The "Bullied" Manager:

An Empirical Study of Individual, Organizational and Contextual Factors

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Abstract: The aim of this paper is to study the determinants of workplace bullying in a group of employees with a privileged position within the company: managers. First of all, we define the phenomenon. After, we make a review of literature with the object to set related variables in a global model of workplace bullying. A sample population of 608 managers was obtained from the microdata file of the last European Working Conditions Survey (European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions). The methodology used to achieve our research objectives is based on the binary logistic regression model. With this statistical technique we determine the probability of the occurrence of an event-workplace bullying in this case-compared to the probability of the occurrence of the opposite event. The global model is integrated by individual, organizational and contextual factors and predicts the likelihood of workplace bullying in 68% (61.6% between bullied managers and 75.9% between non bullied managers). The resulting model for managers is similar to models of workplace bullying for employees in general.

Key words: Workplace bullying; Power; Harassment; Mobbing; Managers

1. POWER IN THE ORGANIZATION AND BULLYING

People who manage and others who obey. Work that responds to common objectives and in which, in principle, everyone should collaborate. Values that are said to be important and are expected to be implemented with conviction in the entire organization. These and further assumptions disregard the "plurality of objectives" and the existence of a political fight in the heart of the organizational life. Organizational structure and organizational culture are not neutral, as they become the means to crystallize specific interests. These interests comprise the "real" finality, updated in accordance with the social groups of the organization, who exert their power so that those interests are to be considered at the present time and, if possible, in the future.

From this political perspective, the organization is likely to use its power to achieve the objectives and, in certain cases and through the implementation of different measures, it may "abuse" in its practices when

someone offers resistance to its claims or questions the predominant interests. In this sense, in the context of profit maximization and centrality of exploitation in the work process, workplace bullying would be, from a Marxist perspective, normal in the day-to-day management, which forces to pay special attention to sources, meaning and dynamics originated by power inequalities in the workplace (Ironside & Seifert, 2003).

Although rare, the presence of those critical perspectives in the organizational analysis, and particularly, labor achievements in developed countries have permitted awareness of certain limits in the organizational demands, acknowledge workplace bullying as a reiterated and irrational behavior, that causes, or has the potential to cause damage (WorkCover NSW, 2008; Einarsen *et al.,* 2003). Today, even some authors consider workplace bullying as one of the most devastating problems for employees to the extent of considering it one of the severest ways of stress at work (Zapf *et al.*, 1996; Niedl, 1995; Wilson, 1991).

The economical context in which these labor trends are incardinated does not favor the reduction of this phenomenon. In many organizations, urged by competitiveness in the global environment and by uncertainty, has emerged a new working climate that is also more competitive, that puts pressure on managers and employees to obtain results by all means, creating this way the breeding ground for conflicts and negative behaviors at work, such as bullying (Guneri, 2009).

The aim of this paper is to study determinant factors for workplace bullying that affect a group of employees with a recognized and privileged position to exercise power –managers–, adopting the individual perspective of the subject –the manager bullied–, regardless of frequency or duration of the action. Managers are in the best position to judge if they are bullied at work, because if they perceive they are, the adverse effects arising from that impression would manifest independently of the presence of solid fundamentals in that perception. For this purpose, we will first define the phenomenon conceptually, followed by a revision of the main empirical findings that will allow us to establish a global model of workplace bullying. Thirdly, the most relevant results of the empirical study obtained through a logistic regression analysis will be presented, and finally, the main conclusions and limitations of this study.

2. DELIMITATION AND EFFECTS OF WORKPLACE BULLYING

But this concept that, in principle, may seem diaphanous and transparent has, in practice, many nuances that should be analyzed. Any study on the phenomenon of workplace bullying should start from a basic premise about the difficulty and risk involved in providing any overall figure on the prevalence of this phenomenon, since the revision done by Zapf et al. (2003) showed that the range fluctuates between 5% and 30%. Without doubt, the concept used for what is considered bullying explains, in part, this disparity in figures.

In the scientific literature different concepts related to bullying (Aquino & Lamertz, 2004)[4] have been explored, among others: intimidation, harassment, victimization, aggression, emotional abuse, psychological harassment, or mistreatment at the workplace. Although researchers hold on to small nuances to distinguish one concept from another, the term bullying is generally accepted and most used by English-speaking researchers, while mobbing is normally used in some Scandinavian and German speaking countries (Hoel & Beale, 2006)[5]. Even though some authors have attempted to find insignificant differences between the two concepts and their applications[6], bullying and mobbing are used indistinctly. In this sense, Einarsen and Mikkelsen (2003) point out that these terms "all seem to refer to the same phenomenon, namely the systematic mistreatment of a subordinate, a colleague, or a superior, which, if continued, may cause severe social,

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[4] A wide range of definitions used by different authors can be consulted in Eirnarsen (2000).

[5] Other terms have been used in southern European countries (e.g. 'moral harassment' in France and Spain) or the USA ('emotional abuse' and 'work mistreatment').

[6] Zapf and Einarsen (2005) were not successful in differentiating both concepts. They referred to *bullying* as behavior delivered by a manager towards a subordinate, while they proposed the use of *mobbing* for unwanted behavior among equals. Further authors tried to differentiate both concepts linking *bullying* with direct forms of aggression by individuals, while more subtle behavior by a group of people would be considered *mobbing* (Zapf, 1999; Leymann, 1996).

psychological and psychosomatic problems in the victim"[7]. Moreover, although Zapf (1999), when referring to Leymann (1996) pointed out the difference between mobbing and bullying, he later on observed that the terms can be used indistinctly, a practice that we will use in this article too.

