

WORK ENVIRONMENT, HARASSMENT, AND STRESS AND HEALTH OUTCOMES OF TEACHERS

Reidar J. Mykletun, PhD., Trude Furunes, MSc., University of Stavanger, Norway;
Christina Björklund, PhD., Karolinska Institutet, Sweden; Gunvor Gard, PhD., University
of Lund, Sweden; Krista Pahkin, MSocSc., Kari Lindström, PhD., Finnish Institute of
Occupational Health, Finland

Workplace bullying and harassment has been reported by 2 - 10 percent of the workforce, depending upon work populations studied. In schools, bullying research has focused on pupils and generally ignoring schoolteachers as victims of harassment. This study addressed observed and experienced harassment among comprehensive schoolteachers in Finland, Sweden, and Norway, and how it related to a) perceived work environment, and b) health and wellbeing. Data were collected by the QPSNordic questionnaire from a randomized sample of 2,653 teachers (response rate = 38 percent).

22 percent of the teachers had observed harassment. 10 percent of the Norwegian teachers, 8 percent of the Swedish, and 6 percent of the Finish reported own experiences of harassment. Observed and experienced harassment were interrelated ($r=.35$, $p<.000$). Experienced harassment increased with increasing age ($r=.06$, $p=.04$). Principals and pupils were the main sources of experienced harassment (41 percent each). Colleagues caused 17 percent and pupils' parents 2 percent of the harassment experiences. Observed harassment was significantly ($p<.01$) but weakly related to work environment problems (correlation coefficients ranging from $r = .29$ to $r = .07$). Only 6 percent of the variance in observed harassment was accounted for by work environment variables in multiple regression analyses. Significant predictors were age inequalities in superiors' management of teachers (Beta = .17; $p<.000$) and decision demands (Beta = .11; $p<.05$). Likewise, own experiences of harassment were significantly ($p<.01$) but weakly related to work environment problems. 11 percent of the variance in experienced harassment was accounted for by the work environment variables in multiple regression analyses. Significant predictors were social climate (Beta = .19; $p<.001$), decision demands (Beta = .12; $p<.05$), control over work pace (Beta = .11; $p<.05$) and role conflicts (Beta = .11; $p<.05$). Harassment also related significantly ($p<.01$) but weakly to teachers' health and well-being. In multiple regression analysis the work environment and the observed and experienced harassment accounted for 47 percent of the variance in organisational commitment, 35 percent in general satisfaction, 25 percent in work stress and 16 percent in working ability. Observed and experienced harassment were not significant predictors of health and well-being in these analyses. In conclusion, harassment may be conceived as weakly related to other work environment variables. When controlled statistically for other work environment factors measured by QPSNordic, harassment has no independent effect on health and well-being of teachers.

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR: Reidar J. Mykletun, PhD., University of Stavanger,
4036 Stavanger, Norway