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Do targets of workplace bullying portray a general victim personality profile?

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The aim of this study is to examine differences in personality between a group of bullied victims and a non-bullied group. The 144 participants, comprising of 72 victims and a matched contrast group of 72 respondents, completed Goldberg's (1999) International Personality Item Pool (IPIP). Significant differences emerged between victims and non-victims on four out of five personality dimensions. Victims tended to be more neurotic and less agreeable, conscientious and extravert than non-victims. However, a cluster analysis revealed that the victim sample can be divided into two personality groups. One cluster, which comprised 64% of the victim sample, do not differ from non-victims as far as personality is concerned. Hence, the results indicate that there is no such thing as a general victim personality profile. However, a small cluster of victims tended to be less extrovert, less agreeable, less conscientious, and less open to experience but more emotional unstable than victims in the major cluster and the control group. Further, both clusters of victims scored higher than non-victims on emotional instability, indicating that personality should not be neglected as being a factor in understanding the bullying phenomenon.

Key words: Workplace victimization, bullying, personality.

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INTRODUCTION

Bullying is increasingly being recognized as a serious problem within the working environment (Mayhew, McCarthy, Chappell, Quinlan, Barker & Sheehan, 2004). For example, in his annual speech to the nation in 2004, the prime minister of Norway gave prevention against bullying at schools and in the working place extensive attention and high priority. In the UK, both campaigns and an increase in media reports have contributed to raise the public's awareness on bullying as a serious type of counter productive behavior at work (Coyne, Seigne & Randall, 2000).

Most surveys indicate that bullying happens in many different social contexts and at different age levels (see Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996; Olweus, 2003). Approximately 5–10% of the work force in Europe is found to be exposed to some kind of bullying at the work place (see Zapf, Einarsen, Hoel & Vartia, 2003). The following definition of bullying at work seems to be widely agreed upon in the literature:

Bullying at work means harassing, offending, socially excluding someone or negatively affecting someone's work task. In order for the label bullying (or mobbing) to be applied to a particular activity, interaction or process it has to occur repeatedly and regularly (e.g. weekly) and over a period of time (e.g. about six months). Bullying is an escalation process in the course of which the person confronted

ends up in an inferior position and becomes a target of systematic negative social acts. A conflict cannot be called bullying if the incident is an isolated event or if two parties of approximately equal "strength" are in conflict (Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf & Cooper, 2003b, p. 15).

Einarsen (1999) has suggested that bullying can be divided into two different kinds, namely predatory and dispute-related bullying. In the predatory type, the victims may be bullied because they are assessed as easily defeated and therefore are easy targets to the predator's aggression. Dispute-related bullying, on the other hand, is provoked by work-related conflicts which escalate into a bullying situation.

In a review of the literature on the potential negative effects of bullying on the health and well-being of the individual victim, Einarsen and Mikkelsen (2003) concluded that exposure to bullying in the work place must be seen as a significant source of social stress at work (see also Zapf, 1999). Clinical observations, e.g., by Heinz Leymann in the early 1990s, portrayed victims as suffering from social isolation and maladjustment, psychosomatic illness, depressions, compulsions, helplessness, anger, anxiety and despair (Leymann, 1996). Leymann's observations were supported by Mikkelsen and Einarsen (2002) and Vartia (2001) who claimed that being exposed to intentional and systematic psychological harm by another person on a regular basis seems to produce severe emotional reactions and health problems, such as fear, anxiety, helplessness, depression and shock in the victim.

The seriousness of bullying at work is also reported by Niedl (1996) who in a sample of 368 Austrian public hospital employees observed that the victims of bullying showed more anxiety, depression, irritation, and psychosomatic complaints than did non-victims. Apparently, the evidence of the detrimental effects of bullying is convincing, as several researchers have demonstrated that exposure to systematic and prolonged non-physical and non-sexual aggressive behaviors at work is highly injurious to the victim's health (see Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf and Cooper, 2003a). In addition, there is emerging evidence of a relationship between bullying and several negative organizational effects, such as absenteeism, turnover, and productivity (Hoel, 2002; Hoel, Einarsen & Cooper, 2003).