But, what can we understand by bullying? Based on the prevailing academic paradigms, this concept entails a type of interpersonal aggression at work characterized by features of intensity, duration, frequency and power disparity (Rayner & Keashly, 2005; Einarsen et al., 2003; Rayner et al., 2002). Firstly, according to Lutgen-Sandvik et al. (2007), intensity specifies the number of multiple negative acts. Researchers usually estimate bullying by counting these acts, which include isolation, humiliation and intimidation, among others. Secondly, a weekly frequency of these acts over a period of six months has been considered for an operational definition, so that severe cases of work-placed bullying are differentiated from a less intense bullying, as for example some kind of stress at work (Saunders, Huynh & Goodman–Delahunty, 2007; Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf & Cooper, 2003; Rayner et al., 2002; Salin, 2001; Einarsen & Hoel, 2001; Leymann, 1990).

Third, not only must two or more negative acts occur frequently, they must occur over a period of time. Researchers usually apply a six-month duration criterion to differentiate bullying from other negative lower intensity acts (Hoel et al., 2001; Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2001; Zapf et al., 1996; Leymann, 1990). Nevertheless, the first bullying act at work implies a breaking point that will affect both bully and victim from then on. It does not need to be reiterated in order to produce its negative effects. In this sense, we totally agree with Lee (2002) on his statement that each incident is unacceptable and that workers should be treated with respect and dignity. Moreover, our analysis is consistent with Leymann's research, pioneer in this field, who characterizes mobbing as a unique negative act. Finally, power disparity between bully and victim is "central for the definition of bullying" (Einarsen et al., 2003), that is to say, those who are bullied feel unable to protect themselves, and they have little chance of taking revenge on their aggressors (Zapf & Einarsen, 2005).

Lines above affirm that there is not a universal agreement on the definition of workplace bullying, although there is a glimpse of some consensus on defining the concept as a series of systematically negative acts that derive into social, psychological and psychosomatic problems for the victim (Einarsen et al., 2003). Therefore, although definitions tend to focus on persistence and duration as key criteria of the phenomenon, the present paper disagrees on this perspective, as workplace bullying has a strong psychological component. In fact, an essential condition for bullying is that the act must be perceived as hostile by the target (Einarsen, 1999; Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996).

From this point of view, noxious effects of workplace bullying (anxiety, depression, absenteeism, lack of organizational commitment…) will only be shown in the very moment that the target has this perception, independently of persistence or duration of the act. From that moment on, worker behavior will change substantially. As Einarsen and Raknes (1997) point out, victims' resentment will affect performance at work causing an unpleasant work environment. In this regard, Hoel et al. (2003) suggest that workplace bullying reduces organizational efficiency, as it decreases employee morale, productivity and motivation, at the time that absenteeism and employee turnover increase.

3. FACTORS INFLUENCING WORKPLACE BULLYING

3.1 Towards a Multifactorial Understanding of Workplace Bullying

Research on workplace bullying initiated in Scandinavia in the 80s, as a result of innovative research at that time on schoolyard bullying (Leymann, 1990; Matthiesen, Raknes & Røkkum, 1989). Heinz Leymann (1990), a German psychiatrist, is considered by many to be the pioneer in this field (Rayner et al., 2002). His initial interest on school bullying gradually extended to include bullying at work (which he named "mobbing"), as he identified similar dynamics in adult patients (Lutgen-Sandvik, Tracy & Alberts, 2007).

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[7] A similar line is taken by authors like Bowling and Beehr (2006), Lapierre, Spector and Leck (2005) or Aquino and Lamertz (2004) when indicating that although different investigations on this phenomenon appear with several labels and in different fields, they all refer to the same construct.

Due to the severe negative consequences of workplace bullying on mental health and well-being of employees, and, hence, on the performance of the organization, it is vitally important to understand the factors that contribute to the emergence and development of this phenomenon (Bond, Tuckey & Dollard, 2010). In this sense, there is a research trend leaded by psychology that focus victim and/or bully pathology. From a humanist perspective, this dominant line of thought highlights workplace bullying at the individual level, producing much research linked with psychological effects and therapeutic practice in support of victims. However, the research field has always provided a sufficiently broad approach, with groups of researchers considering the influence of micro-organizational factors, such as role conflict, leadership, political aspects or organizational culture (Einarsen et al., 2003)[8].

Therefore, research on workplace bullying has evolved towards a multi-causal understanding. Hoel and Cooper (2001) identified five main areas of analysis depending on where the main focus is: on the individual, on the social interaction between two (or more) people, on group dynamics, on working environment (dealt with in our research) or on a wider context at the level of organization, society and political context. Nevertheless, most researchers agree that workplace bullying is the result of the interaction of some factors that manifest in the individual, organizational and contextual ambits (Hoel & Salin, 2003; Salin, 2003; Coyne, Seigne & Randall, 2000; Zapf, 1999).

The following section will first offer a compilation of the main empirical findings on bullying at a general level –for any employee– and secondly a synthesis of the hypotheses that have configured a global model, which could be used to derive some specific characteristics for the case of employees with managerial responsibilities.

3.2 Workplace Bullying Individual Factors

Some personal characteristics of victims could constitute, in principle, a workplace bullying antecedent. In fact, first studies suggested that those employees who suffered conflict at work used to experiment it in other contexts such as within the couple, in the family and with friends (Skjorshammer & Hofoss, 1999). Yet, research on a personality inclined to bullying is far from being conclusive (Bowling & Beehr, 2006). Most researchers conclude that a personality predisposed to play the role of victim or bully may not exist (Zapf & Einarsen, 2003; Rayner *et al*., 2002).

