Article

"It's Not Us, It's You!": Extending Managerial Control through Coercion and Internalisation in the Context of Workplace Bullying amongst Nurses in Ireland

Juliet McMahon * , Michelle O'Sullivan, Sarah MacCurtain, Caroline Murphy and Lorraine Ryan

Department of Work & Employment Studies, University of Limerick, V94 T9PX Limerick, Ireland; michelle.osullivan@ul.ie (M.O.); sarah.maccurtain@ul.ie (S.M.); caroline.murphy@ul.ie (C.M.); lorraine.t.ryan@ul.ie (L.R.)
* Correspondence: juliette.mcmahon@ul.ie

Abstract: This article investigates why workers submit to managerial bullying and, in doing so, we extend the growing research on managerial control and workplace bullying. We employ a labour process lens to explore the rationality of management both engaging in and perpetuating bullying. Labour process theory posits that employee submission to workplace bullying can be a valuable method of managerial control and this article examines this assertion. Based on the qualitative feedback in a large-scale survey of nurses in Ireland, we find that management reframed bullying complaints as deficiencies in the competency and citizenship of employees. Such reframing took place at various critical junctures such as when employees resisted extremely pressurized environments and when they resisted bullying behaviours. We find that such reframing succeeds in suppressing resistance and elicits compliance in achieving organisational objectives. We demonstrate how a pervasive bullying culture oriented towards expanding management control weakens an ethical climate conducive to collegiality and the exercise of voice, and strengthens a more instrumental climate. Whilst such a climate can have negative outcomes for individuals, it may achieve desired organisational outcomes for management.

Keywords: workplace bullying; managerial control; culture of bullying

1. Introduction

Evidence indicates that bullying is a widespread occurrence across many sectors and sizes of workplace [1–3]. Bullying refers to situations where an employee(s) perceives themselves as subjected to repeated negative actions of others. It is well documented that bullying entails negative outcomes for the organisation and individual employees including in respect to employee engagement, turnover, job efficacy, and employee health and well-being [4–6]. Employees can try to resist bullying for instance by using workplace complaint procedures, or through their union if one is present. In this way, employees possess a certain degree of agency and countervailing power in the employment relationship [7,8]. However, research highlights several apparent contradictions. The first is that despite the potential for strong worker agency, such as where workers are highly unionised, studies point to an enduring prevalence of bullying and a strong reluctance of employees to report bullying. For example, nursing is a sector with generally high unionisation levels, yet studies indicate significant levels of perceived bullying and under-reporting [5,9,10]. A second apparent contradiction is that despite the negative impact of bullying and other negative behaviours on organisations, and the establishment of procedural mechanisms, organisational responses are often weak [11]. Not only can organisational responses be ineffective, but research highlights the role of management in tolerating and perpetuating bullying [11–13]. Ineffective managerial responses can influence victims and observers' perceptions of the efficacy of reporting bullying in the future [5,14].

Studies on ethical climate refer to the distinction between climates based on instrumentality and self-interest, and more 'citizen'-oriented typologies based on friendship, caring and freedom to exercise voice [15,16]. Research has also shown how the form that ethical climates take can influence employees' views as to what is acceptable, dangerous, safe, or rewardable behaviour in the workplace [17–19]. Mayer et al. [20] assert that managers play a critical role in developing an ethical climate insomuch as they set the ethical tone for an organisation by enacting practices, policies, and procedures. In this article, we explore how a pervasive culture of workplace bullying is linked to employee perceptions of a strongly instrumental ethical climate. In such climates, employees come to understand that behaviours serving the interests and desired outcomes of management are the only acceptable ones.

The two questions which anchor this article are: firstly, why would management engage in behaviour that they formally assert is an 'affront to dignity at work' [21] and by inference unethical? After all, anti-bullying and harassment procedures are developed by management and communicated to employees. Secondly, why do workers submit to bullying behaviours on the part of management given the serious negative outcomes for employees? [12,22]. This article contributes to the growing body of work which highlights how organisational responses to bullying complaints are an exercise in power [23]. Hodgins et al. [23] noted the relevance of labour process theory as one of a number of perspectives that can provide insight on the power and control dynamics in relation to bullying. This article extends this research by employing a labour process lens to explore the rationality of management both engaging in and perpetuating bullying. Labour process theorists posit that employee submission to workplace bullying can be a valuable method of managerial control and, over time, acceptance of such managerial action can become embedded and culturally normalized [24,25]. The analysis is based on a significant volume of qualitative comments provided by respondents in the first nation-wide survey of bullying amongst nurses in Ireland. In considering the findings, this article explores the role of management not just as a collective agent of the organisation but also the rationality of individual managers, as employees themselves, in devaluing the legitimacy of bullying complaints. We also comment on a recent revision of a code of practice on workplace bullying in Ireland, a form of 'soft law' or a set of principles intended to persuade and guide organisations to act in an ethical and responsible manner. The relevance of the code to our analysis is that, in light of our findings, it may have unintended consequences and reinforce management discourse in bullying complaints. This study is set in the context of nurses working in health care settings in Ireland during a time of severe cutbacks to services and staffing. Nursing in Ireland is a profession which operates in a highly unionised environment where bullying procedures are prevalent. However, the Irish health sector has struggled to retain nurses in recent years, amid assertions that a deterioration of working conditions has reportedly led to an exodus of nurses from the state and the profession.