So far, research has focused on two main explanations for workplace bullying, namely psychosocial work environment and organizational climate factors and personality and the individual characteristics (Einarsen, 1999). The work environment hypothesis has gained support in research, in as much as bullying is associated with a working situation that is strained and competitive (Vartia, 1996). Bullying has also been found to correlate with dissatisfaction with management, role conflicts, and a low degree of control over one's own work situation, with monotonous and unchallenging work and with an organizational climate with little encouragement for personal growth (Einarsen, Raknes & Matthiesen, 1994; Zapf, 1999).

More recently, however, some researchers are taking another stand, arguing that individual antecedents such as the personality of the bullies and victims indeed may be involved as causes of exposure to bullying (see Coyne *et al.*, 2000). Zapf and Einarsen (2003) encompass both the environment and the person oriented hypotheses, stating that organizational issues undoubtedly have to be considered when explaining the occurrence of bullying. They add that no comprehensive model of workplace bullying would be satisfactory without also including personality and individual factors of both perpetrators and victims, and their contributing effects to the onset, escalation and the consequences of the bullying process.

Focusing on bullying among school children, Olweus (1993) found that victims were cautious, sensitive and anxious, while perpetrators were self-confident, aggressive and impulsive. Brodsky (1976) described victims of bullying at work as conscientious, literal-minded and unsophisticated with difficulties adjusting to the situation. Niedl (1995) asserts that the probability of being a target of bullying increases if the person is unable to defend himself or is stuck in a situation due to dependency factors. Such a dependent relationship may be of a psychological nature, influenced by the victim's self-esteem, personality or cognitive capacity. Consistent with this view, many victims in a Norwegian survey reported that their lack of coping resources and self-efficacy, such as low self-esteem, shyness, and lack of conflict management skills, contributed to their problem (Einarsen, Raknes & Matthiesen, 1994).

Research in the Nordic countries have shown that personality traits, such as neuroticism, are also related to exposure to bullying (Vartia, 1996; Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2002) and that victims act more actively in conflict situations than do others (Thylefors, 1987). In Ireland, O'Moore, Seigne, McGuire, and Smith (1998) found that victims of bullying on average scored lower than the norm group on Catell's 16PF concerning emotional stability and dominance, as well as higher on the anxiety, apprehension, and sensitivity scales. Also, Zapf (1999) reported that victims of bullying portrayed symptoms of anxiety and depression even before the onset of bullying.

More recently, Coyne *et al.* (2000) found victims to be less extroverted and independent as well as being more unstable and conscientious than a sample of non-victims, arguing that these findings suggest that personality traits may give an indication of who in an organization is most likely to become a target of bullying, and thus indicate some risk factors for exposure to bullying. Matthiesen and Einarsen (2001) investigated psychological correlates of bullying among 85 former and current victims using MMPI-2, which is a clinical personality diagnostic scale measuring personality disturbance of a psychiatric nature (Havik, 1993). Some of these victims portrayed an elevated personality profile, indicating a range of deviances in terms of personality and psychiatric distress. However, this study demonstrated that the victims can be divided into three distinct subgroups with different personality; "The seriously affected", "The disappointed and depressed", and "The common group". The latter group did not portray any particular personality profile, questioning the existence of a general victim profile.

Concerning the personality hypothesis, and in terms of personality of the victims, there is a lack of structured empirical research into this issue (Coyne *et al.*, 2000). A reason for this shortage may be that one of the pioneers of bullying research disregarded the role of individual characteristics as antecedents of bullying (Leymann, 1996; Leymann & Gustafsson, 1996). Leymann strongly claimed that personality traits, such as anxiety or rigidity, found among victims were a *result* of and definitely not a cause of exposure to bullying. According to Zapf and Einarsen (2003), one has indeed to tread carefully with respect to these issues, as one might easily be accused of "blaming the victim".

However, bearing such precautions in mind, there are still legitimate reasons to examine the role of personality in the victimizing process. For example, Ross (1977) has shown through the concept of "The fundamental attribution error" how people in general attribute and explain the social behaviors or experiences of others in terms of personality. Hence, a person-oriented perspective will probably be present among the lay population anyway, requiring empirical data in this respect. According to Einarsen (2000), the personality of a victim may at least be relevant in explaining perceptions of and reactions to workplace bullying. The personality of the victim may also elicit certain destructive responses and

behaviors in the perpetrator, as well as the bully's personality may trigger certain behaviors in the victim that may end in a destructive encounter. Furthermore, individual differences may also be involved as potential moderating factors explaining why some more than others develop stress reactions and health problems after exposure to bullying (Zapf & Einarsen, 2003). Developing effective intervention techniques in order to prevent bullying at work thus depends upon a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon (see also Olweus, 1993).

