible for 27.1% ($R^2 = 0.271$, $p = 0.000$).

Discussion

Workplace bullying, which has also been called psychological abuse, refers to continuous exposure

to negative acts intended to humiliate, anger, sarcasm and cause stress.⁽¹⁶⁾ Authentic leadership has special importance in a turbulent work environment because it offers stability by promoting clear directions for subordinates and needed to build trust in the workplace.⁽⁶⁾ Therefore, the aim of this study was to examine workplace trust and authentic leadership as predictors of work-related bullying among staff nurses.

Concerning workplace trusts core, the highest was for co-worker while the lowest was for organization.

This may be explained as nurses always work in teams and develop a sense of cohesion within the team, therefore, they trust in their co-workers. In the same line, a study done in Germany by **Lehmann-Willenbrock & Kauffeld (2010)**⁽¹⁾; found that, trust in co-worker mean score was the highest. Moreover, in South Africa a study carried out by **Coxen (2016)**⁽³⁾ on public health care sector employees; emphasized the same results.

With regard to authentic leadership; the highest score was for balanced processing while the lowest score was for transparency. It may be due to importance of information to staff nurses, which the leaders pay attention when making decisions. This is in alignment with a study conducted in Philippines by **Roncesvalles (2015)**⁽²⁾ who declared that the most perceived authentic leadership indicators are balanced processing and self-awareness.

In relation to workplace bullying; the highest score was for work-related bullying and the lowest was for physical intimidation. It could be due to the shortage of nurses which in turn lead to excessive work load and pressure, consequently, excessive work supervision and monitoring occurs to nurses. This is supported by a research conducted by **Laschinger(2012)**⁽⁸⁾ on nurses in Canada, emphasized that work-related bullying was the highest score.

Regarding correlations between the independent variables; there was positive significant correlation between workplace trust and authentic leadership. This may be due to that, staff nurses who perceive their leader as authentic, consequently, it will increase their levels of trust. Similar results found by **Wong & Cummings (2009)**⁽⁴⁾ who conducted a study in a western Canadian cancer care agency; showed positive correlation between authentic leadership and workplace trust. In the same line, **Ebrahim (2017)**⁽¹⁶⁾ concluded that, there was correlation between authentic leadership and trust. Additionally, **Coxen (2016)**⁽³⁾ and **Roncesvalles (2015)**⁽²⁾ reported the same results.

In relation to the predicting effect; workplace trust and authentic leadership were negative predictors of work-related bullying. From researcher opinion, these results may be due to that, authentic leadership enhances positive morale and trust in the workplace, so it is reasonable that nurses, who view their leaders as authentic, will experience positive attitude in the workplace.

This result in agreement with **Laschinger(2012)**⁽⁸⁾, who found that, authentic leadership was significantly correlated with work-related bullying. Additionally, in Egypt, a comparative study between private and public hospitals, carried out by **Elewa and El Banan (2019)**⁽¹⁷⁾ who emphasized that, there was a statistical significant negative correlation between organizational trust and bullying. Furthermore, in New Zealand, a study done by **Gardner (2016)**⁽¹⁸⁾ who documented that, ethical leadership was negative predictor of workplace bullying.

Conclusion

Authentic leadership and workplace trust are negative predictors of work-related bullying. Therefore, it is recommended to develop and implement authentic leadership practices a strategy for eliminating work-related bullying.

Conflict of Interest: Nothing

Source of Funding: Self source

Ethical Clearance: Before data collection, the content of this study were approved by ethics committee and dean of the Faculty of Nursing, Zagazig University. Nature and aim of study were explained to nurses who participated in the study. They were given an option to discontinue the study at any time without explanation; all personal information was maintained confidential; they aren't forced to write their names. The responses were used for research purposes only and will be disposed of after publishing the research.

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