Building Institutional Capacity to Withstand Bullying In Policing Organisations: A Cross Country Comparison

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Abstract
Like many other organisations and agencies, police effectiveness has been inhibited by bullying. However, there are two specific aspects to police work that make policing organisations vulnerable to bullying. First, police work is often a high stress occupation involving such stressors as: high levels of role conflict; poor community relations and the resulting negative behaviours to police by members of the public; and a work environment characterised by intricate and complex rules and procedures. Second, there is considerable literature regarding the distinctive nature of police sub-cultures that are often associated with attitudes, beliefs and behaviours conducive to the emergence of bullying behaviours.

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This study’s ambition is to explore the characteristics, implications and outcomes of bullying in Australia and to connect this with results from a survey undertaken with police in Bursa, Turkey.

This study, by comparing what is known about bullying in police organisations across these different contexts, explores the question of how unique policing actually is as an occupation, and the extent to which these characteristics increase the likelihood of bullying. By comparing policing and instances of bullying across two countries, each with their own histories and cultures, this study sheds light on the detrimental effects of bullying in policing organisations. The important question of relationship between management capacity to suppress bullying and the broader legislative and legal frameworks available can not be answered directly by this work. However, it is hoped that this research supports and prompts future research designed to address this question.

1. Introduction to The Concept and International Snapshot

While this article will refer to the phenomenon as ‘bullying’, it is also the case that in non-English European literature this phenomenon is used interchangeably with the term ‘mobbing’. In the 1960s, the Austrian ethnologist Konrad Lorenz used the term ‘bullying’ to describe the behaviour of geese for scaring away a fox, a stronger predator; in the 1970s, Dr. Peter Heinemann, a Swedish physician, observed similar behaviour among children and used the term ‘bullying’ to emphasise the seriousness of the behaviour, which could drive the victim to despair and isolation, even to suicide (Neuberger, 1999). During the 1980s, Dr Heinz Leymann discovered similar group violence in workplaces among adults and observed that the circumstances created by the work structure and culture marked some people as difficult and, once identified as difficult, the company created further reasons for terminating them. He called this behaviour ‘bullying’ and published his first report regarding his 1984 study of Swedish workplaces in Germany (Leymann, 2002). This article was followed by more than 60 research articles and books about bullying and psycho-terror at workplace (Leymann, 2004).

Following Leymann’s impetus, a great deal of research, particularly in the developed countries, has been accomplished or is now in progress. Because of the extensive literature and media coverage, the awareness of bullying in the workplace is widespread in Europe. In 1998, the International Labour Office (ILO) published
the report *Violence at Work*; in this report, bullying behaviours are discussed together with other more commonly known violent behaviours (Chappell & Di Martino, 2000).

Globally, the prevalence of bullying in the general working population is unclear. Some studies estimate that between 25-50% of employees will, at some point in their careers, experience bullying (Beyond Bullying Association 2001) There is evidence that the levels of bullying varies significantly across differing occupations and industries, however in the policing context there is comparatively little research. British research indicates that around 30% of employees in the U.K. police services have experienced bullying. A large-scale study by Hoel and Cooper (2000) indicated that 29% of respondents report having been bullied in the previous five years. This study identified a manager / supervisor as the perpetrator in 81% of cases. Rayner's (2000) survey of police support staff found that 30% of respondents had experienced bullying on a weekly basis during the six-months prior to the survey being undertaken.

Part of the explanation regarding the lack of clarity about the prevalence of bullying is due to a lack of consensus regarding what bullying is. While significant research has been undertaken in a variety of countries, there exists no agreed standard for the measurement of bullying behaviour. The most important difficulty is in the definition of bullying behaviour among adults. There are many definitions, which are very similar to each other but not standardised (Wyatt & Hare, 1997; Rayner & Hoel, 1997; Davenport, Schwartz & Eliot, 1999; Neuberger, 1999; Einarson, 2000; Leymann, 2002). In general, situations in which individuals or groups of individuals subject one or more other(s) to negative behaviours at work over an extended period of time is called bullying. Rayner & Hoel defined bullying behaviour in the following five categories (1997):