In summing up the existing but scarce research literature, targets of workplace bullying seem to be submissive, anxious and neurotic, lacking social competence and self-esteem, and characterized by behavioral patterns related to overachievement and conscientiousness (Coyne *et al.*, 2000; Zapf & Einarsen, 2003). Thus, empirical evidence indicates the existence of individual antecedents of bullying located within the targets. This leads us to the first hypothesis of the present study:

Hypothesis 1: Victims of workplace bullying score higher on personality traits in the Big Five Model, such as emotional instability, agreeableness and conscientiousness, but lower on extroversion and intellect compared to a non-victim group.

Furthermore, we expect the scores of the victims to reveal a relatively great variance, since several studies have reported the existence of different personality groups within victim samples (e.g., Matthiesen & Einarsen, 2001). For example, Zapf (1999) has shown that one subsample of victims seems to lack social and communicative skills compared to another subsample and the control group. Hence, the second hypothesis of this study is the following:

Hypothesis 2: There exist different personality groups within the victim sample.

METHOD

Procedure

Two separate samples were recruited in two phases. In the first phase (2002–2003), 221 participants were recruited among members of two Norwegian support associations against bullying at work. Questionnaires were distributed by the two associations to their members by regular mail. Attached to the questionnaires were a letter of recommendation from the heads of the associations, and an accompanying letter from the researchers. The questionnaires were anonymously returned directly to the researchers. In the second phase in 2005, a group of 96 persons was recruited from several groups of mature part-time students from different locations in Norway. Participation was voluntary. The purpose of this second sample was to acquire a non-bullied control group that could be matched with the bullied sample on demographic variables. Matched random assignment assures that the groups are equivalent on the matching variables. This assurance is particularly important with small sample sizes, because ordinary random assignments procedures are more likely to produce equivalent groups only when the

sample size is increased (Cozby, 1993). However, 24 of the controls had either been bullied or had not answered the relevant questions in the survey and were therefore excluded from the matched sample.

Response rates were neither available for the victim samples nor the control group. Concerning the victims, the questionnaires were administered by the two support associations and therefore beyond our control. The contrast group was created exclusively to match the victim sample in order to control for any demographical effects. Due to this lack of response rates, this study should not be seen as representative for the population of victims and the results must therefore be generalized to the community with caution. However, it is important to distinguish between representative studies that aim to demonstrate the frequency and nature of bullying at work, and studies attempting to demonstrate the phenomenology of bullying (Matthiesen & Einarsen, 2002), which is the aim of the present study.

Sample

Seventy-two respondents of the bullied participants were matched with non-bullied participants on the demographic variables; work tasks, age and gender. Hence, combining the samples, there were 144 total participants who provided usable data for this study. The matching procedure was done in SPSS by sorting the cases on the relevant variables. The subjects were then rank-ordered and made into pairs. In cases with two or more possible pairs, a randomization mechanism was utilized to decide the pair. Fourteen of the pairs did only fit on age and gender, and not on work task. In those cases, persons with adjacent work tasks were selected.

The total matched sample had an age range from 29–56 years ($M = 43.3$; $SD = 6.86$). The targets ($N = 72$) had a mean age of 43.7 years ($SD = 6.90$), while the mean age in the control group was 42.8 ($SD = 6.84$). Both groups consisted of 51 women and 21 men. In resemblance with the total sample, the majority of both sub-samples was or had been assigned to work tasks related to administration/executive work (bullied sample: 37%; control group: 43%) or health-care (24% and 22%, respectively).

Instruments

Data were collected by means of anonymous self-report questionnaires assessing exposure to bullying and personality. Exposure to bullying at the workplace was measured by the Norwegian version of the Negative Acts Questionnaire (NAQ) (Einarsen & Raknes, 1997; Hoel, Rayner & Cooper, 1999), which measures self-reported exposure to specific negative acts. The version of the NAQ used in this study consisted of 28 items (Cronbach's alpha = 0.96), describing different kinds of behavior which may be perceived as bullying if they occur on a regular basis. All items were written in behavioral terms, with no reference to the phrase bullying. The NAQ contains items referring to both direct (e.g., openly attacking the victim) and indirect (e.g., social isolation, slander) behaviors. For each item the respondents were asked how often they had been exposed to the behavior, response categories being "never", "now and then", "about monthly", "about weekly" and "about daily". The NAQ attends to the frequencies and duration of bullying, but not differences in power.