However, some studies have attempted to identify some individual factors –gender, age, seniority– that could increase the risk of becoming victim or bully (Zapf & Einarsen, 2003; Coyne, Seigne & Randall, 2000). Presence or absence of these factors affects bullying ratio (Bjorkqvist, Osterman & Lagerspetz, 1994). This happens as bullies estimate costs and potential profits of bullying in terms of specific features of victims, as certain groups (for example women or junior employees) are more vulnerable.

One of the key factors that could be used to study bullying at the individual level is gender. However, results of empirical studies that have analyzed this aspect do not seem to be very conclusive. Thus, some authors have observed a higher frequency of bullying among women (Salin, 2003; Cortina, Magley, Williams & Langhout, 2001; Zapf *et al*., 1996; Niedl, 1995; Björkqvist, Osterman & Lagerspetz, 1994; Björkqvist, Osterman & Hjelt–Back, 1994), while other large-scale studies conclude that, except for sexual harassment, both men and women are equally prone to be bullied at work (Zapf *et al*., 2003; Hoel & Cooper, 2000; Rayner, 1997; Einarse & Skogstad, 1996; Vartia 1996; Leymann, 1996).

In view of the aim of our paper, it is especially relevant the research by Veale and Gold (1998) which reveals that women in management positions are more vulnerable to bullying. According to the authors, the explanation can be found in still predominant sexist attitudes as well as in structural barriers that inhibit women's careers as compared with their male colleagues'.

In any case Einarsen *et al.* (2003) suggest that gender differences found by some researchers are, in fact, consequence of the discrimination that both genders may suffer due to their position at work. From this

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[8] For example, regarding organizational culture, the emphasis has been placed on socialization processes through which workplace bullying acts have been normalized and thus reproduced or institutionalized, as suggested in some studies such as Archer's (1999) on a fire brigade, Randle's (2003) on a group of nurses or Johns and Menzel's (1999) on a sample of chefs.

perspective, incidence of bullying would correspond to the fact of being part of a minority at work, independently of the gender of this minority[9].

Findings related to another personal factor such as victim age do not show a clear relation. Thus, Rayner (1997) reported that bullying victims were normally under 25, and later Hoel and Cooper (2000) found that young people were likely to experiment a greater level of bullying than older employees. However, just the opposite was reported by Einarsen *et al.* (1994) and Einarsen and Skogstad (1996), who found a higher incidence of bullying among senior employees. This same conclusion was found in later research (Vartia, 2003; Piirainen *et al.*, 2000)

3.3 Workplace Bullying Organizational Factors

To think of the organization as a whole is essential to understand the phenomenon of bullying, as it is quite difficult to imagine the labor context as independent or not influencing, and thus, triggering bullying at work. Therefore, although first studies focused mainly on psychological characteristics of bullies and their victims, since the 90s researchers have considered with higher emphasis the influence of some labor and structural characteristics of the organization. We will present, hereafter, a brief bibliographical revision of the main studies that have analyzed the relation among some internal dynamics –such as job stability, job design or Human Resources practices– and workplace bullying.

3.3.1 Job stability

The level of employee stability at work can influence the degree of vulnerability towards bullying, not only because less stable and eventual employment is common among lower-status professional jobs, but also because insecurity reduces the power of employees vis-à-vis their superiors. Empirical research out among employees of an university centre sustains that flexible working arrangements contribute to the prevalence of bullying (Lewis, 1999). This circumstance is due to the fact that flexibility context implies less job security, fewer opportunities for socialization and less time for conflict resolution, which could contribute indirectly to aggression and bullying (Hoel & Salin, 2003). In fact, one of the reasons given to explain the increase of bullying in 21st century organizations is precisely that organizational restructuring processes, with a high rate of outsourcing, have enlarged the power gap between management and employees (Vaez *et al.*, 2004; Hearn & Parkin, 2001). Workers are more inclined to feel intimidate in those chaotic and unpredictable environments marked by insecurity, role conflict or tension, (Hodson *et al.*, 2006; Lawrence, 2001).

Against this background, it could be assumed that rates of bullying among employees with temporary contracts would be higher than among their colleagues with permanent contracts. However, Kivimäki, Elovainio and Vahtera (2000) did not observe any difference between them, neither between full-time and part-time employees. In reference to this aspect, research results are also conflicting. While Baron and Neumann (1996) found a positive relation between part-time and bullying, Hoel and Cooper (2000) found that same relation among full-time employees.

3.3.2 Intrinsic characteristics of the job position

Empirical research on the relation between workplace bullying and intrinsic characteristics of the job position is also extensive. Prior studies have identified many of these elements, such as workload (Salin, 2003; Hoel & Cooper, 2000; Einarse *et al.*, 1994), control (Omari, 2003; Vartia & Hyyti, 2002[10]; Rayner *et*

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[9] In some research on a group of nurses from Norway, a profession where men are under-represented, Eriksen and Einarsen (2004) found that exposition to bullying by female nurses was 4.3%, while among male nurses it reached 10.2%.

