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**LIKE 2 + 2 = 5: BULLYING AMONG
HYDRO-QUÉBEC ENGINEERS**

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BULLYING AMONG HYDRO-QUÉBEC ENGINEERS

Angelo Soares

It may be proved, with much certainty, that God intends no man to live in this world without working: but it seems to me no less evident that He intends every man to be happy in his work. It is written, "in the sweat of thy brow," but it was never written, "in the breaking of thine heart".
(John Ruskin)

The title of this report is drawn from a Brazilian song written by Caetano Veloso during the era of its military dictatorship. With the words, "Everything is all right, like two plus two equals five," the author demonstrated the absurdity of the image that there were no problems. Two plus two never equal five, and to say otherwise is plain and utter nonsense. Bullying, too, is senseless, and it can strike anyone, often in organizations that are generally not prepared or that categorically refuse to recognize that the problem exists in their midst. One must be wary of the declaration that: "Here, everything is all right. There is no bullying!" One must equally be wary of the trivialization or rationalization of the problem. For everything can seem to be just all right, like two plus two equals five...

In fact, bullying is an insidious organizational illness that deteriorates labour conditions and workers' mental health and it poisons social relations in the workplace. It is an organizational problem on the rise in modern-day organizations. Yet, it is not a new organizational phenomenon. Brodsky (1976) defined bullying as the "repeated and obstinate attempts of one person to torment, frustrate, or break the resistance of another person, an attempt to get a wanted reaction from them. It is a form of treatment that, applied with persistence, provokes, pressures, frightens, intimidates, and inconveniences the victim." This is the first definition of bullying in the scientific literature.

In his book on bullying published in 1984, Swedish psychologist Heinz Leymann defined bullying as a destructive process arising from a sequence of hostile words or acts which, if seen individually, might seem innocuous, but whose constant repetition has pernicious effects. This definition raises one notable aspect of bullying; that is, if we look at bullying as individual acts, we run the risk of trivializing it. This insidious form of violence may seem harmless. It is the synergetic and repetitive nature of these acts which brings about

the destructive effects, and results in the psychological breakdown of the individual who has been the target of bullying.

Contrary to other types of workplace violence, bullying is a process made up of different kinds of behaviours that develop over time. Since it is a process, it is important to understand how and when it begins, so that we can intervene in time to prevent or stop it in its tracks. This is all the more important, for it is at the beginning that preventive measures can be the most effective.

In December 2002 in Québec, an amendment to the Labour Standards Law introduced measures on bullying, including a salaried employee's right to a bullying-free workplace. This is an extremely important law, not only because it places Quebec among the pioneers countries¹ which have legislated on the issue, but also because it indicates a fundamental societal choice of zero tolerance against violence. The Quebec law came into effect in June 2004; anyone who believes he or she is being bullied at work can lodge a complaint with the Labour Standards Commission, which can lead to a hearing with the Labour Relations Board. The law also specifies the regulations to apply if an employee is the victim of professional injury resulting from bullying. This law is very important because until now it has been very difficult to get justice in cases of bullying at work.

In this report, our primary objective is to better understand and document the issue of bullying among engineers at Hydro-Québec in order to identify its causes and its consequences on the mental health of these professionals. This study is, in fact, part of a larger research project² whose goal is to verify if the issue of bullying is influenced by gender.

METHODOLOGY

Given the nature of our objectives, we adopted a quantitative research strategy based on mailing surveys to *all members* of the Union of Professional Engineers of Hydro-Québec – SPIHQ, (n = 1467 questionnaires).

To ensure a higher response rate, we addressed each questionnaire to each person by name. We included a cover letter explaining the objectives of the questionnaire and guaranteed the confidentiality and anonymity of the research. Every envelope contained the letter, the questionnaire, and a stamped and self-addressed envelope. The response rate was 32% (n = 469).

¹. Other countries include France, Belgium, Sweden, England and Ireland.

². This project was financed by the Health Canada Research Institute, to whom we are very grateful.

We identified five groups of workers: (a) those who never experienced bullying (NB); (b) those who are currently experiencing bullying (CB); (c) those who have been bullied at work over the last 12 months (RB); (d) those who have been bullied at work but not in the last 12 months (PB); and (e) those who have witnessed bullying (WB).

Psychological distress, depression, anxiety, hopelessness, burnout, and post-traumatic stress syndrome were used as early markers of a threat to respondents' mental health. We compared these markers for the five groups in relation to the general Québec population in terms of psychological distress.

INITIAL RESULTS

It is important to note that, similar to our previous research projects and in empirical research reported in the current scientific literature³, there is no correlation between individual characteristics (age, gender, and ethnic origin) of the victims of bullying and bullying itself. It is our belief, then, that bullying occurs not as a result of individual characteristics, but because of organizational tolerance. The socio-demographic profile of the respondents of our study is presented in Table 1.

The average age of the population was 43.5 years. On average respondents have been working as engineers for 19 years, 7 years in their present position, and 15 years for Hydro-Québec. Regarding their education beyond engineering, 21.5% have a Master's degree, 7.0% a Certificate, 5.3% another Bachelor's degree and 0.6 % a doctorate or post-doctorate. This is therefore a high skilled workforce.

Table 1: Socio-demographic Profile of Respondents	
	(%)
Age During the Study	
20 - 30 years	9.7
31 - 40 years	28.6
41 - 50 years	36.3

³ We feel that it is important to distinguish between scientific knowledge based on empirical research regarding bullying at work and the abundance of popular literature, which can sometimes be interesting, but which in most cases is questionable and charged with prejudice. It has no scientific basis and does not advance the cause of the prevention of bullying.

51 years and over	25.4
<i>Total</i>	100.0
Gender	
Women	18.0
Men	82.0
<i>Total</i>	100.0
Ethnic origin	
Canadian	90.4
Immigrant	9.6
<i>Total</i>	100

Table 2 illustrates the distribution of engineers in various sectors of activity at Hydro-Québec:

Table 2: Distribution According to Sectors of Activity		
	(%)	(%)
Sector of activity	In Study	In Reality
Production	27.1	26.9
Transenergy	26.0	24.0
Distribution	21.5	17.7
Shared services	4.3	4.1
Equipment	21.1	27.3
<i>Total</i>	100.0	100.0

BULLYING

In this study we used two ways to identify people who are experiencing bullying. The first is based on the “Leymann Inventory of Psychological Terror” (LIPT). The second is

based on a definition of bullying followed by a question whose objective was to establish the kind of link that exists between the respondents and bullying in the workplace, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Bullying in the Workplace		
The five groups:		(%)
I am currently a victim of bullying	(CB)	10.5
I have been bullied in the past 12 months	(RB)	12.0
I have been bullied, but not in the last 12 months	(PB)	9.9
I have witnessed incidents of bullying	(WB)	6.7
I have never experienced or witnessed bullying	(NB)	60.9

These results show that 39.1% of engineers at Hydro-Québec have in one way or another experienced bullying in the workplace. In addition, more than one person in five was a victim of bullying at work in the course of the last year.

