Louisiana Academic Library Workers and Workplace Bullying

Catherine Baird, Andrea Hebert, and Justin Savage (all share equivalent authorship)

Introduction

Workplace aggression can be damaging to both workers and workplaces. It can cause stress, musculoskeletal and gastrointestinal issues, sleep problems, depression, anxiety, mood swings, self-esteem issues, burnout, exhaustion, feelings of rage/despair, and in some cases, post-traumatic stress disorder or suicide (Namie 2012). It affects job satisfaction and performance, leads to absences, and results in decreased commitment to the organization as employees seek jobs elsewhere. Outside of work, the impacts are also felt by family members and friends, as a target of workplace aggression experiences social isolation and an inability to cope, affecting relationships outside of work (Manier, Kelloway, and Francis 2017; Namie 2003; Leymann 1990).

The present study attempts to describe the prevalence of workplace bullying in academic libraries in Louisiana. Most studies about bullying in academic libraries are limited by convenience samples or exclude non-librarian workers. We aim to broaden the investigative scope through a more holistic, non-listserv sampling approach and expand the traditional constraints of the librarian title by including all library workers. Focusing on a single state serves as a pilot for larger studies and potentially allows for future comparisons between states and geographic regions.

Literature Review

Results from a nationally representative sample of U.S. workers suggest that 41.4% of workers experience psychological workplace aggression such as bullying or harassment and 13% report that it occurs on a weekly basis. The most frequent forms of aggression include being shouted at (35%), insulted/called names (24.4%), and indirect threats (12.2%). Workers reported that their customers/clients were most frequently the perpetrators (23.4%), followed by coworkers (15%) and bosses (13.5%) (Schat, Frone, and Kelloway 2006).

The Workplace Bullying Institute's 2021 U.S. Workplace Bullying Survey surveyed American adults in January 2021 and found that 39% are targets of bullying; 22% witness bullying; and 73% are aware that bullying is happening. Bullies are overwhelmingly male (67%) and hold a higher rank than their target (65%). When looking at race and ethnicity, targets of bullying were most frequently Hispanic (35%), followed by White (30%), Black (26%), and Asian (11%) (Namie 2021).[1] Bergbom and Vartia (2021) conclude that based on their review of available studies, minority populations are more at risk of experiencing bullying than majority populations.

As highlighted in the report, "Bullying thrives in hierarchical organizations," and happens at all levels, from top management through middle management, though the target of the bullying is most often those who are not managers (52%). Most often, men are the perpetrators (67%), bullying women more often than bullying men. Notably, when women are the bullies, they more often bully other women (65%). Note that this survey reported gender as a binary category and failed to include identifiers for LGBTQ+ populations. However, other work has reported that lesbian, gay, and bisexual employees encounter more bullying than heterosexual workers (Hoel, Lewis, and Einarsdóttir 2021) and that "women in a sexual minority report particularly high rates of bullying and incivility" (Salin 2021). Further, in a 2011 U.S. report of a transgender and gender non-conforming population, a staggering 90% reported "harassment or mistreatment" at work (Grant et al. 2011).

Early work in bullying research labelled negative workplace behaviors as "misconduct", "misbehavior", or "deviance" and described individuals engaging in theft, counterproductive behavior, crime, whistleblowing, deviant behavior, sexual harassment, and vandalism (Vardi and Wiener 1996). Brodsky's (1976) book *The Harassed Worker* is often cited as one of the earlier works on the topic. Though not a representative sample, it presents the stories and themes from its subjects who were claimants from the California Workers' Compensation Appeals Board and Nevada Industrial Commission. These stories underpin the structure of the book which explains workplace harassment and details how it happens and becomes a part of the institutional culture.

As the literature on workplace aggression and bullying has grown, so has the number of terms, concepts, and constructs to define it. Some examples include: workplace aggression (Neuman and Baron 2005), bullying (Einarsen, Hoel, and Notelaers 2009), mobbing (Leymann 1990), counterproductive work behavior (Fox and Spector 2005), workplace incivility (Andersson and Pearson 1999), social undermining (Duffy, Ganster, and Pagon 2002), and interpersonal

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[1] In contrast to the U.S. Census, this survey treated Hispanic as a racial category and it is unclear if respondents had the opportunity to report multiple identities

conflict (Spector and Jex 1998). Some scholars have questioned the usefulness of this fragmentation of terminology (Fritz 2014; Hershcovis 2011) and have argued that the differentiating elements (namely persistence, power, intent, and intensity) have not been sufficiently measured to discern their uniqueness from one another (Hershcovis 2011).

Neuman and Baron define "workplace aggression" as "any form of behavior directed by one or more persons in a workplace toward the goal of harming one or more others in the workplace (or the entire organization) in ways the intended targets are motivated to avoid" (Neumann and Baron 2005, 18). These behaviors can be direct or indirect. Direct aggression (for example, verbal or physical aggression between co-workers or between supervisor/subordinates) is a more visible phenomenon. Indirect aggression is less obvious and can take the form of exclusion, manipulation, gossiping, or devaluing someone's opinions (Lipinski, Albright, and Fenclau 2014).

Einarsen, Hoel, and Notelaers (whose Negative Acts Questionnaire-Revised (NAQ-R) is used in the present study) describe "bullying" as "persistent exposure to interpersonal aggression and mistreatment from colleagues, superiors, or subordinates" (2009). The duration, frequency, and patterning of the negative acts as well as the power differential between the perpetrator and the target are characteristic of bullying.

Leymann (1990 and 1996) characterizes workplace "mobbing" as "hostile or unethical communication, which is directed in a systematic way by one or a few individuals mainly towards one individual who [...] is pushed into a helpless and defenceless position" (1996, 168). Leymann separated the concept of mobbing from bullying because of the violence and threats of violence that characterize bullying.

Fox and Spector explain "counterproductive work behaviors" as behaviors that "harm or intend to harm organizations or people in organizations" (2005). When viewed as a counterproductive work behavior, bullying is an action that reduces productivity either due to stressors being experienced by the target of bullying or observers of bullying being distracted by it (Fritz 2014). Counterproductive work behaviors, as described by Sackett and Shewach, do not necessarily include "intent to harm" as found in definitions of workplace aggression (2017, 298). However, the behavior is intentional (i.e., not accidental) and can be targeted at individuals or the organization (Robinson and Bennett 1995). Sackett and Devore describe counterproductive work behavior as "any intentional behavior on the part of an organization member viewed by the organization as contrary to its legitimate interests" (2002). They include behaviors such as withdrawal (being late/absent), rudeness, wasting time/working slower, theft, abuse of others

(verbal/physical), not following directions, poor quality work, disregard for safety procedures, alcohol or drug use (Jex and Britt 2014).

"Workplace incivility" (Andersson and Pearson 1999, 457) is a "low-intensity deviant behavior with ambiguous intent to harm the target, in violation of workplace norms for mutual respect. Uncivil behaviors are characteristically rude and discourteous, displaying a lack of regard for others." Andersson and Pearson go on to argue that incivility can spiral into higher intensity behaviors/actions.

Indirect aggression or low-intensity incivility can still result in harm, have the potential to escalate, and may even be more harmful due to their relative invisibility and the potential for greater frequency in the workplace. Although bullying has significant impacts on individuals, it is a systemic issue that works its way into workplace culture if left unaddressed (Lutgen-Sandvik and Scheller Arsht 2014). Targets and bystanders may not even identify the behaviors as problematic, despite the fact they still have to deal with the negative impacts of these behaviors.

Clearly, workplace bullying is detrimental to workplaces, both to individuals and to the organization. Academic libraries are not immune to this problem (Freedman and Vreven 2016). Left unchecked, the cost to an institution can include increased medical, legal and worker's compensation costs, along with costs associated with reduced work quality and productivity, higher rates of absenteeism, and, most of all, a high rate of turnover (Lutgen-Sandvik and Scheller Arsht 2014). Sadly, the target of the bullying is more likely to leave their job (willfully or not) than to receive help from their employer or colleagues (Namie 2021).

