Work Locus of Control and Workplace Bullying: The Moderating Effect of Work Centrality

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Abstract

This study examined the moderating effect of work centrality on work locus of control and workplace bullying. A total of two hundred and forty-one (241) participants were selected and used as participants in the study. A 10-item Work Centrality Questionnaire (WCQ) designed by Paullay et al., (1994), 16-item Work Locus of Control Scale designed by Paul E. Spector (1988) and the 22-item Workplace Bullying Questionnaire which was designed by Einarsen & Hoel (2001) were used to measure the variables. Result showed that there is a significant effect of work locus of control on workplace bullying and that employee with external locus of control orientation perceived higher workplace bullying than employees with internal locus of control. There is a significant effect of work centrality on workplace bullying, with employees that are high in work centrality reporting lesser experience of workplace bullying. A significant sex difference in work centrality was also observed but there are no significant sex difference in work locus of control and bullying. Finally, we found that work centrality moderate the effect of work locus of control on work place bullying. Implications of our findings are discussed.

Keywords*: work locus of control, workplace bullying, work centrality, moderating effect

Introduction

In various organizations, employee occupies numerous position demanding very large responsibilities. Different functions of employees whether in private or public corporate bodies or other agencies make great demands on their time, leisure and other psychological resources which in turn leads to conflicts, pressure, and frustration which inevitably leads to bullying.

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Workplace bullying has become a problem that is too costly to ignore. As quoted by Poilpot-Rocaboy, (2006) psychological harassment is very costly for organisations. Leymann (1990) argues that a case of bullying may cost the organisation around 30,000 to 100,000 euros each year. Di Martino, et al. (2003) reveal that in a study of bullying at two Finnish hospitals it was estimated that the annual cost of absence from bullying was equivalent to 195,465 euros. In Australia, using the latest Australian estimates, the cost of workplace harassment to industry was estimated at between $6 billion and $13 billion per annum when calculating the cost of direct, hidden and lost productivity, including lost opportunity costs. Given this estimate, workplace harassment represents between point nine and two per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Queensland Government 2002) The term 'workplace bullying' has been drawn from a conceptual framework of school bullying, which conjures images of school playgrounds where larger than average boys and girls humiliate other children. The contemporary concept of workplace bullying was introduced by Leymann (1996) in Sweden. From this early research, academic interest in workplace bullying has evolved into a body of literature that has helped to inform practices and ongoing research in many contemporary organizations. Bullying is persistent unwelcome behavior mostly used unwarranted or invalid criticism nitpicking, fault-finding, also exclusion, isolation, being singled out and treated differently, being shouted at, humiliated, excessive monitoring, having verbal and written warnings imposed, and much more. In the workplace, bullying usually focuses on distorted or fabricated allegations of underperformance. According to Amiscus - MSF Union (1994), workplace bullying is defined as "persistent, offensive, abusive, intimidating or insulting behavior, abuse of power or unfair penal sanctions which makes the recipient feel upset, threatened, humiliated or vulnerable, which undermines their self-confidence and which may cause them to suffer stress".

The purpose of bullying is to hide inadequacies. Bullying has nothing to do with managing, for example good managers manage while bad manager's bully, therefore anyone who chooses to bully is admitting their inadequacy, and the extent to which a person bullies is a measure of their inadequacy. Bullies project their inadequacy on to others: to avoid facing up to their inadequacy and doing something about it, to avoid accepting responsibility for their behavior and the effect it has on others, and to reduce their fear of being seen for what they are, namely a weak, inadequate an often incompetent individual and, to divert attention away from their inadequacy, in an insecure or badly managed workplace, this is how inadequate, incompetent and aggressive employees keep their jobs.

Current research on workplace bullying demonstrates that this phenomenon not only involves bullies and bullied victims, but may also have a negative impact at an organizational level (Matthiesen & Einarsen, 2001). Several studies (e.g., Hoel & Cooper, 2000;) suggest that bullying may have a negative effect on witnesses or bystanders. In the study of Hoel and Cooper (2000), more than 30% of the participants agreed with the statement ''bullying reduces our efficiency''. Hoel and Cooper (2000) highlighted that such workplace bullies can lead to increased pressure on social services and welfare, growing medical costs, premature retirement, or potential loss of productive workers.