By using the indirect method, based on the LIPT, we can observe that 58.8% of people report that they have never been the victims of bullying. This difference reveals that at least eight people claim to have never experienced bullying, while they were in fact subjected to one or several acts of bullying without being aware of it.⁴ This unfortunately reveals how this form of violence has been trivialized.

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF BULLYING

The most frequent acts of bullying experienced in the last 12 months are indicated in Table 4.

⁴ Among the behaviours which characterize bullying at work as listed by Leymann (1996).

Table 4: The Most Frequent Acts of Bullying (%)	
A superior did not allow you to express your opinion ^a	37.3
People question your judgement ^b	32.1
People talk behind your back ^b	30.6
People make insinuations, but say nothing directly ^b	26.9
Other people do not allow you to express your opinion ^a	26.9
Negative gestures and stares ^b	24.4
The quality of your work is attacked ^b	23.8
You are required to perform tasks that are below your level of qualification ^c	22.3
Your performance is evaluated on false criteria or in a hurtful way ^b	21.8
You are treated like you don't exist ^d	20.2
People ridicule you in the presence of others ^b	18.1
People start rumours about you ^b	17.6
You are interrupted constantly ^a	16.1
You are screamed at ^a	13.0
You are given nonsensical tasks ^c	11.4
You are verbally threatened ^a	8.8
Tasks are no longer assigned to you ^c	7.8
No one speaks to you ^d	7.3
People attack or make fun of your private life ^b	7.3
Your private life is constantly being attacked ^b	6.7
People say you have mental problems ^b	6.2

These behaviours can be grouped into four categories. The first category (a) aims to prevent the person being targeted from expressing himself or herself (23.8%); the second category (b) aims to diminish the target person in his or her work environment (52.4%); the third category (c) aims to discredit the work of the person (14.3%) and the fourth category (d) aims to isolate the person (9.5%).

These figures reveal that 70% of people have been bullied for over a year, and that 19.2% are subjected to very intense bullying on an almost daily basis. In fact, one engineer out of three is bullied several times a month.

WHO ARE THE BULLIES?

Among engineers at Hydro-Québec, most often the bullies are the superiors, followed by colleagues (see Table 5).

Your superior	37.6
A colleague	17.5
Several colleagues	11.3
One or several subordinates	8.8
Several sources	24.7

It should be noted that in the case of Hydro-Québec engineers, regulations in the collective agreement and grievance procedures do not seem to prevent or dissuade bullying by superiors. As for bullying from subordinates, it also appears relatively high, when compared to our other studies carried out in Quebec, using the same methodology (see Table 6).

	Who are the Bullies ?			
	One or Several Colleagues	Superior	Clients	Subordinates
Study 1 Rank and File – Non-Unionized Workers	29%	57%	n.a.	14%
Study 2 CSQ – Education Sector	53%	22%	20%	4%
Study 3 Health Professionals	54%	32%	9%	5%
Study 4 Engineers - SPIHQ	38%	50%	n.a.	12%

Table 6 suggests that the bullying to which Hydro-Québec engineers are subjected resembles the bullying taking place among non-unionized groups such as Rank and File. This is surprising because the two groups are extremely different (in terms of education, salary, social status, casualization of work and unionization). Even more surprising is the comparison with Study 3⁵, in that there seems to be an inversion of percentages related to colleagues and supervisors in spite of the similarities between the two groups (in terms of education, unionization, salary, and social status).

There is no significant difference regarding the gender and age of bullies (see Table 7).

Table 7: Bully's Gender and Age (%)			
Gender		Age	
Male	76.4	Younger	24.7
Female	3.0	Older	24.7
Male and Female	15.5	Same age	50.6

Finally, one must note an extremely important point in the dynamics of bullying: understanding the bully's reasoning. However, knowledge of this aspect of bullying is still limited, for the simple reason that there is no scientific literature on bullies at work. All the information on bullies has been obtained via their victims, which obviously poses limits due to bias. As such, the different typologies created to describe bullies appear to us as totally devoid of meaning. In addition, these typologies don't answer the reasons behind the bullying.

It is not a question of excusing bullying or apologizing for the bully; there are no excuses for bullying! Moreover, not understanding the bully's logic does not prevent us from identifying and diagnosing the fact that bullying took place. The definitions of bullying, let us remember, are centered on the effects on the victim of bullying, and not on the intentions of the person doing the bullying.

⁵. This group is comprised of professionals in the health sector.

THE SOURCES OF BULLYING

From our data (see Table 8), three elements seem to trigger bullying: (1) organizational changes; (2) interpersonal conflicts; and (3) the exercising of a work-related right.⁶

Table 8: Factors Which Trigger Bullying	(%)
Following a change in the organization	44.3
Following a conflict with the individual doing the bullying	22.8
After exercising a work-related right (sick leave, maternity leave, etc.)	13.8
After refusing to take part in an action that is contrary to my ethical beliefs	12.0
Following reductions of personnel	4.2
Note. In this question, respondents were allowed to choose more than one response.	

THE CONSEQUENCES FOR MENTAL HEALTH

The consequences of bullying on individuals are always damaging. In this study we have measured the effects of bullying on the mental health of our sample group of engineers at Hydro-Québec.

PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS

To measure psychological distress, we used the psychological distress scale developed by Santé Québec (IDPESQ-14) from Ilfeld's "Psychiatric Symptoms Index – PSI". Ilfeld's

⁶ These three aspects and the casualization of work have also been identified as triggers of bullying in the study we conducted among victims of bullying in partnership with "Au bas de l'échelle", a group in Montreal as well as in our study on members of the CSQ, see Soares (2002).

Index includes four factors: anxiety, depression, aggressiveness and cognitive problems. It should be emphasized that the PSI does not identify cases of mental illness or incapacity. The index measures the intensity of symptoms, and it may be a good indicator of the state of mental health of individuals.

