INTEGRATIVE LITERATURE REVIEW ARTICLE

MORAL HARASSMENT AT WORK: A MULTIDISCIPLINARY APPROACH

ASSÉDIO MORAL NO TRABALHO: UMA ABORDAGEM MULTIDISCIPLINAR

ACOSO MORAL EN EL TRABAJO: UN ENFOQUE MULTIDISCIPLINARIO

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ABSTRACT

Objective: to investigate, in online journals, how the phenomenon of workplace bullying is being addressed in scientific research. **Method:** this is a bibliographic study, integrative review type, in which texts published in the Virtual Health Library and indexed in the LILACS, MEDLINE and BDNF databases were used, from 2014 to 2016. A review was performed, for data analysis, a division into the areas of knowledge to which the articles belonged. **Results:** 11 studies were found in three different areas of knowledge, meeting the inclusion and exclusion criteria of the research and the objective of the study. **Conclusion:** it is concluded that the issue of bullying at work is an emerging theme in postmodern society portrayed by different areas of knowledge such as: Social Work, Nursing and Psychology. In each area of knowledge, the interaction between bullying and the work environment was shown, giving greater visibility to this ethical, moral and psychological damage. **Descriptors:** Harassment Non-Sexual; Occupational Health; Workplace Violence; Health; Work; Quality of Life.

RESUMO

Objetivo: investigar, em periódicos *on-line*, como o fenômeno assédio moral no trabalho está sendo abordado em pesquisas científicas. **Método:** trata-se de um estudo bibliográfico, tipo revisão integrativa, no qual se utilizaram textos publicados na Biblioteca Virtual de Saúde e indexados nas bases de dados LILACS, MEDLINE e BDNF, entre os anos de 2014 a 2016. Realizou-se, para a análise dos dados, uma divisão nas áreas de conhecimento as quais os artigos pertenciam. **Resultados:** encontraram-se 11 estudos, em três diferentes áreas de conhecimento, atendendo aos critérios de inclusão e exclusão da pesquisa e ao objetivo do estudo. **Conclusão:** conclui-se que o tema assédio moral no trabalho é uma temática emergente na sociedade pós-moderna retratada por diferentes áreas de conhecimento como: Serviço Social, Enfermagem e Psicologia. Mostrou-se, em cada área de conhecimento, a interação que há entre o assédio moral e o ambiente de trabalho, prestando-se maior visibilidade a este dano ético, moral e psicológico. **Descritores:** Assédio não Sexual; Saúde do Trabalhador; Violência no Trabalho; Saúde; Trabalho; Qualidade de Vida.

RESUMEN

Objetivo: investigar, en revistas en línea, cómo se aborda el fenómeno del acoso laboral en la investigación científica. **Método:** se trata de un estudio bibliográfico, tipo de revisión integradora, en el que se utilizaron textos publicados en la Biblioteca Virtual en Salud e indexados en las bases de datos LILACS, MEDLINE y BDNF, de 2014 a 2016. Se realizó para análisis de datos, una división en las áreas de conocimiento a las que pertenecían los artículos. **Resultados:** se encontraron 11 estudios en tres áreas diferentes de conocimiento, cumpliendo los criterios de inclusión y exclusión de la investigación y el objetivo del estudio. **Conclusión:** se concluye que el tema del acoso moral en el trabajo es un tema emergente en la sociedad posmoderna representado por diferentes áreas de conocimiento, tales como: Trabajo Social, Enfermería y Psicología. En cada área de conocimiento, se mostró la interacción entre el acoso moral y el lugar de trabajo, dando mayor visibilidad a este daño ético, moral y psicológico. **Descriptores:** Acoso no Sexual; Salud laboral; Violencia Laboral; Salud; Trabajo; Calidad de Vida.