Types of bullying in the workplace include: Pressure bullying or unwilling bullying - is where the stress of the moment causes behavior to deteriorate; the person becomes short-tempered, irritable and may shout or swear at others. Organizational bullying - is a combination of pressure bullying and corporate bullying, and occurs when an organization struggles to adapt to changing markets, reduced income cuts in budgets, imposed expectations, and other external pressures. Corporate bullying - is where the employer abuses employees with impunity knowing that the law is weak and jobs are scares for example Institutional bullying - is similar to corporate bullying and arises when bullying becomes entrenched and accepted as part of the culture. Client bullying - is where employees are bullied (and often assaulted) by pupils and their parents, nurses are bullied by patients and their relatives, social workers are bullied by their clients an shop/bank/building staff are bullied by customers. Often the clients is charming their perceived right (e.g to better service) in an abusive derogatory and often physically violent manner. Serial bullying - is where the source of all dysfunction can be traced to one individual, who picks on one employee after another and destroys them. People describe the serial bullying as a person who exhibit's the behavioral characteristics of a socialized psychopath. Most people know at least one person in their life with the profile of the serial bullying; but they do not recognize this person as a socialized psychopath, or sociopath. Other bullying include - Secondary bullying, Pair bullying, Gang bullying, Vicarious bullying, Regulation bullying, Residual bullying, Cyber bullying.

Work Centrality

Interest in work centrality originated from Max Weber's book The Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism (1930).

Weber described work ethic, as well as the general ethic of the protestant faith, which suggests that work is an end in and of itself and people should avoid leisurely activities as they would avoid sin. The protestant work ethic was originally used to explain how the attitudes of a large group of people affected the global economy; more recently psychologists have been studying the concept on a more individualized basis (Furnham, 1990; Miller et al, 2001).

The concept called work centrality is developed to represent the generalized importance of working to individuals. Work centrality has been defined as the degree of general importance that working has in one's life at any given time (MOW-international Research Team, 1987) and can be distinguished from other related concepts such as work engagement and the inverse concept of work alienation (Hirschfield & Field, 2000). People who consider work as a central life interest have a strong identification with work in the sense that they believe the work role to be an important and central part of their lives (Hirschfield & Field, 2000).

Work centrality has been explored by a variety of researchers across a number of cultural settings, and the findings that work plays a central and fundamental role in the life of an individual has been supported empirically in most industrialized countries (Brief & Nord, 1990; England & Misumi, 1986; Mannheim, 1993; Mannheim, Baruch, & Tal,1997). In addition, work has been found to be of relatively high important life areas such as leisure, community, and religion, and has been found to rank second in importance only to family (Harding & Hikspoors 1995, Harpa 1999); MOW interrelated to a number of personal, demographic, job and organizational characteristics. Ashfort and Mael (1989) organizational work identification is the perception of oneness with or belonging to a group, involving direct or vicarious experiences of its successes and failures. Individuals with high levels of work identification are more committed to their occupations (Cable & DeRue, 2002), and are more willing to exert extra effort on behalf of the organization (VanDick et al., 2007). Such an individual worker would be expected to place a greater value on work outcomes than those low in work identification.

Work Locus of Control

Scholars have examined the effect of abusive supervisors on employee behaviour and suggest that personality diffrences between victims of abusive supervisors play an important role in moderating its effect.

Locus of control is a theory in personality psychology referring to the extent to which individuals believe that they can control events that affects them. Understanding of the concept was developed by Rotter in 1954, and has since become an aspect of personality studies. Rotter (1996) differentiates internal and external Locus of control. Internals are those who believe that they are the masters of their fate and therefore, often are confident, alert and directive in attempting to control their external environments. Further, they often perceive a strong link between their actions and consequences. Externals on the other hand, are those who believe that they do not have direct control of neuroticism is the most closely related to LOC (Bono & Judge 2003). Researchers observe that individuals' LOC plays important work outcomes including job satisfaction and job performance (Judge & Bono 2001). Also in a study on work locus of control conducted by Owolabi (2013) the result reveals that employees who are internal in control orientation perceived their working environment to be more supportive than those that are external in control orientation. The general belief of the internally control oriented individuals is that they are in control of situations around them.

