

EXPLORING WORKPLACE BULLYING IN MALAYSIA: RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY ANALYSIS OF THE MALAYSIAN VERSION OF THE NEGATIVE ACTS QUESTIONNAIRE REVISED (NAQ-R)

*Shariffah Sheik Dawood

4701 College Drive, Penn State Behrend, 16563 PA, USA

*Correspondent author's e-mail: srs42@psu.edu

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Abstract: This is a preliminary study exploring the nature of bullying in the Malaysia workplace. Additionally, it analyses the psychometric properties of the Malaysian translation of the Negative Acts Questionnaire-Revised (NAQ-R). The sample comprised of 252 (response rate: 50.4%) employees from private and public sectors. Exploratory factor analysis indicated three components explaining 67.5% of the total variance. Confirmatory factor analysis revealed the fit indices for the modified version of Model 4, derived from the current study, showing a slightly improved model fit; 2.6, 0.87, 0.84, 0.94 and 0.08 for χ^2 /DF, GFI, AGFI, CFI and RMSEA. Reliability analysis showed excellent internal consistency of the scale (Cronbach's alpha=0.96). There were significant correlations between the NAQ-R with organizational and health measures. Twenty-one percent of employees were classified as targets of workplace bullying, which was above the international prevalence (8-15%). The importance of job level and the type of contract in the bullying process were emphasized.

Keywords: Workplace Bullying, NAQ-R, Malaysia, Psychometric Properties, Cross-Cultural

INTRODUCTION

Workplace bullying has been recognized as a serious and widespread phenomenon (Petrović, Čizmić, & Vukelić, 2014), and is also known to be the most common threat to workers compared to other forms of physical violence (Hoel, Sparks, & Cooper, 2001, p. 6; Di Martino, Hoel, & Cooper, 2003). The prevalence rate of workplace bullying is estimated

to be 15.7% in European countries (Nielsen, Matthiesen, & Einarsen, 2010); 25% in the United States (Lutgen-Sandvik, Tracy, & Alberts, 2007); 9.0–15.5% in Japan; and 5 – 7% in Australia (McLinton, Dollard, Tuckey, & Bailey, 2014). Research has also consistently shown that workplace bullying is related to severe health problems such as chronic fatigue, anxiety, sleep problems, and depression (Einarsen & Raknes, 1997; Vartia, 2001; Høgh, Mikkelsen, & Hansen, 2011). Organizations are reported to face problems relating to higher absenteeism and turnover, and lower productivity and performance due to workplace bullying (Hoel, Sheehan, Cooper, & Einarsen, 2011).

The dire need to further understand the phenomenon and prevalence of workplace bullying has fuelled many large-scale studies in the Scandinavian countries, Europe, the United States and Australia. Despite this development, studies investigating bullying in another cultural context are scarce. The current study aims to address this limitation by replicating and extending prior findings in the context of Malaysian organizations.

Consistent with majority researchers, the current study defines workplace bullying as a situation where one or more employees are persistently and systematically subjected to negative acts by others at work (Einarsen, 2000; Hershcovis, 2011). Negative behaviors related to workplace bullying can be categorized into: (1) work-related behaviors such as giving unmanageable tasks, excessive monitoring, withholding information needed for the work to be done; (2) person-related behaviors such as humiliating, ridiculing, social exclusion or spreading rumors; and (3) physical intimidation, in the form of a physical threat or physical attack (Einarsen, Hoel, & Notelaers, 2009; Petrović, Čizmić, & Vukelić, 2014).

According to Nielsen and colleagues (2011) there are approximately 27 different inventories based on the ‘behavioural experience approach’, measuring workplace bullying. Among them the Negative Acts Questionnaire (NAQ) and the revised version NAQ-R were identified in 47% of studies investigating workplace bullying and have been used in 40 countries (Tsunoda, Kawakami, Inoue & Abe, 2010). Einarsen and Raknes (1997) developed the original NAQ, with 23 items measuring exposure to negative acts typical of bullying, but do not require

respondents to label themselves as targets of bullying. A newer 29-item version has been introduced in the United Kingdom (Hoel, Cooper, & Faragher, 2001), and a 27- and 28- item versions have been utilized in Norway (Nielsen, Matthiesen, & Einarsen, 2008; Mathisen, Einarsen, & Mykletun, 2008). More recently, Einarsen, Hoel, and Notelaers (2009); and Nielsen et al. (2009) recommended a revision containing 22-items which has been psychometrically validated in various cultures (see also Nielsen et al., 2011). The current study is focused on the translation and validation of the 22-items NAQ-R in the Malaysian culture.