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INTRODUCTION

In the daily life of many works, one can notice the presence of bullying. Moral harassment at work is also known as moral violence at work and some authors bring definitions on this topic. Marie-France Hirigoyen is known to be a French researcher known internationally for analyzing this phenomenon through her published studies. Moral harassment by the author is defined as: "Any and all abusive conduct (gesture, word, attitude or behavior) that repeatedly and systematically harms a person's psychic or physical dignity and integrity, threatening his or her job or degrading one's working mood".^{1,17}

Therefore, bullying is defined as a type of psychological violence, so that it will violate or infringe something that is normally established by society, as well as misused behaviors, which may cause moral, physical or emotional harm to the victim, disrespecting her.² In this sense, it is important to look at understanding the interaction between work and workers in order to identify the aspects of work organization that relate to the occurrence of bullying.

All occurrences of bullying are found to indicate a set of negative and embarrassing influences that become repetitive and prolonged at a certain frequency (every day, every week, every time ...) and that cause intimidation of the individual suffering from this disease.³ Thus, bullying is seen as one of the main stressors in the workplace, causing adverse consequences for the employee, employee groups and even entire organizations, leading to loss of profits due to skill exhaustion and absenteeism.⁴⁻⁵

It is noticed that the presence of bullying can be caused by the time that the individual remains at work, the demands made by superiors, the competitiveness and demands that the boss makes to his employee, however, these and other situations may also favor the stress that certainly ends up later revealing the presence of bullying at work.⁶

Thus, it can be noted that work may develop some psychosocial risks such as: mental fatigue; stress; anxiety; difficulty in interpersonal relationships with co-workers and family, and promote physical damage resulting from these exposures in the workplace.⁷⁻⁸ It can be generated, by these losses that occur through negative exposures to working conditions, also situations and behaviors of violence and risk to the health of workers who, in turn, may be afflicted by the work.⁹

All changes and constant transformations that occur in the work environment are considered to be caused by situations involving the capitalism, politics and economy of the company and the consequence of this is the exploitation of the

workforce of the worker which, in turn, has the need to stay employed and submits to stressful, embarrassing situations that hurt his human condition. Thus, it is inferred that business owners, in most cases, only aim to generate profits without measuring their employers' efforts, thus favoring suffering and moral violence at work.¹⁰

From this context, it is observed that the increasing moral violence in the workplace is due to the process in which this evil has been inserted in the structures and organizational policies of companies, which are, at first, a power of control, but which in some ways begin to be used as often abusive and inappropriate measures. In this sense, this type of bullying occurs, often in a collective way that flourishes and dies in the public domain, occurring and specializing in the affective, subjective and psychological sphere of all workers' collective.¹¹

Workplace bullying is being discussed year after year, and this issue is increasingly gaining recognition and popularity in the postmodern period, as this phenomenon not only occurs at work, but reaches dimensions beyond it as well. However, this practice is still poorly measured in these areas. Considering the importance of this theme, it is necessary to carry out a study to contribute to increase the visibility and transparency of the practice of bullying in the workplace.

OBJECTIVE

- To investigate in online journals how workplace bullying is being addressed in scientific research.

METHOD

This is a bibliographic study, integrative literature review type (ILR), which aims to investigate scientific articles on workplace bullying from 2014 to 2016. The method of integrative literature review of Laurence was adopted. Ganong, who proposes a process of systematization and data analysis with the objective of understanding the theme under study.¹² This method aims to group and synthesize the results of primary research in order to analyze the data and develop a broader explanation of a specific phenomenon.¹³

The method is systematized in six steps: 1) definition of the research question; 2) definition of study inclusion criteria and sample selection; 3) representation of the selected studies in table format, considering all the characteristics in common; 4) critical analysis of the findings, identifying differences and conflicts; 5) interpretation of the results and 6) clearly reporting the evidence found.¹¹

Publications indexed in the Virtual Health Library (VHL) were searched for in three databases: Nursing Database (BDENF); Medical Literature Analysis and Retrieval System Online (MEDLINE) and Latin American and Caribbean Health Sciences Literature (LILACS). Searches were performed in November 2017 for the selection and identification of publications. The choice of these databases is due to the fact that they include national and international publications. For the search, the following keywords were used: “Moral Harassment” and “Work”. For the combination of these descriptors in the bases, the Boolean operator “AND” was used.

The following guiding question was delimited: “How is the phenomenon of workplace bullying being addressed in online scientific publications?”. For the choice of studies, the following filters were adopted: full scientific articles available for analysis; published between 2014 and 2016 and in Portuguese, English and Spanish languages. We then selected articles that framed, in their titles

or abstracts, the following term: “Moral Harassment”.