[10] On a sample of 900 prison officers in Finland, Vartia and Hyyti's research (2002) reveals that a poor social climate and precarious working conditions are predictor variables of workplace bullying. Contradictions at work, lack of opportunities to influence decisions, monotony or social climate explain 17% of the variance in bullying towards men and 19% towards women. Contradictions at work ($\beta = 0.28$; $p < 0.01$) was the most intense predictor among men, while social climate ($\beta = 0.33$; $p < 0.01$) was among women.

al., 1999; Vartia, 1996; Zapf *et al.*, 1996[11]), role ambiguity (Jennifer *et al.*, 2003; Einarsen *et al.*, 1994[12]), role conflict (Einarsen *et al.*, 1994)[13], leadership behavior (Vartia, 1996; Einarsen *et al.*, 1994)[14], social support from co-workers and supervisors (Hansen *et al.*, 2006; Zapf *et al.*, 1996[15]), social climate (Agervold & Mikkelsen, 2004[16]; Vartia & Hyyti, 2002; Hoel & Cooper, 2000; Zapf *et al.*, 1996; Vartia, 1996; Einarsen *et al.*, 1994) and organizational change (Hoel & Cooper, 2000; O'Moore, Seigne, McGuire & Smith, 1998; Sheehan, 1998; McCarthy, 1996).

A large investigation carried out in United Kingdom among 5,200 people revealed that bullying victims, as compared with non-bullied, were suffering from workload, rarefied working environment, greater organizational changes, unsatisfactory relations at work and greater intention to resign (Hoel & Cooper, 2000). Likewise, a study on Norwegian employees, Einarsen *et al.* (1994) discovered a significant correlation between variables above and bullying: workload (0.14; p<0.01), control (0.24; p<0.01), role ambiguity (0.11; p<0.01) and role conflict (0.26; p<0.01), leadership behavior (0.26; p<0.01), social climate (0.19; p<0.01) and organizational change (0.19; p<0.01). In a similar line, Salin (2003) found that bullying correlated with politized (0.30; p<0.01) and competitive (0.11; p<0.05) organizational climate, and more slightly with workload (0.09; p<0.05). Vartia's research (1996) indentified as significant variables of bullying the precarious social climate (0.39; p<0.01), internal communication problems (0.36; p<0.01) and the prevalence of a competitive work atmosphere (0.29; p<0.01). In the same way, with a sample of 400 employees from five Swedish organizations, Hansen *et al.* (2006) found a reverse correlation between bullying and support given to employees by their colleagues (–0.19; p<0.01) and their superiors (–0.17; p<0.01).

Bowling and Beehr's meta analysis (2006) –carried out over a total of 90 studies on bullying published between 1987 and 2005– contributes with some coherence to the investigation on this phenomenon, compiling and organizing the empirical research that existed so far. Relating to characteristics of job position, these authors inform that bullying tends to disclose in work environments where other stressors, such as role conflict (r=0.44), role ambiguity (r=0.30), overload (r=0.28) and work limitations (r=0.53) are present. Likewise, they confirmed that autonomy at work was negatively associated with bullying (r= –0.25).

Further organizational variables studied for their relation with bullying were monotony, complexity or team work. Zapf *et al.*'s research (1996) evidenced that monotonous and repetitive tasks were more usual among bullying victims. In a later investigation, Zapf (1999) could not corroborate any association between bullying and work complexity. Zapf *et al.* (1996) found that in those activities where team work was present, bullying among equals was more likely to occur. According to these authors, the climate generated by these groups

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[11] These authors find, notably, that the control of victims over time at work is significantly lower than among those employees who have never suffered from bullying.

[12] For example, Jennifer *et al.*'s research (2003), carried out on a sample of 677 employees of three large European companies, showed that ambiguity at work manifests more frequently among those employees with a higher level of bullying.

[13] According to these authors, role stressors (role conflict and role ambiguity are directly related to bullying as the exposure to these stressors produces negative answers, emotional and behavioral, that reinforce victimization among bullied employees.

[14] Namie and Namie (2003) maintain that in 80% of the cases, bullying is delivered by a superior towards a subordinate. Therefore, the way of exercising leadership by superiors constitutes a critical element to promote or mitigate bullying at work. In this sense, some studies have revealed that authoritarian or coercive leadership is an instigator or bullying (O'Moore and Lynch, 2007; Kelloway *et al.,* 2005; Hoel and Salin, 2003; O'Moore *et al.,* 1998). Likewise, Skogstad *et al.* (2007), Hauge *et al.* (2007) and Di Martino, Hoel, and Cooper (2003) investigated the effect of laissez-faire leadership on workplace bullying, concluding that this style of leadership is associated with bullying from different perspectives, mainly stimulating conflict and role ambiguity, as well as other interpersonal conflicts among employees. In a different sense, Hepworth and Towler (2004) found that charismatic leadership correlated negatively to workplace bullying.

[15] In an investigation on a sample of 200 bullying victims in Germany, Zapf *et al.* (1996) revealed that bullied employees showed greater demands for cooperation and less control over their time as compared with a group of non-bullied employees.

[16] In addition to organizational climate, in some research carried out on a sample of 186 blue collar workers from a Danish company, these authors found that victims had less control over their work, a poor management style, greater role ambiguity, less social contact with their colleagues, more conflicts and disagreements with colleagues, and undervalued jobs.

contribute to the search of scapegoats, generally among less powerful members, to whom team aggressiveness is targeted.