1. Professional threat: belittling opinion, public professional humiliation, accusation of lack of effort.
2. Personal threat: insulting, teasing, name-calling.
3. Isolation: preventing access to opportunities such as training, withholding information.
4. Work overload: undue pressure to produce work, giving impossible deadlines.
5. Destabilisation: failure to give credit when due, giving meaningless tasks, removing responsibility, shifting of ‘goal posts’ in objectives, standards and goals.
Other researchers (Davenport, Schwartz & Eliot, 1999; Neu-berger, 1999; Leymann, 2002; Leymann, 2004) provide different categories of characteristics workplace bullying:

1. Bullying is defined by its effects on the victims. Therefore, it can be described differently according to different personal perceptions.

2. Bullying should have negative effects on the victims.

3. Bullying should be persistent and continuously.

A national Australian study reported that 35% of Australians had been verbally abused by a co-worker and 31% by a superior, at some time (Mayhew & Chappel, 2001).

The majority of countries do not have bullying as a crime in their legal systems. In the Scandinavian countries like Sweden, there is a special crime called bullying (mobbing) in the Law on Work Security and Worker’s Heath of 1994 and in a similar Law in Finland since 2000.

While these variations in definition of bullying make it difficult to undertake direct comparisons, this earlier research has raised awareness in many countries of the significance and prevalence of the issue. This growing awareness has led to the establishment of workplace help organisations. European countries like Sweden, Norway, Finland, and Germany have enacted proactive and protective occupational safety laws that include emotional well-being to legally address the bullying behaviour. New legislation has been proposed in the United Kingdom and Australia as well. In *The Third European Survey on Working Conditions* based on 21,500 face-to-face interviews with employees in member countries of the European Union, 9% reported that they were exposed to intimidation and bullying (European Foundation, 2005).

On April 26, 2007, the EU’s “social partnership organizations” (the European Trade Union Confederation in collaboration with the Council of European Professional and Managerial Staff/ European Confederation of Executives and Managerial Staff liaison committee; BusinessEurope; the European Association of Craft, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises; and the European Centre of Enterprises with Public Participation and of Enterprises of General Economic Interest) signed what is called a “framework agreement” regarding workplace violence and harassment at work. The framework agreement calls for businesses to train managers and workers to reduce incidences of harassment and violence in the workplace, to draft
policies explaining that harassment and violence will not be tolerated, and to set out procedures by which investigation into complaints or incidences of violence and harassment will be conducted. The agreement also contains suggested procedures for investigation and management of complaints.

The framework agreement, which sets guidelines for the enactment of legislation by member states, sets a target date for the EU’s member organizations to comply with the framework agreement’s objectives by April of 2010. As a procedural matter, each member state should seek to comply with the agreement in a manner consistent with their own industrial relations systems. In the United Kingdom, a Code of Conduct in line with the framework agreement will likely be introduced by one of the government agencies responsible for providing guidance to employers. While Codes of Conduct in the UK, like enforcement letters or regulations promulgated by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in the United States, lack the force of law, they are commonly afforded deference by courts and tribunals.

The EU’s framework agreement broadly defines workplace harassment and violence. Harassment occurs when “one or more worker or manager are repeatedly and deliberately abused, threatened, and or humiliated in circumstances relating to work.” The definition of harassment is broad enough to include instances of abuse, threats, and humiliation that occur outside the workplace or may have a rather tenuous connection to work, within the definition of workplace harassment. Nevertheless, because each EU member state will draft its own legislation or otherwise enforce the agreement through its administrative agencies, the definition of harassment and what constitutes “appropriate action for perpetrators” of workplace harassment and violence will invariably differ among member states.

In the United States, it is estimated that one in five workers is affected by bullying (Namie & Namie, 2000). Although there is no generalized law to prevent bullying, there is a growing support for laws devoted to end bullying. Workplace Bullying Institute has lobbied state legislatures to introduce Healthy Workplace Bills. Since 2003, California and 12 other states have introduced bills to ban bullying in the workplace, some of which are still pending. The California Healthy workplace Bill prohibits discrimination on the basis of age, gender, race etc. and considers subjecting an employee to an “abusive work environment”. Such an environment is defined in the bill as “a workplace where an employee is subjected to abusive
conduct that is so severe that it causes physical or psychological harm to the employee”. This bill has unfortunately been turned down and has not been reintroduced (http://workplacebullyinglaw.org/press/WorkPlaceHorizons090107.html, 30.11. 2007).