A handful of studies have addressed the issue of workplace bullying in several industries in Malaysia. Patah, Abdullah, Zahari, and Radzi (2010) explored the relationship between workplace bullying, emotional dissonance and intentions to pursue a job in the hospitality industry. A study by Yahaya, Ing, Lee, Yahaya, Boon, and Hashim (2012) revealed a significant negative correlation between workplace bullying and job performance among 217 employees at a plastics manufacturing company. Another study among 231 employees representing various industries in Malaysia revealed that 14 % employees experienced bullying that resulted in higher psychological strain and lower job performance (Hassan, Al Bir, & Hashim, 2015).

Whilst focusing on the prevalence, antecedents and consequences of workplace bullying, Malaysian researchers paid limited attention to the operationalization and validation of the NAQ-R in the Malaysian cultural context. For instance, the above-cited studies used the English version of NAQ-R, which lacks adaptation to the Malaysian culture and the official language, Malay. Some researchers have also modified the English version based on the consensus of a group of experts but not on psychometric criteria. Till date, a validated Malay version of NAQ-R is non-existent. Addressing this gap will also allow findings from Malaysia to be compared with NAQ-R internationally published data.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

This is a cross-sectional survey that was conducted through opportunity sampling. Approximately 500 questionnaires were administrated to the workers in diverse organizations such as schools, HR consultation

company, universities and financial organization. Overall response rate was 50.4%; average age of participants was 31 years old; 44% were male and 56% were female. As for their education level, 5.6% had Primary/SRP level education (equivalent to elementary and middle school), 21% had SPM (equivalent to high school), 26% had a Diploma (equivalent to associates degree); and 48% had university education. In terms of job level, 55% said that they were regular workers, 19% were in middle management while 16% were in senior management level. Seven percent of the participants were part-time/temporary workers, 17% contract workers, and 74% were permanent workers. Further distribution of each demographic characteristics by gender can be observed in Table 1.

Table 1: Distribution of Demographic Characteristics, Workplace Bullying, Supervisor Support, Co-Worker Support, Role Ambiguity, Role Conflict, Job Satisfaction and Psychological by Gender (N = 252)

	Male (N=111)		Female (N = 140)		p	α
	Average	n (%)	Average	n (%)		
Age	32 ± 9.3		30 ± 7.8		0.02	
Education level					0.01	
Primary		1 (1)		0		
SRP/PMR		10 (9.1)		3 (2.2)		
SPM		23 (20.7)		29 (20.7)		
Diploma		19 (17.1)		45 (32.1)		
University		58 (52.2)		61 (43.6)		
Job level					0.02	
Worker		52 (46.8)		88 (62.9)		
Middle management		23 (20.7)		25 (17.9)		
Senior management		25 (22.5)		13 (9.3)		
Other		9 (8.1)		11 (7.9)		
Employment status					0.01	
Part-time/temp.		10 (9.0)		8 (5.7)		
Contract		24 (21.6)		18 (12.9)		
Permanent		77(69.4)		110 (78.6)		
Scale scores						
Workplace bullying (NAQ-R)	36.64 ± 14.5	110	33.43 ± 13.5	139	0.07	0.96
Supervisor support	11.92 ± 2.21	103	11.92 ± 2.04	133	0.9	0.88
Co-worker support	12.17 ± 1.86	111	12.1 ± 1.87	140	0.7	0.83
Role ambiguity	28.85 ± 6.8	110	28.4 ± 6.1	140	0.6	0.87
Role conflict	27.62 ± 9.75	111	27.17 ± 9.72	140	0.7	0.89
Job satisfaction	24.57 ± 5.39	111	25.01 ± 5.07	127	0.51	0.74
Psychological distress	11.13± 11.6	111	11.66 ± 10.7	138	0.7	0.95

Measures

Malay version of NAQ-R

The 22-item, NAQ-R was translated with the permission of the Bergen Bullying Research Group. The NAQ-R measures exposure to negative acts typical of bullying. Respondents indicate on a five-point Likert scale (1-never, 2- now and then, 3-monthly, 4- weekly, and 5-daily) whether they have experienced the designated negative act in their workplace in the past six months without any reference to the word bullying or harassment.