An interesting comparison to better understand this measure was offered by Perreault (1987) : “Psychological distress is to mental health what fever is to infectious diseases: a measurable symptom, an obvious sign of a health-related problem, but which by itself cannot explain the etiology nor the severity of the problem.”

Table 9 compares the average scores obtained on the Ilfeld Scale for the five groups of engineers regarding bullying: those who are currently being bullied (CB), those who have been bullied in the recent past (RB), those who have been victims of bullying, but not in the last 12 months (PB), those who have witnessed bullying (WB), and those who were never bullied or never witnessed any bullying at work (NB).

The results contained in Table 9 reveal the presence of symptoms of psychological distress which are significantly higher among people who are presently the target of bullying. The results of the analysis of variance are significant for all groups. The probability that the average differences among the four groups are due to a sampling error is extremely low ($p < .001$).

It should be noted that Santé Québec uses a value of 26.2 to identify a high-symptom population. In addition, according to the data obtained by the 1998 Social and Health Survey, the proportion of Quebecers who can be categorized at the higher end of the psychological distress index declined between 1992-93 and 1998.

	NB	WB	PB	RB	CB
Overall Index	14.3	17.3	18.3	28.7	35.9
Anxiety	19.7	18.8	24.4	33.7	42.9
Depression	12.0	18.6	15.7	27.3	34.4
Aggressiveness	12.8	14.9	17.8	28.1	33.5
Cognitive problems	14.6	16.7	16.7	28.0	35.4

Use of the Scheffé test allowed us to carry out multiple comparisons, which in turn yielded a more detailed analysis of these differences. For the overall index as well as for the four factors (anxiety, depression, aggressiveness, and cognitive problems), the

average scores obtained by the engineers who are current victims of bullying (CB) and those who have been victims in the past 12 months (RB) are significantly higher than people who have never been victims of bullying (NB).

The overall results reveal greater symptoms of psychological distress among people who are current victims of bullying or have been bullied at work in the last 12 months compared to people who have never been bullied.

The average psychological distress score for people who are currently the victims of bullying is 250% higher than that of people who have never experienced bullying. The average psychological distress score of people who were victims of bullying in the last 12 months is 200% higher than that of people who have never experienced bullying.

DEPRESSION

Depression is one of the most serious problems affecting mental health. Depressive states are often associated with other types of psychological problems. The danger of committing suicide is noticeably higher among people suffering from depression. To measure depression we used the Beck Depression Inventory – BDI. It is a self-evaluation instrument validated for francophone populations to evaluate the severity of the symptoms of general depression.

Table 10: Evaluation of the Severity of Depression According to BDI					
	NB	WB	PB	RB	CB
BDI Overall Index (0 – 63)	4.5	4.6	6.1	12.1	15.0
Depression					
0 - 9 (no symptoms)	84.4%	82.8%	73.9%	49.1%	30.6%
10 – 15 (light)	10.6%	10.3%	15.2%	20.0%	32.7%
16 – 19 (average)	1.4%	3.4%	6.5%	14.5%	6.1%
20 – 29 (severe)	2.5%	3.4%	4.3%	9.1%	22.4%
29 and higher (very severe)	1.1%	0%	0%	7.3%	8.2%

Table 10 compares the average scores obtained using the Beck Depression Inventory for the five groups of engineers: those who are current victims of bullying (CB), those victimized recently (RB), those who were victimized, but not in the past 12 months (PB) those who witnessed bullying (WB), and those who never experienced bullying at work (NB). The variance analysis results are significant for all groups. The probability that the average differences among the five groups are due to sampling errors is extremely low ($p < .001$). The scale's reliability rating is 0.93.

Through the use of the Scheffé test, multiple comparisons allowed us to conduct a more precise analysis. The average differences between the groups are statistically significant when we compare two groups: those currently or recently subjected to bullying and the three other groups. This reveals that the average scores obtained by people who are victims of bullying (CB) or were so in the recent past (RB), are significantly higher than those of the people who have never experienced bullying (NB).

In the groups of people who experienced bullying, 30.6% suffer from depression serious enough to require medical attention. Among the people who were victims of bullying in the last 12 months, 16.5% still suffer from bouts of depression requiring medical attention.

ANXIETY

The characteristics of anxiety are a key element in the dynamics of psychopathologies (Öhman, 2000). Anxiety can be described as “the fearful apprehension of a danger to come or of a misfortune accompanied by a feeling of dysphoria or of somatic symptoms of tension.” Symptoms of anxiety are often felt in traumatic situations.

To measure the gravity of the symptoms of anxiety we used the Beck Anxiety Index – BAI, a frequently used self-evaluation instrument validated for francophone populations.

Table 11 compares the average scores recorded using Beck Anxiety Inventory for the five groups of engineers: those who are currently victims of bullying (CB), those who were victimized in the recent past (RB), those who were victimized but not in the past 12 months (PB), those who witnessed bullying at work (WB), and those who never experienced bullying of any form (NB). The variance analysis results are significant for all groups. The probability that the average differences among the five groups are due to sampling errors is extremely low ($p < .001$). The scale's reliability rating is 0.92.

Table 11: Evaluation of the Severity of Anxiety According to the BAI					
	NB	WB	PB	RB	CB
BAI Overall Index (0 - 63)	2.5	4.3	4.1	8.8	10.4
Anxiety					
0 – 7 (no symptoms)	92.9%	86.2%	84.8%	61.8%	51.0%
8 - 15 (light)	5.0%	6.9%	4.3%	20.0%	22.4%
16 - 25 (average)	1.8%	3.4%	10.9	10.9%	18.4%
26 and higher (severe)	0.3%	3.5%	0%	7.3%	8.2%

Through the use of the Scheffé test, multiple comparisons allowed us to conduct a more precise analysis. The average differences between the groups are statistically significant when we compare two groups: those currently or recently subjected to bullying and the three other groups. This reveals that the average scores obtained by people who are victims of bullying (CB), or were so in the recent past (RB) are significantly higher than those of the people who have never experienced bullying (NB).

In the group of people who are victims of bullying, 8.2% suffer from anxiety sufficiently severe to require medical attention. Among those who were victimized in the last twelve months, 7.3% are still suffering from episodes of anxiety which are sufficiently severe to require medical attention. Anxiety appears to be less present than depression.

HOPELESSNESS

To measure hopelessness, we used the Beck Hopelessness Scale – BHS, a frequently used self-evaluation instrument validated for francophone populations. Hopelessness appears when the individual's initiatives to respond and react to an event appear to be blocked. Beck's hopelessness scale is a measure of pessimism and evaluates the suicidal potential of the individual. More precisely, the scale measures the negative view of the future.