On the other hand, United States Courts tend to interpret certain acts as the Disabilities Act, Age Discrimination in Employment Act which protect characteristics such as race, sex, religion, colour, national origin, disability and age and in some places sexual orientation. In other words, under the current law, harassment is not illegal, as long as the harassment does not concern a legally protected characteristics such as, race, sex, religion, colour, national origin, disability and age or is not a tortuous act (http://workplacebullyinglaw.org/press/WorkPlaceHorizons090107.html 30.11. 2007).

Anti-bullying legislation has been passed in Canada in 2004, in the Quebec Labour Standards Act, which prohibits psychological harassment in the workplace. “Vexatious behaviour in the form of repeated and hostile or unwanted conduct, verbal comments, actions or gestures that affects an employee’s dignity or psychological or physical integrity and that results in a harmful work environment for the employee” is prohibited. Under the Act, a single episode of vexatious behavior could constitute psychological harassment if it has a “lasting, harmful effect” on the employee. Employers must take “reasonable steps” to prevent the harassment, and once it is known, “put a stop to it” (http://workplacebullyinglaw.org/press/WorkPlaceHorizons090107.html, 30.11. 2007).

2. Contextualising and Comparing Policing Organisations

Australia and Turkey have very different police structures and significant points of departure that need highlighting prior to any comparison as these differences shape the respective organisations and what is being compared. A primary difference is that in Australia, police employees are comprised of two components; police that have been ‘sworn’, that is they have the authority to uphold and enforce the law and police who are ‘unsworn’ whose occupy administrative and specialist roles but have no special powers in relation to upholding the law. The first group fit the traditional understanding of what police do while the latter in many countries are not described as police but as support staff. The studies that examine bullying police organisations in Australia include both of
these types of personnel. This is not the case in the data collected in Turkey as police only comprise of ‘sworn’ officers.

Another important distinction between Turkey and Australia is the proportion and types of roles undertaken by women in these organisations. In Australia, while the opportunities and roles for women in policing has changed significantly from when they first entered the service women continue to be under-represented in a range of roles and within the senior echelons of policing. Women account for more than 30% of all police in Australia but are concentrated into a narrower range of roles than their male colleagues and are over-represented in administrative and support functions. Sworn women police officers account for 20.9% of the total number of sworn officers but represent 65.7% of the total of unsworn police. (Australian Institute of Criminology, 2003).

Currently in Australia there is a national shortage of police officers, and in order for policing to remain a competitive career choice, police organisations need to maximise the opportunities for all employees to fully engage their skills and experiences. By managing difference and diversity, police organisations will be better placed to attract and retain their employees.

Another point of distinction between Australian and Turkish police organisations is the emphasis on recruiting and retaining and resultant participation rates of women police personnel. In 2006 in Australia 28.2% of police personnel are women (AIC 2007) and the target is to increase this proportion. Whereas in Turkey about 10% of the officer recruits educated at the Police Academies are women and women police personnel is 5%. In Australia, barriers to recruiting more women and increasing their retention in policing have been well documented in the literature. These include bullying, discrimination, inflexibility in organisation policies in work-life balance, workplace culture, and staff development opportunities. As a consequence, bullying in Australia not only seen as damaging to victims and police organisations generally, it is viewed as a barrier to achieving the target of increasing the numbers of women in police.

3. Bullying In The Police - Australian Understandings And Context

Workplace bullying is a term used to describe a range of unacceptable behaviors within the workplace. Barron (1998) defines bullying as a repeated pattern of aggressive behavior that escalates
over time and causes victimization in the subject who is unable to defend him or herself. He emphasises two main features of bullying at work, namely that aggressive behaviors are repeated and that they are intended to be hostile and/or perceived as hostile by the recipient (see also Einarsen, 1999). Bullying may take a variety of forms, including: ridicule a co-worker or subordinate publicly for disagreeing; public verbal abuse; social isolation; personal attacks on one’s private life by ridicule, insulting remarks etc.; undermining an individual with vindictive or humiliating.