The key concept embedded in the construct on locus of control is one's perception of control and external influences or reinforcements (Galejs, & Hegland, 1982). The effect of locus of control on the performance of high-level managers was significantly stronger than its impact on the performance of lower-level managers (Frucot, & Shearon, 1991). When environmental conditions are not sufficient to explain individuals' success or failures, locus of control can facilitate in making these situations clear. For instance, individuals may sometimes perceive good and bad events in different ways. To mention that these different ways are based on external and internal forces (Taylor, 2006).

The individuals, who have the internal locus of control, think that they have a big role on affecting the events which influence their lives. Furthermore, they assess themselves as possessing the power for the attitude they want to display by having the positive ego concept, and they believe that they can direct their lives whatever way they desire (Gulveren, 2008).

The individuals with external locus of control relate the events affecting their lives to perceptions such as chance, fate, and fortune which are out of control.

Additionally, they believe that the events affecting their lives cannot be predicted and controlled (Kucukkaragoz, 1998). Individuals with internal locus of control are careful, alert, dominant, focused on success, self-confident, and ingenious. On the other hand, the individuals with external locus of control are careful, affected by the group members, easily influenced by external forces, less self-confident, and they display unsteady performances (Rotter, 1975).

According to MOW (1987) an employee who attaches importance to work will show greater performance, likely to be more committed to work and the organisation and experience greater job satisfaction. Previous researches have also pointed to the fact that those who are high in work centrality are more incline to their job, probably have more affective bound with their organisation and show greater effort doing their job. In the light of existing literature, we therefore postulate that work centrality will moderate the effect of locus of control on workplace bullying.

Hypothesis

1. Employees who are external in control orientation will perceive higher bullying than those that are internal in control orientation.
2. Employees who are low in work centrality will experience bullying in the workplace than those that are high in work centrality.
3. Work centrality will significantly moderate the effect of locus of control on workplace bullying; i.e there will be no significant difference between employees who are external in locus of control but high in work centrality and employee who are internal in locus of control but low in work centrality on workplace bullying
4. There will be a significant sex difference in work centrality, work locus of control and workplace bullying.

Methods

Participants

A total number of two hundred and forty one (241) participants were purposively selected (both private and government organizations) in Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State and Lagos State Nigeria, these organizations are Ekiti State University Ado-Ekiti (EKSU), United Bank of Africa (UBA), Guarantee Trust Bank (GTB), Standard Chartered Bank, First City Monument Bank (FCMB), Stanbic IBTC Bank, Keystone Bank, Virgin Atlantic Airline and University of Ado-Ekiti Health Centre. The participants comprise one hundred and twenty eight (128) males and one hundred and twenty one females (121), their age ranges between the ages of 20 and 65. The workers were both from Christian and Islamic religion.

Measures

Work Centrality Questionnaire (WCQ) developed by Paulley, Alliger and Stone-Romero (1994) was used to measure work centrality. It is a 10-item scale meant to access the cognitive belief of individual respondents regarding the degree of importance the work plays in their lives. The internal consistency of the work-centrality questionnaire was reported as moderately high (cronbach$\alpha = 0.80$), the coefficient alpha 0.70, mean and S.D are 33.89 and 5.49 respectively. The work centrality questionnaire (WCQ) is been scored using a response formatted on a 6-point Likert type scale, with the following response options: 1- Strongly agree, 2- Agree, 3-Mildly agree, 4- Mildly disagree, 5- Strongly disagree, 6- Disagree. WCQ scores can be computed by summing the response while items 1, 6, 8, and 9 are reversely scored.

Work locus of control was measured using Work Locus of Control Scale (WLCS) designed by Paul E. Spector (1988). It is a 16-item scale which is used to assess control beliefs in the workplace. The Work Locus of Control Scale (WLCS) is a format which is rated on a 6-point response choice:1- Disagree very much, 2- Disagree moderately, 3- Disagree slightly, 4- Agree slightly, 5- Agree moderately, 6- Agree very much, its total score is the sum of all items, and ranges from 16 to 96. The scale is scored so that externals receive high scores. It is a domain specific locus of control scale that correlates at about .50 to .55 with general locus of control.