Table 12 compares the average scores recorded using the Beck Hopelessness Scale for the five groups of engineers: current victims of bullying (CB), those victimized in the

recent past (RB), those who were victimized but not in the past 12 months (PB), those who witnessed bullying at work (WB), and those who never experienced bullying (NB). The variance analysis results are significant for all groups. The probability that the average differences among the five groups are due to sampling errors is extremely low ($p < .001$). The scale's reliability rating is 0.92.

Table 12: Evaluation of the Severity of Hopelessness According to the BHS					
	NB	WB	PB	RB	CB
BHS Overall Index (0 - 20)	3.4	3.0	3.9	5.2	6.7
Hopelessness					
0 – 3 (no symptoms)	64.4%	74.2%	56.5%	42.9%	36.7%
4 - 8 (light)	27.8%	16.1%	37.0%	37.5%	30.6%
9 - 14 (average)	6.3%	9.7%	2.2%	14.3%	18.4%
15 and higher (severe)	1.4%	0%	4.3%	5.4%	14.3%

Table 12 reports the frequency of the intensity of the symptoms of hopelessness for the five groups of engineers at Hydro-Québec. Through the use of the Scheffé test, multiple comparisons allowed us to conduct a more precise analysis. The average differences among the groups are statistically significant when we compare two groups: those currently or recently subjected to bullying and the three other groups. This reveals that the average scores obtained by people who are victims of bullying (CB) or were so in the recent past (RB) are significantly higher than those of people who have never experienced bullying (NB).

In the group of people who are victims of bullying, 14.3% registered a severe level of hopelessness. This is a troubling figure, for several studies have confirmed the predictive value of the Beck Hopelessness Inventory with regard to suicide attempts (Bouvard et al., 1992 and Beck & Steer, 1988). In addition, the literature reports several instances where victims of bullying committed suicide (Leymann, 1996). There are documented cases of bullying leading to suicide in France and in Québec⁷.

⁷ The literature identifies several cases of suicide resulting from bullying, such as that of Vicky Binet, 44 years of age, married and the mother of four children, who took her own life a few hundred metres from her place of work, the Amadeus Company in France.

POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS SYNDROME

Numerous studies have illustrated the relationship between bullying and the onset of post-traumatic stress syndrome⁸. Leymann and Gustafsson (1996) highlight a very important aspect: post-traumatic stress syndrome can bring about changes in personality in victims of bullying to the point of triggering depressive or obsessive behaviours. This notion is very important, for people who are or have been victims of bullying may already find themselves in a post-traumatic state; and, as a result, efforts to identify their personality traits as a justification for bullying are invalidated from the start. For what is being described are the traits of people whose personality has already been afflicted and therefore modified by bullying.

Post-traumatic stress syndrome is an extremely debilitating anxio-depressive disorder which can manifest itself after exposure to a traumatic event, that is, an event in which the two following elements are present: (a) the individual is victim or witness to a patently stressful event in which one fears for her / his life or physical well-being; and (b) the response to the event is one of intense fear, horror or impotence.

Most individuals afflicted by post-traumatic stress syndrome try to avoid all recollections or thoughts associated with the traumatic event. But despite the avoidance strategies, the individual will relive the event in repeatedly, through nightmares, intrusive thoughts, etc. The most frequent symptoms are troubled sleep, nightmares, depressive feelings, feelings of guilt, and irritability.

We used two instruments to measure post-traumatic stress syndrome among the engineers at Hydro-Québec who experienced bullying. The first instrument is the Post-Traumatic Stress Symptoms Scale (PTSS-10). Table 13 summarizes the principal results by comparing the four groups of Hydro-Québec engineers exposed to bullying.

The second instrument is the *Impact of Event Scale* (IES) developed by Horowitz (1986 and 1979) to measure the subjective distress associated to a specific event. The IES is comprised of two scales, one for cognitive intrusion symptoms and the other for avoidance experiences, and it constitutes an effective means of post-traumatic adjustment.

⁸ See, namely, Leymann & Gustafsson (1996); Björkqvist et al. (1994); Groeblichhoff & Becker (1996); Soares (2002) and Mikkelsen & Einarsen (2002).

Table 13: Post-traumatic Stress Symptoms Scale (%)				
	WB	PB	RB	CB
No symptoms	74.2	82.6	48.2	32.7
Uncertainty	19.4	13.0	21.4	26.5
Occupational dysfunction	6.5	4.3	30.4	40.8

The variance analysis results are significant for all groups. The probability that the average differences among the five groups are due to sampling errors is extremely low ($p < .001$). The scale's reliability rating is 0.86.

Through the use of the Scheffé test, multiple comparisons allowed us to determine that the differences in the average scores obtained by people who are victims of bullying (CB) or have been so in the past 12 months (RB) compared to the two other groups (WB and PB) are significantly higher. This means that the levels of post-traumatic stress are significantly higher among individuals who are current victims of bullying or have been victimized in the last twelve months (CB and RB) than among people who were victimized but not in the last 12 months (PB) or those who merely witnessed bullying (WB).

These results are confirmed when we use the *Impact of Event Scale* – IES (see Table 14). The variance analysis results are significant for all groups. The probability that the average differences among the five groups are due to sampling errors is extremely low ($p < .001$). The scale's reliability rating is 0.92.

By using the Scheffé test, we can determine, through multiple comparisons, that the differences between the group of bullying victims and the group of people victimized in the past 12 months (CB and RB) and the other two groups (PB and WB) are statistically significant.

Table 14: The Impact of Bullying According to the IES Score				
	Average			
	WB	PB	RB	CB
Intrusion (total)	3.9	3.9	9.2	13.4
Avoidance (total)	6.0	4.2	12.1	15.0
IES (total)	9.9	8.1	21.3	28.4

Table 14 indicates that when people experience bullying in the workplace, they manifest intense post-traumatic symptoms: these include intrusive and recurrent thoughts of the

bullying (intrusion) and the avoidance of the elements with which the thoughts are associated. For the witnesses and for people who are past victims of bullying, we can observe a certain reduction of post-traumatic symptoms. This reduction is statistically significant.

