Psychosocial Safety Climate as an Indicator of Bullying, and Post-traumatic Stress Symptoms in Remote Area Nurses

A collaborative research project between Centre for Remote Health, Council of Remote Area Nurses of Australia, the Northern Territory Department of Health and Community Services and the University of South Australia

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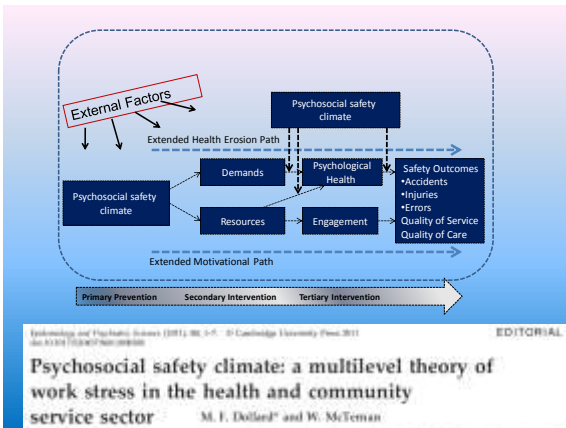
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Context

- Bullying accounts for 15% of workers compensation claims for mental stress in Australia
- Health and community services 24.0 % of bullying/harassment stress claims
- Australian Productivity Commission 2010 found that **work-related stress and psychosocial hazards** (e.g. bullying & harassment) **not given the same attention** as physical hazards

Psychosocial safety climate: a multilevel theory of work stress in the health and community service sector   M. F. Dollard* and W. McTernan

PSC Defined

- *Psychosocial safety climate (PSC)* refers to shared perceptions regarding policies, practices, and procedures for the protection of worker psychological health and safety

- Freedom from psychological harm

- (Dollard & Bakker, 2010)

Ingredients of PSC

1. Senior management show support for stress prevention through involvement and commitment
2. Participation and consultation in occupational health and safety (OHS) issues occurs with employees, unions, and occupational health and safety representatives
3. In practice, the prevention of stress involves all layers of the organization
4. My contributions to resolving occupational health and safety concerns in the organization are listened to

New 12 item version--Hall, G.B., Dollard, M.F., & Coward, J. (2010). Psychosocial Safety Climate: Development of the PSC-12. *International Journal of Stress Management, 4, 353-383*.
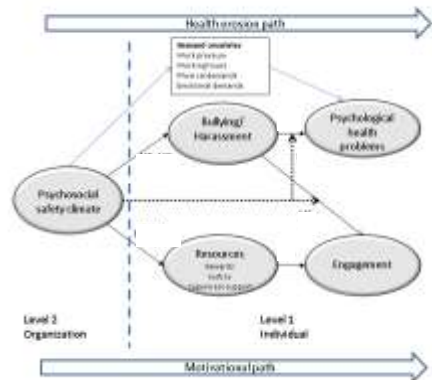
Psychosocial safety climate

- Psychological health at work is a serious occupational health and safety issue

- Theories matter "not just because theories influence the institutional arrangements, norms, and language of organizational management, but also because **theories focus both research and public policy attention**" (Pfeffer, 2010, pg. 40).

the Evidence

Sobel
1. -2.58, *p* < .01
2. -1.97, *p* < .05
3. -2.49, *p* < .01

Controls for Time 1 Dependent measures
N = 262 Time1; N = 196, Time 2
18 schools

Psychosocial safety climate as a precursor to conducive work environments, psychological health problems, and employee engagement

w., R., Dollard, M. F., Tuckey, M. R., & Dormann, C. (2011). Psychosocial safety climate as a lead indicator of workplace ullying and harassment...... *Accident Analysis & Prevention, 43*(5), 1782–1793.

To reiterate

- Psychosocial safety climate (PSC) refers to a specific organisational climate for the psychological health of workers.

- In low supply it is a latent pathogen for hazardous behaviours (i.e., bullying, harassment).

Design

- Assessed effects of unit PSC and bullying on post-traumatic stress symptoms assessed 24 months later in remote nurses.
- A novel design whereby unrelated data from remote area nurses were used across time
- $N = 190$, Time 1; $N = 163$ Time 2
- Matched at the work unit level ($N = 48$).