After searching the studies in each database, 202 scientific articles that meet the search filters were obtained. The articles were subdivided into the databases as follows: 22 at BDENF; 89 in MEDLINE and 91 in LILACS, as shown in figure 1.

48 articles that were repeated in one or more databases and eight articles that belonged to other reviews were excluded. Thus, a total of 11 articles were selected for the analysis, which were organized in table form in Microsoft Excel 2016 software, containing: title; author; place; year; knowledge area; Methodological Approach; kind of study; goal; data collect; analysis of data and results. The articles were analyzed with the help of this tool, comparing them between their similarities and differences, allowing the extraction of data from each article that met the objective of this integrative literature review.

Figure 1. Study selection flowchart adapted from the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyzes (PRISMA 2009). Manaus (AM), Brazil, 2017.

For data analysis, a division was made into the areas of knowledge to which the articles belonged. The 11 articles were organized in the following areas of knowledge: Social Work, <https://periodicos.ufpe.br/revistas/revistaenfermagem/index>

Psychology and Nursing. Therefore, it was decided to deal with a complex theme, articulated by a multidisciplinary team and involving several fields of knowledge, to operate this integration, showing the contributions in each mentioned area.

The articles were classified according to the level of evidence: level 1 - systematic reviews or meta-analysis of relevant clinical trials; level 2 - evidence derived from at least one well-designed randomized controlled trial; level 3 - well-designed clinical trials without randomization; level 4 - well-designed cohort and case-control studies; level 5 - evidence from case or experience reports and level 6 - evidence based on expert opinion.

RESULTS

The sample selected consists of 11 articles in total. Then, for the analysis of the data in the areas of knowledge of each article in which it was found: one from the Social Service, five from Psychology and five from Nursing. The articles were organized considering the common characteristics among the articles under study, in table form, containing the names of the authors, year of publication, article title, journal name, knowledge area and the main conclusions of the study as shown in figure 2.

Author	Year of publication	Title of the study	Area of knowledge
Silva, Raichelis ¹⁴	2015	Moral harassment in the social worker's work relationships: an emerging issue	Social service
Cahú, Costa, Costa, Batista, Batista ¹⁵	2014	Moral harassment situations experienced by nurses in the workplace	Nursing
Silva, Costa, Batista, Zaccara, Costa, Duarte ¹⁶	2015	<i>Moral harassment: a study with nurses of the family health strategy</i>	Nursing
Lima, Sousa ¹⁷	2015	Psychological violence in nursing work	Nursing
Andrade, Leão, Costa, Brito, Santos, Costa ¹⁸	2015	Moral harassment in primary care according to nursing professionals	Nursing
Machado, Murofuse, Martins ¹⁹	2016	Experiences of being a worker in the poultry agribusiness of mental health care users	Nursing
Rissi, Monteiro, Cecconello, Moraes ²⁰	2016	Psychological interventions in the face of workplace moral harassment	Psychology
Jacoby, Monteiro ²¹	2014	<i>Mobbing of Working Students</i>	Psychology
Rueda, Baptista, Cardoso ²²	2015	Construction and initial psychometric studies of the Moral Harassment Labor Scale (MHLS).	Psychology
Campos, Rueda ²³	2016	Moral Harassment: Evidence of scale validity and relationships with quality of life at work	Psychology
Lima CQB, Barbosa CMG, Mendes, Patta ²⁴	2014	Moral harassment and workplace violence: characterization in judicial expertise. Banking Experience Report	Psychology

Figure 2. Results found according to author, year of publication, title of study and area of knowledge. Manaus (AM), Brazil 2017.

All 11 articles were uniformed in pointing to the understanding and interpretation of workplace bullying. It is revealed that the studies are descriptive, exploratory and investigative. It is important to know that of the 11 articles selected, six papers have a methodological approach with quantitative data and the remaining four bring qualitative data in which the interview was used as an instrument in their data collection.

It is noteworthy that each article and its authors moved in contextualizing each area of knowledge; These bring concepts that harassment and/or moral violence have and that, in addition to discussing and contributing to their current work, also favor interpretations for further research, as well as assisting the direction of data analysis in each area of knowledge.