Table 15: The Impact of Bullying Using the Total IES by Category (%)				
	WB	PB	RB	CB
Weak (< 8.5)	60.9	69.4	25.0	9.1
Average (8.6 - 19.0)	13.0	13.9	18.8	11.4
High (> 19)	26.1	16.7	56.3	79.5

Overall, post-traumatic stress syndrome is significantly higher among individuals who are current victims of bullying (CB) than among recent victims (RB) or those who witnessed it (WB). These results are confirmed statistically for both scales (PTSS and IES). In addition, it is important to mention that there is a positive correlation between the duration, the frequency of the bullying, and the post-traumatic stress symptoms measured. That is, the longer and more frequent the bullying, the greater the symptoms of post-traumatic stress.

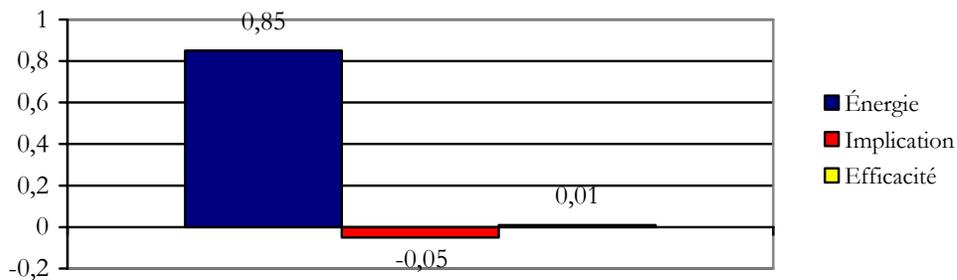
Understanding this issue appears fundamental to us, as much within the dynamics of intervention against and the prevention of bullying as within the dynamics of returning to work for the individuals who were the targets of bullying. The importance of early intervention in cases of bullying should also be noted.

BURNOUT

Recently, Maslach & Leiter (1997) proposed the notion of burnout as an erosion of one's engagement to one's work, which includes three dimensions: exhaustion, depersonalization, and inefficiency. In this way, "What started out as important, meaningful, and challenging work becomes unpleasant, unfulfilling, and meaningless. Energy turns into exhaustion, involvement turns into cynicism, and efficacy turns into ineffectiveness" (p. 416).

We have used the model proposed by Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter (2001) to understand the agreements or disagreements among six aspects of life in the workplace and the individual: the greater the disagreement, the greater the probability of exhaustion. On the contrary, the greater the agreement, the greater the probability that the individual is involved in his work. According to the authors, “mismatches arise when the process of establishing a psychological contract leaves critical issues unresolved, or when the working relationship changes to something that a worker finds unacceptable” (p. 413).

Graphique 2 : L'épuisement professionnel



In this model, we find six areas of organizational life which play a central role in the exhaustion of the individual: workload, control, rewards, community, justice and values. This model encompasses a representative group of organizational factors found in studies and associated to professional burn-out.

Graph 2 is worrisome, for we can discern a trend towards burnout in our group of engineers. The feeling of involvement is starting to weaken. Involvement is headed towards cynicism. Cynicism arises when the individual coldly distances himself from his or her work and from the people with whom he or she works. The individual tries to minimize involvement in work in an effort to protect against burning out. Efficiency is close to zero, which suggests that the engineers at Hydro-Québec are starting to lose faith in their ability to make a difference in the organization. On the other hand, it is encouraging to observe that they are maintaining a good level of energy. In our opinion, one should intervene on short notice to avoid an increase in the number of cases of burnout among this group of professionals.

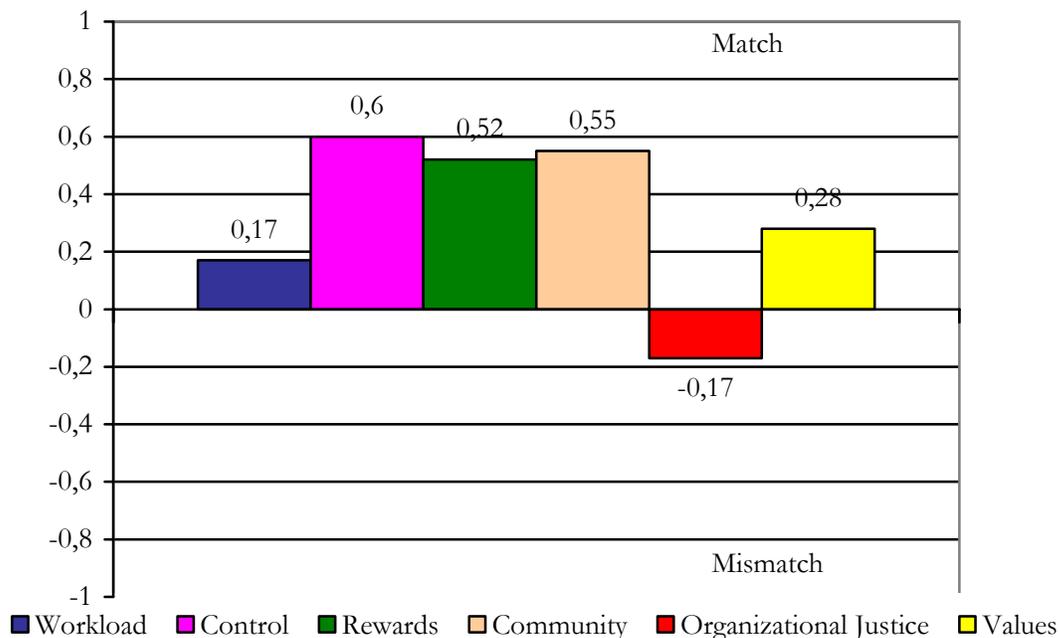
It is important to highlight that burnout is not a person-oriented problem, as is commonly believed. As Maslach & Leiter (1997) clearly demonstrated, “burn-out is not a problem of the people themselves but of the social environment in which people work” (p. 18).

ORGANIZATIONAL DIMENSIONS

We have indicated elsewhere (Soares, 2002) that the triggers of bullying are a function of the organizational and socio-economic environment rather than individual variables. In addition, the organizational consequences of bullying are disastrous and manifest themselves by a higher rate of absenteeism, a deterioration and disintegration of the organizational climate, a reduction in the quality and the quantity of work, difficulties accomplishing teamwork, a deterioration of the image of the organization, higher insurance premiums and an increase in legal fees. In this study, for example, we counted 2566 work days lost because of bullying.

This study investigated the six aspects of organizational life as proposed by Maslach & Leiter (1997) so as to identify the possible sources of burn-out and the possible correlations with bullying. Graph 3 illustrates the results for work-related burn-out.

Graph 3: Six Dimensions of Organizational Life



Among the six aspects, the greatest disagreement occurs in organizational justice. This indicates a perception of injustice or absence of fairness within the organization.