Following Brislin (1970), Werner and Campbell (1970), and Geisinger (2003), four bilingual language experts were utilized to complete the back-translation. Two of the experts translated the original questionnaire to the Malay language, which are then back-translated into English by the other two experts who have not seen the original English version of the questionnaire. An English professor from the Department of English and a certified translator from the Malaysian Translation Association compared the original and back translated questionnaires to evaluate any difference in the meaning of the items and to ensure both versions are equivalent. The translated version was piloted on a 5-person focus group comprised of students, and private and public sector workers. No differences in meaning between the original and back-translated items were found.

Measures of other psychosocial work characteristics

The following scales were used to appraise the construct validity of the Malay version of the NAQ-R. These scales were already translated into Malay language and validated by previous researches.

Twelve items from the Malay version of the Job Content Questionnaire (JCQ) were administered to test the construct validity of the NAQ. The JCQ, originally developed by Karasek (1985), consists of 49 items representing numerous scales. It is widely used to assess the psychosocial work environment and is available in over 12 languages (Joanna and Michael, 2002). Previous Malaysian researchers have used both the English and the Malay versions of the JCQ in several occupational groups (Edimansyah, Rusli, Naing, & Mazalisah, 2006). Twelve items utilized in the current study constituted a minimum set of questions for four of the major scales of the JCQ. These scales were selected based on

their good internal reliability in the Malaysian validation studies: physical job demand (1item), job insecurity (3 items) and supervisor social support (4 items), coworker social support (4 items). The internal reliability for these scales in the present study is listed in Table 1.

Rizzo, House, and Lirtzman's (1970) six-item scale was utilized to measure role ambiguity. The scale measured the level of employees' perceived ambiguity about their role's authority and responsibility, their work objective, necessary information about the job, and the expectation of others of them. This scale had internal reliability of .87 in the current study.

Role conflict was measured by Rizzo *et al.*'s (1970) eight-item scale that is intended to measure the perception of resource adequacy, conflicting requests, group interdependence and different working styles experienced by academics. The internal reliability for the scale was .89 in the current study.

Participants completed the five-item shortened version of the General Satisfaction Measure section from the Job Diagnostic Survey (JDS: Hackman & Oldham, 1975). It is 'an overall measure of the degree to which the employee is satisfied and happy with the job' (Hackman & Oldham, 1975, p. 162). It was translated and validated in Malay language by Ahmand and Ngah (2009). The internal consistency of the scale in the current sample was .74, which was comparable to those reported previously (.74-.77; Cook, Hepworth, Wall, & Warr, 1981).

The shortened version Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS) is a 21-item scale designed to measure depression, anxiety and stress levels concurrently. A pilot study among automotive workers found that the Malay adaptation of the scale showed good Cronbach's alpha and construct validity (Edimansyah *et al.*, 2006; Ramli *et al.*, 2007). In the present study, the internal consistency of the scale was .95.

RESULTS

Table 1 shows the respondents' characteristics and average scores on each scale. Since there were no significant differences between male and female for the NAQ-R and for average scores on other job stressor scales ($p > 0.05$), the data was analyzed as a whole. The internal reliability for

the Malaysian version of the NAQ-R was Cronbach’s alpha ($\alpha = 0.96$). Table 1 shows the internal reliability of NAQ-R and other scales used in the study.

Exploratory Factor Analysis

All 22 NAQ-R items were entered into an exploratory factor analysis, using the maximum likelihood method. The correlation matrix showed that all the coefficients were greater the 0.3 but none were more than 0.8. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure was 0.953, while Bartlett’s sphericity was statistically significant ($\chi^2 [231] = 4311.354; p = .000$). Factors with eigenvalues of more than 1.0 were extracted and the Promax rotation method was used to obtain factor structure. Results indicated three factors, which account for 67.5% of the variance: The first factor, labeled as work-related bullying accounts for 58.3% variance; the second factor, labeled as person accounts for 4.9% variance; and the third factor, labeled as physical intimidation/isolation accounts for 4.3% variance (refer Table 2). Although earlier researchers (Einarsen, Hoel, & Notelaers, 2009) identified three similar factors: person-related bullying, work-related bullying and physical intimidation, there was slight variation per factor on the basis of their content/items in the current study. Factor 1 consists of five items measuring exposure to behaviors typically associated to work-related bullying from previous studies such as unmanageable workloads, opinions ignored, unreasonable deadlines, and excessive monitoring. However, factor 1 also consisted two items (‘intimidating behavior’ and ‘persistent criticism’) which typically were not considered as work-related bullying in previous studies. Factor 2 consists of seven items measuring person-related bullying describing exposure to behaviors such as gossip, insulting remarks, and excessive teasing. It also consisted of an item ‘withholding information’ which usually falls under work-related bullying in previous studies. Factor 3 consisted of four items relating to person-related bullying (mostly isolating in nature), two items related to physical intimidation and one item related to work-related bullying. Cronbach’s Alpha for Factor 1= .90, Factor 2= .92, and Factor 3= .91