DISCUSSION

A single article was found for the area of knowledge of Social Work that meets the inclusion criteria delimited, but that is of total importance and relevance to this area. The article analyzed the relationships that exist in the work of the

social worker, in view of the bullying in the midst of crises of business capital from the new strategies of organization and work management.

It was evidenced that, although the term “bullying” has become more recently used, the suffering and oppressions of this phenomenon are old in the world of work and that this has been causing physical and mental illness to workers over the years because they are always charged for actual production and, consequently, the generation of capital for companies.¹⁴

It was also stressed about the flexibilization of labor relations, which is one of the expressions of precariousness, which promoted new forms of human resources management, being bullying one of them, but also, on the other hand, opened doors for the deepening of oppression at work, allowing the understanding of how the violation of human rights is carried out and how the domination of capital in labor relations occurs today.¹⁴

It was understood that with the structural crisis, the productive restructuring and managerial reform of the state and social policies brought the <https://periodicos.ufpe.br/revistas/revistaenfermagem/index>

Taylorist-Fordist organization, which became hegemonic throughout the twentieth century. By Taylorism, the application of scientific principles to work organization was proposed, increasing exponentially Fordism and labor productivity by introducing new management strategies.¹⁴

By reordering these human resource management policies, the rights won by the civil service were achieved, in which the managerialism ideology was disseminated in labor relations and in the forms of public policy management. This ideology brought a great impact to social workers, who later suffered the negative effects of the neoliberal reform of the state. Thus, social workers began to verify the relevance of discussing bullying in the social worker's labor relations to understand how all this productive restructuring affected this class of workers.¹⁴

Therefore, one began to understand the concepts that bullying has in the daily life of the social worker and how this violence negatively affects the lives of these workers, such as the fear of job loss and increased competitiveness among workers. It is believed, therefore, that this article contributes especially to the empirical finding that the practice of bullying also occurs with social workers and that the fight against bullying in labor relations must belong to all workers of this class. Bonds and political alliances between social workers should be created to combat this practice in the workplace.¹⁴

In the area of Nursing, five texts were found that investigate and reveal the practice and situations of bullying in the work environments that nurses face, both in primary care and in public hospitals located in some cities of the country. It was also revealed the perceptions of these workers that involve bullying, as well as the knowledge of this violence, identifying the harassers and its characteristics and the consequences of this practice for professional health.

In one of the Nursing studies, some behaviors of bullying of the aggressor were found, in addition to presenting aggressions suffered in the work of the category, according to information from the research participants. It was evidenced in this study that what occurs most often is the manipulation that the aggressor makes so that workers take positions that are contrary to their interests, thus impeding their professional growth and work performance, directly influencing their health and emotional state.¹⁵

In another study, it was found that 33.3% of the nurses present in the research suffered bullying during the work of the Family Health Strategy and that almost half of the cases (46%) recognized the aggressors as supporters, followed by doctors (30.7%) and management (30.7%). There were also some characteristics that the aggressor has, being

the biggest ones: being an excessively stressed person; one who always has the reason for everything; insecure; gives contradictory and envious orders. It was also found that the prevalent and frequent type of bullying is decent, when the person holds the power and harasses his subordinate with false accusations and insults, reaching his psychological integrity.¹⁶

Bullying is practiced not only in a downward fashion,¹⁵⁻⁶ also being present in the relationships between patients, caregivers and other health professionals in the hospital network and that the biggest aggressors of nursing workers are patients (60%) followed by companions (32%) and, finally, managers or managers (20%).¹⁷

Most cases of psychological violence were found to consist of verbal aggression (95%) and, secondly, by bullying (27%).¹⁷ Therefore, it is understood the importance of understanding the occurrence of bullying in nursing professionals and it is necessary to conduct training, workshops and continuing education activities for these professionals, patients and hospital visitors.