This article is structured as follows. Section 2 situates this article within the literature that explores the nature of managerial power and control. We discuss the utility of labour process theory in advancing our understanding of how and why management extend control over employees and extend this analysis to managerial use of bullying behaviours. Mechanisms of managerial control do not have universally identical effects on all employees and this section also reviews the varied nature of worker responses to managerial control generally and to bullying specifically. Section 3 explains the methodological approach of thematic analysis in detail. This is followed by the findings in Section 4 which thematically present the qualitative comments provided by respondents in the survey. Section 5 explores the insight that the findings provide into management's use of bullying behaviours as an expedient mechanism of control. The discussion also highlights the importance of junctures in the employment relationship during which employee–management interactions reinforce managerial control over employees. Lastly, we review the recent national code of practice on bullying and its potential impact on managerial control discourse.

2. Coercive and Internalized Forms of Managerial Control

At the core of labour process theory is an acceptance of the indeterminacy of labour as a commodity of production and the fluidity of the frontiers of control [26,27]. Such indeterminacy from an employer perspective raises questions of how best to realise full value from the labour commodity. Management has a 'control imperative' to minimize indeterminacy and maximize labour productivity while workers' perspective of minimising indeterminacy is linked with efforts to resist exploitation. Labour process theorists have provided useful typologies of the forms of control utilised by employers within varying contexts of production regimes. For instance, the early period of industrialisation was conducive to more coercive or 'despotic' approaches due to the low collective power of workers and high dependence on work for earnings [28]. However, a move to more 'hegemonic' or consent form of co-operation seeking was driven by a rise in labour agency and resistive ability, scaffolded by the emergence of the welfare state, protective legislation, and growing strength of unions. In this context, management had to try to persuade workers to cooperate 'although never to the exclusion of coercion' [28]. With the advent of neo-liberalism, deregulation, and the fall in trade union power, Burawoy identified a new form of control, that of hegemonic despotism, where workers stripped of collective powers feel compelled to align themselves to the norms and values of management resulting in a corresponding rise/return to more unitarist approaches to employment relations. Thus, 'labour control' is built upon some combination of market coercion and shared prosperity between management and its workers' [29].

Central to and inherent within this process is power. We align with Anderson and Brion's understanding of power as involving 'asymmetric control over resources' whereby 'low-power parties depend on high-power parties to obtain rewards and avoid punishments' [30] (p. 69). As power is relational, workers themselves possess complex layers of agency and countervailing power in the employment relationship. Indeed, a valid criticism directed at labour process theory is the level of determinism with respect to the ability of employers to shape worker consciousness and resistance [31]. This agency and resistive power can accrue through collective means or through individual agency [32]. As Clegg [8] argues, '[employer control] will be open to erosion and undercutting by the active, embodied agency of those people who are its object: the labour power of the organisation'. However, to acknowledge this is not to negate that the starting point of an employment relationship is one of power inequality [33,34] and a wider recognition that employers possess strong institutional, ideational [35] and positional power [36]. They are recognised as having a considerable degree of power 'over' [37]; they shape key aspects of organisational life such as reward systems and voice mechanisms, as well as many processes and policies [38]. A contribution of more contemporary analysis of power with respect to labour process theory [31,39] is the inclusion of Foucaldian and Gramscian perspectives which examine the diffusive, inculcating nature of power whereby subjects-in this case workers-internalize and accept the norms values and goals of management as legitimate and become self-regulating. Thus, management can be 'powerful in' [35] shaping what is accepted and legitimate within organisations. As this occurs, explicit and bureaucratic forms of labour control may become less necessary, because workers begin to emulate the normative behaviour of management [29].

It has been argued that alongside the rise in neo-liberalism, there has been a broad shift in the balance of power at both macro and micro levels in favour of employers [40,41] and that this 'has facilitated and resulted in a strengthening, deepening and broadening of managerial controls within and across firms' [42]. Control mechanisms utilised in this regard can include blatantly coercive strategies such as surveillance, bureaucratic regulation, and the threat of dismissal [28,43]. However, management methods of exerting control can take other forms beyond overt coercion. Eliciting cooperation can involve 'internalized forms of control' [31], where management aim to control 'the underlying experiences, thoughts and feelings that guide [employee] action' [44]. Thus, employees assimilate the objectives and prerogative of management, leading to self-regulation and

cooperation. In summary, what emerges is what is termed self-regulation or concertive control [45]. Yet we should be reminded that gaining employee compliance is not the only contemporary mechanism of managerial control and that 'consent is always surrounded by the armor of coercion' [43].

The literature regarding coercive and internalized forms of control are instructive for advancing our understanding of how and why workplace bullying occurs and the extent to which workers resist or do not resist. The inequity of power between parties involved is a core tenet of workplace bullying, which includes the effort to dominate others [46,47]. From a labour process perspective, bullying is a potentially powerful method by which management individually and collectively can achieve desired outcomes [25,48] and extend control. At this juncture, it must be acknowledged that labour process theory has been criticised for ascribing a lack of autonomy to managers and there is an assumption that managers automatically act in concert with an overarching organisational objective of extracting surplus from labour. The alternative perspective is that managers do have some degree of freedom in the choices they make about their individual approach to the employment relationship. Nevertheless, as Beale and Hoel [25] point out, managers at all levels themselves have concerns over their own career and promotion prospects. Intertwined with this concern is the fact that they are part of the collective entity of management that demands loyalty and compliance. Thus, all managers have an imperative to support each other in achieving the overarching aims of the organisation and in minimising worker resistance.