Some investigations found connections between bullying and other individual perceptions on the organization such as job satisfaction and commitment. In the first case, job dissatisfaction constitutes another phenomenon related to bullying (Vartia & Hyyti, 2002). Regarding the second case, as bully victims are affected emotionally, this phenomenon is necessarily linked to affective commitment. Several authors have pointed out a negative relation between the two variables (McCormack et al., 2006; Hoel & Cooper, 200). Moreover, employees highly committed with their organizations could be more vulnerable to stressors in the work environment, due precisely to the emotional link with the organization (Irving & Coleman, 2003)

3.3.3 Human resources practice

Through their policies, culture and practice, organizations can originate a promising breeding ground for the appearance and development of bullying. In this line of thought, Bowling and Beehr (2006) indicate that personal features of victims could be found in the origins of bullying, but these victims can consider organizational climate and the practice of Human Resources partially responsible (recruitment, formation and remuneration schemes) due to the effects on their jobs (presence of other stressors and presence of bullies). Roscigno's research (2007) examines thoroughly the incidence of remuneration schemes pointing out that workers who receive low payment are likely to be exposed to bullying, while well-paid employees are usually better protected as their professional situation is closer to their superiors'.

Güneri (2009) –quoting Bayrak Kök (2006)– goes further when he indicates that the most important reason for bullying lies on organizational factors, such as compensation schemes and labor agreements; job position design; culture and organizational climate; leadership and organizational changes or sector dynamism. We will deal with this last aspect in the following section.

3.4 Contextual Factors in Workplace Bullying

In addition to factors related to internal dynamics of organizations, bullying can also be affected by the context in which the organization operates. A context that could be characterized by the sector of activity, nature or size of the organization.

Research on this aspect reveals that bullying is more frequent in the service sector, especially in health, public service, education and financial services (Björkqvist *et al.*, 1994; Omari, 2003). Leymann (1996) also argues that the most common bullying occurs in health, especially among nurses, due to work overload and to the double supervision they receive (by doctors and chief nurses), breaking the Unity of Command Principle. Supporting this argument, Yildrim and Yildrim (2007) evidenced that 87% of nurses in Turkey are submitted to some form of bullying, especially those in the public sector.

High bureaucracy, existence of very strict norms and high level of job security generate an adequate environment for the development of bullying, as this environment makes the bully invisible and the victim less likely to resign (Salin, 2001). In this sense, Zapf *et al.* (2003) offers a summary of European studies concluding that in the public sector –public service, health, education and public assistance– the prevalence of bullying is higher than in the private sector. A similar conclusion was obtained by Hoel and Cooper (2000) in the United Kingdom, who illustrated a higher incidence of bullying in public services such as education or among correctional officer and a lower prevalence in the retail market and in the industrial sector. Likewise, Soares' research (2002) showed that 4.4% of a sample of employees in the Public Health Service and in Education was bullied by their patients or students.

3.5 Hypothesis for a Global Model of Workplace Bullying

As indicated in the introduction, the object of the present investigation is to analyze the causes of workplace bullying among managers. In this sense, the prevalence of bullying is expected to be higher among lower-status professional employees, as there is a reverse relation between the possibility of being a victim and the position in the organization (Hodson *et al.,* 2006). Therefore, managers should have a perception of bullying lower than those employees with no managerial responsibilities. In this regard, Salin's research (2001), with a sample of professional employees, revealed that only 2% of managers have experimented

bullying, while 17.5% of employees have suffered it in the last 12 months. However, these results are not decisive, as other empirical studies point out that the ratio of bullying victims is similar among employees, middle and senior managers (Hoel, Cooper & Faragher, 2001; Einarsen & Raknes, 1997).

As studies on bullying to managers are scarce and the most relevant findings focus on those investigations that discuss this problem indirectly, for the present investigation, our assumptions about bullying to managers will be made from an overall perspective, assuming initially a model similar to that of employee bullying, independently of the responsibility held in the organization.

Under this premise, the hypotheses to be contrasted in our empirical study are the following:

1) At the individual level, no personal factors are considered determinant for workplace bullying, therefore:

Hypothesis 1: The probability of being a bullied manager is independent of gender or age.

2) At the organizational level, we set up the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 2: the senior, the less likely to be bullied.

Hypothesis 3: the greater the job insecurity, the more likely to be bullied.

Hypothesis 4: The probability of being a bullied manager increases when team working.

Hypothesis 5: Unsatisfied managers are more likely to be bullied.

3) Finally, at the contextual level, we formulate the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 6: Managers in the service sector and in public institutions are more likely to be bullied.

Insofar as the model confirms these hypotheses, we could confirm the existence of a specific profile of bullying to an employee with managerial responsibilities, or, on the contrary the prevalence of the same pattern described by the general models on bullying in the scientific literature.

4. EMPIRICAL STUDY

4.1 Methodological Design and Data

As we pointed out in the previous section, workplace bullying is a phenomenon whose causes have to be found in different personal, organizational and social factors. This is the approach that leads the empirical research dealt with in this section, in which the methodological explanation is addressed in accordance with its multidimensional character, the source of used data, nature of variables and obtained results.

The methodology used for the fulfillment of our objectives in this paper is based on the binary logistic regression model, a specific type of dichotomous response regression model. This statistical technique determines the probability of the occurrence of an event –to feel bullied in this case– compared to the probability of the occurrence of the opposite event.

Data used in this research have been obtained from the last European survey on working conditions, carried out in autumn 2005 by the *European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions*. This survey analyzes working conditions in the 27 countries of the European Union, plus Turkey, Croatia, Norway and Switzerland[17]. In light of the objectives of this investigation, we obtained a sub-sample of 608 managers and middle managers, of which 47.0% reported feeling bullied at work, while 53.0% admitted they did not feel being bullied. All the subjects of the sample are senior or middle managers, from the public sector (31.2%) and private sector (68.8%). The average age of the surveyed was 42.86 years (43.62 in men and 41.82 in women). Finally, 5.8% declared they did not have formal qualifications or they have only completed primary education, 58.7% followed secondary education and 35.5% have completed studies at university.