In this context, we notice the need for the professional nurse to understand bullying and its nuances in the workplace. It was found that this phenomenon is widespread among nurses and nursing technicians and that some of these professionals know the concept of this practice and note that, in most cases where this violence occurs, it is in descending form. It is understood that bullying can bring psychological disorders that favor the appearance of: emotional fever; fear; sadness; cry; depression and anxiety.¹⁸

Moral harassment is approached, more specifically in the context of Nursing in mental health, as it was identified that most of the research participants involving workers in the poultry agribusiness had work-related mental illness. It was noted, therefore, that the experience of these workers indicates the presence of a Taylorist/Fordist management that further intensifies the exploitation of workers in relation to their production.¹⁹

It is understood that the organizational model of companies favors "a space for the production of sick and even disabled people to be physically and/or psychologically". In this scenario, it is important for the professional nurse to understand the worker in the different areas of work, understanding the context in which this worker is inserted, that is, the context of the management model that associates Taylorism and Fordism, which provides acceleration and increased production and thus generate more profits for companies.¹⁹

It has been noted in articles in the field of Psychology that bullying is a worldwide phenomenon, complex and multi-causal, and can be inserted in large public and private institutions,

in work organizations in which the psychologist acts and also in working university students. Thus, through Psychology, one sees the need to create instruments that identify and measure bullying in these work environments and organizations.

It was observed in one of the studies in the area of Psychology, when conducting interviews with psychologists about what is bullying at work, the perception of the occurrence of bullying at work and interventions used by them facing bullying at work, which the professional psychologist can identify and know the meaning of the concept bullying, however, none of the interviewed participants referred to the criteria that identify this phenomenon, such as the frequency and duration of this event.²⁰

It was evident from the questioning about the occurrence of bullying in the company in which psychologists operate, that most of these professionals denied the presence of this phenomenon. Therefore, it was realized that it is possible for many companies to be able to maintain healthy relationships among their employees, thus favoring lower risks of bullying and other forms of violence.²¹

It is observed in publications in the area of Psychology that bullying is included in various types of workers, organizational management and also in educational institutions. It is revealed that 89.3% of college students showed significant measures in the Negative Acts Questionnaire (NAQ), which measures the incidence of bullying. It is understood, therefore, that the higher the educational level of the worker, the higher is his expectation of growth in work, thus favoring a greater sensitivity of university workers to acts that go against their dignity and willingness to denounce bullying for through the applied questionnaire.²¹

Psychology, when referring to instruments, is interested in contributing to the creation of a questionnaire that indicates and also measures bullying. It is reported that, in Brazil, the first instrument that accomplishes this purpose is called the Moral Harassment Labor Scale (MHLS), created and validated in 2015 by Fabián Rueda and Makilim Baptista, which favored a breakthrough in Psychology, showing evidence of validation the following year (2016). Associations were made between MHLS and the Quality of Life at Work Scale (QLAWS). These works contributed to the construction of a better instrument to the Brazilian reality and culture, thus allowing the possibility of conducting new national studies in order to identify and investigate the presence of this phenomenon at work.²²⁻³

It is noted that the lack of instruments in which an expert's work plan is presented involving the importance of the need to identify violence and bullying at work is exposed in the study that

addresses the suffering of workers who are affected by Repetitive Strain Injury/Work-Related Musculoskeletal Disease (RSI/WRMSD). It is evident that there are some difficulties encountered during this skill, one of them being the lack of standardized instruments for the characterization of workplace bullying.²⁴

CONCLUSION

It was found that the theme bullying is an emerging phenomenon in postmodern society portrayed by different areas of knowledge such as: Social Work, Nursing and Psychology, containing contributions to each area presented. It was sought, in each professional class, to understand a little more about this theme, giving greater visibility in the academic environment, concerning the concepts and interaction that permeate bullying in the workplace.

It was also sought to corroborate the disclosure of the information presented here in order also to alert the need for prevention and elimination of this practice that is so present in various work environments. Thus, it is believed that it is up to the professional nurse, social worker and psychologist, in addition to knowing about bullying, also knowing how to identify and seek strategies for coping with different situations that involve bullying in their daily work.

Professionals from other areas need more research on the subject, since the object under study spreads throughout the multidisciplinary team and involves different types of organizational management focused on workers' health. This will increase the possibility for other professionals to understand more about this phenomenon, which has been plaguing the worker's daily life.

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