Collective managerial action with respect to bullying does not necessarily refer to mobbing, but to actions such as managers closing ranks, ignoring bullying action by other managers, or reacting punitively to those who complain of managerial bullying. Such action sends clear signals by the collective management group as to the likely outcomes of resistance. Subsequently, if workers succumb to bullying and do not resist it, then such managerial behaviour becomes normalised and an accepted element of workplace culture. This in turn can facilitate and extend the parameters of managerial control and prerogative to manage without challenges [24]. As Beale and Hoel [25] and Seifert [49] argue, for management, the benefits associated with bullying may outweigh the costs. Indeed, Hutchinson and Jackson [50] posit that bullying can be used by management to achieve organisational changes that may otherwise be resisted. Management can protect their interests further by 'determining which issues are important and which come into the decision-making arena' [51] (p. 67) and 'those which threaten the interests of the powerful are frequently marginalized or set aside' [52] (p. 9). In their study of sexual harassment, Wilson and Thompson note that managements' decision-making agenda can render such harassment invisible 'by the prevailing normative rules, or though the capacity of harassers....to mobilize the cultural resources of the organisation in their favour' [51] (p. 67). In such cases, management could try to normalize sexual practices or signal that 'it was women's responsibility to handle sexual harassment' [51] (p. 69).

Worker Responses to Managerial Control and Bullying

What does extant research tell us about worker responses to managerial control and workplace bullying? We know that, in general, worker responses to management attempts at eliciting cooperation can include resistance, accommodation, compliance, or consent [53]. Workers can engage in compliance if they assess that the costs of alternative choices outweigh the benefits, particularly where alternatives involve coercive action [43]. In seeking to understand the cognitive processes by which employees engage in compliance, Kärreman and Alvesson's [54] work is relevant. They examine how employees in their study recognised the detrimental impact of their jobs on their lives yet at the same time they engaged in discourse which rationalised the reasons for this and for their lack of agency. In this way, 'there is a strong but fleeting moment that hints at resistance, which is then resisted' [54]. In the simplest terms, employees can talk themselves out of agency and resistance. Other studies into the reasons why employees do not resist or speak up in

situations that warrant such action identify fear of reprisals and/or a sense of futility that no restorative action will be taken by management [55,56].

Research specifically focusing on employee responses to inappropriate/negative behaviour such as bullying and harassment show that employee responses can range from resistance to inaction. Inaction in turn can involve distancing or denial, to accepting such behaviour as normal/inevitable [57]. Reasons cited for inaction in a wide range of research include powerful perpetrators and the embeddedness or normalisation of cultures of bullying [58,59]. Furthermore, research has demonstrated that where complaints are raised, common managerial responses are to deny the existence of bullying, to label the complainants as deviants or troublemakers [60,61] to 'sequester' or avoid addressing the complaint [62] or indeed to take coercive action against the complainant. Such responses can exert a powerful influence on employee responses. Recent research by Ng et al. [63] into the actions of bystanders to bullying shows that an internal process of sensemaking occurs which influences responses and action/inaction. One aspect of this is the perception of efficacy of the bystander which is informed by such things as likely managerial responses. The way in which management react to resistance acts as a signal to employees as to the likely outcomes of making a complaint, that is, utilising their agency. In this way, employers are demonstrating their power relative to that of workers and this, we argue, can exert an internalising effect on potential complainants. Deetz (p. 87) [64] captures this succinctly, stating 'the modern business of management is often managing the "insides"– the hopes, fears, and aspirations–of workers, rather than their behaviors directly'. Workers internalise the signals and make decisions on this basis as to whether or not speaking up with respect to bullying is a feasible option [5] (see also [65]). Thus, workers may be reluctant to report/resist bullying because of a sense of fear of retribution by those in power or a sense of futility, i.e., that nothing will be done [66].

The fear/futility thesis reflects a situation whereby employers explicitly flex their power and domination over workers. However, power is not always explicit; it can be implicit, circumstantial, and relational and while power is sometimes a forthright exercise of control, it can also be intangible, ambiguous, complex, and elusive [35]. The preceding discussion on managerial power suggests that if workers have become self-regulating, internalising the goals, values and norms of management, they may in turn be conditioned not to perceive certain managerial action as bullying but as 'something else'. Thirlwall [62] cites a number of studies whereby workers were made to feel that complaining about bullying constituted unprofessional behaviour. Our study explores the experiences of bullying in nursing. The health sector is an apt one for examination given it is characterized by hierarchical relationships and oppressive cultures and research has pointed to the undervaluation of nursing work [67]. In analysing nurses' experiences of bullying, we examine their perceptions of management responses and how management exerted control in their messages about how employees should behave.

3. Methodology

Nurses are employed in both private and public health care settings in Ireland, with the vast majority employed by the state health agency, the Health Services Executive (HSE). Nurses are almost exclusively members of one union, the Irish Nurses and Midwives Organisation (INMO). In all Irish health care settings, there are comprehensive dignity at work policies and procedures as a result of union–management agreements. With the support of the INMO, we undertook a large-scale study of bullying distributed to 27,000 members in 2010. Though the data are from 2010, there is no indication that any significant policy or managerial changes have been introduced in the intervening period which could impact the continued relevance of the findings. Indeed, subsequent research has pointed to the ongoing necessity to analyse the connections between workplace bullying and management behaviours. The Irish Workplace Behaviour Study in 2017 found that respondents working in health and social services were the most likely to report experiencing and witnessing 'unreasonable management' and incivility and disrespect [1].

