

# Interpersonal Communication in Workplace Bullying

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**Abstract**—Communication is an important thing between a person and information within a business organization. Bullying in the workplace is a continuous and repetitive negative behavior that can lead to unfriendly work environment. Bullying behavior has influence both in the short and long term on the victim. The phenomenon of workplace bullying can be seen from how interpersonal communication built between the boss with employees, inferior, and other employees. This study would like to see how the factors causing bullying on the level of interpersonal communication within a service business organization located in Semarang. Data analysis method used in this research is descriptive qualitative research method by using phenomenology approach. Overall, this study shows the existence of verbal bullying behavior, in the form of criticism of work or personal, humiliation, and sarcasm. In the results of this study known that the style of authoritarian leadership and often doing intimidating communication plus stressful work environment, becomes the dominant factor of *workplace bullying* cause in one of service business organization in Semarang. It also causes the split of interpersonal relationships between superiors and subordinates.

**Keywords**—*interpersonal communication, workplace bullying, organization, leadership style.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Bullying is a repeated intimidation act done by the ruling or stronger side against the weaker side, intentionally done and aims to injure the victim both physically and emotionally. Bullying in the workplace is a negative treatment to the victim, making the victim feel inferior in work situations and may be related to work or non-work issues [1].

Indonesia lately surprised by suicide news resulting from bullying behavior. Many exposure of bullying case that occurs among children and teenagers who are students, as well as many outstanding cases of bullying that occurred in social media or often referred as cyber bullying. Bullying case is becoming the government's current concern, until the emergence of Law number 35 year 2015 on amendment to Law number 23 year 2002 on Child Protection and public service advertisements on "Stop Bullying".

Bullying is not only happening among children and teenagers, but bullying can occur anywhere, including in the work environment. Workplace bullying is a frequent phenomenon but gains little attention both from organizations and individually. Many studies on the *workplace bullying* case are done in some Western countries, but currently it is not only happen to some Western countries, the same thing can also occur in some Asian countries even including Indonesia, considering that most of Asian countries are developing countries with a complex culture.

Previous study has shown large numbers of employees in Europe and North America face constant bullying in the workplace, with a percentage of between 10% and 15% of employees experiencing bullying in the workplace [1]. Bullying in the workplace is now a global problem. Another study showed that the presence of bullying increased up to 17%, in addition other researchers also showed as many as 55% and 40% of employees revealed that they face "intimidation" from both colleagues and superiors [1].

Not only in Western countries, research conducted by AIA Vitality in several Asian countries such as Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore on the workplace bullying case also showed surprising results. AIA Vitality surveyed more than 10,000 employees in Hong Kong, Malaysia and Singapore. In Hong Kong and Malaysia, about 12% of respondents reported symptoms of depression about twice that proportion in Australia, Singapore and the UK. Meanwhile, the level of intimidation in workplaces in Hong Kong, Malaysia and Singapore is almost 3times, as much as 6.6% of the UK [2].

While in Indonesia, workplace bullying also occurs in several types of company sectors, such as research conducted by Dewi (2013) in RSUP M. Djamil Padang, explained that as much as 42.2% nurses experience verbal bullying. Furthermore, there is a study conducted by Zonedni [3] on the relationship of bullying behavior with the motivation of nurses performance in RSUD Prof. Dr. Ma. Hanafiah, Sm Batusangkar, there are 69.4% of nurses experiencing bullying and 74.1% nurses have decreased of work motivation.

The *workplace bullying* phenomenon not only negatively impacts the victims personally, but previous studies have also shown that the phenomenon of bullying has proven to have negative effects on organizations and witnesses who see the bullying. In a study conducted Vartia (2001) revealed that the negative effects of workplace bullying can have an impact on witnesses or people who see it. Bullying affects negatively to the company through high employee absenteeism and the magnitude of voluntary turnover. The company's costs of high turnover rates can be enormous when both victims and witnesses of the bullying event are negatively impacted and motivated to resign.