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[17] The study population are those people older than 15 whose usual place of residence is any of the EU member states and who were working during the period under consideration. In the course of the field work, 72,300 homes were visited, obtaining a total of 29,766 valid surveys.

4.2 Used Variables

4.2.1 Dependent variable

The dependent variable of this study is bullying at work. Respondents were asked only one question on their individual perception regarding this topic: *Have you been subjected to bullying at work?* Bullied senior and middle managers were codified as 1, while those who had not feel bullied were codified as 0.

4.2.2 Independent variables

Having into account prior studies on workplace bullying, we use three sets of independent variables grouped into three categories: factors at the personal and familiar level, working conditions and, finally, organizational contextual factors. The codification of variables to be considered is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Explanatory Variables: Coding and Frequency

Variable and coding	Frequency			
	Value 0	Value 1	Value 2	Value 3
1. Personal and familiar level				
Gender (0: male; 1: female)	350	258		
Age (0: 16-24; 1: 25-39; 2: 40-54; 3: 55 or over)	19	223	275	91
Education (0: no education/primary; 1: secondary; 2: higher education	35	357	216	
Status (0: partnered; 1: single)	426	182		
Children under 15 at home (0: Yes; 1: No)	219	389		
Children of 15 or older at home (0: Yes; 1: No)	185	423		
2. Working conditions				
Seniority (0: Up to one year; 1: more than 1 up to 5; 2: more than 5 up to 10; 3: more than 10 years)	35	187	132	249
Type of contract (0: An indefinitive contract; 1: A temporary contract)	392	63		
Working hours (0: Less than 20 hours; 1: 20 to 40 hours; 2: More than 40 hours)	18	314	262	
Work at night (0: No; 1: Yes)	421	174		
Work in the evening (0: No; 1: Yes)	235	357		
Work on Sundays (0: No; 1: Yes)	359	237		
More than 10 working hours a day (0: No; 1: Yes)	249	340		
Working day (0: Full time; 1: Part time)	557	47		
Shift work (0: No; 1: Yes)	499	98		
Capacity to decide timetable (0: Flexibility; 1: No flexibility)	317	288		
Harmony between working hours and personal matters (0: Yes; 1: No)	427	177		
Monotonous tasks (0: No; 1: Yes)	396	210		
Complex tasks (0: Yes; 1: No)	476	128		
Rotating tasks (0: Yes; 1: No)	343	256		
Team work (0: Yes; 1: No)	469	133		
Autonomy on the content (0: Yes; 1: No)	463	141		
Autonomy on the pace of work (depending on people) (0: No; 1: Yes)	119	487		
Autonomy on the pace of work (depending on automated systems) (0: No; 1: Yes)	314	284		
Journeys/day (0: Less than 30 minutes; 1: From 30 to 60 min.; 2: More than 60	302	175	112	
Job emotional demand (0: No; 1: Yes)	167	434		
Job intellectual demand (0: No; 1: Yes)	237	363		
Working condition satisfaction (0: Yes; 1: No)	488	119		
Payment satisfaction (0: Yes; 1: No)	302	173		
Likely to be dismissed (0: No; 1: Yes)	444	81		
Promotion opportunities (0: Yes; 1: No)	246	225		
3. Organizational context				
Sector/Industry (0: agriculture; 1: industry; 2: construction; 3: services)	18	97	44	402
Type of sector (0: Private; 1: Public)	370	168		
Size (0: Micro enterprise (1-9 employees); 1: Small enterprise (10-49 employees); 2: Medium enterprise (50-249 employees); 3: Large enterprise (250+ employees)	207	191	115	84

Source: authors.

4.3 Results Analysis

4.3.1 Bivariate analysis

The main objective of this research attempts to explain the determinants of workplace bullying among managers and middle-managers. To this end, we have used firstly an analysis of contingency table and a Pearson's chi-square test in order to examine the bivariate relationship between the dependent variable –to feel bullied or not– and a set of independent variables grouped into the three categories mentioned above. This estimate assumes a preparation for subsequent multivariate analysis, as the logistic regression model should only include those independent variables with a statistically significant predictability.

The application of Pearson's contrast at a 0.05 level of significance leads us to exclude from the analysis some variables initially under consideration. First, at the individual level, those variables related to the age of respondents (Sig. 0.541), to the education level (Sig. 0.228) and to the presence of children above 15 at home (Sig. 0.721) are discarded. Second, at the organizational level, working conditions related to type of contract (Sig. 0,188), working hours a week (Sig. 0.951), working day –full-time or part-time– (Sig. 0.579), flexibility regarding timetable (Sig. 0.913), task monotony (Sig. 0.159), task complexity (Sig. 0.525), rotating tasks (Sig. 0.250), team work (Sig. 0.258), autonomy on the content (Sig. 0.389), autonomy on the pace of work depending on people (Sig. 0.142), autonomy on the pace of work depending on automated systems (Sig. 0.249), length of journeys to work (Sig. 0.144) and intellectual demand (Sig. 0.704) are also excluded. Finally, at a contextual level we would discard the variable related to size (Sig.0.375)

4.3.2 Multivariate analysis

Following the initial analysis, we now present a logistic regression model in order to determine to what extent the different categories of variables used in this investigation can explain bullying. To prove the effect of every group of variables on voluntary activity we have produced up to three different models, where the addition of each block is treated as a new separate model. To estimate the model we have opted for a step forward method, using all the predicting variables of each model to assess the most efficient variable combination in the explanation of workplace bullying to senior and middle-managers.