Consent for this study was granted by the ethics committee within the University following a review process and a letter outlining the informed consent process was included in all copies of the survey. This was a cross-sectional survey using self-report measures. It was completed and returned directly to the research team resulting in 2929 usable responses, a response rate of 10.8 per cent. All responses were anonymised. This study uses the qualitative responses of staff nurses who comprised 57% of the survey (1684 nurses). In terms of the demographics of this cohort of staff nurses, the vast majority (96%) were female. A total of 58% were between the ages of 35 and 45 years of age and 28.5% were over 45. The majority worked in general hospital and continuing care settings (67%) and were employed on a permanent basis (78%).

3.1. Measures

This article draws from a larger study on workplace bullying in the nursing profession. In defining bulling, we utilised a definition commonly used in the literature and adopted by the then Irish employment rights body, the Labour Relations Commission as: "a situation where one or several individuals persistently over a period of time perceive themselves to be on the receiving end of negative actions from one or several persons, in a situation where the target of bullying has difficulty in defending him or herself against these actions" [12,61]. We therefore do not refer to one-off workplace incidents as bullying in line with literature and national state agency policies and guidelines on bullying. There were both quantitative and qualitative elements to this study. The quantitative element of this study sought to establish the extent, nature and outcomes of workplace bullying amongst nurses. The quantitative questions were drawn from pre-validated measures, namely the revised negative acts questionnaire (NAQ-R) [68], and those developed by Whiteside and Barclay, 2013 [69], and Harlos and Pinder 2001 [55] to explore propensity to speak up or stay silent in the workplace. These quantitative findings of the survey are reported elsewhere [5,14] and thus we do not refer to them in this paper. This article focuses specifically on participants' perceptions of, and responses to, managerial control and workplace bullying. Open questions were used to capture the qualitative data. Respondents were asked to reflect on their own experiences of bullying, on the outcomes when they reported bullying, and their observations of the experiences of, and outcomes for, co-workers who had reported bullying. We asked them to indicate how their experiences shaped their propensity to speak up or stay silent. The qualitative questions were: Would you like to comment on your own experiences of workplace bullying? Would you like to comment further on the effects workplace bullying has had on you personally? Would you like to comment further on bullying you have observed? Would you like to comment further on why you would/would not be prepared to speak up regarding workplace bullying in your organisation? Would you like to comment further on your experiences or observations on the outcomes of speaking up with respect to workplace bullying? In total 1356 comments were provided across the five questions. Time and time again, participants indicated that management would either engage in bullying to suppress employee concerns or they would trivialize or sequester complaints of bullying. This information was so frequent and consistent that it prompted the current paper.

3.2. Analysis

A thematic, inductive analysis was adopted for this study. The original study sought to explore the causes and outcomes of workplace bullying, and the issue of managerial control was not initially a specific area of investigation. However, a strong theme of bullying being utilized and tolerated as a form of control by managers namely, to suppress resistance to unilateral managerial action, emerged from the qualitative data during the familiarisation stage. It was felt that this warranted further interrogation. To this end, utilising Harrington et al.'s [70] iterative and recursive process, the authors re-visited relevant extant literature on labour process theory, power and control and workplace bullying. Key overarching themes to emerge were those of hegemonic and coercive control,

internalisation, and resistance (or lack of). This process guided the researchers in the phased approach to thematic analysis [71]: familiarisation with the data, data coding, and revision. This recursive process captured consistent aspects of participant experiences, which were coded [72]. For instance, the narratives and reflections of the respondents consistently linked managerial bullying to quelling resistance to change and instilling self-doubt among respondents as to the legitimacy of their perceptions around bullying. These experiences in turn were eventually codified under labels such as managerial bullying, stigmatising, self-doubt, internalisation. This codified data aligned with the overarching themes relevant to the research question and resulted in a framework for analysis [73]. Three of the authors were involved in this process. Participant quotes were selected by the team for use in the paper on the basis of their representativeness and consistency in aligning with the themes. The actual words used by participants were retained. The study findings were peer reviewed by an external researcher familiar with qualitative research but not involved in the actual study. The themes and resultant discussion are reflected in the subheadings of the results section.

4. Results

The results below reflect the key themes emerging from the literature, namely, coercive control, internalisation, and reluctance to resist. A key finding to emerge from the data and analysis was that coercion and sequestering were common responses by management to employee complaints of bullying. Also insightful was the reaction of management when responding to general employee concerns in areas such as work intensity. A common managerial response was to reframe employee concerns, i.e., to question the competency and professionalism of the employee who raised a complaint or attempted to resist, thus inferring that the issue lay not with management but with personal or professional failings of the employee.

4.1. Coercion and Sequestering

By way of context, 49% of the staff nurses who responded to the quantitative survey reported that those who engaged in bullying were at management level, either middle or senior management, and 43% indicated that bullying was a pervasive problem within their organisation. The qualitative comments reflected those of the quantitative elements in that 46% made comments regarding managers as bullies, with 40% referring to widespread acceptance of bullying or a culture of bullying. The responses reflected a view that management would close ranks and support each other rather than complainants, as reflected in the representative quotes below.

> *There is a terrible culture of bullying in my workplace. Unfortunately it comes from the top down.*

> *It is my opinion that bullies are often in a position of power within the organisation and are protected by senior managers within the system.*

> *The bully gets a promotion, the nurse isn't believed, and management supports the manager [who was the alleged bully].*

The results generally indicated evidence of widespread practice of directly coercive responses towards complainants and sequestering of complaints within the formal complaints process [74,75]. Common examples of the type of overtly coercive actions reported were that the complainant would be further targeted, would be treated unfavourably in terms of leave/promotion, or transferred unwillingly. In some cases, the responses were such that complainants felt compelled to exit the organisation. Typical actions were reflected in quotes from both complainants and observers:

> *A person complained and expected promotion was passed over and she was isolated by the CNM3.* (CNM3 is a grade of middle management)

> *The complainant was put on leave and disciplinary action taken against them.*

The victim is further victimised by frequent transfers to other wards and they end up with a bad reputation.