Organizational justice is important for a sense of respect within the organization, as well as the solidarity of the group. This sense of injustice can occur when there is a sense of unfairness over workload or types of rewards, or again when evaluations or promotions are not carried out in a transparent and appropriate manner (Maslach, Schaufelli & Leiter, 2001).

Moreover, our results indicate a correlation between organizational justice and work-related burn-out as well as a correlation with the different scales associated to mental health we have used (psychological distress BDI, BAI, BHS – see Table 16).

Certainly, these correlations are moderate and should not be seen as having a causal link. Still, we can conclude that the weaker these aspects of organizational life are, the greater the symptoms of problems related to mental health. No correlation was found for workload. In addition, as organizational justice shows the lowest average, the correlations are higher for this aspect. These results are in line with other studies which raise the issue of the sense of justice and mental health (Sheppard, 2002).

Table 16: Correlation Between the Six Organizational Aspects and Measures of Mental Health

	A	ST	Mental Health Measure			
			Distress	BDI	BAI	BHS
Control	3.6	.85	-.45	-.45	-.37	-.43
Rewards	3.5	.96	-.43	-.48	-.35	-.43
Community	3.6	.84	-.44	-.43	-.33	-.34
Organizational Justice	2.8	.86	-.49	-.46	-.41	-.41
Values	3.3	.69	-.36	-.35	-.27	-.35

Note. All correlations are significant $p < .01$;
 BDI - Beck Depression Inventory; BAI – Beck Anxiety Inventory; BHS – Beck Hopelessness Scale; A – Average ; SD – Standard Deviation.

It should be noted that an absence of justice, according to Maslach, Schaufelli & Leiter (2001), contributes to work-related burnout in two ways: firstly, it is emotionally deplorable and exhausting; secondly, it fuels the feeling of cynicism towards the organization.

Furthermore, all aspects analyzed here, except for workload, show a correlation with bullying. The variance analysis results are significant for all groups. The probability that the average differences among the five groups are due to sampling errors is extremely low ($p < .001$). Through the use of the Scheffé test, multiple comparisons allowed us to conduct a more precise analysis. For the five aspects of organizational life, the average scores obtained by the engineers who are currently victims of bullying (CB) are lower than those who never experienced bullying (NB). It is important to note that despite the

fact that we can identify these differences and the correlations, the causal relationship between these aspects and bullying remains to be determined.

One of the myths surrounding bullying, built around target individuals, is to say that these individuals don't want to work, that they don't perform as well, or that they try to avoid work. It is important to eliminate this myth. People who are the targets of bullying are generally satisfied with their job. We used a scale from 1 (very satisfied) to 4 (very dissatisfied) to measure the degree of worker satisfaction with regard to different extrinsic and intrinsic aspects of work. In Table 17 we can observe that, on average, respondents were satisfied with the job.

Table 17: Professional Satisfaction Among Engineers		
		Satisfaction (Average Score)
I am currently being bullied	(CB)	2.5
I was bullied in the last 12 months	(RB)	2.4
I was bullied, but not in the last 12 months	(PB)	2.0
I witnessed bullying taking place	(WB)	2.1
I have never experienced bullying	(NB)	1.9

Through the use of the Scheffé test, multiple comparisons allowed us to conduct a more detailed analysis. For the overall index of satisfaction, the average scores obtained by the engineers who are currently victims of bullying (CB) and those who were victims in the previous 12 months (RB) are lower than those in the other three groups. Moreover, the item which triggers the greatest dissatisfaction is the one associated to the possibility of promotion in the organization. In fact, in the open-ended question at the end of the questionnaire, several respondents underscored their disappointment with respect to the progress of their career.

Table 18: Professional Experience and Salary / Career Level (in years)				
	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Time in the current position	3	7	11	7
Time at Hydro-Québec	6	16	23	19
Time as engineer	8	20	27	26

In Table 18, we can in fact observe that one of the possible sources of this dissatisfaction is the feeling of injustice ($r = .58$) with which it is correlated. The engineers in Level 4 have worked fewer years for the organization and fewer years as engineers, which can perhaps result in a feeling of career stagnation, especially for those in Level 3. Passage from Level 3 to Level 4 seems to be problematic. We believe that the possibility of advancement in one's career is something which should be studied more closely.

SOCIAL SUPPORT AND COPING STRATEGIES

It would be wrong for us to assume that a person who is the victim of bullying will remain passive. Among the resources available to the individual to help him cope with the traumatic situation are social resources, that is, people who can help the person deal with the bullying.

Social support is an important variable which has a favourable impact on the individual and which acts as a "shock absorber" for the stressful conditions which affect the individual's mental health (Karasek & Theorell, 1990; Cobb, 1976; Thoits, 1995 and 1999). According to Cobb (1976), social support can be defined as information associated to one or more of the three following categories: "a) information that leads the subject to believe that he or she is loved and that he or she is looked after (emotional support); b) information which leads the individual to believe that he or she has value and that he or she is esteemed (esteem support); and c) information that leads the individual to believe that he or she is part of a mutual communication and responsibility network (informational support)" (p. 300).

In fact, social support must be understood as a multidimensional concept comprised of at least three components: structural support (social network); social support received (effective assistance given to the individual by his or her entourage); and perceived social support (the subjective impact of the assistance given to the individual by his or her entourage).

We have tried to determine if the victims of bullying in our study were able to rely on any structural support. In Table 19, we can see the data related to structural and social support received for cases of bullying.

We can observe that victims of bullying increasingly seek social support among work colleagues, family members, and friends outside of work. In addition, as concerns social support received, family comes first, followed by friends outside of work, and finally, colleagues at work.

Table 19: Social Support and Bullying		
	Structural Support (%)	Social Support Received (average 1 - 6)
Colleagues at work	63.3	3.4
Superior	28.2	2.2
Union representative	25.4	2.6
Human resources	8.5	1.4
Friends outside of work	28.8	3.8
Family	41.2	4.4
Health service in organization	n.a.	1.9
Nobody, though I would have liked to talk about it	4.5	-
I had no need to talk about it	9.0	-

Note: The scale of social support received varies as: 1 (never); 2 (almost never); 3 (from time to time); 4 (quite often); 5 (very often); 6 (always).

It should be noted that if individuals affected by bullying have more frequent social support from their family and friends, then it is the social support of work colleagues which has a moderate shock-absorber effect on the individual's post-traumatic stress symptoms as well as on other mental health symptoms which we have measured. In sum, the greater the social support received from work colleagues, the less intense the mental health symptoms (see Table 20).

