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Workplace bullying among New Zealand veterinarians

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Wendy Rasmussen

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Abstract

Workplace bullying is a global issue associated with devastating consequences for individuals and is costly to organisations. Veterinarians play a vital role in New Zealand and whilst there has been considerable research on workplace stress within the profession, little is known about the extent to which workplace bullying occurs and the problems it gives rise to. This study examined job demands (team conflict and destructive leadership) and job resources (ethical leadership and perceived organisational support) and their relationship to employees' physical health, level of strain and organisational variables in the context of workplace bullying. In addition, the buffering role of psychological capital against workplace bullying was examined. This study investigated these relationships by means of an online survey, using multiple regression analyses to test the main hypotheses.

Workplace bullying was prevalent amongst this sample of New Zealand veterinarians and was associated with worse physical health, higher levels of strain, reduced self-rated job performance and higher intentions to quit. Destructive leadership and team conflict had direct effects on personal and organisational variables and created an environment where workplace bullying was able to flourish. Workplace bullying did not mediate relationships to the extent expected. Positive resources reduced the effects of workplace bullying on strain and self-reported job performance but not on physical health symptoms, intentions to quit and absenteeism. Overall, the results indicate negative work conditions are stronger than positive work conditions and are associated with undesirable individual and organisational variables. Workplace bullying is a potent stressor and is fostered by negative work environments. This study concludes it is vital that organisations create positive work environments to prevent or reduce bullying from occurring.

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