While no legislated definition of workplace bullying exists within Australia, bullying is covered more generally under equal opportunity, occupational health and safety, and workers compensation legislation with common law case examples providing comparators (Toten 2003). A range of Australian Government organisations have developed similar definitions. The individual Workcover/Worksafe organisations formed around the country have developed similar definitions for bullying. These definitions require that an unreasonable behaviour be repeated and directed to a person or group of people in a workplace creating a risk to health and safety (ACT Work cover 2005, Worksafe Victoria 2006, Work cover New South Wales). To expand the definition repeat behaviour requires that the same action or other actions with similar intent occur multiple times over separate occasions. Unreasonable behaviour is judged by the ‘reasonable man’ test and includes actions which the reasonable man would deem to be intimidating, degrading, offensive and threatening. A risk to health and safety requires the individual or group experience or be at risk of experiencing negative effects from the behaviour, either physically or mentally (Worksafe 2003, Hood 2004).

The nature of workplace bullying and the grave effect that it has on the victim has resulted in a recognized lack of reporting, effecting the accuracy of official statistics and research in the area. Independent studies into the area of workplace bullying have shown that a majority of victims chose indirect methods for managing the problem rather than reporting the behaviour with thirteen percent preferring to leave the organization (Keashly et al 1994, Wahl 2002). The extent of bullying within Australian workplaces is alarming with a recent study by Griffith University (McCarthy et al 1995, cited in: Toten 2003, ACT Workcover 2005) finding three and a half percent of the workforce are bullied at a cost of between six and thirteen billion dollars a year in areas such as sick leave, lost revenue and legal costs.
Frequency and characteristics

Recent research conducted by the Australasian Centre for Policing Research in 2005 entitled ‘Minimising the risk of negative behaviours: Understanding workplace bullying in Australasian police organisations’ sought to investigate the extent and effect of workplace bullying in Australian police forces. The study surveyed 3000 sworn and unsworn police members from three separate Australian police forces, using measurement scales and open-ended questions to investigate the work demographic, and environment, workplace attitudes, the individual’s health, and well-being, negative behaviours in the workplace and prevalence and exposure of workplace bullying. 1031 of the 3000 surveyed returned a completed response. This and other recent research by Boni and Circelli (2002) indicates that:

• Nearly half of police indicate they have been subjected to threatening or abusive language by colleagues in the previous two years.
• Females were five times more likely to have experienced this form of bullying than males.
• Females were also more likely (44.1%) to have experienced being humiliated in front of fellow workers or the public than males (32.3%).
• At the same time, 40.1% of males compared with 34.2% of females were more likely to have experienced being unreasonably refused requests for training and males were more likely to have experienced this form of bullying more frequently.
• Sworn police officers were more likely to have experienced or witnessed all forms of bullying compared to non-sworn [support] staff.

Boni and Circelli (2002) report that in the two years prior to the study, 37% of the surveyed police staff reported that they had been given unreasonable or impossible tasks, 31% been prevented from explaining or putting their point of view, and 29% had undesirable rumours spread about them at least twice by colleagues. Additionally, 31% of the sample had experienced threatening or abusive language or treatment by colleagues at least twice and that 16% had experienced this form of bullying more than five times during this period.
Boni and Circelli's (2002) study also indicate significant sex-based differences in people's experiences of work-based bullying. While nearly half of the sample had been subjected to threatening or abusive language in the previous two years, females were five times more likely to have experienced this form of bullying than males. Females were also more likely (44.1%) to have experienced being humiliated in front of fellow workers or the public than males (32.3%). At the same time, 40.1% of males compared with 34.2% of females were more likely to have experienced being unreasonably refused requests for training and males were more likely to have experienced this form of bullying more frequently.

Role-based differences in the respondents’ experiences of bullying were also reported by Boni and Circelli (2002). Sworn police officers were more likely to have experienced or witnessed all forms of bullying compared to non-sworn [support] staff. This may indicate that there is something specific about the operational policing environment that encourages or facilitates this behaviour, but due to the exploratory nature of their study, these findings require care in their interpretation.