Of course, while these correlations are moderate and must not be understood as a causal link, one can conclude that the more intense the social support received from work colleagues, the weaker the mental health symptoms. Interestingly, the social support received from work colleagues, albeit moderate (Table 19) compared to the support received from family and friends outside of work, seems to be more effective in reducing mental health symptoms. A possible explanation is that the instrumental and informative function of social support from colleagues (advice, suggestions, know-how and knowing how to manage or resolve bullying) can be more effective in cases of bullying. Colleagues know the corporate culture, sometimes even the bully, as well as the organizational resources available, whereas the support from people outside of the institution (family, friends) is associated to the emotional function – fundamental, of course, but less effective in resolving the problem.

Table 20: Correlation Between the Intensity of the Social Support Received and Mental Health Symptoms

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Family	1								
2. (Work) Colleagues	.336(**)	1							
3. Friends outside of work	.480(**)	.496(**)	1						
4. IES	-.111	-.216(**)	-.137	1					
5. Distress	-.162(*)	-.298(**)	-.248(**)	.564(**)	1				
6. PTSS10	-.151(*)	-.297(**)	-.261(**)	.647(**)	.708(**)	1			
7. Hopelessness	-.169(*)	-.334(**)	-.276(**)	.319(**)	.684(**)	.499(**)	1		
8. BDI	-.166(*)	-.249(**)	-.289(**)	.574(**)	.835(**)	.676(**)	.727(**)	1	
9. BAI	-.069	-.182(*)	-.102	.455(**)	.769(**)	.613(**)	.535(**)	.738(**)	1

** Correlation is significant $p < .001$

* Correlation is significant $p < .05$

Beyond these social resources, individuals will also use coping strategies to deal with bullying. Coping can be defined as “constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person (Lazarus, 1999: p.110). In short, coping strategies are the efforts made to manage the stress. These strategies can be: a) focused on the problem or b) focused on the emotion. Through these strategies, an attempt is made to modify the cause of stress.

Faced with bullying, Hydro-Québec engineers use the strategies described in Table 19.

Table 19: Coping Strategies Used to Deal With Bullying		(%)
1. Ignore the bully or bullies		34.1
2. Confront the bully or bullies		32.9
3. Ignore the bullying		26.3
4. Report the bullying to a union delegate		21.0
5. Couldn't do anything		12.6
6. Ask for a job transfer		12.0
7. Ask that the bullying be stopped		11.4
8. Report the bullying to human resources		5.4
9. File a grievance		5.4
10. Threaten to tell everyone about the bullying		1.8
Note. For this question, the respondents could choose more than one strategy.		

We can see that most of the coping strategies used by the engineers at Hydro-Québec to defend against bullying focus on the problem, either by trying to solve the problem (6, 7 and 9), or by confronting the bully (2 and 10). It is important to emphasize that, in our opinion, confrontation is not a good coping strategy for bullying, for it will rarely work given the weaker position of the victim in the power relation. The other strategies focus on emotion, either minimization or avoidance (1 and 3), or search for social support (4 and 8). Only 5.4% sought social support from human resources! This is troubling, in our opinion, because dealing with different types of violence at work is an issue of human resources management as well as of policy regarding health and safety at work.

The different aspects of bullying among the engineers under discussion are worrisome and at times even troubling. We would recommend the following proposals for the development of a strategy for the prevention of bullying at work.

PREVENTION

There is no miracle solution to fight bullying at work. However, one must be aware that prevention is always possible and important, not only to reduce individual suffering, but also to maximize organizational effectiveness. As concerns the prevention of violence at work, the scientific literature contains a number of common principles. The work structure and the organizational context are often the cause of problems of violence and the source of their solution. The equal participation of employees, their representatives and management to determine possible solutions for problems of violence at work is key, and it is essential to regularly question the policies and programs in order to evaluate their effectiveness and adapt them to the constantly changing organizational setting (Chappell & Di Martino, 2000).

We have identified three different levels of prevention strategies for bullying at work: primary strategies (before); secondary strategies (during); and tertiary strategies (after).

PRIMARY STRATEGIES

Primary strategies aim to reduce the risk of bullying. In this way, one must act first and foremost on the cause of bullying. One must change the organization of work, improve organizational structure and culture, and work methods and management practices - especially those affecting human resources management. Interestingly, among the six organizational dimensions studied, there is still much room for improvement (see Graph 3).

Given the destructive effects of bullying at the individual and organizational levels, it is essential to sensitize all the people who might be concerned by the problem. This means **all members of the institution**, because all are (in)directly affected by the bullying. This sensitization can be done via comprehensive campaigns and training sessions so as to prevent the trivialization of the problem, as well as to equip individuals with the tools to prevent bullying and, if necessary, the procedures to deal with bullying at work.

Furthermore, among the primary strategies, there is the development, implementation, and follow-up of organizational policies against bullying. This path is very popular among Québec organizations, particularly since the passing of the anti-bullying law giving an employee the right to a workplace that is free of bullying. Nevertheless, one

must be careful, for an organizational policy is a necessary condition, not a sufficient one. To be effective, the organizational policy against bullying must be “alive” above all⁹.

For the Montréal Transit Corporation, the implementation of such a policy was followed by a series of sensitization campaigns, communications (which, in fact, won a number of prizes for their effectiveness), and training programs so that all the members of the organization are aware of the policy and of the procedures in cases of violence or bullying. By taking such action, this organization has reduced what is euphemistically known as the “Balashev Syndrome.”

In the novel *War and Peace* by Leo Tolstoy, Russian Tsar Alexander sends Balashev, a diplomat he trusted, to deliver a message to Napoleon in France, asking him to withdraw his army from Russia. The Tsar gives Balashev very precise instructions as to what he should say: Napoleon must withdraw all his soldiers from Russian territory or there will be war. On his way Balashev encounters different people with a variety of different preoccupations, each more urgent than the other – all of which have an effect on him. By the time he meets with Napoleon, Balashev softens the message, telling Napoleon that it will not be necessary to remove all the soldiers from Russia, it will suffice to simply withdraw them to the other side of the river. Without ever realizing it, Balashev changes the course of history when Russia and France go to war¹⁰.

Balashev’s syndrome can be seen as that resistance which the organizational structure and/or organizational culture place against the implementation of certain organizational policies. The existence of an organizational policy against bullying is not in itself a sufficient condition for the prevention of bullying. Many organizational policies exist simply at the theoretical level, in some file on a shelf somewhere. Its practical application is unknown or its implementation is very complicated, expensive, or discouraging. The reality is that in this case there is no organizational policy capable of buffering the organization.