After I reported the problem I was told that my career would go no further.

Not dealt with properly, I am leaving the bully is staying without any corrective action taken.

No investigation was carried out in my case, discriminated against. I was attacked and punished for complaining about bullying. I was forced out of my job.

I have been to the highest level I can go of senior management-director level, and no action was taken and now I only feel more isolated. It is a terrible feeling every day, to have to go into a place where no one will listen or act on bullying. It effects all aspects of my life and I feel that I am powerless as I'm not in a position to be unemployed as I need the money.

The bully never seems to be dealt with quickly and as more time goes by the situation is made to look trivial.

I have submitted a letter of complaint regarding an incident of bullying to the director of nursing and have never received a reply or an invitation to come and talk to her-I am disgusted.

4.2. Reframing of Complaints: 'It's Not Us It's You'

Whilst this study provided evidence of inaction and directly punitive responses, it was the form that these responses often took that proved most insightful: by far the most consistent feedback from the respondents was that management engaged in a reframing of the situation encapsulated in the phrase: 'it's not us, it's you'. This reversal of the problem on to the employee could be perceived both as an attempt both to stigmatise those who speak up in the context of their community of practice and to regulate employees' 'insides' [76], in this case, with respect to their professional identity and their self-image. This reframing of the problem by management occurred through the creation of a discourse that placed employee resistance as professional incompetence, thus linking the narrative to professional identity and performance management [76]. This has been observed in other studies with regard to employee resistive actions to bullying [77,78] but the scale of this was notable in this study. Furthermore, it is interesting that the reframing brought the issue into the realm of individual performance management and assessment. This was done in several ways. One recurring theme that emerged was the managerial response to label complainants as troublemakers, thus casting doubt on their organisational citizenship. Another managerial response was to call into question their ability to do their job, thus reframing the problem as one of professional (in)competence. A third response was for management to question the individual's resilience and ability to cope under pressure, thus linking the narrative to self-image.

This reframing varied in terms of intensity and occurred at both a general work level and at a specific bullying level. For example, when general work concerns or grievances in respect of issues such as workload or resourcing were raised by employees, they would be followed by coercive action in the form of sustained questioning and undermining of the complainant's competence/resilience. At a specific incident(s) level, where people formally complained of bullying already in train, management also responded by pushing the issue back on the employee. This was done by questioning citizenship, professional competence and personal resilience as outlined above—and at varying levels of intensity—for example, management may not have actively increased the bullying action, but would simply dismiss the complainants concerns as their inability to cope or lack of professional competence. Findings also illustrated a more intense and coercive response, where management would escalate the situation by actively engaging in undermining and questioning the competence or professionalism of the complainant. The common thread here is that when an employee demonstrates agency either to question general work practices or specific

bullying behaviours, the problem was attributed to them in a way that questioned their over professional or personal competence or their organisational citizenship.

> *I expressed concerns re accountability and morality to comply with best practice and I was subjected to humiliation and told that it was 'me' that was unable to cope despite the fact that I love my work and work really methodically and hard.*

> *I was made feel as though I was causing trouble by complaining.*

> *I ended up being assessed as a nurse* (as a result of lodging a formal complaint against bullying).

> *The person was made feel that they weren't up to the job though they were so the baddies won out in the end as the victim was moved on.*

> *It* (the response by management) *was worse than the bullying. The threats, denials, try and blame the victim and turn the tables.*

> *[The Director of Nursing] is quite reactive if we express difficulties and humiliates nurses by telling them that it is their lack of coping skills is the problem. She has stated that she does not want to hear if nurses are busy and also that there is no reason why nurses cannot get their work load done in the days' timeframe.*

> *The management are aware of this* (respondent out sick because of alleged bullying) *but somehow blame it on you* i.e., *if you're out sick your colleagues suffer with a heavy workload.*

4.3. Outcomes: Internalisation of Management Actions and Reluctance to Resist

Managerial action with respect to bullying can act as a powerful framing device, signalling to those perpetrating bullying that there will be no consequences and thus providing an incentive to continue. Thus, those who complain are left in a vulnerable position with a bully who has effectively carte blanche. Inaction also provides a strong message to potential complainants that while procedures may be in place, that there is little to be gained from utilising them. Indeed, making formal complaints can result in escalation of bullying. In this study, managerial bullying behaviour was often triggered when nurses questioned or challenged the rise in what was perceived as excessive or unmanageable workloads or when nurses tried to resist bullying already taking place. Thus, there was clear signalling on the part of management that questioning the status quo or managerial prerogative could result in negative reactions against individuals. Respondents were directly asked to reflect on the reasons why they would/would not formally report or complain if they observed or experienced bullying. From the data, it was evident that observed managerial responses provided clear signals to both complainants and observers that likely outcomes of future complaints regarding bullying would result in either coercive action or sequestering.

> [I would not be comfortable reporting bullying/taking action in my workplace because] *the repercussions are terrible.*

> *Bullying is very hard to deal with. Reporting it in my organisation is a no go. The victim ends up been further bullied. It can affect your health and general happiness in life. When it eases off you and one of your colleagues are of the receiving end well you are relieved. Angry that it is still continuing and a pure feeling of helplessness.*

> *Fear of future implications this may have-*e.g., *not getting a promotion* etc. (if I make a complaint)

> *I have seen other colleagues report bullying but nothing is done about it. The bully still bullies usually because they are senior and can get away with it.*

> *When one is bullied very little gets done 'at top'. I don't know why. Therefore the bully remains and continues to bully.*

That these managerial messages were subsequently internalized and impacted on propensity to raise complaints in this sphere was clear from the reflections of respondents. These included those who had been at the receiving end of management actions and those who had observed such action and the reasons why they would not raise complaints were very much reflective of their previous experiences or their observations.