The Challenge of Measuring

Studying workplace aggression is challenging for multiple reasons, as summarized by Jex and Bayne (2017): (1) it is subjective; (2) the intent of the negative action is difficult to ascertain; (3) researchers rely on the memories of targets, which may be unreliable; (4) targets of aggression do not see the actions because they are not there when the actions are happening (e.g., gossiping about someone); (5) multiple actors (targets, perpetrator, observer) are involved, which means the behaviors can be looked at and measured from different perspectives (11).

A number of different scales and constructs have been developed to measure workplace aggression (e.g., abusive supervision, bullying, incivility, social undermining, interpersonal conflict). The authors of this paper chose the widely used Negative Acts Questionnaire--Revised (NAQ-R) (discussed further in Methods), in part, because of the simple definition of bullying: "the persistent exposure to interpersonal aggression and mistreatment from colleagues, superiors or

subordinates" (Einarsen, Hoel, and Notelaers 2009); the focus on both psychological harassment and physical actions; and the consideration that bullying can happen between multiple roles and in multiple directions (abusive supervisors, coworkers, subordinates).

Bullying in Academe

Bullying is found to be more common in academe than the general workforce population in the United States (Keashly and Neuman 2018). Academics report witnessing and experiencing negative and problematic behaviors, as well as identify themselves as the targets of explicit bullying to a significant degree (Keashly and Neuman 2013). While research indicates that there are differences across academic departments and disciplines (Keashly and Neuman 2018), the literature highlights two aspects of the academic workplace–strict hierarchical structure and the practice and culture surrounding the tenure process–that may explain the prevalence of bullying.

Leymann (1990) highlights the strict hierarchical structure of most academic workplaces along with frequent leadership turnover as risk factors for bullying. As reported by the Workplace Bullying Institute, management behaviors directly impact workplace toxicity (Namie 2021). The managerial structure of the academic workplace is, of course, further complicated by the process of tenure. Tenure adds a wrinkle to the traditional superior-subordinate workplace structure. Tenure-track faculty, for example, are not only responsible to the hierarchy of their institution (their Department Heads, Provosts, Deans, etc.), but also to their horizontally-aligned colleagues. These colleagues in many instances have a matter of direct control over the tenure-track faculty member's reappointment and promotion, establishing a power dynamic across horizontal lines within the organization. As Keashly and Neuman (2013) note, although power differences are not shown across all studies of bullying, many definitions of bullying centralize these power differences between perpetrator and target. Salin (2003) proposes that faculty members may engage in bullying behaviors because they believe the job security afforded to them via tenure protects them from negative consequences. That being said, bullying is not exclusively found within a tenured faculty-as-bully paradigm. Taylor's 2012 study suggests that tenure status is significantly related to the frequency of exposure to specific bullying behaviors, and that non-tenure-track faculty and tenured faculty report significantly higher rates than tenure-track faculty. This may seem counterintuitive when considering the dynamics of power as they relate to bullying, but the double-edged sword of job security may play a role here. Because tenure provides a significant layer of job security, there may be a perception that removing a tenured faculty member from their position can only be accomplished by forcing the member to leave of their own volition.

Westhues (1998) argues that it is this conundrum that makes tenured faculty bullying targets, as bullying tactics are seen as the only recourse for the organization when it comes to removal. This demonstrates a proactive instrumental or 'cold-cognitive' process, whereby bullying serves to satisfy a desired institutional goal (Penney, Martir, and Bok 2017). However, does this underhanded tactic work? Taylor (2012) would suggest otherwise. Their findings on bullying experiences and exit behaviors have this to say:

> "After controlling for the faculty's NAQ-R score, a faculty member's tenure status significantly improved the prediction of Exit behaviors. In other words, the experience of having been bullied predicts whether a faculty member will leave, and tenure status significantly adds to the predictive power for the Exit response. Not surprisingly, the lower the tenure status, the more likely the faculty member will leave the organization." (31)

These results suggest that although tenured faculty are more likely to report experiencing specific bullying behaviors at a higher rate, they are also less likely to leave an organization than their tenure-track or non-tenure track counterparts. Thus, the cycle continues.

Bullying in Academic Libraries

Henry et al.'s (2018) survey of 4,168 library workers found that 40.1% reported personally being bullied–bullying defined in the survey instrument as "persistent negative attacks which can be personal and/or work related" (138)–while 59.0% had witnessed bullying. Of the respondents, however, only 23.2% were from academic libraries. Academic libraries are situated such that they are exposed to the intersection of a variety of environment-specific bullying risk factors. Librarians in higher education not only are exposed to the bullying risk factors found within the general workplace, the academic workplace and the library workplace, but also specific factors related to the academic library workplace itself. Despite the perceptions of academic librarians as passive and docile, "comparisons indicate that persistent workplace negativity is much higher in U.S. academic libraries than in the general workforce" (Freedman and Vreven 2016). In their 2016 study on workplace bullying in academic libraries, Freedman and Vreven found that in a sample of 414 librarians and library staff, 24% experienced bullying either weekly or daily, irrespective of faculty status. What makes academic library workplaces susceptible to bullying? In their phenomenological study of low morale amongst academic librarians, Kendrick (2017) highlights a series of major themes that enable low morale in the academic library workplace. These include faculty status/tenure and promotion, human resources limitations, perceptions of librarianship, staffing and employment, leadership, uncertainty, and mistrust. Kendrick notes that "academic

librarians who experience low morale are often victims of long-term workplace abuse, including emotional, verbal/written abuse, system abuse, and negligence" (875). Although the definitions of low morale vs. experiences of bullying differ, there exists a connection between these low morale enabling systems and their potential effects on bullying as experienced by academic librarians. In a following study, Kendrick and Damasco (2019) investigate the unique experiences of ethnic and racial minority academic librarians. They report that minority academic librarians face additional impact factors on top of those that affect non-minority academic librarians, namely stereotype threat and deauthentication. Minority academic librarians also face a set of specific low morale enabling systems–diversity rhetoric, whiteness, white supremacy, racism, career or environmental landscapes, politics, collegiality, and oppressed group behavior. These findings are in accordance with the literature that suggests an intersection of racial and ethnic identity and negative workplace experiences, but more work needs to be done within the framework of academic librarianship.

There is a dearth of literature surrounding the prevalence and effects of bullying in the academic library workplace. Taylor (2012) found that bullying has a significant effect on a faculty member's response to workplace dissatisfaction, but this study was not specific to the academic library workplace. Heady et al.'s (2020) study of contributing factors to academic library turnover produced similar findings to Freedman and Vreven (2016) and Kendrick (2017). Low morale was the highest reported area of dissatisfaction amongst 275 academic librarians who had voluntarily left an academic librarian position within the last five years. The sample reported bullying conflicts between supervisors and subordinates as well as between colleagues and across departments, reiterating the notion that while perhaps more likely, superior-subordinate bullying is not the only paradigm that bears consideration.

Research Question

What is the prevalence of workplace bullying among librarians and staff in Louisiana academic libraries?

Methods

Population and Sampling

The eligible population included currently employed Louisiana academic library workers in the 40 SACSCOC-accredited institutions (Table 1, https://sacscoc.org/institutions). People

under 18 years of age were ineligible, and student workers and graduate students were excluded from the survey.