1) Incidence of personal and familiar factors (Model 1)

As stated above in the bibliographic review, during the last few decades several investigations have pointed out that possible antecedents of bullying range from organizational factors up to personality features (for example, Coyne, Seigne & Randall, 2000; Zapf, 1999). In this sense, we can see in Model 1 of table 2 that female managers who are not partnered perceive bullying to a greater degree. All the findings presented are significant at 1% level. Therefore, the probability of being bullied at work decreases among male managers and among their female colleagues when they are partnered. For this level of significance, the logistic regression model indicates that the presence of children under 15 at home does not relate –nor positive or negatively– to bullying perception.

Table 2-a: Logistic Regression: Factors That Determine Workplace Bullying

Variables	Odds ratios		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
1. Factors at a personal and familiar level			
Gender (0: male; 1: female)	0.706	n.s.	n.s.
Status (0: partnered; 1: single)	0.641	0.745	0.792
Children under 15 at home (0: Yes; 1: No)	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
2. Working conditions			
Seniority (0: Up to one year; 1: more than 1 up to 5; 2: more than 5 up to		-0.315	-0.415
Work at night (0: No; 1: Yes)		0.599	n.s.
Work in the evening (0: No; 1: Yes)		n.s.	n.s.
Work on Sundays (0: No; 1: Yes)		n.s.	n.s.
More than 10 working hours a day (0: No; 1: Yes)		n.s.	n.s.
Shift work (0: No; 1: Yes)		n.s.	n.s.
Harmony between working hours and personal matters (0: Yes; 1: No)		n.s.	n.s.
Job emotional demand (0: No; 1: Yes)		0,652	0.582

Table 2-b: Logistic Regression: Factors That Determine Workplace Bullying

Variables	Odds ratios		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Working condition satisfaction (0: Yes; 1: No)		n.s.	0,725
Payment satisfaction (0: Yes; 1: No)		0,776	0,647
Likely to be dismissed (0: No; 1: Yes)		n.s.	0,773
Promotion opportunities (0: Yes; 1: No)		0,567	n.s.
3. Organizational context			
Sector/Industry (0: agriculture; 1: industry; 2: construction; 3: services)			n.s.
Type of sector (0: Private; 1: Public)			0,752
Constant	-0,613	-0,696	-0,573
χ^2 Efficiency test- Added category	35,921	8,387	3,449
Degrees of freedom	2	4	1
Level of significance	0,000	0,000	
χ^2 Efficiency test- Global Model	35,921	44,308	47,757
Degrees of freedom	2	6	7
Level of significance	0,000	0,000	0,000
% correct prediction			
Global	60,4	63,8	68,0
Bullied	66,4	62,8	61,6
Non-bullied	55,0	64,7	73,9

Source: authors.

Despite this, the impact of each significant variable on the probability of feeling bullied at work is not the same in all the cases, as it is stated by the analysis of confidence intervals obtained for the corresponding odds ratios (see table 3). This way there is a slightly higher effect on the variable gender, as the probability of feeling bullied among women practically doubles that of men (OR: 2.025), with a confidence interval that varies from 1.448 to 2.832. Meanwhile, being single increases the probability of bullying by 1.899 times (CI: 1.320-2.731).

Table 3: Logistic Regression: Factors That Determine Workplace Bullying
(Confidence Intervals for the Odds Ratio of Model 1)

Variables in the model					Odds ratios 95% C.I. for OR		
	B	**S.D.**	**Wald**	**p**	**OR**	**Lower**	**Upper**
Gender	0,706	0,171	16,991	0,000	2,025	1,448	2,832
Partnered	0,641	0,186	11,946	0,001	1,899	1,320	2,731
Constant	-0,613	0,119	26,439	0,0000			

Source: authors.

The contrast statistic applied to assess the validity of the model on the whole points out that there are enough reasons to accept its validity[18], that is to say, to affirm that a set of variables –personal and familiar–, taken into account in the first model of our research, can satisfactorily explain whether a manager is exposed to bullying at work and to what degree. However, the suitability of the model to be widely available –considering only personal and familiar variables– is limited, as 60.4% of the considered individuals was classified correctly knowing their real situation (see table 2) in advance. Moreover, there exists remarkable disparity between the percentages related to bullied (66.4%) and non-bullied (55.0%) managers, what suggest that the former are more easily identified. These results indicate that there are further factors, apart from those presented in this first model, that contribute to explain the perception of bullying at work.

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[18] The omnibus test of the model, used for this purpose, presents the following results: Chi Square: 35.921; Sig. 0.0000.

2) Joint impact of factors at the personal-familiar level and working conditions (Model 2)

The second model incorporates personal and familiar variables as well as those related to working conditions –seniority, autonomy, contract type, timetable, etc.– enjoyed by the senior and middle managers of our sample. As can be seen in the last rows of table 2, when these variables are included, the percentage of bullying prediction increases by 3.4 percentage points, from 60.40% to 63.80%[19]. The improvement in the general model comes with a higher balance in the predictability between both groups. Therefore, the capacity of generalization for the group of bullied managers is at 62.8%, while among non-bullied managers it reaches 64.7%.