Table 2: Exploratory Factor Analysis of the NAQ-R Using the Maximum Likelihood Method and Promax Rotation (N = 252)

Item#	Shortened version of items	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
Factor 1: Work Related Bullying				

Exploring Workplace Bullying in Malaysia: Reliability and Validity Analysis of the Malaysian Version of the Negative Acts Questionnaire Revised (NAQ-R)

21	Exposed to unmanageable workload (w) (w')	.843
9	Intimidating behavior (i) (p')	.827
19	Pressure not to claim something (w) (w')	.775
14	Opinions/views ignored (w) (w')	.722
16	Tasks with unreasonable/impossible deadlines (w) (w')	.715
13	Persistent criticism of work (p) (p')	.706
18	Excessive monitoring of work (w) (w')	.701
Factor 2: Person Related Bullying		
15	Practical jokes (p) (p')	.878
7	Insulting/offensive remarks about your person (p) (p')	.826
20	Subject of excessive teasing/sarcasm (p) (p')	.800
5	Spreading of gossip/rumors about you (p) (p')	.785
17	Allegations made against you (p) (p')	.759
11	Repeated reminders of errors (p) (p')	.746
2	Humiliated/ridiculed in connection to work (p) (p')	.735
1	Withold information which affects your performance (w) (w')	.588
Factor 3: Physical Intimidation/Isolation		
6	Ignore/excluded from the workgroup (p) (p')	.849
10	Hints to quit job (p) (p')	.836
12	Ignored or face hostile reaction when you approach (p) (p')	.787
22	Threats of violence of physical abuse or actual abuse (i)	.786
8	Being shouted at/target of spontaneous anger (i) (p')	.758
4	Responsibility removed/replaced with trivial or unpleasant tasks (p) (w')	.704
3	Ordered to do work below your competence (w) (w')	.571
Variance explained (%)		58.3 4.9 4.3

Work related bullying (w), Person related bullying (p), Physical intimidation (p), according to Einarsen, Hoel, and Notelaers (2009). Work related bullying (w'), Person related bullying (p'), according to Einarsen and Hoel (2001).

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Confirmatory factor analysis was performed to test the goodness-of-fit of the structural equation model. Previous studies reported a one-factor model, a two-factor model consisting of person-related bullying and a work-related bullying (Einarsen & Hoel, 2001) and a three-factor model consisting of person, work and physical bullying (Einarsen, Hoel, & Notelaers, 2009). In the current study, the author tested a one-factor model (Model 1), a two-factor model (Model 2), a three-factor model (Model 3) and a fourth model (Model 4) which was obtained from factor analysis results of this study. The model fit was assessed by the

following criteria: GFI, AGFI, and CFI > 0.90; and RMSEA < 0.05 or < 0.08 (Browne & Cudeck, 1993; Byrne, 2001; Blunch, 2013). In terms of the quotient χ^2 /df , a value of 4 is considered reasonable fit, whereas values close to 2 are considered very good fit (Brooke, Russell, & Price, 1988; see also Wheaton, Muthen, Alwin and Summers,1977; and Kline, 2005). Based on these criteria, the confirmatory factor analysis showed that Models 1, 2, and 3 did not have good model fit to the data (refer Table 3). Model 4 showed a close but non-optimal fit. Consequently, Model 4 was further modified by eliminating items which are loading lower than .7 (items 1, 3, 15 and 21). The fit indices for the modified version of Model 4 showed a slightly improved model fit; 2.6, 0.87, 0.84, 0.94 and 0.08 for χ^2 /DF , GFI, AGFI, CFI and RMSEA. Standardized estimate values were all significant ($p < 0.001$). Correlations between all three factors or dimensions (in Model 4 modified) are very high exceeding 0.90. All items had factor loadings equal to or greater than .070. Cronbach’s Alpha for Factor 1 = .89, Factor 2 = .91, and Factor 3 = .91.