Table 1. SACSOC-Accredited Institutions in Louisiana
Baton Rouge Community College
Bossier Parish Community College
Centenary College of Louisiana
Delgado Community College
Dillard University
Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady University
Grambling State University
L. E. Fletcher Technical Community College
Louisiana Christian University
Louisiana Delta Community College
Louisiana State University and A&M College
Louisiana State University at Alexandria
Louisiana State University at Eunice
Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center
Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center at Shreveport
Louisiana State University in Shreveport
Louisiana Tech University
Loyola University New Orleans
McNeese State University
New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary
Nicholls State University
Northshore Technical Community College
Northwestern State University of Louisiana
Notre Dame Seminary
Elaine P. Nunez Community College
River Parishes Community College
Saint Joseph Seminary College
South Louisiana Community College

Southeastern Louisiana University
Southern University and A & M College at Baton Rouge
Southern University Law Center
Southern University at New Orleans
Southern University at Shreveport
Sowela Technical Community College
Tulane University
University of Holy Cross
The University of Louisiana at Lafayette
The University of Louisiana at Monroe
The University of New Orleans
Xavier University of Louisiana

To approximate a census sample, the authors collected names and email addresses through the institutions' public web directories. Although some institutions listed graduate students in the directories, they were excluded from the study because there is no standard practice for inclusion of their contact information in public-facing directories. The authors reached out to the two academic libraries without public-facing directories; one supplied the contact information, but the other did not respond to the request.

The authors collected 636 names; the author from a Louisiana institution was excluded from the survey. It is possible that not all workers were included in the directories, and some directories may have been out of date due to employee turnover.

This study was approved by the Louisiana State University Institutional Review Board (Study no. IRBAM-21-0694) and by the Montclair State University Institutional Review Board (Study no. IRB-FY20-21-2269).

Data Collection

The authors used an online survey application (Qualtrics) to send the recruitment emails and to administer the survey. Each participant had a unique link to the survey, but responses were anonymized. Qualtrics did not record the name, email, or IP address of the respondents.

Instrument

The Bergen Bullying Research Group granted the authors permission to use the Negative Acts Questionnaire--Revised (NAQ-R) in their study (personal communication from Ståle V. Einarsen, March 16, 2022). The NAQ-R instrument has been tested for consistency and validity and is the scale most widely used in bullying studies, including Freedman and Vreven's (2016) article about workplace incivility and bullying in academic libraries (Escartin et al. 2019). NAQ-R measures three aspects of workplace bullying: work-related, person-related, and physically intimidating bullying with 22 items (Einarsen, Hoel, and Notelaers 2009). Each of the 22 items describes a bullying action. Respondents rate their experience on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = never, 2 = now and then, 3 = monthly, 4 = weekly, 5 = daily). Item 23 asks respondents to self-identify whether they have experienced bullying. The instrument has a high level of internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha, .90) (Einarsen, Hoel, and Notelaers 2009). Einarsen, Hoel, and Notelaers (2009) determined that its validity was acceptable by testing for and finding correlations between total NAQ-R scores and measures of job satisfaction, psychological health and wellbeing, and psychosomatic complaints.

Because NAQ-R avoids mentioning bullying until item 23, which gives respondents a definition of bullying and then asks respondents whether they have experienced it in the last six months, it allows researchers to compare a respondent's frequency of reported bullying behaviors to the respondent's self-identification as a target of bullying.

The survey included several questions after the NAQ-R instrument to gather demographic information about respondents and, when applicable, the bullying perpetrator (Appendix I). Some questions were piloted for use in a related project; data from those questions will not be reported in this article.

Data Analysis

After the survey closed, data were exported from Qualtrics into SPSS and cleaned. The authors excluded data from participants who did not answer item 23 of NAQ-R or responded to fewer than 20 of the first 22 items of NAQ-R.

Although data has been aggregated for reporting for participant privacy, the authors also consolidated some of the demographic response choices when the small number of responses may have led to the potential identification of participants. The authors will indicate consolidated data when reporting results.

Results

Response Rate

The initial recruitment email was sent on March 17, 2022. A reminder was sent on March 29, 2022. After receiving IRB permission from both institutions for a change to the recruitment message, the authors added the following sentence to the reminder: "Your responses will not be linked to your name, email, institution, or IP address. We are not collecting this information." The authors hoped including that information in the recruitment message would increase the response rate. This change was included in recruitment reminders sent on April 8, 2022, and April 19, 2022. The survey closed on April 28, 2022.

During the course of the recruitment, one email failed, and 10 emails bounced. The recruitment message reached 615 eligible subjects. After cleaning the data as described in the data analysis section, the researchers had survey data from 140 respondents for a 22.7% response rate.

The majority of respondents work at public universities (75.3%), and most work at institutions that grant master degrees or higher (86.7%). Over half (56.1%) work at institutions with an enrollment of 10,000 or more students. Table 2 presents the full breakdown of the respondents' institutional profiles.

Table 2. Respondents by Institutional Profile	
Type of institution (N=138)	
Private	34 (24.6%)
Public	104 (75.3%)
Highest degree offered (N=137)	
Associate	9 (6.5%)
Bachelor	9 (6.5%)
Master	26 (18.9%)
Doctoral	93 (67.8%)
Size of College or University (Student Enrollment) (N=137)	
Fewer than 1,999*	15 (10.9%)
2,000-2,999	6 (4.4%)
3,000-4,999	9 (6.6%)
5,000-6,999	14 (10.2%)

7,000-9,999	16 (11.6%)
10,000-19,999	32 (23.3%)
20,000-29,999	4 (2.9%)
30,000+	41 (29.9%)

*The number of respondents from institutions of fewer than 1,999 students was combined for privacy.

Most respondents work full time (134 of 139, 96.4%). The 139 respondents are classified as academic staff (18, 12.9%), administration (9, 6.4%), civil service staff (7, 5.0%), faculty (68, 48.9%), professional staff (31, 22.3%), and "other" (6, 4.3%).

Prevalence of Workplace Bullying

When answering NAQ-R question 23 ("Have you been bullied at work?"), 32 of 140 respondents (22.8%) self-identified as having been bullied at work to some degree (Figure 1).
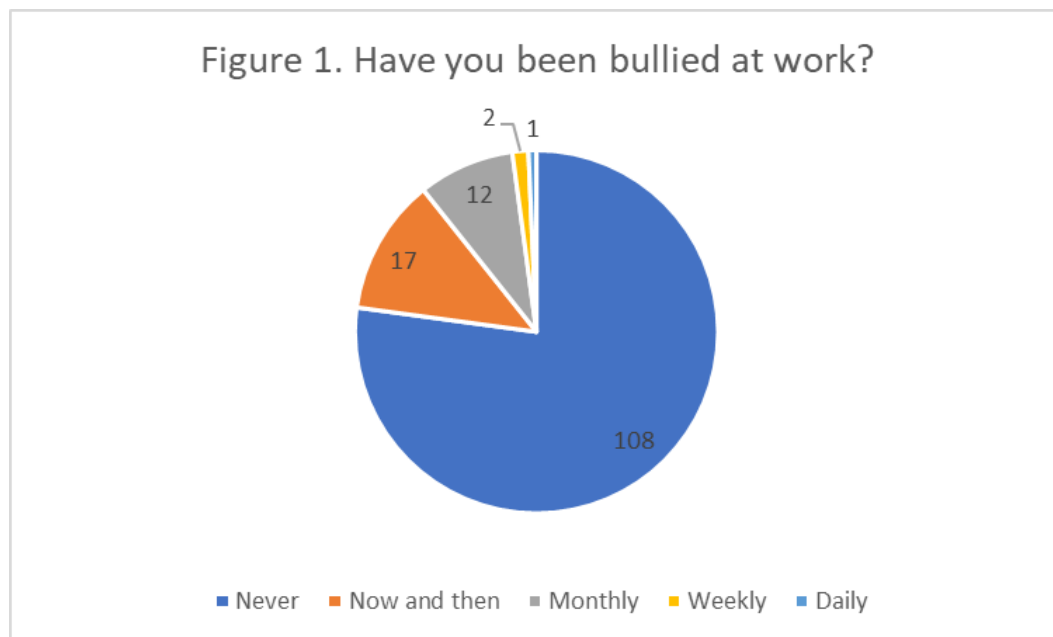

Figure 1: Have you been bullied at work?