A significant number of both sworn and nonsworn personnel had both personally experienced and observed bullying in the police workplace. There were differences in the types of bullying commonly experienced by men and women. Overall, women were more likely than men to have experienced and observed bullying. At the same time, sworn respondents were more likely than nonsworn respondents to have experienced and observed bullying (Boni & Circelli 2002, v).

4. Bullying In The Police – Turkish Understandings And Context

Bullying is not recognised in Turkey and data about victimisation at workplaces does not exist. Occupational safety laws do not cover emotional well-being issues, and protective and proactive measures have been neglected. Turkey's current Labour Law enacted in 2003 does not address the obligations of the employer in terms of measurement and protective and proactive implementations of bullying in workplace.

On the other hand, the Turkish police forces are not within the scope of Labour Law. They are civil servants, working under the General Directory of Security, which is within the Ministry of the Interior (Home Office). The law concerning the police is called “The
Law on the Duties and Responsibilities of the Police”. There is also a bylaw regulating the disciplinary penalties for the police officers. Different behaviours against the police disciplinary rules and violation of the code of ethics are punished according to this bylaw. In fact behaviours such as insulting, defamation, beating of equals or subordinates are punished after disciplinary investigation. Thus if bullying occurs within the police they are punished with disciplinary punishments and also according to the provisions of the Turkish Criminal Code where there is no specific crime of bullying but insult, libel, assault and battery etc. crimes. Certainly police sub culture is a major impediment for the punishing of bullying within the force. Especially the elements of solidarity and secrecy (Sokullu-Akinci, 1990) prevent the reporting of bullying.

As there has been little prior research undertaken in Turkey regarding bullying, and no prior work that focussed on bullying and policing, it was necessary to develop a methodology that would generate pertinent information to the questions being explored. This involved the adaptation of a 20 item inventory of bullying designed by Quine (1999), Job induced stress scale (House et al., 1972), the hospital anxiety and stress scale (Zigmond and Snaith, 1983), job satisfaction scale (Quinn and Staines, 1979) and the propensity to leave scale (Cammann et al. 1979).

Our sample group selected from the personnel lists from the Turkish National Police. The questionnaires were provided to police staff in closed envelopes and were filled in by themselves anonymously. All the data was later analysed with multi variable statistical analysis using the SPSS statistical package.

The primary findings from this survey were significant statistical differences between bullied and not bullied employees in terms of anxiety, depression, and job induced stress and support at work. In summary we found:

- 56.4% reported experiencing one or more types of bullying in the previous year.
- The top three forms of bullying behaviour were (i) excessive workloads / demands - 70% (ii) Destabilisation - 55.3% (iii) Threats to professional status - 41.8%.
- Incidence rates of bullying were close between the sexes.
- Victimisation rates are higher in young, single, childless people.
• When bullying occurs it is most likely done be by a line-manager / superior.

• About 60% of the victims have tried to take action when bullying occurred, but most were dissatisfied with the outcome.

**Turkish survey results**

179 police officers were examined in our study. 101 of them (56.4%) reported experiencing one or more types of bullying in the previous year.

When bullying occurs it is most likely done be by a line manager. About 60% of the victims have tried to take action when bullying occurred, but most were dissatisfied with the outcome. We found statistical significant differences between bullied and not bullied employees in terms of anxiety, depression, job induced stress and support at work.

**Table 1:** Type and proportion of police reporting each type and category of bullying

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>N= 179</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Threat to professional status</strong></td>
<td>41.8*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persistent attempts to belittle and undermine your work</td>
<td>14.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persistent and unjustified criticism and monitoring of your work</td>
<td>15.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persistent attempts to humiliate you in front of colleagues</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intimidator use of discipline or competence procedures</td>
<td>31.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Threat to personal standing</strong></td>
<td>32.1*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undermining your personal integrity</td>
<td>16.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destructive innuendo and sarcasm</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal and non-verbal threats</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making inappropriate jokes about you</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persistent teasing</td>
<td>14.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical violence</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violence to property</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Isolation</strong></td>
<td>19.9*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Withholding necessary information from you</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freezing out, ignoring or excluding</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unreasonable refusal of applications for leave, training or promotion</td>
<td>11.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overwork</strong></td>
<td>70.0*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undue pressure to produce work</td>
<td>16.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Setting of impossible deadlines 66.7
Destabilisation 55.3*  
Shifting of goal posts without telling you 28.4  
Constant undervaluing of your efforts 22.2  
Persistent attempts to demoralise you 31.1  
Removal of areas of responsibility without consultation 31.9