Table 3: Goodness-of-Fit Indexes of Each of The Proposed Models (N= 245)

	χ^2 /DF	GFI	AGFI	CFI	RMSEA
Model 1	3.46	.78	.73	.87	.10
Model 2	3.31	.79	.74	.88	.09
Model 3	3.34	.79	.75	.88	.09
Model 4	2.93	.82	.78	.90	.08
Model 4 (modified)	2.6	.87	.84	.94	.08

Note. χ^2 /df = chi-square /degrees of freedom; GFI = Goodness of fit index; AGFI= Adjusted goodness fit index; CFI = Comparative fit index; RMSEA = Root mean square error of approximation.
 All the p values were statistically significant at the level of $p < .001$.

Construct Validity

To assess concurrent construct validity, Pearson’s correlation coefficients were calculated between the NAQ-R score and a number of variables: self-labeling as a victim of bullying as measured by the NAQ-R, supervisor support, co-worker support, role ambiguity, role conflict, job insecurity, physical job demand, job satisfaction and psychological distress. The score on NAQ-R is expected to be positively correlated with the self-labeling as victim of bullying, role conflict, role ambiguity, job insecurity, physical job demand and psychological distress. The scores on NAQ-R is expected to be negatively correlated with supervisor support, co-worker support and job satisfaction.

As predicted, there was a significant positive correlation between the NAQ-R score and self-labeling as victim of bullying, role conflict, job insecurity, physical job demand and psychological distress. There was no significant relationship between NAQ-R score and role ambiguity. There was a significant negative correlation between the NAQ-R score and supervisor support, co-worker support and job satisfaction (refer Table 4).

Table 4: Pearson’s Correlation Coefficient between NAQ-R, Self- Labelling, Supervisor Support, Co-Worker Support, Role Ambiguity, Role Conflict, Job Satisfaction and Psychological Distress (N = 252)

Scales	r	p
Self-labelled as bullied in the last 6 months	0.25 **	0.001
Self-labelled as bullied in the last 1 year	0.20 **	0.009
Supervisor support	-0.19**	0.004
Co-worker support	-0.13*	0.05
Role ambiguity	0.015	0.8
Role conflict	0.34**	0.001
Job Insecurity	0.16*	0.01
Physical Job Demand	0.26**	0.0001
Job satisfaction	-0.33 **	0.001
Psychological distress	0.57 **	0.001

**p < 0.001

*p < 0.05

Prevalence of Workplace Bullying

Table 5 reports the frequencies of each item in the NAQ-R. Twenty one percent of the participants were classified as targets of workplace bullying, having reported at least one of the 22 negative acts weekly or more in the past six months. While 12.8% felt subjected to bullying and 1.2% were regularly bullied on a weekly basis based on the subjective criteria.

Table 5: Percentage of Endorsed Items on The Translated NAQ-R (N= 252)

During the last 6 months, how often have you been subjected to the following negative acts in the workplace?		Never	Now and then	Monthly	Weekly/ daily
1.	Someone withholding information which affects your performance	42.1	40.9	10.7	5.2
2.	Being humiliated or ridiculed in connection with your work	61.1	29.4	4.8	4.0
3.	Being ordered to do work below your level of competence	31.7	51.2	7.1	8.8
4.	Having key areas of responsibility removed or replaced with more trivial or unpleasant tasks	53.6	34.9	6.0	4.8