Physically Intimidating Bullying

Physically intimidating bullying is characterized by physically aggressive acts, including violence or the threat of physical violence (Einarsen, Hoel, and Notelaers 2009). Few respondents

indicated that they had experienced behaviors that fall into the category of physically intimidating bullying, although 23% of respondents (32 of 139) had experienced "being shouted at or the target of spontaneous anger" (Figure 2). An average of 11.4% of respondents reported being the target of physically intimidating bullying behaviors at least "now and then."
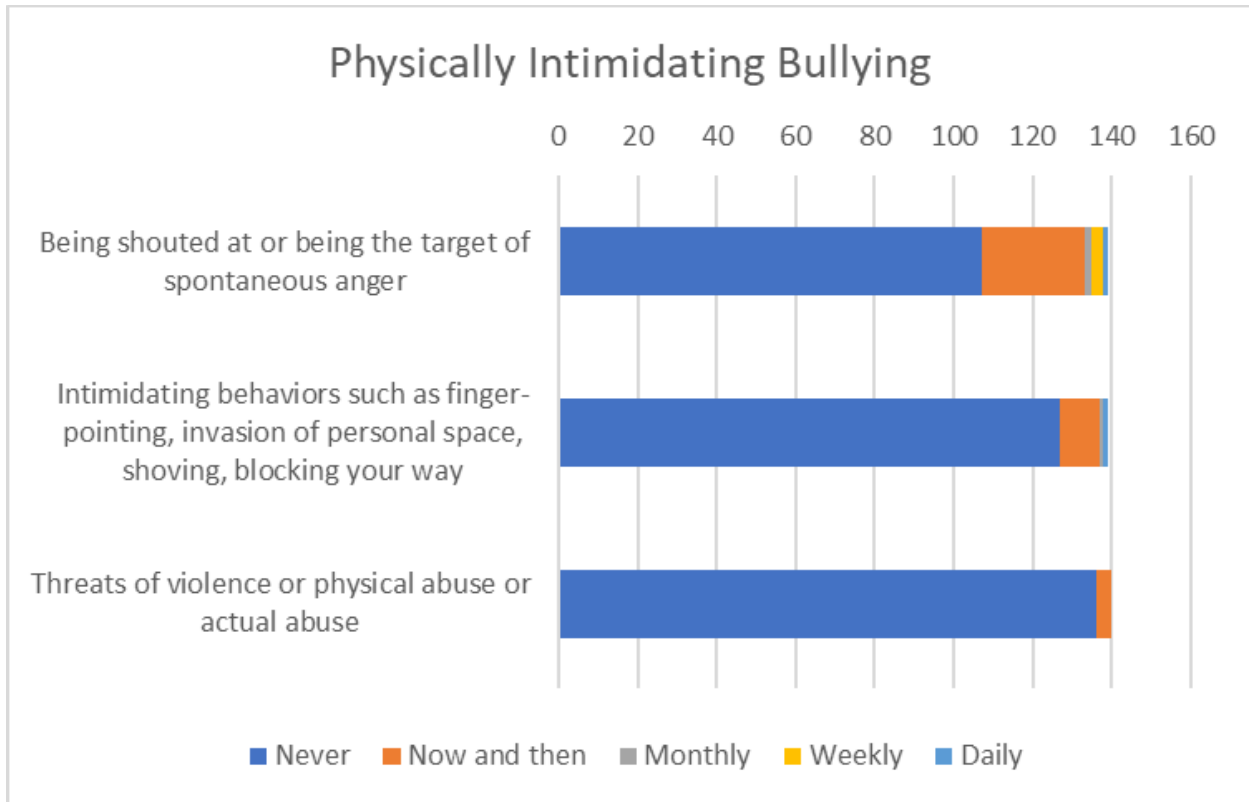
Physically Intimidating Bullying

Figure 2: Physically Intimidating Bullying

Person-Related Bullying

Person-related bullying refers to behaviors related to personal attacks or social isolation of a target (Einarsen, Hoel, and Notelaers 2009). Person-related bullying was more common than physically intimidating bullying, with an average of 26.5% of respondents reporting that it happened at least "now and then" (Figure 3). The most commonly reported experience was "being ignored or excluded" (55.7%, 78 of 140 respondents).
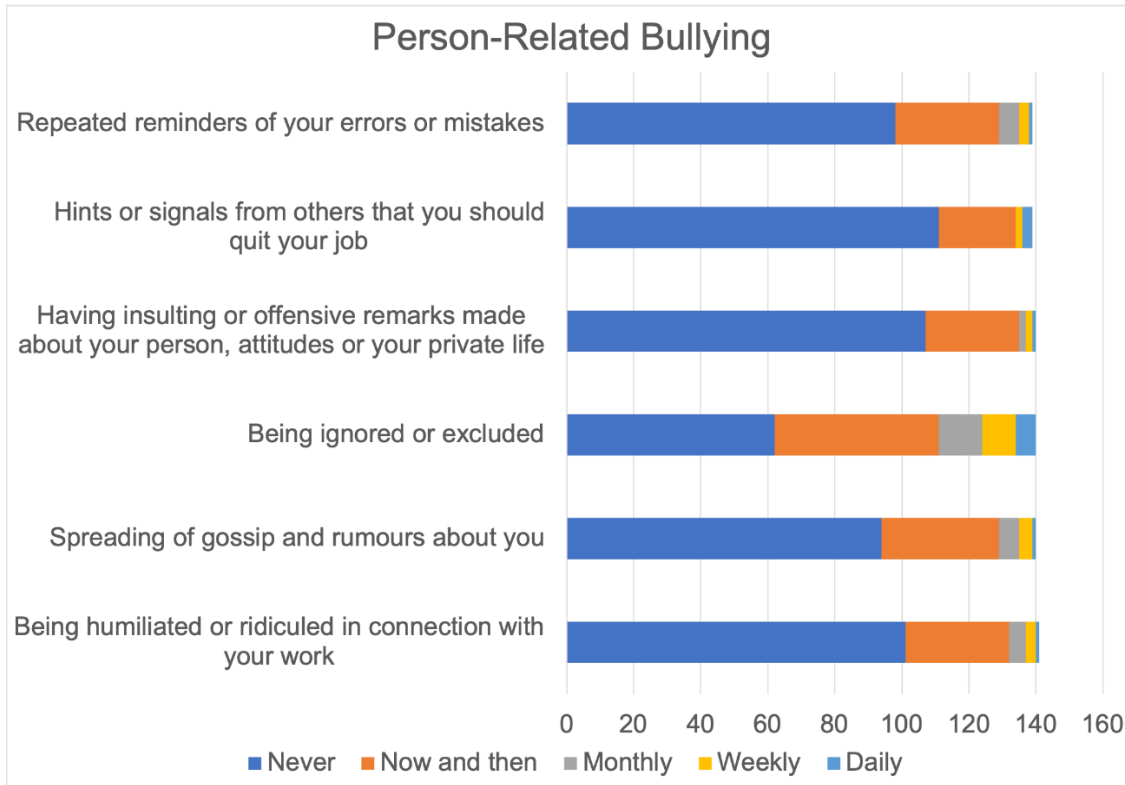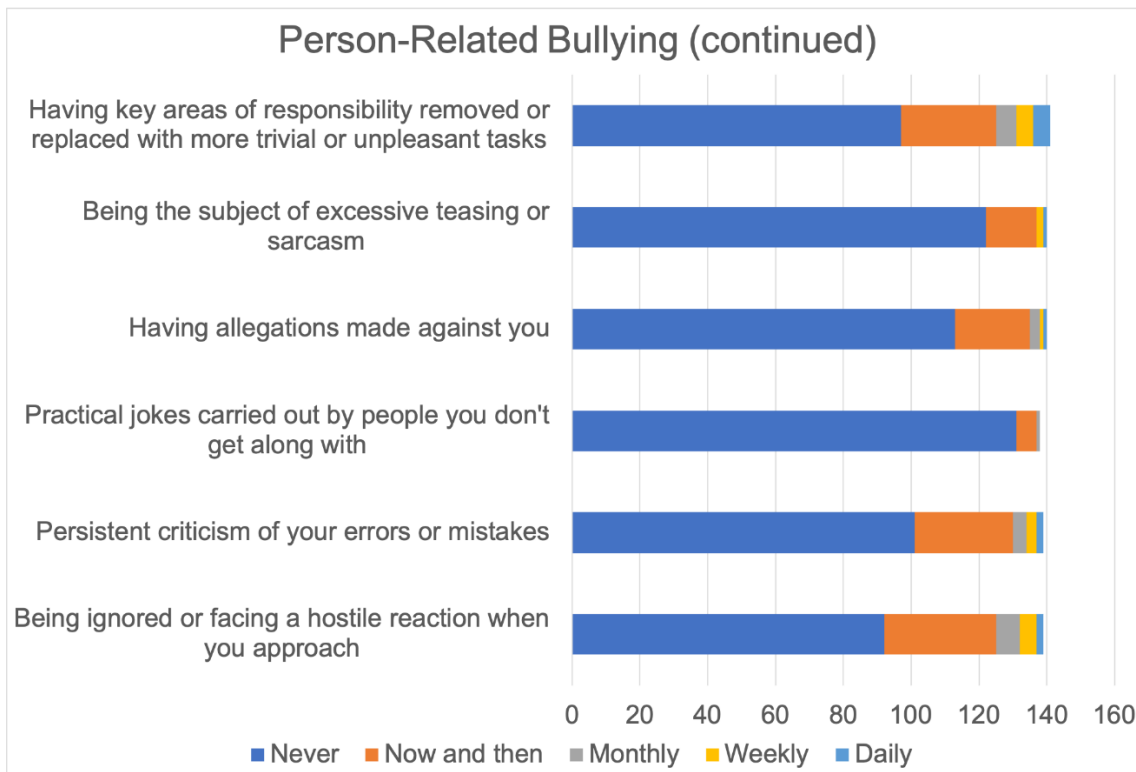
Figure 3: Person-Related Bullying