The internal consistency (coefficient alpha) generally ranges from .80 to .85 in the English language version. Test-retest reliability for a year was reported as .57 by Bond &Bunce (2003) and .60 by Moyle (Moyle, 1995). The scale has been shown to relate to several work variables, including job performance and job satisfaction. It relates also to counterproductive behaviour and organizational commitment.

Work place bullying was measured using the Negative Acts Questionnaire (NAQ-R) developed by Einersen and Hoel (2011). It is a 22-item scale aimed at measuring hostile and unethical communication that occurs in a workplace. It was developed to access high psychological distress, high intra group and intergroup conflict, low interactional justice as experienced. The internal consistency reliability, Cronbach's alpha coefficients of the NAQ-R were 0.95 & 0.91. The NAQ-R shows high internal consistency and construct validity. The Negative Acts Questionnaire (NAQ- R) is been scored using a response format on a 5- point scale, with the following response options: 1- Never, 2- now and then, 3- Monthly, 4- Weekly, 5- Daily.

Procedure

The researcher started by visiting the organisations (private and public organization) in Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti. The workers were told to respond as honestly as possible and they were assured on utmost confidentiality of their responses. The total numbers of questionnaire distributed initially were two hundred and fifty (300) copies, two hundred and sixty (260) were retrived while two hundred forty one (241) questionnaires were found good and valid for analysis.

Statistical Analysis

The treatment of data that were collected from the research participants were used to test the hypotheses. The Independent t-test table was used to test, hypotheses 1,2 & 5, 2×7 ANOVA was used to test hypothesis 4 and 2×2 ANOVA was used to test hypothesis 3.

Results

Hypothesis one which states that employees who are external in control orientation will perceive higher bullying than those that are internal in control orientation was tested using the independent t-test. The result is presented in the table below

Table 1: An Independent T- Test Table Showing the Effect of Work Locus of Control on Work Place Bullying

Variable	N	Mean	SD	SE	Df	T
Internal LOC	98	37.69	13.41	1.35	239	2.72**
External LOC	143	43.09	16.24	1.36		

** Significant at .05

From the above table, the result showed that there is a significant effect of work locus of control on bullying t (239) = 2.32 P < .05. Using the mean score, employees with external work locus of control orientation perceived higher workplace bullying than the employees with internal work locus of control.

Hypothesis two which states that employees who are low in work centrality will experience bullying in the workplace than those that are high in work centrality was tested using the independent t-test. The result is presented in the table below.

Table 2: An Independent T- Test Table Showing the Effect of Work Centrality on Workplace Bullying

Work centrality	N	Mean	SD	SE	Df	T
High	103	40.45	10.24	1.50		
Low	138	45.49	13.49	1.32	239	3.48

From the above table, the result showed that there is a significant effct of work centrality on workplace bullying, i.e there is significant difference between those that are low and high in work centrality on their experience of workplace bullying t (239) = 3.48 P < .05. The hypothesis is therefore accepted.

Hypothesis three which states that work centrality will significantly moderate the effect of locus of control on workplace bullying: i.e there will be no significant difference between employees who are external in locus of control but high in work centrality and employee who are internal in locus of control but low in work centrality on workplace bullying was tested using a 2x2 analysis of variance.

Table 3: Descriptive Table Showing the Mean Scores and Standard Deviation of Work Locus of Control and Work Centrality on Workplace Bullying

Work LOC Work Centrality	N	Mean	SD
External High	24	38.25	13.73
Internal	74	35.22	13.06
Total	98	36.73	13.41
Internal Low External	79	41.20	15.74
Total	64	45.44	16.66
	143	43.32	16.24
Total	241	40.02	15.36

Table 4: A 2x2 ANOVA Table Showing the Effect of Work Locus of Control and Work Centrality on Workplace Bullying

Source	SS	Df	Ms	F
LOC	800.48	1	800.48	3.54
Work Centrality	38.77	1	38.77	.17
LOC &Work Centrality	1263.39	1	1263.39	5.58*
Error	53625.55	237	226.27	
Total	56617.61	240		

* Significant at .05

From the above table, the result showed that there is a significant joint effect of work locus of control and work centrality on workplace bullying, $F (1,237) = 5.58$ $P> .05$. Using the means scores on table 3 above, even though employees that are internal in work locus of control and are high in work centrality have a higher mean score than other categories of employee but employees that are external in control orientation but higher in work centrality have a higher mean scores than employees who are internal in control orientation but low in work centrality.