After the completion of the NAQ, a formal definition of bullying at work was introduced, and the respondents were asked to indicate whether or not they considered themselves as victims of bullying at work according to this definition: "*Bullying takes place when one or more persons systematically and over time feel that they have been subjected to negative treatment on the part of one or more persons, in a situation in which the person(s) exposed to the treatment have difficulty in defending themselves against them. It is not bullying when two equal strong opponents are in conflict with each other*" (Einarsen *et al.*, 1994). The response categories were "no", "to a certain

extent", and "yes, extremely". The victim group was also asked to supply information about when they were bullied, the duration of the bullying, who bullied them and the number of perpetrators.

Personality was measured by the International Personality Item Pool (IPIP; Goldberg, 1999). The IPIP Big-Five marker consists of 50 items measuring extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability (neuroticism) and intellect (openness) (Goldberg, 2001). *Extraversion* assesses traits such as sociability, talkativeness, and excitement seeking. *Agreeableness* refers to the extent that an individual is likeable, understanding, and diplomatic. Individuals scoring high on *Conscientiousness* tend to be traditional, organized, and dependable. *Emotional stability* examines whether an individual tends to be relaxed and stable, or anxious and easily upset. *Intellect* assesses traits such as reflection, competence, and imagination. The participants rated each item on a five-point Likert scale (from "Very Inaccurate" to "Very Accurate"). In the present study, the internal stability of the personality scales as measured by Cronbach's alpha was satisfactory: Extraversion (0.90), Agreeableness (0.86), Conscientiousness (0.82), Emotional Stability (0.87), and Intellect (0.79).

Statistics

The data were coded and processed using the statistics package SPSS 13.0. The following statistical procedures were employed: frequency analysis, *t*-test, univariate analysis of variance, TwoStep cluster analysis, and correlation analysis.

RESULTS

Means and standard deviations of the scores on the Big Five personality dimensions were calculated for both samples, and an independent *t*-test was used to determine any differences between victims and non-victims. As shown by Table 1, there were significant differences between the groups on four of the five personality dimensions. A significant difference emerged for emotional instability, with victims tending to be

Table 1. Means, standard deviations and *t*-values for victims and non-victims of workplace bullying

Personality dimensions	Victims (<i>N</i> = 72)		Non-victims (<i>N</i> = 72)		<i>t</i> (142)
	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	
Extraversion	3.25	0.89	3.64	0.72	-2.92**
Agreeableness	4.07	0.76	4.29	0.43	-2.20*
Conscientiousness	3.42	0.81	3.81	0.55	-3.39***
Emotional instability	3.15	0.80	2.25	0.68	7.27***
Intellect	3.78	0.64	3.68	0.59	1.04

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

Table 2. Pearson's product-moment correlation between Negative Acts Questionnaire (NAQ) and Big Five personality dimensions for victims of workplace bullying

	Extraversion	Agreeableness	Conscientiousness	Emotional instability	Intellect
NAQ	-0.21*	-0.06	-0.16	0.46**	0.09

* $p < 0.05$ level, two-tailed, ** $p < 0.01$, two-tailed.

more anxious, neurotic and easily upset (M victims = 3.15 and M non-victims = 2.25, $t(142) = 7.27$, $p < 0.001$). A significant difference was also revealed for conscientiousness, with victims being less traditional, organized, and dependable (M victims = 3.42 and M non-victims = 3.82, $t(142) = -3.39$, $p < 0.001$), and for extroversion, with victims being less social, talkative, and excitement seeking compared to the non-victims ($M = 3.25$ and $M = 3.64$, respectively $t(142) = -2.92$, $p < 0.01$). Further, the scores on agreeableness were also different between the two groups, with victims tending to be less likeable, understanding, and diplomatic ($M = 4.07$ and $M = 4.29$, respectively $t(142) = -2.20$, $p < 0.05$), while the scores on intellect were not different between the two groups.