PostTraumatic Stress Disorder Symptoms

Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Checklist (PCL) (Weathers et al., 1993).

- 17 fundamental symptoms of PTSD
- reexperiencing symptoms (e.g. nightmares or flashbacks)
- hyperarousal symptoms (e.g. easily startled)
- avoidance (e.g. activities, places or people)
- 5-point scale 1 (not at all) to 5 (extremely).
- ($\alpha = .93$).

Bullying

HOW OFTEN:

0 Never	1 A few times a year or less	2 Once a month or less	3 A few times a month	4 Once a week	5 A few times a week	6 Everyday

How often does your manager . . .	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
218. Perpetrate bullying behaviour.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

How often do you experience . . .	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
223. Colleagues perpetrating bullying behaviour.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Aggregation

- Significant between-group variance ANOVA, $F_{(45, 107)} = 1.77$, $p < .01$.
- The ICC (1) at Time 1 indicated 15% of the variance in PSC was due to unit level effects.
- The reliability of the group mean, the ICC (2) for Time 1 was .85

Between-groups Effects

- Independent samples matched by work unit ($N = 48$)
- Time 1 → Time 2 24 months
Main effects and mediation model

Results

- Unit PSC was positively associated with bullying perpetrated by a manager or co-worker both within time, and across time.
- Psychosocial safety climate predicted change in post-traumatic stress symptoms via bullying
- Support the notion of PSC as a latent pathogen for hazardous behaviors, that in turn have traumatic consequences.
- Crucially linkage of two distinct data sets, PSC predicted bullying of 'other nurses', and bullying predicting trauma in 'other' nurses in the same work unit 24 months later.
- Limitation---measure of bullying
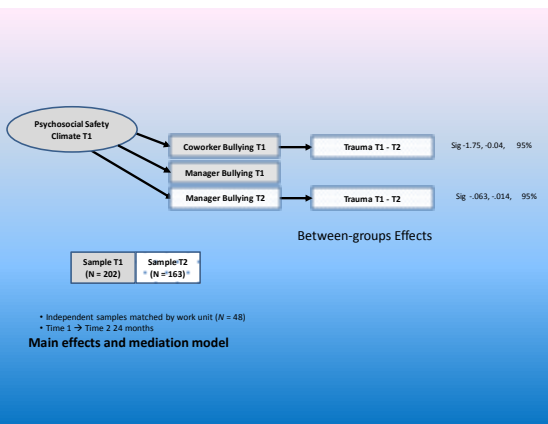
Conclusion

- We propose a multilevel theoretical model – psychosocial safety climate theory of work place bullying
- PSC is largely driven by senior management and varies by work unit
- PSC has important theoretical and practical utility – a target for intervention

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We sincerely hope that you will attend the ICOH-Work Organisation Psychosocial Factors conference (ICOH-WOPS) in Adelaide Australia in Sept 2014 ☺

End

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Published Papers on PSC
Book Chapters
Dollard, M.F. (2011). Psychosocial safety climate: A lead indicator of work conditions, workplace psychological health and engagement and precursor to intervention success. In *Managing psychosocial risks in the workplace: The role of process issues*. In Eds C. Biron, M. Karanika-Murray, & C. L. Cooper, Publisher: Routledge/Psychology Press.
Opie, T., Lenthall, S., & Dollard, M.F. (2011). Occupational stress in the remote area nursing profession. In J.Langan-Fox and C. Cooper *Handbook of Stress in the Occupations*, Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd., U.K.
Dollard, M.F., & Karasek, R. (2010). Building psychosocial safety climate: Evaluation of a socially coordinated PAR risk management stress prevention study. In J. Houdmont, & S. Leka (Eds). *Contemporary occupational health psychology: Global perspectives on research and practice*, (pp. 208-234). Chichester: Wiley Blackwell.
Brooks, B., Staniford, A., Dollard, M.F., & Wiseman, R.J. (2010). Risk factors. Consequences, and management of aggression in health care environments. In J. Houdmont, & S. Leka (Eds). *Contemporary occupational health psychology: Global perspectives on research and practice*, (pp. 229-254). Chichester: Wiley Blackwell.