In a business organization engaged in services, communication is an important thing between a person and information. Not only on the position, either a manager or employee has the information needed to run the job. Communication between all members within an organization is very important in determining success. With effective communication and proper delivery, each member of the

organization can receive the information provided. Proper communication benefits the organization, but improper communication bring harm to the organization. Communication is required by all members within the organization, not only superiors with subordinates but between co-workers are also needed. Communication between superiors and subordinates is required for assignment and supervision, but communication between the work is required to coordinate in doing the work so it would not bring problem among employees.

According to Joseph A. Devito [4], interpersonal communication is a communication that occurs between two people who have a relationship, people who in one way "*connected*". Interpersonal communication is also a process of exchanging information between a person with at least one other person or usually between two people who can be directly known the feedback. As more people involved in communication, leads to the increase of the perspective of people in communication events, the more complex communication will becomes.

Communication is very important in an organization, both business organizations and other organizations. The phenomenon of workplace bullying can be seen from how interpersonal communication built between the boss with employees, subordinates, and other employees. This research, besides want to see how the mechanism and pattern of interpersonal communication in a service business organization from boss to subordinate, and between employees, also want to see the factors that cause the occurrence of bullying in a service business organization.

## II. RESEARCH METHOD

Data analysis method used in this research is descriptive qualitative research methodology by using phenomenology approach. Data analysis in this research consists of problems and formulation of research questions, life experience text, exploitation and interpretation, and conclusion. Data collection techniques in this study were conducted by in-depth interview techniques with male and female employee research subjects who experienced intimidation in a service business organization in Semarang to study the form of interpersonal communication that they do.

## III. CONCLUSION

Communication is very important, because basically communication is a process in delivering a message or information from one source to another source. Communication can take place as long as there is a common meaning of what is spoken [5].

Understanding of Interpersonal communication can be seen from various views, one of which refers to the communication that occurs directly between two people [6]. View mentioned is also supported by the understanding of Interpersonal Communication expressed by DeVito [4] which states that "Interpersonal Communication is the verbal and nonverbal interaction between two (or sometimes more than two) interdependent people." Interpersonal Communication is a verbal and non-verbal interaction between two or more dependent people. Interpersonal communication can occur from parents and children, peers and coworkers depending on how the

communication patterns are created and the type of relationships formed.

When Interpersonal Communication is done, then the parties involved are connected and dependent on one another. This is seen as the impact and feedback that is given or expected when the communication is done. So Interpersonal Communication becomes the foundation in shaping and managing Interpersonal Relationships. Good Interpersonal Communication can create good Interpersonal Relationships, and vice versa [4].

A company certainly consists of many people with various social and professional backgrounds who work with the same goal, making communication very important in the scope of work. Often a manager or a boss is unaware of the importance of building a good interpersonal communication with their employees, so that it can lead to unconformity that ends in a message containing bullying.

*Workplace bullying* is classified into two categories, person-related bullying and work-related bullying both occurring either closely or openly [7]. Person-related bullying may include spreading rumors, verbal abuse, prolonged criticism, false allegations, and social isolation. Meanwhile work-related bullying may include excessive job monitoring behavior, irregular workload, and misjudgment of work [8]. Whereas in the relationship context of workplace bullying are classified into three categories. First downward bullying by managers to subordinates. Second, horizontal bullying done by one or more co-workers in the same position. Third, upward bullying, in which subordinates perform the bullying to individual with higher positions.

Based on the results of interviews that have been conducted on the target bullying, there is a bullying behavior that occurs verbally in an interpersonal relationship between superiors with subordinates. This work-related bullying, where the bully bullying in the form of criticism, harsh words and degrading that are not worthy to be spoken in front of the victims and other employees. Authoritarian leadership style dominates in the work environment and work environment that trigger stress become the dominant factor of *workplace bullying* in service business organization in that located in Semarang.

The workplace bully in the service business organization is a leader or manager who is generally a male who has dominant characteristics, hard, ambitious and easily provoked so several times done verbal bullying action to employees. While the target of the workplace bullying itself is an employee who previously had a good relationship with the bully and in the past had errors in the work, so the bully continuously intimidate the target and interpersonal relationships increasingly stretched. Similarly with new employees who are not obedient and subject to superiors (the bully) will continuously intimidated verbally by saying harsh words and degrading. It affects both the psyches of the target workplace bullying and affects the tolerance of interpersonal relationships between managers and employees.

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