For further exploration, Pearson's product-moment correlation analysis was performed on the victim's scores on the personality dimensions and the NAQ. The analysis revealed a strong and significant correlation between emotional instability and exposure to bullying as measured by the NAQ ($r = 0.47$, $p < 0.01$) and a weak but significant negative correlation between extroversion and NAQ scores ($r = -0.21$, $p < 0.05$). The associations between the three other personality dimensions; conscientiousness, agreeableness and intellect and NAQ were weak or almost at zero (see Table 2). Hence, emotional instability and introversion seem to be associated with exposure to bullying behaviors.

A TwoStep cluster analysis (log-likelihood distance measure; Schwarz's Bayesian Clustering Criterion) was employed in order to investigate if any subgroups exist within the victim sample. The cluster analysis indicated the existence of two different personality groups among the victims. The first cluster comprised 64% ($n = 46$) whereas the second cluster comprised 36% ($n = 26$) of the victims. *T*-tests revealed that the victims in cluster 2 tended to be significantly less extrovert, agreeable, conscientious and open to experience, but more emotionally unstable than the victims in cluster 1 (see Table 3). While cluster 2 differed significantly from cluster 1 and the control group on all five personality dimensions, subgroup 1 was more similar to the control group, showing a significant difference only on emotional stability and intellect. A significant ANOVA ($F = 108.96$; $df = 2/141$; $p < 0.001$) with LSD *post-hoc* test showed that both cluster 1 ($M = 2.52$; $SD = 0.69$; $N = 46$) and cluster 2 ($M = 2.42$; $SD = 0.62$; $N = 26$) had been more exposed to negative acts than the control group ($M = 1.25$; $SD = 0.26$; $N = 72$). However, no significant differences in exposure to negative acts were found between the two clusters.

Table 3. Cluster profiles and multiple comparisons between cluster 1, cluster 2 and the control group

Personality dimensions	Sample	N	Mean	SD	Sample	N	Mean	SD	Sig.
Extroversion	Cluster 1	46	3.65	0.68	Cluster 2	26	2.55	0.78	0.001
	Cluster 2	26	3.55	0.78	Control	72	3.64	0.72	0.98
Agreeableness	Cluster 1	46	4.44	0.42	Control	72	3.64	0.72	0.001
	Cluster 2	26	3.41	0.79	Cluster 2	26	3.41	0.79	0.001
Conscientiousness	Cluster 1	46	3.82	0.55	Control	72	4.29	0.43	0.13
	Cluster 2	26	2.62	0.56	Control	72	4.29	0.43	0.001
Emotional instability	Cluster 1	46	2.92	0.68	Cluster 2	26	2.62	0.56	0.001
	Cluster 2	26	3.55	0.50	Control	72	3.82	0.55	0.53
Intellect	Cluster 1	46	4.06	0.46	Control	72	3.82	0.55	0.001
	Cluster 2	26	3.31	0.63	Cluster 2	26	3.55	0.50	0.001
					Control	72	2.25	0.68	0.001
					Control	72	2.25	0.68	0.001
					Cluster 2	26	3.31	0.63	0.001
					Control	72	3.68	0.59	0.001
					Control	72	3.68	0.59	0.01

DISCUSSION

The present study demonstrated that victims of bullying at work differ from non-victims on four out of five personality dimensions in the Big Five Model. The victims tended to be more anxious and neurotic and less agreeable, conscientious and extravert than non-victims. These findings are consistent with previous research reporting differences in personality between victims and non-victims (Vartia, 1996; O'Moore *et al.*, 1998; Coyne *et al.*, 2000; Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2002; Zapf & Einarsen, 2003), thus supporting our hypothesis that there exist differences in personality between victims of bullying at work and non-victims.

However, our hypothesis that victims of bullying would score higher on agreeableness and conscientiousness than non-victims, were not supported. On the contrary, they scored significantly lower than the control group, which contrasts with previous studies claiming victims of bullying to be more agreeable and more conscientious than non-victims (see Coyne *et al.*, 2000). A reasonable explanation for the divergent results between the present study and previous research is that the above result actually reflects the distinction between different subgroups of victims. An important contribution of the present study is that victims of bullying may not be seen in terms of one type of personality, but rather comprise several subgroups. Victims in cluster 2 tended to be more unstable and less agreeable, conscientious and extravert than victims in cluster 1 and non-victims. Once more, this result is in line with research indicating that victims have a different personality than non-victims. However, cluster 2, which includes only 36% of the victim sample, is a small subgroup that differs significantly from cluster 1 and the controls which again were more alike; indicating that two-thirds of the victims are quite like non-victims as far as personality is concerned. Yet, one general difference remains.