4.4. Effectiveness of Coercive Stigmatising as a Control Mechanism

As discussed earlier, nurses indicated that their complaints were met with a response that 'reversed' the source of the problem back onto complainants and that this proved to be as a very effective control mechanism. What emerged was a particular propensity of management to 'turn the tables' on complainants and to assert that the problem actually lay with the complainant. Specifically, the complainants' citizenship, professional and personal competency would be called into question. This proved a powerful restraint on nurses with respect to resisting bullying through the complaints procedures (both previous complainants and those who observed the treatment of complainants). In this instance the responses indicated a level of internalisation of these reverse allegations regarding competence and a seeming sense of powerlessness to resist such accusations. The qualitative responses focused more on the fear of potential damage rather than any sense that this managerial action should and could be resisted or opposed. The perceived potential threat of this 'reversing' action took three forms. The first was damage to reputation or standing as a citizen of the community of practice and where was a strong sense from respondents that management's framing of the complainant as a 'troublemaker' would gain traction in the wider work community.

> [I would not be comfortable reporting bullying/taking action because] *the story gets twisted. It usually reflects back to being unable for the job.*
>
> *Impression given to staff that complainant can't cope.*
>
> *When the complaints have been made, the nurse on the floor was made feel like she was the one causing the problem.*
>
> *The person was made feel that they weren't up to the job though they were so the baddies won*
>
> *These complaints are generally ignored or not taken seriously and you get labelled as a trouble maker, then you get forced out of the area you're in.*
>
> *The complainant is generally made to feel like a trouble maker, then nothing is done so why bother?*
>
> *That person is singled out. "watch her", "oh, she's trouble".*
>
> (I would not be comfortable reporting bullying/taking action because) *one is seen as a troublemaker.*
>
> *You are seen as a trouble maker and told none of your colleagues have issues like you do.*

The second type of internalisation experienced by both observers and complainants to emerge from the data relates to professional competency, where the managerial response was to question the complainants' professional competence. This manifested in two ways—the internalisation of their perceived incompetency and also fears regarding the perception of their competency within the wider community of practice, i.e., that management's assertions would be believed by others and impact their professional reputation. It was clear from the qualitative comments that this threat served to prevent them both from resisting unilateral management actions perceived as unfair and complaining about bullying.

> [I would not be comfortable reporting bullying/taking action because] *the story gets twisted. It usually reflects back to being unable for the job.*
>
> *When the complaints have been made, the nurse on the floor was made feel like she was the one causing the problem.*

You are made feel inadequate.

The extent of the success of management 'framing' was demonstrated by the third (and perhaps most insidious) form of internalisation, captured by reflections of those respondents who reported more long-term effects on their own perception of self-efficacy. Respondents reported how sustained action on the part of management could lead to them questioning their own professional capacity or identity as a nurse:

At a recent meeting with staff and management staff complained of low morale in hospital. We were told "it wasn't low morale, it was low self-esteem". Believe me, it was low morale due to the bullying techniques of management, but no one there had the courage to say so.

I questioned myself in every aspect of my life.

My confidence in myself as a nurse has been negatively affected. It makes me feel like there's something wrong with me.

It erodes peoples self-confidence and interferes with a persons ability to work i.e., *they start to question their own knowledge and capability when dealing with other staff/patients.*

I can say that it has had a horrible on my self-confidence etc. *I feel that I am not able for the job now.*

5. Discussion

The qualitative commentary by nurses points to the ways in which management exert influence and control over employees. Respondents, victims, and observers were asked to reflect on why they would or would not make a formal complaint with respect to bullying. It was clear that respondent decisions that they would not feel comfortable reporting bullying were influenced by their experience or knowledge of management responses to those who had reported bullying in the past. Observations of sequestering of complaints by management resulted in both a sense of futility (what is the point?) and a sense of fear (of the bully now being aware that there would be no consequences for their action). What particularly stood out in this study was the form that both coercive responses and sequestering took summed up in the phrase: 'it's not us, it's you'. When employees challenged managerial action in general such as in respect to workloads or unilateral change, they were subjected to bullying of a specific type, whereby their competency, resilience and organisational citizenship was questioned. Similar action was taken against those who challenged bullying. This approach seemed to exert a particularly powerful effect both on observers and those whose competence/coping ability had been questioned. There was evidence that some of those who were subjected to such allegations experienced a breakdown of confidence and began to question their competence and self-worth. Overall, the reflections by nurses clearly indicated that managerial responses to formal complaints of bullying had been internalised, and significantly that respondents felt a sense of powerlessness to resist when competency or citizenship was called into question. It was evident from this study that these outcomes engendered a sense of fear among the respondents and acted to dissuade people from speaking up. In this way, respondents' compliance reflected a process of strategic rationality, where workers base decisions to take action after assessing the likely consequences of alternative actions [43]. Should they assess that reporting bullying is dangerous or futile, they are unlikely to speak up. The results illustrate that mechanisms of managerial control are not dichotomous and there can be blurred lines between coercive and internalized forms of control. For example, in relation to employees who perceived that management labelled them as 'troublemakers', this can be identified as a coercive action but it also seeks to influence behaviours by projecting a view that blame lies with the employee than on the person or system driving negative behaviours towards them and that a troublemaker is attempting to deliberately distort the status quo without the perceived legitimacy. Our findings chime with those of Collinson and Collinson [57] in their research on sexual harassment. They noted that women's varied responses to harassment were

're-defined and criticised by line managers as a means of claiming that the women were incompetent/unable to fit in' [57]. While the authors presented this as evidence of male workers using sexual harassment as a mechanism to exclude women from non-traditional jobs, our findings point to similar responses from management and therefore show that such forms of control are not necessarily unique to male-dominated workplaces but are the preserve of those who seek to dominate others.