Surely, the existence of an organizational policy is important, for it sends a clear message that bullying is unacceptable behaviour in the organization and establishes procedures on how to act and react when confronted with bullying. Still, one must avoid Balashev’s syndrome. The procedures used by the Montréal Transit Corporation appear to us as heading in the right direction. Finally, as concerns organizational policies against bullying at work, one must understand that they are still embryonic. It is, therefore, very important to observe them and evaluate them periodically to ensure their effectiveness¹¹.

⁹ The word “alive” comes from Mrs. Lorraine Pilon, ombudsperson at the Montréal Transit Corporation, to describe their policy of prevention of violence and bullying.

¹⁰ This idea comes from Hochschild (1997), who uses it to explain inertia in the use of a policy of flex-time scheduling in a large American organization.

¹¹ See Richards & Daley (2003).

SECONDARY STRATEGIES

On this issue, the scientific literature is limited and undeveloped. There is also a certain overlapping with organizational policies concerning, for instance, the way in which complaints about bullying will be investigated. In this sense, one must ensure that the enquiry and statement procedures are reliable and confidential for all instances of work-related bullying, whether they are real or possible.

There is some agreement on the issue that intervention must take place as soon as the problem is identified. One must never think that “the problem will go away with time.” Magic will not solve the problem. On the contrary, the data shows that the longer the problem lasts, the greater the consequences will be on the individual’s mental health. In addition, we must be wary of rationalizations and of the mechanisms of avoidance of conflict management, such as “It’s a personality conflict.” The scientific literature and our data show that it is not a question of individual differences.

It is also necessary to establish procedures to listen to the individual who has been the target of bullying at work. We must remember that the individual has been shaken and is perhaps even confused or in a state of post-traumatic stress. It is important that the individual is made to feel that he or she can be heard. It should also be understood that to help does not mean giving the individual all the answers. In most cases, it is a matter of giving the individual the freedom to speak and be heard.

We must ensure that intervention measures are quick and efficient. It would also be wise to ascertain if there are other people in the same situation.

TERTIARY STRATEGIES

In the case of bullying at work, it is important not to overlook the importance of giving psychological counselling to people who have been the victims of bullying.

In addition to psychological support, it is important to show solidarity with the victim, for the social support of colleagues is fundamental in reducing the effects of this form of violence on the person’s mental health. This solidarity will express at once the degree of cohesiveness of the organization and its players, and their capacity to deal with bullying at work. It will also be an element in the victim’s recovery that will help him or her to gradually erase the symptoms related to the post-traumatic stress.

It is also essential to properly plan the return to work of an individual who required a leave of absence because of the effects of bullying. It is fundamental that the sources of bullying be eliminated so that target individuals can return to work. The literature cites several cases of individuals who committed suicide prior to their return to work, upon realizing that the conditions that caused their malaise had not been removed. It seems obvious to us that more aggressive back-to-work strategies, such as presence management, should be prescribed.

Finally, it is incontestable that bullying poisons work relations and the work environment. Besides the actual victim, those who are witnesses can also be affected by bullying. It is therefore equally important to pay particular attention to the witnesses of bullying.

CONCLUSION

First, we must limit the general application of the results reported in this study. Our results can not be applied to all engineers at Hydro-Québec, for we carried out a survey and did not obtain a representative sample of engineers. Still, our group of respondents appears to be very representative of the general population of Hydro-Québec engineers and members of the union (Syndicat professionnel des ingénieurs d'Hydro-Québec - SPIHQ). We cannot apply these results to the Québec population either. Other research projects are necessary, some of which are underway, to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of bullying in the larger Québec population.

This study confirms the results of other studies we have conducted in Québec, and studies conducted in Europe. Bullying in the workplace is a gnawing organizational disease which damages working conditions, deteriorates the health of individuals and poisons social relations at work. It is an increasingly serious organizational problem among the engineers we have studied in this report.

The high incidence of bullying, depression, anxiety, hopelessness, and of post-traumatic stress syndrome are indicators of a deterioration of working conditions and of the quality of life and the mental health of engineers. It is deplorable to see that bullying is still present in an important organization such as Hydro-Québec.

It is important to highlight the fact that no correlation was found between individual characteristics (age, gender, ethnic origin, work status) and the people victimized by bullies. The factors which trigger bullying are, rather, a function of organizational elements.

The study also reveals that the fact that an anti-bullying policy exists is not a sufficient condition to counter bullying. This surreptitious form of violence is particularly complex;

combining prevention measures (training, information, changes in the way work is organized and in the corporate culture) with “living” organizational policies that more effective results can be obtained while minimizing the possible manifestation of Balashev’s Syndrome.

We must also understand that to try to develop anti-bullying policies without first assessing the seriousness of the problem and understanding it in its organizational context – sources, types, conditions which give rise to it – is like give a patient a prescription before diagnosing the illness.

Another troubling aspect is the vertically descending (superiors bullying employees under them) and horizontal (workers bullying their peers) expression of bullying among the engineers we studied. We find such a reality unacceptable, for in both instances, the ultimate responsibility for such a situation lies with management.

Faced with a situation of horizontal bullying (between colleagues), managers are accomplices by assuming, in most cases, a passive behaviour, and not resolving the conflict. Seventy percent of those who reported being bullied have been so for more than one year, and 19.2% experience it every day or nearly every day. In fact, one engineer in three is the victim of bullying several times per month. This tacit acceptance of horizontal bullying by management is highly troubling, for not only is management abstaining from exercising one of its prerogatives – which is to control and overcome conflict in the workplace - but it is also unable to ensure a safe working environment for its employees.

Worse, the managers are at once accessories and agents of bullying, since 59% of the victims of bullying identified their superior as the bully or as one of the bullies. How can we explain such a managerial paradox?

It might be explained by managerial incompetence in terms of the management of human resources (for example, lack of competencies for conflict resolution or organizational communication). Another possible explanation might be the absence of leadership (Leymann, 1996). Two other explanations are possible: management might be openly involved in the unravelling of the social ties, or management condemns bullying it fosters it in its management choices (for example, in the manner in which it distributes bonuses in the organization) (Cru, 2001).

In all these possibilities, it is very difficult to understand how the organization can tolerate such a reality. It is an intolerable and unacceptable situation, where everything appears to be all right only if we believe that two plus two equals five.

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