By comparing the results of the victim clusters to the results of the control group, both clusters differ significantly from non-victims on emotional stability and intellect. Another interesting finding was that the major part of the victims scored higher than the control group on the intellect dimension, indicating those victims to be rather creative, resourceful and open to experience (cf. McCrae, 1987). Altogether, these results indicate there is no such thing as a general victim personality profile indicating vulnerability.

Further, the present study revealed positive relationships between the NAQ and emotional stability and extroversion. Although causal conclusions cannot be drawn based on the cross-sectional nature of these data, this result strengthens the idea that victims are, or become as a consequence of bullying, more neurotic and introvert than non-victims. Research in school settings has also shown that 8–13-year-old victims scored high on neuroticism and low on extroversion on Eysenck's personality dimensions (Mynard & Joseph, 1997), leading Randall (1997; cited in Coyne *et al.*, 2000) to suggest that these traits may also emerge within adult victims.

Leymann (1996) has strongly claimed that any differences in personality between victims of bullying and non-victims are caused by exposure to bullying. In line with his view, there is strong evidence that bullying may cause dramatic effects in the victim, such as fear, anxiety, helplessness, depression and shock (Mayhew *et al.*, 2004). Leymann and Gustafsson (1996) reported that victims of bullying may even show symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), a finding which is recently supported by Einarsen and Mikkelsen (2003). However, personality traits as measured in the present study are generally regarded to remain rather stable across time (Miller, Lynam & Leukefeld, 2003). In a sample of 398 men and women, Costa and McCrae (1988) found an average six-year stability coefficient of 0.83 across the five personality dimensions in the Big Five Model.

From such a view it can be hypothesized that the individuals in the total victim sample portray personality profiles they had before the onset of bullying. The two victim clusters, portraying significantly different personality patterns, did not report any different exposure to negative acts. Hence, this result may indicate that exposure to bullying by itself is not sufficient to explain the revealed differences between the groups. Moreover, these results may also indicate that 34% of the targets (cluster 2) tended to be significantly more emotionally unstable, but less agreeable, conscientious, extrovert and open to experience compared to the major part of the victims and the non-victims, even before the bullying had taken place. Our findings accord closely to Zapf (1999) who also claimed the existence of a small group of “derailed” targets, lacking social and communicative skills. Portraying such personality traits probably will increase the likelihood of becoming a target of workplace bullying. For example, being anxious which may imply a lack of confidence and social skills may make the victim vulnerable and an easy target of frustration. An anxious employee with few social skills may cause annoyance and therefore elicit aggressive behavior in others (Zapf, 1999). In the present study, cluster 2 showing low agreeableness may provoke aggressive behaviors within a bully, and thus, be identified with so called “provocative victims” (Olweus, 1993).

Acknowledging the complex social interaction pattern related to workplace bullying, Einarsen (1999) has suggested that different personality traits of victims may provoke different types of bullying. For example, personality traits such as anxiety and introversion may be related to predatory bullying, while unreliable or untraditional individuals may provoke anger in others, and lead to dispute-related bullying. The notion that the personality of an individual can predispose them to become victims of bullying can even be thought of as a vicious circle, where bullying may lead to personality changes, which again makes the victim more vulnerable or “provocative” and predisposed to further attacks. This way it is possible to argue that personality plays an important role in the bullying process, without taking a stand whether the personality causes the bullying or that bullying causes the personality differences found between victims and non-victims. However, until longitudinal studies have been conducted the issue of cause and effect remains unanswered.

CONCLUSION

The results of the present study indicate that the major part of the victims is quite like non-victims as far as personality is concerned. Therefore, it seems that there is no general victim personality profile. However, one-third of the victims tended to be more neurotic and less agreeable, conscientious and extravert than non-victims. Further, emotional instability and introversion are associated with exposure to bullying as measured by the Negative Acts Questionnaire. Hence, the

findings of the present study confirm the notion that personality should not be neglected being an important factor in understanding the bullying phenomenon. Yet, personality does not easily differentiate targets from non-targets. Hence, the main focus when intervening in order to prevent bullying in organizations must be on organizational factors more than on the personality of victims.

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