This article extends the research which explores the rationality of management perpetuating bullying and shows that coercive and internalized forms of control in responding to bullying complaints are not confined to a rogue individual manager but extend to managers across workplace settings. It is important when exploring managerial control 'to locate control practices in a bigger picture of changing corporate and societal regime practices' [42]. Managements' use of coercive and internalized forms of control would hardly come as a surprise to radical researchers who situate such practices in the context of managements' role in the capitalist system. It could be argued this critical analysis of the role of managers is only relevant to private enterprises driven by capitalist principles and not the public sector which does not have profit and a rate of return on capital as its raison d'etre. However, public-sector organisations operate within capitalist states which are dependent on systems of capital accumulation for their resourcing [49,79]. A striking feature of research is the similarities that are evident in managerial responses to workplace bullying in public-sector settings across countries [50]. A strong thread of research on comparative human resource management has focused on the influence of national factors such as culture and institutions in shaping distinctive organisational practices [80]. Despite varying public-sector environments, health systems, and legislative contexts across countries, studies point to converging trends in public-sector employment relations, particularly how similar drivers in economic and political environments have placed capitalist-like pressure on public-sector management. The political pressure for public-sector bodies to deliver operational efficiencies under value for money principles has contributed to a shift towards marketisation, managerialism and the normalisation of practices associated with the private capitalist enterprises such as greater performance management, intensification of work, and surveillance [49,50,81,82]. In Ireland, nurses have worked in an increasingly pressurised environment involving intensification of work and pay cuts during the global financial crisis from 2007 [83]. Despite economic recovery and the restoration of pay cuts, the deterioration of overall working conditions has led to an exodus of nurses from the state and the profession [84]. To some extent, there have been strong similarities historically in comparative public sectors given that common characteristics include strong hierarchical relationships, bureaucracy, and a prioritisation of process over individual agency [82]. Such features 'can prevent efforts at individual agency' [85] and hinder effective responses to bullying while economic and political pressures have contributed to more oppressive working environments.

It is worth considering the role of managers as individuals as opposed to management as a collective unit. Managers are not employers and usually there are layers of managers. While for some, managerial actions are solely for the purpose of securing surplus from workers for capital accumulation [86] others recognise the 'equivocality' of managerial work [87]. In this context, managers are both agents of the capitalist production but also 'share in the subjugation and oppression' of workers [88]. Managers must respond to the pressures of organisational objectives, but these pressures are mediated by their own personal agendas as employees themselves such as seeking promotion or having a quiet life [25,86]. Employers can exploit such alternative personal concerns and 'induce managers to suspend their personal values and priorities when these are deemed to impede or subvert corporate objectives' [86]. In this way, the bullying actions can be conceived of as the rational actions of managers who must fulfil performance objectives imposed on them and who can advance their own self-interest with organisational impunity. In the public sector, individual middle-level managers have little power to reward employees

for effort but have the power to punish and elicit consent through cognitive mechanisms of control.

Unlike sexual harassment, which has been described as 'zero sum as it benefits one group at the expense of another' [51], our study of workplace bullying from a labour process perspective would suggest that the benefactors are not one group of workers but the organisation in terms of the advancement of organisational performance objectives. While employees who report bullying perceive managerial responses as punitive, managers themselves are unlikely to have similar interpretations and instead their reactions suggest they view complaints as illegitimate and must respond in a way that 'gets work done'. The qualitative data in this article highlight employee perceptions of managers enforcing unreasonable workloads and managers' voicing their need to achieve objectives regardless of employee concerns. One illuminating response came from a from a manager who made the following observation: "*In my experience I feel the people who have cried 'bullying' are lazy and don't pull their weight or work hard looking for excuses for their poor performance*". What employees perceive as bullying behaviours may be perceived by management as the normal set of competences required in performance management and we have offered insight to the ways managers can reframe bullying as deficiencies in the competency of employees. To this end, we consider the relevance of recent developments in national policy on workplace bullying. In 2021, the Irish Minister of State for Business, Employment and Retail launched a new Code of Practice for Employers and Employees on the Prevention and Resolution of Bullying at Work, a set of principles and guidelines encouraging organisations to act responsibly when bullying claims arise. The Code is intended to provide 'a framework for fostering a culture of respect in the workplace' [89]. The Code can be considered a form of 'soft law' because a failure to follow it is not an offence though it can be admissible in evidence in legal proceedings. The Code defines what bullying is and, interestingly, emphasises what bullying is not. It notes that bullying does not include 'ordinary performance management' or 'reasonable corrective action taken by an employer or supervisor relating to the management and correction of employees (for example, managing a worker's performance, taking reasonable disciplinary actions or assigning work)' [21] (p. 9). We do not argue that reasonable management actions constitute bullying, but the difficulty with this guidance, as our findings and other research have highlighted, is that it is management who shape the institutions, policies, processes, and agendas in the organisation, including what constitutes performance management. They also shape the ethical climate as to what is considered acceptable and normal behaviour within the workplace. The Code ignores the reality of power relations within organisations where performance management is a mechanism for managers to dominate workers [90]. They have the authority to initiate disciplinary action, which employees can generally only dispute after the fact. If, as we argue, management can reframe bullying as legitimate actions as part of ordinary performance management, then this Code of Practice can serve to further legitimize such perceptions. The guidance in the Code implies there is an objective view of ordinary performance management or reasonable corrective action and of course, should an employee pursue a legal claim for bullying, the onus will be on management to prove in a legal forum that their actions did not constitute bullying. However, managerial control of the nature we have discussed can prevent the initiation of legal claims and, through coercive and internalized forms of control, management can shape employee perceptions of what effective performance looks like and normalize a view that poor performers complain.