* Some respondents reported more than one type of bullying in each category

Reported rates of experiences of bullying were close between the sexes. The percentage of male and female bullying victims is close so they are not indicated in the tables. x2 test was applied and it was found out that female victims were bullied by females and male victims by males and the relationship is statistically meaningful (x2 = 138.53 df=1 p<0.001).

Table 2: Victims and Perpetrators According to Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VICTIMS</th>
<th>PERPETRATORS</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Both Sexes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>(61.9%)</td>
<td>(7.5%)</td>
<td>(30.6%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>(15.6%)</td>
<td>(40.1%)</td>
<td>(44.4%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>(37.2%)</td>
<td>(24.8%)</td>
<td>(38.0%)</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

These results suggest that bullying is a serious problem in the Turkish police force. Table 3 indicates that bullying has severe physiological and psychological consequences. Interestingly, participants who had a managerial responsibility were exposed to bullying behaviour 1.9 times more than those without a managerial responsibility, and respondents who had poor support at work experienced bullying 2.5 times more than those with good support.

The most common reported coping behaviours were talking about bullying with colleagues and friends (80%), ignoring the perpetrator (62%) and warning the perpetrator not to do this again (62%).

Table 3: Reported Health Effects of Bullying

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feel physically sick?</td>
<td>(40.4%)</td>
<td>(59.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep?</td>
<td>(48.2%)</td>
<td>(51.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel miserable or depressed?</td>
<td>(40.9%)</td>
<td>(59.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel anxious most of the time?</td>
<td><strong>(76.9%)</strong></td>
<td>(23.1%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Feel constantly keyed up and jittery? (79.5%) (20.5%)
Suffer from an upset stomach? (29.0%) (71.0%)
Feel easily upset or irritated with others? (50.0%) (50.0%)
Experience a twitching of your face, head, or shoulders? (18.5%) (81.5%)
Feel as if you didn’t want to go to work? (61.1%) (38.9%)
Feel frightened of going out and meeting people? (24.1%) (75.9%)
Feel worthless? (43.5%) (56.5%)
Feel that everything was your fault? (26.8%) (73.2%)
Feel unwanted or devalued? (43.7%) (56.3%)
Suffer from bad headaches or pains in your eyes? (34.8%) (65.2%)
Feel as if you might have a breakdown? (31.5%) (68.5%)
Think about leaving your job? (44.3%) (55.7%)
Feel tearful? (48.2%) (51.8%)
Suffer from nightmares? (17.4%) (82.6%)

5. Comparison and Discussion Regarding Bullying Between Australian and Turkish Police Organisations

While it is clear that in both Turkey and Australia police organisations are impeded in their respective organisational goals by the consequences of high levels of bullying behaviour, there are also significant points of departure. The most significant of these is in the ways that bullying is most commonly experienced. In Australia, bullying through verbal abuse is significantly higher than Turkey while in Turkey, bullying through being given unreasonable or impossible tasks is much more prevalent than Australia. These differences might be explained by a range of factors; for example the differences in organisational structures and differences in gender ratios, through to cultural differences. This study did not incorporate methodologies that would assist us in explaining these distinctions and subsequently are beyond the remit of this paper.

Table 4: Side-by-side comparison of different forms of bullying

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Australia</th>
<th>Turkey</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>48% subjected to threatening / abusive language</td>
<td>29% subjected to threats to personal standing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37% given unreasonable or impossible tasks</td>
<td>70% given unreasonable or impossible tasks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discussion and conclusion

For both Turkey and Australia it appears operational police environment is particularly vulnerable to bullying behaviours - That there is something specific about this environment that encourages or facilitates this behaviour.