Hypothesis four which states that there will be a significant sex difference in work centrality, work locus of control and workplace bullying was tested using the independent t-test. The result is presented in the table below.

Table 4:7: Independent T-Test Table Showing the sex Difference in Work Centrality, Work Locus of Control and Workplace Bullying

Variable		N	Mean	SE	SD	df	T
Work centrality	Male	128	36.55	.83	9.42	239	2.29*
	Female	113	30.13	.75	7.94		
Work locus of control	Male	128	60.15	1.29	14.57	239	1.28
	Female	113	62.54	1.35	14.29		
Bullying	Male	128	41.62	1.35	15.29	239	.78
	Female	113	40.08	1.45	15.40		

* Significant at .05

From the above table, the result showed that there is a significant sex difference in work centrality t (239) = 2.29, p <.05, but no significant sex difference was observed in work locus of control t (239) = 1.28, p >.05 and workplace bullying t (239) = .78, p >.05.

Discussion

The current study examined the extent to which work centrality moderate the effect of work locus of control on workplace bullying. The first hypothesis which is state that employees who are external in control orientation will perceive higher workplace bullying than those that are internal in control orientation. It revealed that there is a significant effect of locus of control on bullying and also that employee with external locus of control orientation perceived higher workplace bullying than employee who are internal in control orientation. The findings of this study is supported by the verifications of Judge, Timothy; Bono, Joyce (2001) who found a similar significant influence of work locus of control on employees satisfaction. They verified that there is a positive correlation between internal locus of control and job satisfaction. Judge and Bono (2001) stated that individual's locus of control plays an important work outcomes including job satisfaction and performance. Spector (1982) suggests that not only do internals perceive greater control, but they may actually seek situations in which control is possible.

The individuals, who have the internal locus of control, think that they have a big role on affecting the events which influence their lives. Furthermore, they assess themselves as possessing the power for the attitude they want to display by having the positive ego concept, and they believe that they can direct their lives whatever way they desire (Gulveren, 2008). Frucot & Shearon, (1991) posit that the importance of locus of control as a moderator between participation and performance –satisfaction as determinant of the type of organization is preferred. The internal locus of control can also be linked to the theory of learned helplessness in this case. Learned helplessness occurs when helplessness is essentially learned. If an employee is at the bottom of the workplace hierarchy and feels as though his/her coworkers treat him/her unfairly, it is undoubtedly easy to feel dejected. What separates those who are more likely to experience bullying with those who remain healthier in work attitude is whether or not the employee believes he/she can take control of the situation. If that is not the case, the employee may slowly begin to 'learn' to be helpless and essentially 'give up' on trying to fight off melancholy, thus putting them at higher risk.

Hypothesis two that stated that employees who are low in centrality will experience bullying in the workplace than those that are high in work centrality. The result revealed that that there is a significant difference between those that are low and high in work centrality on bullying. Employees who are low as regards the importance that working experience has in their lives experience higher workplace bullying than those who are high in work centrality. An understanding of the importance of work centrality for individuals would assist to apply human resource initiatives to evoke the highest levels of work-based identification which in turn will improve performance and over all organizational effectiveness (Pfeiffer, 1994).). According to Diefendorff et al (2002) people with high work centrality are known to attach higher meaning to the role of work in their lives and consequently invest time and effort in building a mutual longstanding relationship with their employer, thus resulting in lower experience of workplace bullying. On the other hand, people with low work centrality attach little value to the role of work in their lives and invest little time and effort into the relationship with their employer. This may justify the higher experience of workplace bullying by those that are low in work centrality.