5.	Spreading of gossip and rumours about you	50.8	35.3	6.0	7.2
6.	Being ignored, excluded or being 'sent to Coventry'	66.7	23.8	4.8	4.0
7.	Having insulting or offensive remarks made about your person (i.e. habits and background), your attitudes or your private life	58.3	31.7	4.0	5.2
8.	Being shouted at or being the target of spontaneous anger (or rage)	61.5	29.0	5.2	3.6
9.	Intimidating behaviour such as finger-pointing, invasion of personal space, shoving, blocking/barring the way	73.8	18.3	3.2	3.6
10.	Hints or signals from others that you should quit your job	76.2	16.3	2.8	3.6
11.	Repeated reminders of your errors or mistakes	57.5	30.6	5.6	5.2
12.	Being ignored or facing a hostile reaction when you approach	57.1	31.7	4.4	5.6
13.	Persistent criticism of your work and effort	56.7	31.0	6.7	4.4
14.	Having your opinions and views ignored	38.9	47.2	7.1	5.6
15.	Practical jokes carried out by people you don't get on with	48.0	39.3	4.4	7.2
16.	Being given tasks with unreasonable or impossible targets or deadlines	44.0	40.1	9.5	5.2
17.	Having allegations made against you	67.1	23.0	4.4	4.8
18.	Excessive monitoring of your work	56.3	31.0	5.6	6.4
19.	Pressure not to claim something which by right you are entitled to (e.g. sick leave, holiday entitlement, travel expenses)	60.3	27.4	6.3	5.2
20.	Being the subject of excessive teasing and sarcasm	71.4	19.0	5.2	3.6
21.	Being exposed to an unmanageable workload	60.3	29.0	4.8	5.2
22.	Threats of violence or physical abuse or actual abuse	77.8	15.2	2.4	3.6
Frequency of people who chose at least one item					21

There was a statistical significance between different job levels and the NAQ score as determined by one-way ANOVA ($F(2,223) = 11.569, p < .001$). A Tukey post hoc test revealed that NAQ score was significantly higher for management level ($M = 44.21, SD = 22$) and for middle management ($M = 35.16, SD = 14$) than for worker level ($M = 32.21, SD = 9$). There was no significant difference between the worker and middle management level ($p = .4$).

There was a statistical significance difference between employment status and the NAQ score as determined by one-way ANOVA ($F(2,243) = 4.68, p = .01$). A Tukey post hoc test revealed that NAQ score was significantly higher for contract workers ($M = 40.40, SD = 17.5$) compared to permanent workers ($M = 34.26, SD = 13.45$) and part-time workers ($M = 29.89, SD = 6.42$). There was no significant difference between the part-time and permanent workers ($p = .4$).

DISCUSSION

This study investigated the nature of workplace bullying in the Malaysian context with special focus in exploring the psychometric properties of the Malay version of the NAQ-R.

The translated Malaysian version of NAQ-R had a high internal consistency, Cronbach's alpha coefficient = 0.96, similar to those

reported in previous studies (Nielsen et al., 2009; Hauge et al., 2007) and comparable to that of the European version.

The exploratory factor analysis of the Malaysian NAQ-R extracted three factors which somewhat differ from the three-factor structure of NAQ-R previously reported by Einarsen, Hoel and Notelaers (2009). This suggests that Malaysian workers may differentiate forms of workplace bullying differently than seen in Western countries. Factor 1, which explained most of the variance (58.3%), consisted mostly of work-related bullying. In addition, item 'Persistent criticism of your work and effort', which is typically considered as a person-related bullying by Einarsen, Hoel, and Notelaers, (2009) seem to be considered by Malaysian workers as work-related. Item 'Intimidating behavior such as finger-pointing, invasion of personal space, shoving, blocking/barring the way' which is typically considered as a physical intimidation by previous researchers (Einarsen, Hoel, & Notelaers, 2009), seem to be considered as work-related bullying by Malaysian workers. Factor 2 consisted of person-related bullying. Factor 3 in this study consists of a mixture of items related to person-related bullying, work-related bullying and physical intimidation. It should be noted, however, that Factor 3 items share a common theme that centers on more severe forms of bullying such as physical/psychological isolation, exclusion and intimidation. Furthermore, in a collectivistic culture like the Malaysian workplace, people share strong affiliation, loyalty and responsibilities towards their in-group (Hofstede, 1980; 1991). As such, according to Tsuno, Kawakami, Inoue, and Abe (2010), in a collectivistic culture, being given a less important task or being ordered to do work below your competence may infer that a worker is being placed in a lower position and thus can be considered as a signal of social exclusion/isolation from the workplace/in-group.

The confirmatory factor analysis revealed that a modified version of Model 4, although not optimal, had a better fit to the data. It is recommended that the factor structure of the Malaysian NAQ-R should be reassessed in a larger and more diverse sample of employees.

Further analysis indicated that the total score of the NAQ-R was positively correlated with the frequency of labeling oneself as a victim of bullying in the past 6-months and 1-year. This was in line with previous

findings where NAQ-R scores seems to increase parallel to the frequency of labelling oneself as a victim of bullying, although self-labeling as a victim of bullying may be related to factors other than exposure to bullying behaviors (Einarsen, Hoel, & Notelaers, 2009).