For both countries it appears that females still face higher levels of discrimination than males. This in turn indicates that policies designed to encourage diversity within policing has not been successfully implemented.

There are significant differences in the types of bullying experienced in Australia and Turkey.

For both countries there are significant implications regarding their relations with the public that they serve - Bullying behaviour tends to manifest itself across organisations. That is, if someone bullies a colleague they are at higher risk of bullying at home or their clients (the public).

The attitudes, beliefs and values of employees combined with aims and goals of an organisation form its culture. Organisational culture affects how employees and the organisation as a whole interact with one another and outside stakeholders. The unique role of a police officer, their legislated power, obligation to serve and protect, and their standing within the community results in a distinctive organisational culture. Police culture derived from a paramilitary hierarchical structure and a ‘tough guy’ image has been documented by many authors and the focus of much research. Hours if not days of boredom followed by brief glimpses of heart stopping excitement and risk, this is how many police officers describe the duty they perform. Skolnick (1966), Sokullu-Akinci (1990), Prenzler (1997) and, Warren and James (2001) in their work on police culture have shown a link between the jobs requirement for an individual who is authoritative and results driven with an acceptance of danger, and the development of an ‘us and them’ attitude towards the general public. The ‘us and them’ behaviour exhibited by the officers, covered by a cloak of loyalty, is seen as a requirement by new recruits to be successful in the role and quickly adopted. While Nixon and Reynolds (1996) describe loyalties positive aspects of support and assistance the concept has been condemned for its encouragement of the ‘code of silence’ by the Wood Royal Commission into New South Wales Police Corruption (Royal Commission into the New South Police 1997) which stated it resulted in the protection
of corrupt officers and the encouragement of unethical behaviour, including bullying (Mollen 1994).

The ‘us and them’ culture and its encouragement of the ‘code of silence’ provides a sound reason for the stark difference between the levels of bullying within policing organisations when compared to the general public. Lynch’s (2005) research into bullying within Australasian police forces found that of the three hundred and twenty eight respondents who experienced bullying over the past three years, ninety (30%) had not reported the behaviour. Over 50% of these individuals’ stated that they were not confident that appropriate action would be taken, with almost the same amount believing they would be labelled as a trouble maker for reporting the behaviour and eighty percent believing that it would make the situation more unpleasant.

Addressing the considerable problem of workplace bullying within police forces requires a cultural shift. This shift needs to encourage a transparent working environment with well documented processes and practices which would enable the tipping of this epidemic. Changes to an organisations culture do not happen quickly, cultures tend to be entrenched into an organisation, and employees out of fear of change often resist the process. However over time with the correct support and appropriate policy it is possible to change the culture underpinning an organisation.

To facilitate this change to culture and tip the bullying epidemic police forces need to focus on the development of policy to protect the victims of bullying which in turn will promote reporting by other members in similar situations. Police organisations need to focus heavily on training current members of all levels on their responsibilities as a member of the force and the benefits of mutually respectful environment. They need to ensure the protection and support of new recruits joining the organisation to avoid the continuation of the negative aspects of the current culture. Police command should also consider advocating for legislative change so that bullying can be responded to through direct legal remedy. These changes have began to occur within Australian police forces with the development of policy and legislation to address whistle blowing and the implementation of force values which employees are expected to abide by at all time during their employment. Australian police forces have also seen substantial support from Police Associations, assisting with research, development and implementation of policy.
Justice Wood, the Royal Commissioner into the New South Wales police service summed up the required change to police culture best, writing: “Police are entrusted by the community with great powers and responsibilities; police must reciprocate this trust by achieving and maintaining high standards of integrity, professionalism, impartiality and performance.”

It appears, a decade after these words and the subsequent reforms that were recommended and introduced in the New South Wales and other police agencies in Australia, that in Australia, like Turkey that bullying in police organisations remains a significant and difficult to eradicate problem. It may be, on the basis of reviewing Turkey’s and Australia’s experiences and understandings of bullying in their respective police organisations that the time has come to consider legislative reform to support these agencies rather than relying on codes of practice and internal guidelines and indirect legal remedies.

**Bibliography**