Hypothesis three which stated that work centrality will significantly moderate the effect of locus of control on workplace bullying; i.e there will be no significant difference between employees who are external in locus of control but high in work centrality and employee who are internal in locus of control but low in work centrality on workplace bullying. Result reveals that the hypothesis is accepted. Deci and Ryan (1980) posit that the psychological need for self-determination and competence are the basis for motivation because internal believe that they are choice-making agents who are competent at maintaining control over their lives, and should generally possess a stronger need for self-determination and competence than do externals. Parker (1993) suggested that the major reason why people desire control is that it increases the predictability of the effort outcome link. Salazar, Hubbard and Salazar (2002) found that internal/external locus of control impacts job satisfaction. Ashfort and Mael (1989) believes that organizational work identification is the perception of oneness with or belonging to a group, involving direct or vicarious experiences of its successes and failures. Individuals with high levels of work identification are more committed to their occupations (Cable &DeRue, 2002), and are more willing to exert extra effort on behalf of the organization (VanDick et al., 2007). Such an individual worker would be expected to place a greater value on work outcomes than those low in work identification. When environmental conditions are not sufficient to explain individuals' success or failures, locus of control can facilitate in making these situations clear. For instance, individuals may sometimes perceive good and bad events in different ways, these different ways are based on external and internal forces (Taylor, 2006).

The individuals with external locus of control relate the events affecting their lives to perceptions such as chance, fate, and fortune which are out of control. Additionally, they believe that the events affecting their lives cannot be predicted and controlled (Kucukkaragoz, 1998). Individuals with internal locus of control are careful, alert, dominant, focused on success, self-confident, and ingenious. On the other hand, the individuals with external locus of control are careful, affected by the group members behaviours such as bulling, easily influenced by external forces, less self-confident, and they display unsteady performances (Rotter, 1975).

An internally controlled individual perceives events which affects him as being produced by his own behavior whereas externally controlled individuals perceives events which affects him as being largely produced by luck, fate, and the control of others (Gigliotti, 1976). Individuals who have an internal locus of control (hereafter 'internala') tend to believe that their actions directly influence outcomes (Hyatt, & Prawitt, 2001). One of the reason while work centrality moderate the effect of locus of control on bullying can be found in job orientation theory. According to this theory work centrality individuals see their work as the central part of their lives and are very devoted to their career (Goodboy 2007). They are very self-motivated and believe in the rules and the procedures of the organization. They are procedure oriented and identify strongly with the organization and has a desire to secure high status rewards. An upward mobile has a high level of job satisfaction, a feeling of attachment to the organization and an exceptional drive for power. These workers are also believed to identify with whatever organization they are employed at and are more than willing to defend their organization against people that may attack it. Upward mobiles have strong decision making skills and are also willing to take risks to keep the success of the organization and their own (McCroskey 2005). They are able to make positive contributions through their willingness to work hard and achieve goals. The people with this type of orientation are highly concerned with their own success then gaining approval from their peers. They do not like associating with people who don't have the same career path that they desire. Many organizations are looking to hire these type of people, this is because they know that they can rely on these people to do what is asked of them (Organizational orientations and communication traits).

Hypothesis four which states that there will be a significant sex difference in work centrality, work locus of control and workplace bullying. The results therefore showed that there is a significant sex difference in work centrality but no significant sex difference in work locus of control and bullying. The result revealed that males attribute more importance to working attitude than the female counterpart. Research findings on sex differences in work attitude have been inconsistent. For example, Rotter (1966) found out that female will exhibit significant greater work locus of control than male. He postulated that there is some evidence that sex-based differences may complicate these findings, with females being more responsive to failures than males to successes.

Rotter's postulate that there is some evidence that sex-based differences may complicate these findings is thereby seen in the works of Hsu-I Huang (2006) who exhibited that male culinary arts worker had a higher degree of internal locus of control than female culinary arts workers.

Lorence (1987) presented two theoretical models for explaining the relation between work centrality and sex (i.e., male vs. female). The "gender model" suggests that men take on the role of care er builder and provider for the family economically, while woman are traditionally raised to accept more family-centered roles. Thus, men tend to invest relatively more resources in developing their careers and as a result their identity as a worker becomes more prevalent while woman tend to allocate their resources to family building, and view their role in the workplace as a less important part of themselves. The "job model," however, suggests the unequal nature of the work environment causes women to value work less than men because they do not receive the same valued outcomes.

One of the crucial factors that may be utilized to study bullying on the individual level is gender, although the current results of empirical studies do not quite seem categorical. Some authors have observed a higher frequency of bullying among women compared to men (Zapf, Knorz, Kulla, 1996), while other large-scale studies indicate that, except for sexual harassment, both men and women are equally prone to being bullied at work. In any case, Einarsen *et al*. suggest that the gender differences found by some researchers are in fact consequences of the discrimination that both genders can suffer as a result of their position within an organization

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