Refereed Journal Articles
Dollard, M.F., & McTernan, W. (2011). Psychosocial safety climate a multilevel theory of work stress in the health and community sector, Epidemiology and Psychiatric Services, 1-7, Cambridge University Press. (Editorial)
Law, R., Dollard, M.F., Tuckey, M.R., & Dormann, C. (2011). Psychosocial safety climate as a lead indicator of workplace bullying and harassment, job resources, psychological health and employee engagement, Accident Analysis and Prevention, 43, 1782-1793.
Idris, M.A., Dollard, M.F., Coward, J., & Dormann, C. (2011, in press). Psychosocial safety climate: Conceptual distinctiveness and effect on job demands and worker psychological well-being. Safety Science.
Idris, M.A & Dollard, M.F. (2011, in press). Psychosocial safety climate, work conditions, and emotions in the workplace: A Malaysian population-based work stress study. International Journal of Stress Management.
Idris, M.A, Dollard, M.F & Winefield, A.H. (2011). Integrating psychosocial safety climate in the JD-R model: A study amongst Malaysian workers. South African Journal of Industrial Psychology. Vol 37. 1-11.
Tuckey, M.R., Winwood, P., Dollard, M.F. (2011) Psychosocial culture and pathways to psychological injury within policing. Police Practice and Research, 1-17. Review
Bond, S. A., Tuckey, M. R., Dollard, M. F., (2010). Psychosocial safety climate, workplace bullying, and symptoms of posttraumatic stress. Organization Development Journal, 28, 37- 56.
Hall, G.B., Dollard, M.F., & Coward, J. (2010). Psychosocial Safety Climate: Development of the PSC-12. *International Journal of Stress Management, 4, 353-383.*
Dollard, M.F., & Bakker, A. B. 2010. Psychosocial safety climate as a precursor to conducive work environments, psychological health problems, and employee engagement. Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology, 83, 579-599.

Refereed conference proceedings
Zimmermann, B. K., Haun, S., Dormann, C., & Dollard, M. (2009). Stress and reciprocity in service interactions: Main and moderating effects of psychosocial safety climate. In P.H. Langford, N. J. Reynolds, & J. E. Kehoe (Eds.), *Meeting the future: Promoting sustainable organisational growth*, 8th Industrial and Organisational Psychology Conference proceedings:150-155. Sydney: Australian Psychological Society.

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event you may have in mind.
Please tick one box for each row.

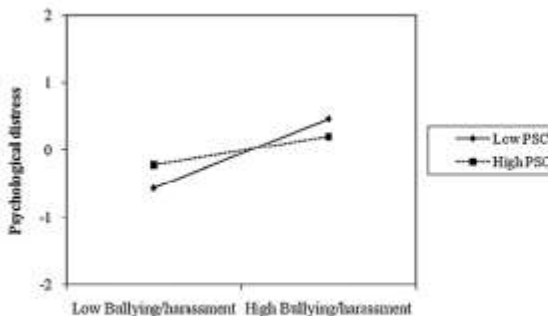|	Not at all 0	1	Somewhat 2	3	Extremely 4
5. Intrusive images	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. Nightmares	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. Reliving of the trauma	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8. Emotionally upset when reminded of the trauma	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9. Physical reactions when reminded of the trauma	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10. Trying not to think, talk, or have feelings about the trauma	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11. Trying to avoid activities, places or people	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12. Memory loss	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
13. Loss of interest	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
14. Feeling distant or cut off	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
15. Feeling emotionally numb	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
16. Lack of future plans	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
17. Difficulty sleeping	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
18. Irritability	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
19. Difficulty concentrating	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
20. Overly alert	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

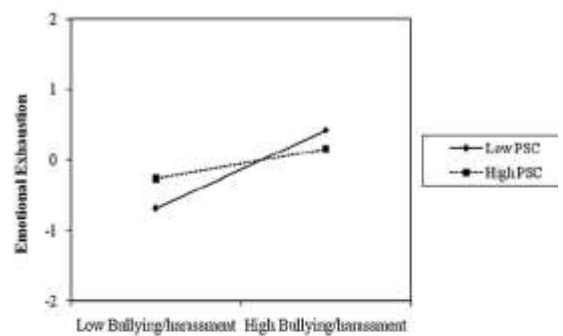Fig. 2. PSC moderates the relationship between bullying/harassment and dis

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Fig. 3. PSC moderates the relationship between bullying/harassment and emotio exhaustion.