Discrimination, Harassment, and Bullying in the Workplace: Contribution of Workplace Injustice to Occupational Health Disparities

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## Definitions

**Workplace Injustice**: discrimination, harassment and bullying based on sociodemographic characteristics, including sexual orientation, gender identity, health condition, and job title/position within the workplace.

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<th>Workplace Discrimination</th>
<th>• When institutions and/or individuals within them enact unfair terms and conditions that systematically impair the ability of members of a group to work</th>
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<td>Workplace Harassment</td>
<td>• Behaviors that contribute to a hostile work environment (not status blind)</td>
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<td>Workplace Bullying</td>
<td>• Involves status blind actions that harass, offend or socially exclude a worker or group of workers or that have a negative effect on work tasks</td>
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The Powerful Role of Power

Chaos and the Abuse of Power
Workplace Bullying in Organizational and Interactional Context

POWER, STATUS, AND ABUSE AT WORK:
General and Sexual Harassment Compared
Minority women report a higher mean level of sexual harassment than non-minority women with Native American women and black women reporting the highest rate of sexual harassment (Bergman and Drasgow 2003; Krieger, 2006)
Figure 1: A Model of Workplace Injustice and Occupational Health Disparities

Potential Modifiers
- Sociodemographic factors
- Response to unfair treatment
- Workplace organizational climate

Workplace Injustice
- Discrimination
- Harassment
- Abuse/bullying

Exposure to Occupational Hazards
- Physical
- Chemical
- Biological
- Mechanical
- Physiological
- Psychosocial

Stress

Health Outcomes

Health Behaviors

Job Outcomes

Family Well-Being

Note. This model is based on the work of Krieger (Krieger, 1994; Krieger et al., 2008).
Types of Workplace Injustice

Institutional
• Normative, sometimes legalized, part of culture and often manifest as inherent disadvantage for a particular group

Interpersonal
• Can be intentional or unintentional, and includes acts of omission and commission
Structural Injustice

Unequal access to labor market

Disproportional exposure to occupational hazards

Differential enforcement of safety regulation

Are Emily and Greg More Employable Than Lakisha and Jamal? A Field Experiment on Labor Market Discrimination

By Marianne Bertrand and Sendhil Mullainathan*

Race and the risk of fatal injury at work

Dana Loomis, PhD and David Richardson, PhD

Risk Amid Recovery:
Occupational Health and Safety of Latino Day Laborers in the Aftermath of the Gulf Coast Hurricanes

Linda Delp, Laura Podolsky, and Tomás Aguilar
Workplace Injustice has direct effect on health

Broader literature on stress and health show strong evidence of effects on physical health, mental health and health behaviors.

**Physical Health**
- Cross sectional studies: pain, aches, and self-rated health
- Strongest evidence for cardiovascular outcomes (experimental and longitudinal studies)
- Biomarkers of stress and immune response

**Mental Health**
- Cross sectional: anxiety, hostility, suicidal thoughts, psychological distress
- Experimental and longitudinal studies: PTSD, psychological distress, depression,

**Health Behaviors**
- Fewer studies and mostly cross-sectional studies
- Racial discrimination → Smoking
- Sexual harassment → Heavy alcohol use
- Workplace bullying → Heavy alcohol use
Workplace Injustice also has indirect effects on health

**Job Outcomes**
- Wage gap by race, gender, sexual orientation
- Increase in sickness absence from work
- Counterproductive work behaviors (coming in late, leaving early)

**Family Well-Being**
- Kick the dog phenomenon: abused workers engaged in family undermining at home
- Men’s report of workplace racism corresponding to depressive symptoms in partners
Workplace injustice has stronger influence on socially disadvantaged populations compared to dominant groups

- African Americans report significantly higher emotional response to racial/ethnic bullying (Fox & Stallworth, 2005)

- Bullying results in increase in drinking to intoxication for women but not men

- Less acculturated families show higher risk of depressive symptoms when fathers experience workplace racism (Crouter et al, 2006)
Recommendations and Conclusion

• We need innovations in study design: incorporate multiple reporters and explicitly examine interaction between exposures

• Much of the research on workplace injustice has NOT focused on health outcomes

• Dire need for design and evaluation of interventions focused on workplace injustice

Current evidence suggests that workplace injustice plays a key negative role on the health of all workers but it particularly contributes to health disparities for socially disadvantaged workers and their families.