Figure 4: Person-Related Bullying (continued)

Work-Related Bullying

Work-related bullying is characterized by behaviors that negatively impact work performance. Work-related bullying was the most commonly experienced form of bullying (Figure 4). An average of 44.8% of respondents indicated they had experienced work-related bullying behaviors at least "now and then." In addition to being the most commonly experienced form of bullying, some work-related bullying behaviors were experienced more frequently (weekly or daily) than any physically intimidating or person-related behavior. Respondents reported experiencing the following behaviors either weekly or daily: having their opinions ignored (16.4%), being ordered to work below their level of competence (15.1%), and being exposed to an unmanageable workload (17.2%).
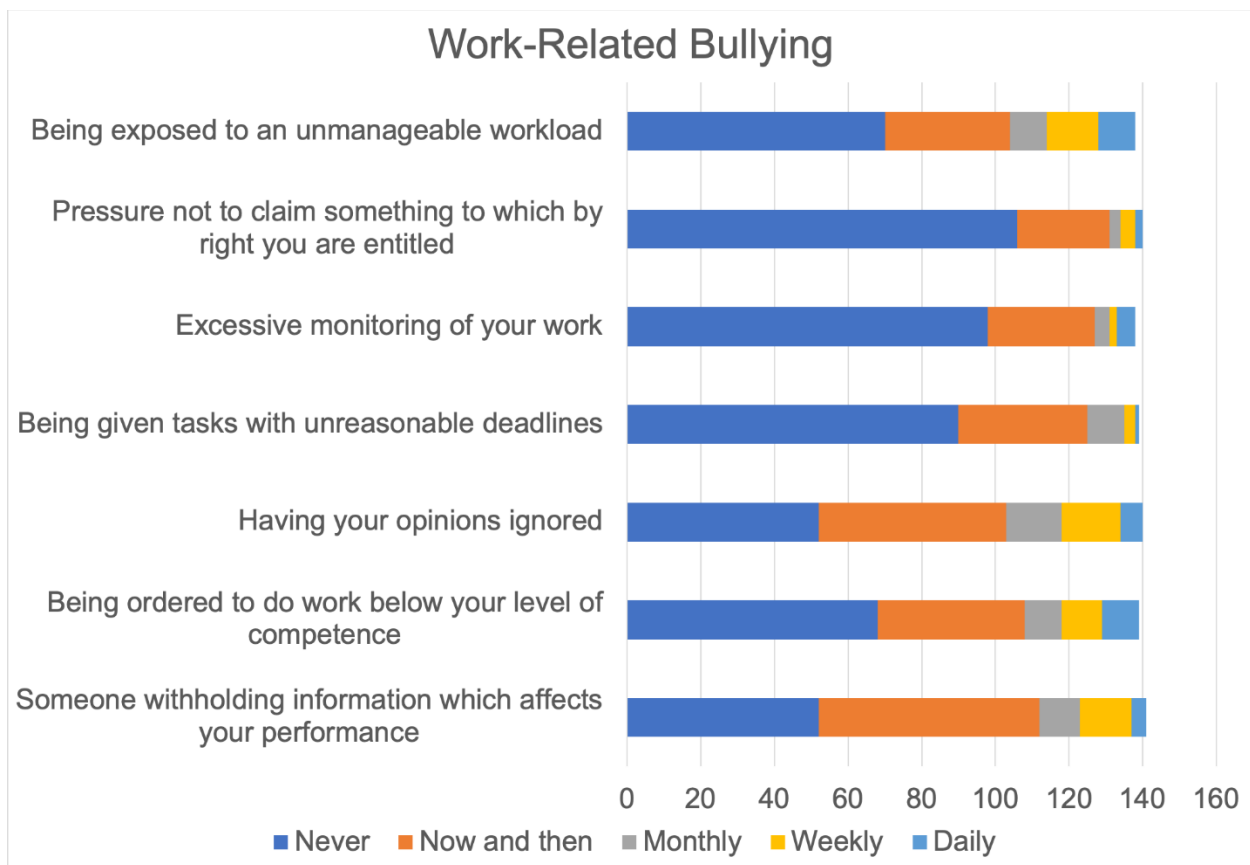

Figure 5: Work-Related Bullying

Most Common Bullying Experiences

Approximately half of respondents reported being subject to the negative acts listed in Table 3 during the last six months. Of the five most frequently experienced negative acts, only one ("being ignored or excluded") was not work related.

Negative Act/Behavior	Number of "Now and then," "Monthly", "Weekly," and "Daily" responses combined/total no. of responses	Percentage of "Now and then," "Monthly," "Weekly," and "Daily" responses combined	Type of Behavior
Someone withholding information which affects your performance	89/140	63.5%	WR
Having your opinions ignored	88/140	62.8%	WR
Being ignored or excluded	78/140	55.7%	PR
Being ordered to do work below your level of competence	72/139	51.7%	WR
Being exposed to an unmanageable workload	69/139	49.6%	WR

Table 3. Most Frequently Reported Negative Acts

WR, work-related; PR, person-related

Discussion

Ascertaining the prevalence of bullying in workplaces is difficult. Studies use different sampling procedures, different time frames, and even different terminology. We will compare our results with Freedman and Vreven (2016) who used the same survey instrument, but relied on a convenience sample (listserv population). We will also compare our results to the Workplace Bullying Institute survey, a nationally representative sample of U.S. adults.

These studies found a greater percentage of employees who self-identify as targets of bullying: 28.2% of library administrators and 43.2% of librarians (Freedman and Vreven 2016); and 39% of employees (Namie 2021). Even greater percentages reported that they had witnessed bullying. In contrast, our study found that only 22.8% of library workers (librarians and library staff)

self-identified as being bullied. However, when asked to report the frequency of negative acts/bullying behaviors, the numbers rise significantly.