In table 2 we can see that, when introducing working conditions in a new combined model, the only personal variable that explains workplace bullying is being single (OR: 2.106), becoming very important the variables related to working conditions of managers. This way, senior and middle managers with less seniority in the company (OR: 0.730), who work at night (OR: 1.820), whose activity is emotionally highly demanding (OR: 1.920), who are little satisfied with their payment (OR: 2.174) and who perceive fewer opportunities for promotion (OR: 1.764) are more likely to feel bullied. The remaining variables –gender, shift work, working on Sundays, etc.– acting together with these, do not explain the perception of workplace bullying among managers.

Table 4: Logistic Regression: Factors That Determine Workplace Bullying
(Confidence Intervals for the Odds Ratio of Model 2)

Variables in the model					Odds ratios 95% C.I. for OR		
	B	**S.D.**	**Wald**	**P**	**OR**	**Lower**	**Upper**
Status	0,745	0,272	7,524	0,006	2,106	1,237	3,586
Seniority	-0,315	0,127	6,152	0,013	0,730	0,569	0,936
Work at night	0,599	0,270	4,908	0,027	1,820	1,071	3,090
Emotional Demand	0,652	0,254	6,583	0,010	1,920	1,166	3,159
Payment satisfaction	0,776	0,266	8,518	0,004	2,174	1,291	3,662
Promotion	0,567	0,254	4,999	0,025	1,764	1,073	2,900
Constant	-0,696	0,354	3,855	0,050			

Source: authors.

3) Joint impact of factors at the personal-familiar level, working conditions and organizational context (Model 3)

In the third model, we have added two variables of the organizational context: activity sector and the public or private character of the organization where the manager works[20]. Table 2 confirms that the effect of these variables on the capacity of generalization of the model increases significantly the percentage of global prediction (from 63.8% to 68.0%): 61.6% in bullied managers and 73.9% in non-bullied managers. Therefore, the inclusion of organizational variables improves the capacity of prediction of the model, as with the validity of the model (Chi-square: 47.757; Sig. 0.000).

The influence of organizational context variables in the model of workplace bullying introduces some alterations that result in the final model presented in table 5. This way, the probability for a manager to feel bullied increases among those who are not partnered (OR: 2.208; CI: 1.223-3.987), who work in the public sector (OR: 2.121; CI: 1.171-3.843), with little seniority (OR: 0.661; CI: 0.498-0.876), who feel little satisfied with their working conditions (OR: 2,066; CI: 1,010-4,223) and, especially, with their payment (OR: 1,909; CI: 1,031-3,535), with a highly emotionally demanding task (OR: 1,789; CI: 1,023-3,129), and with a high degree of job instability what could lead them to dismissal in a few months (OR: 2,167; CI: 1,000-4,695).

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[19] The validity of the global model improves when the working conditions variables group is added, increasing χ^2 up to value 44.308 (Sig. 0.0000).

[20] The variable size has been excluded from the category of organizational context as recommended by the bivariate analysis.

Table 5: Logistic Regression: Factors That Determine Workplace Bullying
(Confidence Intervals for the Odds Ratio of Model 3)

Variables in the model					Odds ratios 95% C.I. for OR		
	B	**S.D.**	**Wald**	**P**	**OR**	**Lower**	**Upper**
Status	0,792	0,302	6,897	0,009	2,208	1,223	3,987
Seniority	-0,415	0,144	8,305	0,004	0,661	0,498	0,876
Emotional Demand	0,582	0,285	4,166	0,041	1,789	1,023	3,129
Working conditions satisfaction.	0,725	0,365	3,952	0,047	2,066	1,010	4,223
Payment satisfaction	0,647	0,314	4,230	0,040	1,909	1,031	3,535
Likely to be dismissed	0,773	0,394	3,844	0,050	2,167	1,000	4,695
Type of sector	0,752	0,303	6,150	0,013	2,121	1,171	3,843
Constant	-0,573	0,379	2,283	0,131	0,564		

Source: authors.

5. DISCUSSION

The multidimensional model obtained at the different levels and factors that can favor bullying to managers is very similar to that expected in other type of employees. The probability for a manager to be bullied is independent of gender or age (hypothesis 1), increases with job insecurity (hypothesis 2), can be found to a greater extent among people dissatisfied with their work (hypothesis 3) and with their payment (hypothesis 5) and among those who work predominantly in the public sector (hypothesis 6). Nevertheless, the contextual variable of the service sector disappears as activity that favors this kind of behavior. In addition to these specific factors, more or less expected due to their existence in the scientific literature on this subject, our research has detected some other variables absent from the bibliographic review. In this sense, our research has revealed that the probability for a manager to feel bullied increase among those who are not partnered (at the individual level) and among those whose activity is highly emotionally demanding (at an organizational level).

Despite the scientific interest in the mentioned findings, some methodological limitations should be considered. Firstly, bullying has been measured through self-awareness, and therefore, the corresponding bias in the key variable must be assumed. Secondly, the casual relation between bullying and the variables taken into account in our study must be relativized as the data under study are cross-sectional and not experimental. Finally, the research assumes a partial perspective of the phenomenon: the point of view of the victim but not of the bully.

Assuming these circumstances inherent to the strategy of the research, we can conclude that we are faced with results that confirm predominantly the general model of bullying, or, in other words, the existence of a specific model for bullying to managers seems to be discarded. Different tasks – less monotonous, more complex, with more demands…–, do not provide them with a protective shield against invulnerability in those conditions where the bully acts and the system are conducive: greater instability in work relations.

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