As predicted, there was a significant positive correlation between the NAQ-R score and role conflict, job insecurity, physical job demand and psychological distress. There was also a significant negative correlation between the NAQ-R score and supervisor support, co-worker support and job satisfaction. Hence, the correlations of the Malaysian NAQ-R score with job and organizational related measures and subjective health and well-being measures further confirm the validity of the NAQ-R in the Malaysian working context. These results are consistent with findings from other countries, both for work related measures (Baillien & De Witte, 2009; Djurkovic et al., 2008; Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2007) and health related measures (Høgh et al, 2011a b; Vie, Glasø & Einarsen, 2011).

Twenty one percent of the participants were classified as targets of workplace bullying, having reported at least one of the 22 negative acts weekly or more in the past six months. This is above the prevalence (8-15%) reported by previous researchers (Zapf et al., 2003; Nielsen, Skogstad, Matthiesen, Glasø, Aasland, Notelaers, & Einarsen, 2009). In addition, 12.8% felt subjected to bullying and 1.2% were regularly bullied on a weekly basis based on the subjective criteria. These findings were within the range previously reported: 4.5-26.8% were bullied, and 0.6-10% were regularly bullied based on the subjective criteria (Nielsen, Skogstad, Matthiesen, Glasø, Aasland, Notelaers, & Einarsen, 2009).

Those who were in senior managerial positions tend to report a higher level of NAQ-R score than those who are not in managerial positions. This result warrants further exploration as previous studies have indicated that the chance for a manager to report being bullied increases among women holding managerial positions and have children under 15 at home; among managers who work at night or on a shift system, who suffer from workplace stress, who are dissatisfied with their working condition and who are not perceiving opportunities for promotions (Ariza-Montes, Muniz, Leal-Rodríguez, & Leal-Millán, 2014). Another study reported that upward bullying is reflective of a problematic work

environment, conflicts within the workgroup, inappropriate expressions of emotion and power imbalance (Branch, Ramsay, Barker, 2007). It should be noted that this finding can also be attributed to high power distance in the Malaysian workplace. Employees in high power distance culture tend to take on a more passive role as they prefer their superiors to make decisions. It is also harder for subordinates to air their views due to the large communication gap between superiors and subordinates. As a result, employees in senior managerial positions may be more vocal in expressing their feelings about bullying incidents than employees in lower level position (Ghosh, 2011; and Khatri, 2009).

The current study also indicates that the level of labor stability influences the degree of vulnerability to workplace bullying since the NAQ score was significantly higher for contract workers compared to permanent workers and part-time workers. This could be because unstable and temporary jobs are frequently held by lower-status contract workers and also because insecurity increases the perceived power distance between employees and their superiors (Ariza-Montes, Muniz R, Leal-Rodríguez, & Leal-Millán, 2014).

Limitations and Implications of the Study

The primary limitation of the present study is attributed to the small sample size and moderate response rate. It should be noted that previous studies have indicated that a low response rate is typical in workplace bullying research, due to the sensitive nature of the investigated questions (Björkqvist et al., 1994). Despite that, future studies should include sample from other groups and occupations to confirm the scale structure and to establish the extent to which the current findings can be generalized to another Malaysian workplace. Having said that, this study contributes to the existing research on workplace bullying by providing insights about workplace bullying in the Malaysian workplace, which is, until now, a fairly neglected group in bullying research. The results also indicate that the validation of the NAQ in Malay has satisfactory psychometric properties, so it can be considered a valid and reliable measure for HR practitioners, in Malay speaking Southeast Asian countries, to assess workplace bullying. This in turn is hoped to encourage practitioners to initiate appropriate policies to curb workplace bullying since such policies are sorely lacking in Malaysian organizations.

Key Points:

- Workplace bullying has been recognized as a serious and widespread phenomenon, and has been rigorously researched in Scandinavian countries, Europe, the United States and Australia.
- Studies investigating bullying in the Asian cultural context, specifically Malaysia is scarce. This study is first to validate the Malaysian version of the NAQ-R.
- Findings showed acceptable psychometric properties of the translated NAQ-R and revealed some concerning preliminary results on the prevalence of workplace bullying.
- Practitioners in Malaysia or in other Malay speaking Southeast Asian countries can utilize this scale to measure and understand the nature of workplace bullying.
- HR practitioners will be able to initiate appropriate policies to curb workplace bullying as such policies are sorely lacking in Malaysian organizations.

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