The two most frequently identified negative acts/behaviors "Someone withholding information which affects your performance" (63.5%) and "Having your opinion ignored" (62.8%) are both work-related bullying. These results mirror the findings of Freedman and Vreven's study (2016), which reported nearly identical percentages for the same behaviors (63.5% and 62.9%, respectively.) An additional work-related bullying behavior was also frequently reported by Freedman and Vreven, "Being exposed to an unmanageable workload (46.6%)," which also compares with the present study's findings at 49.6%. Whereas Freedman and Vreven also found that "Being ignored or excluded" was the most frequent person-related bullying behavior (63.5%), this occurred slightly less often in this study's population (55.7%).

These frequently reported behaviors may be difficult to monitor and observe and may be easily ignored, even by the target, but also by witnesses and the organization as a whole. In other words, a target may experience negative acts, but may not self-identify as being bullied. Nevertheless, the impact of these behaviors contributes to a stressful work environment, which can have consequences for people's health, general well-being, job satisfaction, and the overall productivity of the workplace. Furthermore, with an increase in work from home arrangements, the blurring of the lines between work life and personal life also means that stressors may cross over between these worlds.

Self-Labeling and Cutoff Scores

After the initial 22-item inventory, NAQ-R asks respondents to self-label their workplace bullying experiences as "never," "now and then," monthly, "weekly," or "daily." Traditionally, when identifying workplace bullying by self-labeling, "now and then" is used as the lower cutoff point for occasional bullying; being bullied "weekly" is the criterion for severe bullying (Notelaers and Einarsen 2013).

This self-labeling approach has limitations. Notelaers and Einarsen (2013) note, "Labeling yourself as a target of workplace bullying is not free of error because personality, emotional and cognitive factors, and misperceptions can figure as potential biases" (679). In response to this limitation, they established cutoff scores to rate the severity of workplace bullying using the raw point value from questions 1-22 of the NAQ-R inventory: scores below 33 indicate that bullying is

not taking place; scores between 33 and 45 indicate occasional bullying; and scores above 45 indicate severe workplace bullying (Notelaers and Einarsen 2013). [2]

The number of respondents in our survey who fit the criteria for being targets of workplace bullying using the self-labeling method compared to those identified with using Notelaers and Einarsen's cutoff scores indicate many more Louisiana academic library workers may be experiencing bullying than those who identify themselves as targets of bullying (Table 4).

Table 4. Prevalence and Severity of Workplace Bullying: Self Labeling and Cutoff Scores		
	Self-Labeling	Cutoff Scores
Occasional bullying	"Now and Then" or "Monthly" 29/140, 20.7%	Occasionally bullied (scores between 33-45) 40/140, 28.6%
Severe bullying	"Weekly" or "Daily" 3/140, 2.1%	Severe bullying (scores above 45) 13/140, 9.3%
Total bullied	22.8%	37.9%
Notes: Self-labeling and cutoff score information is from Notelaers and Einarsen (2013). NAQ-R assigns a point value of 1 to "never" responses. There were six respondents who skipped one NAQ-R question and one respondent who skipped two NAQ-R questions. Instead of assigning a point value of 1 to non-responses, the authors chose to be conservative in their interpretation and did not assign a point value to skipped responses.		

The disparity between the self-labeling of bullying and the indication of bullying using the cutoff score may have multiple explanations. Targets may avoid self-identifying as being bullied out of a sense of shame, and some may hesitate to label themselves as targets of workplace

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[2] While the cutoff scores are useful, Notelaers and Einarsen (2013) based their cutoff scores on a sample of approximately 2,500 Norwegian workers; cultural differences between populations may make the cutoff scores they defined inapplicable to other populations.

bullying to avoid admitting their lack of control over the situation (Zapf et al. 2003; Zapf and Einarsen 2003).

This discrepancy between labeling bullying and the reporting of bullying behavior may be, in part, attributed to the number of women employed in library work. A recent qualitative study of nurses examines the gendered workplace bullying impacting the nursing profession and suggests that bullying behaviors are accepted in nursing because it is seen as part of how women interact and socialize, for example, being passive aggressive (Akella and Seay 2022). Gendered workplace bullying may be impacting library workplaces in the same way it impacts nursing.

Toxic Environments

Out of the five most frequently reported negative acts in the present study, four are categorized as work-related–rather than physically intimidating or person-related. Bullying is not simply a consequence of a few "bad seeds" or individuals with toxic personalities. Instead, bullying manifests according to workplace cultures and situations that are conducive to bad behaviors. In academe, this manifestation is supported by common higher education organizational factors such as high job security, subjective performance measures, and conflicting goals, which as Westhues (2004) suggests, play a role in the pervasiveness of bullying in this environment. The behaviors that thrive according to these conditions, in turn, are displayed by one or more perpetrators, and targeted at one or more victims.
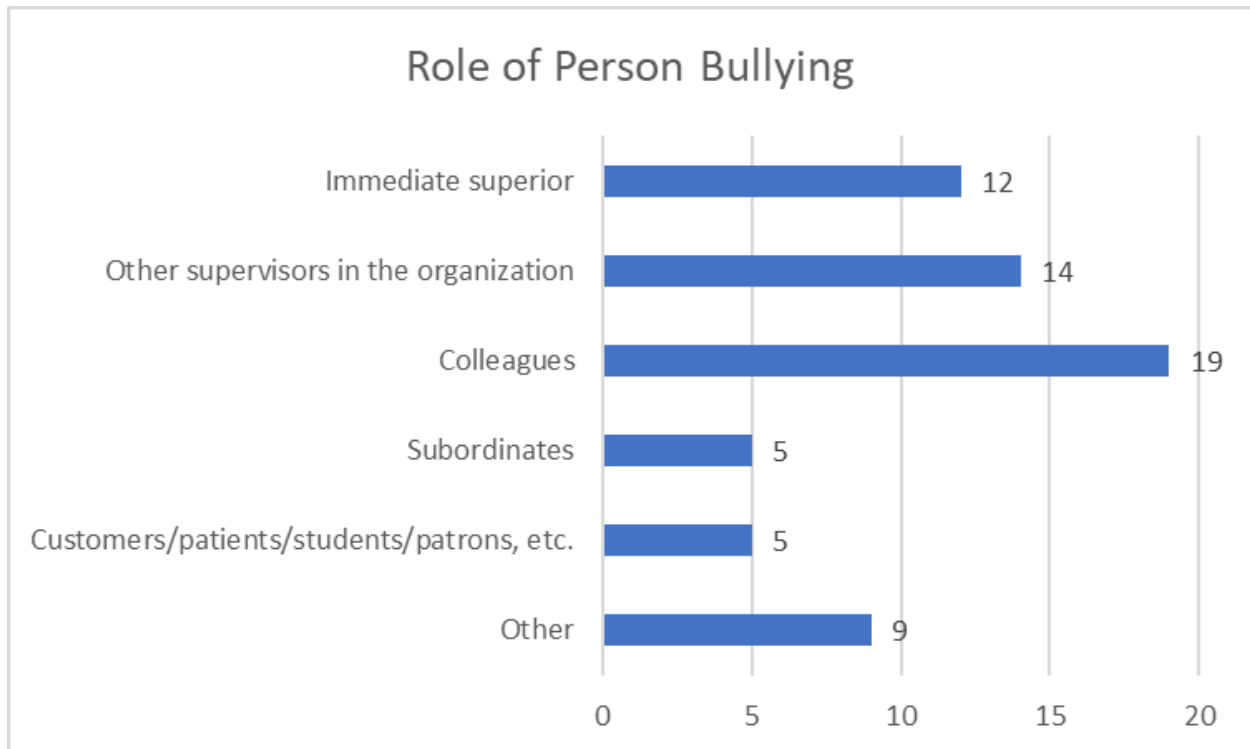
Figure 6: Role of Person Bullying

In our data, colleagues were almost as frequently identified as being the bully as were supervisors (19 vs. 26) (Figure 6). It is not just a "bad supervisor" problem. It is happening between peers. This echoes Keashly and Neuman's (2008) findings, which discovered that in a sample of university employees, frontline staff were more likely to identify superiors as bullies, but faculty were more likely to identify as being the targets of bullying by their colleagues. Here, bullying was identified across both vertical and horizontal relationships within the workplace structure. While hierarchical structures may lead to increased risk of bullying, this is not to say bullying falls strictly within the lines of hierarchical relationships, i.e. superior as perpetrator and subordinate as target.

Limitations

In addition to the normal challenge of response rate to surveys, the required informed consent language included a statement that some employers monitor employer-issued computers and Wi-Fi that may have discouraged people from participating, especially those who are unable to access their email off campus. Even with assurances of the anonymity of responses, some employees may not have felt comfortable disclosing potentially sensitive information about negative work environments. As with all optional surveys, the results may be skewed by non-

response and self-selection. Conversely, the survey may have appealed to those who frequently deal with negative acts at work.

It is difficult to know whether the demographic profile of participants reflects the demographic profile of the entire population of Louisiana academic library workers. Other than an underrepresentation of library staff vs. librarians (65.9% of respondents were librarians vs. a population of 47% according to ACRL dashboard statistics), it is not possible to know whether the responses reflect the ratios of gender, race/ethnicity, age, etc. Because one of the authors works at an eligible institution (Louisiana State University), there may be an overrepresentation of responses from employees who work there; employees may have been more willing to respond to a survey from a researcher with whom they were familiar.

Some librarians had been working remotely or on a hybrid schedule for many months due to the pandemic during recruitment in March and April 2022. Some NAQ-R items are not easily translatable to an online environment (e.g., being ignored or facing a hostile reaction when you approach). Scores for those items may have been lower than they would be under full-time, on-site conditions. Workplace bullying may look different in an online work environment.

Implications & Future Research

The potential for future research is significant and varied, including a more comprehensive survey that includes other states or even between institutions of different sizes and Carnegie rankings. The study could also be modified slightly and used to study workplace bullying in different types of libraries, such as public libraries, and collect data about unionized vs. non-unionized workplaces, including states where collective bargaining is explicitly prohibited. Further research could also explore in more detail the experiences of those who witness bullying, as well as those who work in different environments (i.e., remote or hybridized workplaces).

More qualitative research is needed to learn how bullying impacts targets. Learning about its prevalence and frequency and demographic information about both its perpetrators and targets is an important first step, but qualitative research can reveal the short- and long-term impact of bullying on targets, both at work and in their personal lives. Interviews are an obvious approach, as are other qualitative methods such as narrative inquiry, that involve stories of experiences in addition to reflective components. These could reveal rich insights and shed light on the chronology of experiences and the connective tissue of workplace cultures that help to shape or dismantle workplace bullying.

This study adds to a vital area of inquiry with regards to workplace bullying in academic libraries, but there is work to be done to gain a more holistic understanding of the problem. This includes not only more variety in terms of study design, but also an investigation of the comorbidity of workplace bullying and discrimination, harassment, burnout, and other pressures that have historically disproportional effects on workers from marginalized backgrounds (Bergbom and Vartia 2021).

Conclusion

How can academic librarians respond to bullying in the workplace? The Workplace Bullying Institute reports that the collective behaviors of management allow workplace toxicity to occur. These behaviors include the organization's track record in responding to (or not responding to) complaints, the human resource department's reaction to complaints, and whether the organization retaliates in reaction to a complaint (Namie 2021). However, individuals' actions and inactions also contribute to the problem. The single most frequently selected factor leading to workplace toxicity was the individual personality of the perpetrator. Additionally, the survey cites the response of the target (i.e., standing up for themselves or not) as well as the reaction (or lack thereof) of bystanders as contributing to the problem (Namie 2021).

This mix of interpersonal and organizational responsibility is echoed by Penney, Martir, and Bok (2017), who describe three explanations for negative workplace behaviors: "proactive instrumental processes," "reactive emotional processes" and "normative processes" (35). When poor behavior serves an instrumental need, such as assisting a worker to receive reward or recognition (i.e., receiving a promotion), it is a proactive instrumental process. When workplace stressors lead to negative emotions which lead to workplace aggression, that is a reactive emotional process. It is therefore extremely important to monitor an organization for these workplace stressors:

- Insufficient time to accomplish work tasks
- Insufficient resources (money, help, equipment) to accomplish work tasks
- Ambiguity relating to role or responsibilities
- Poor physical environment (temperature, noise, space)
- Too many work tasks
- Too difficult of work tasks

- Insufficient compensation
- Unjust decisions
- Disrespectful treatment (including a lack of communication about decisions that impact a person's work)
- Poor supervisory practices
- Poor coworkers or customers (39-46)

The final process is the normative process. In this explanation for workplace aggression, the social processes learned at work lead to the problem. Employees learn that this is how the workplace functions, and the aggressive behaviors are woven into and become part of the workplace culture (37-38). The normative process is perhaps the most important since the organizational response predicts future behavior. If problems are addressed and poor behavior is punished rather than rewarded, the impact on the workplace climate can be positive.

Staninger (2016) posits that the first step in mitigating bullying in the academic library is awareness and identification, i.e. acknowledging the problem and determining from where within the organization the problem stems. Once this is established, prevention measures–such as establishing an anti-bullying culture and developing formal anti-bullying policies–can be taken in an attempt to effectively mitigate bullying before it begins (Wells et al. 2013). Academic libraries, however, have not appeared to make it beyond the awareness stage. Despite nearly a quarter of surveyed academic librarians reporting having experienced at least three negative acts on a weekly or daily basis, "bullying goes almost unnoticed in academic libraries" (Freedman and Vreven 2016, 728). In a survey of 21 large academic libraries, only 3 had an anti-bullying policy (Kim et al. 2018). More research is needed on the prevalence of bullying in the academic library workplace, its effects on academic librarians, the outcomes of prolonged exposure to bullying behaviors, and ultimately what can be done to temper if not fully eliminate it.

The present study shows that 22.8% of Louisiana academic library workers report being bullied. When controlling for self-labeling via established cutoff scores, this number jumps to 37.9%. Workplace bullying in academic libraries is a problem, and the solution involves more research in the field that explores the experiences of these workers, the roots of bullying in a toxic environment, and how bullying can be stopped and prevented.

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Appendix 1

NAQ-R Louisiana Academic Library Workers

Q1

1. Study Title: You are invited to participate in a study titled Louisiana Academic Library Workers and Negative Acts in the Workplace.

2. We hope to learn the prevalence of negative acts in the workplace among Louisiana academic library workers at SACSCOC-accredited institutions and to look for correlations between negative acts and faculty status, tenure status, and other demographic characteristics. If you decide to participate, you will complete an online survey, including the Negative Acts Questionnaire--Revised (NAQ-R) instrument (Einarsen, Hoel & Notelaers, 2009). The survey is designed to measure exposure to negative acts in the workplace. It will take about 15 to 20 minutes to complete the survey. You will be asked to answer questions about specific workplace experiences and demographic questions.

3. Inclusion criteria: If you are currently employed at a Louisiana academic library at a SACSCOC-accredited institution and are 18 years or older, you are eligible to participate.

4. Exclusion criteria. If you are not currently employed at a Louisiana academic library at a SACSCOC-accredited institution or if you are younger than 18 years of age, you cannot participate in this study.

5. There are no direct benefits to the participants, but this study will contribute to the literature on negative acts in the workplace and the relationships affecting workplace dynamics in academic libraries in Louisiana.

6. There are no known risks associated with participation in this study, but you may experience mental or emotional distress when considering personal experiences with negative acts in the workplace.

7. Please feel free to contact us if you have questions regarding the study: Andrea Hebert (ahebert@lsu.edu), 225-578-7195 at Louisiana State University; Catherine Baird (bairdc@montclair.edu), 973-655-7144 at Montclair State University; or Justin Savage, (savagej@montclair.edu), 973-655-7142 at Montclair State University.

8. If you decide to participate, you are free to stop at any time. You may skip questions you do not want to answer.

9. Data will be collected using the Internet. There are no guarantees on the security of data sent on the Internet. Confidentiality will be kept to the degree permitted by the technology used. Subject identity will remain confidential unless disclosure is required by law. We advise that you do not use an employer-issued electronic device, laptop, phone, or WIFI to respond to this

survey, as many employers monitor use of all devices. Results of the study may be published, but no names or identifying information will be included in the publication.

10. This study has been approved by the Louisiana State University Institutional Review Board and Montclair State University Institutional Review Board. For questions concerning participant rights, please contact Alex Cohen, Chair of the Institutional Review Board at Louisiana State University, at irb@lsu.edu or 225-578-8692 or Dr. Dana Levitt, Chair of the Institutional Review Board at Montclair State University at reviewboard@montclair.edu or 973-655-2097.

By selecting "I agree to participate," I confirm that I have read this form and will participate in the project described. Its general purposes, the particulars of involvement, and possible risks and inconveniences have been explained to my satisfaction. I understand that I can discontinue participation at any time. My consent also indicates that I am 18 years of age.

It is okay to use my data in future studies.

◯ Yes

◯ No

Q2 Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Andrea Hebert, Louisiana State University

Catherine Baird, Montclair State University

Justin Savage, Montclair State University

◯ I agree to participate

◯ I decline

Q3 The following behaviors are often seen as examples of negative behavior in the workplace. Over the last six months, how often have you been subjected to the following negative acts at work by a co-worker? Please select the answer that best corresponds with your experience.

	Never	Now and then	Monthly	Weekly	Daily
Someone withholding information which affects your performance	○	○	○	○	○
Being humiliated or ridiculed in connection with your work	○	○	○	○	○
Being ordered to do work below your level of competence	○	○	○	○	○
Having key areas of responsibility removed or replaced with more trivial or unpleasant tasks	○	○	○	○	○
Spreading of gossip and rumours about you	○	○	○	○	○
Being ignored or excluded	○	○	○	○	○
Having insulting or offensive remarks made about your person,	○	○	○	○	○

attitudes or your private life					
Being shouted at or being the target of spontaneous anger	○	○	○	○	○
Intimidating behaviors such as finger-pointing, invasion of personal space, shoving, blocking your way	○	○	○	○	○
Hints or signals from others that you should quit your job	○	○	○	○	○
Repeated reminders of your errors or mistakes	○	○	○	○	○
Being ignored or facing a hostile reaction when you approach	○	○	○	○	○
Persistent criticism of your errors or mistakes	○	○	○	○	○
Having your opinions ignored	○	○	○	○	○

Practical jokes carried out by people you don't get along with	○	○	○	○	○
Being given tasks with unreasonable deadlines	○	○	○	○	○
Having allegations made against you	○	○	○	○	○
Excessive monitoring of your work	○	○	○	○	○
Pressure not to claim something to which by right you are entitled (e.g., sick leave, holiday entitlement, travel expenses)	○	○	○	○	○
Being the subject of excessive teasing or sarcasm	○	○	○	○	○
Being exposed to an unmanageable workload	○	○	○	○	○
Threats of violence or	○	○	○	○	○

physical abuse

or actual abuse

Q4 Have you been bullied at work? We define bullying as a situation where 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 himself/herself/themselves against these actions. We will not refer to a one-off incident as bullying.

Using the above definition, please state whether you have been bullied at work over the last six months?

○ No

○ Yes, but only rarely

○ Yes, now and then

○ Yes, several times per week

○ Yes, almost daily

Q5 Please select the appropriate choices below to state who you were bullied by (select all that apply):

☐ My immediate superior

☐ Other supervisors/managers in the organisation

☐ Colleagues

☐ Subordinates

☐   Customers/patients/students/patrons, etc.

☐   Other

Q6 I work at a:

○ Private university

○ Public university

Q7 Highest degree offered

○ Associate

○ Bachelor

○ Master

○ Doctoral

Q8 Size of College or University (Student Enrollment)

○ Fewer than 100

○ 100-199

○ 200-299

○ 300-499

○ 500-699

○ 700-999

○ 1,000-1,999

○ 2,000-2,999

○ 3,000-4,999

○ 5,000-6,999

○ 7,000-9,999

○ 10,000-19,999

○ 20,000-29,999

○ 30,000+

Q9 Do you work full-time?

○ Yes

○ No

Q10 Are you classified as a librarian at your institution?

○ Yes

○ No

Display This Question:

If Q10 = Yes

Q11 What best describes your current situation?

◯ Tenured

◯ Tenure-track

◯ No option for tenure

◯ Other (self describe) _____

Q12 How are librarians classified at your institution?

◯ Academic staff

◯ Administration

◯ Faculty

◯ Professional staff

◯ Other (self describe) _____

◯ Don't know

Q13 What best describes your current status?

◯ Academic staff

◯ Administration

○ Faculty

○ Civil service staff

○ Professional staff

○ Other (describe) _____

Q14 How many years have you worked in a library? Select the best response, rounding up as necessary.

○ 0 to 3 years

○ 4 to 7 years

○ 8 to 12 years

○ 13 to 20 years

○ 21 to 30 years

○ 31 or more years

Q15 How many years have you worked in your current position? Select the best response, rounding up as necessary.

○ 0 to 3 years

○ 4 to 7 years

○ 8 to 12 years

○ 13 to 20 years

○ 21 to 30 years

○ 31 or more years

Q16 Gender: How do you identify?

○ Man

○ Non-binary

○ Woman

○ Prefer to self-describe _____

○ Prefer not to answer

Q17 What is your age?

▼ 18-24 ... 85 or older

Q18 Which of the following best describes you?

○ Asian or Pacific Islander

○ Black or African American

○ Hispanic or Latino/a/x

○ Native American or Alaskan Native

○ White or Caucasian

○ Multiracial or biracial

○ A race/ethnicity not listed here

○ Prefer not to answer

Q19 What degrees do you hold? Select all that apply.

☐ High school

☐ Associate

☐ Bachelor

☐ Master (other than a library degree)

☐ Library degree (e.g., MLS, MLIS, etc.)

☐ Ed.D.

☐ Ph.D.

☐ J.D.

☐ Other (please specify) _____

Q20 In what area of the library do you work (e.g., special collections, reference, technical services, etc.)?

_____

Q21
We are interested in information about the person(s) who bullied you.

Please select the appropriate choice(s) below that best describe the person(s) you were bullied by (select all that apply):

- [ ] Asian or Pacific Islander

- [ ] Black or African American

- [ ] Hispanic or Latino/a/x

- [ ] Native American or Alaskan Native

- [ ] White or Caucasian

- [ ] Multiracial or biracial

- [ ] A race/ethnicity not listed here

- [ ] Prefer not to answer

Q22 Please select the appropriate choice(s) below that best describe the person(s) you were bullied by (select all that apply):

- [ ] Man

- [ ] Non-binary

- [ ] Woman

- [ ] Prefer to describe _____

- [ ] Prefer not to answer

Q23 Please select the appropriate choice(s) below that best describe the person(s) you were bullied by (select all that apply):

☐ Tenured

☐ Tenure-track

☐ No option for tenure

☐ Library staff

☐ Library user

☐ Other (describe) _____

Catherine Baird (bairdc@montclair.edu) is Online and Outreach Services Librarian at Montclair State University **Andrea Hebert** (ahebert@lsu.edu) is Research Impact Librarian at Louisiana State University **Justin Savage** (savagej@montclair.edu) is Research and Reference Librarian at Montclair State University