This article makes several contributions with theoretical and practical implications. The findings seek to extend our understanding of how management extend control of employees and why employees consent to such control or, as Burawoy phrased it, 'how workers come to comply with and otherwise advance their own dehumanisation' [91] (p. 90). Our findings highlight the cognitive mechanisms of control which management engage to elicit desired employee behaviours and extend their authoritative reach. In particular, we draw out a previously under-explored avenue of management control-their

ability to cast doubt about employees' professional competency and citizenship. This can have a significant negative impact on employees. Indeed, we highlight the links between such forms of control and the internalisation of such behaviours by employees whereby they question their own self-esteem. The findings also illustrate how power–resistance dynamics between management and employees are complex and can occur at different 'time and issue junctures' in the employment relationship, whereby employee resistance to managerial pressure on work demands and/or bullying can elicit additional adverse reactions from management. In terms of wider policy implications, we emphasise the need for caution when policy makers develop anti-bullying strategies and guidance. In seeking to provide definitional and operational clarity on what workplace bullying is, policy makers can instead fortify managerial prerogative and blur the lines between bullying and 'ordinary management'.

6. Conclusions

Our findings reflect an embeddedness of bullying which in turn perpetuates a very managerially oriented instrumental ethical climate across the health care environments in which nurses work. Ultimately, this results in the perpetuation of what is widely considered unethical behaviour and contributory HR practices in order to increase the parameters of managerial control. We argue that while such climates and actions on the part of management are effective in serving managerial interests against a backdrop of pressure for change and cost efficiency, there will be little incentive for change. Indeed, the pursuit of change is implicitly underpinned by an assumption that management inherently want to eliminate workplace bullying, an assumption that can be built of sand. Thus, the standard calls for enhanced managerial capabilities to address bullying complaints such as through line manager training are likely to be superficial responses if the current status quo elicits results for organisational purposes. The forms of managerial control discussed above and indeed the 'tight control' [92] over the managers themselves indicate that the debate needs to take a more integrated, multilevel contextualized approach that recognizes the inequitable distribution of power in workplaces. Indeed, it may be timely to examine more closely the potential for countervailing resistance to power of organisations through collective agency [48,49]. Thus, there is a case to include the strategies and actions of unions and representative bodies in the workplace bullying research agenda. An additional under-explored area warranting further research concerns the role of the state and workplace bullying in public-sector organisations. On the one hand, state dispute resolution bodies in Ireland were involved in the development of the new code of practice with the intention of helping organisations to address bullying. On the other hand, the state, as employer and funder, has led the charge towards capitalist-like values and benchmarks involving cost containment and operational efficiencies, the outcomes of which have contributed to public sector workplace environments conducive to bullying behaviours. This draws attention to the external environmental context within which workplace bullying takes places and to the multiple and sometimes contesting roles within state apparatuses that influence workplace bullying.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, J.M., M.O., S.M., C.M., L.R.; methodology, J.M., S.M., C.M.; software, J.M., C.M.; formal analysis, J.M., S.M., C.M.; writing—original draft preparation, J.M., M.O., S.M.; writing—review and editing, J.M., M.O., S.M., C.M., L.R.; supervision, J.M.; project administration, J.M., M.O., S.M.; funding acquisition, J.M., M.O., S.M. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Ethical approval for the research was granted by the Kemmy Business School Ethics Committee, University of Limerick, in January 2010.

Informed Consent Statement: Survey respondents completed the questionnaires anonymously.

Data Availability Statement: The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

References

1. Hodgins, M.; Pursell, L.; Hogan, V.; MacCurtain, S.; Mannix-McNamara, P. *Irish Workplace Behaviour Study*; IOSH: Leicestershire, UK, 2017.
2. León-Pérez, J.M.; Escartín, J.; Giorgi, G. The Presence of Workplace Bullying and Harassment Worldwide. In *Concepts, Approaches and Methods. Handbooks of Workplace Bullying, Emotional Abuse and Harassment*; D'Cruz, P., Noronha, E., Notelaers, G., Rayner, C., Eds.; Springer: Singapore, 2019.
3. Nielsen, M.B.; Matthiesen, S.B.; Einarsen, S. The impact of methodological moderators on prevalence rates of workplace bullying. A meta-analysis. *J. Occup. Organ. Psychol.* **2010**, *83*, 955–979. [CrossRef]
4. Cullinan, J.; Hodgins, M.; Hogan, V.; McDermott, M.; Walsh, S. Bullying and Work-Related Stress in the Irish Workplace. *Societies* **2019**, *9*, 15. [CrossRef]
5. MacMahon, J.; O'Sullivan, M.; Murphy, C.; Ryan, L.; MacCurtain, S. Speaking up or staying silent in bullying situations: The significance of management control. *Ind. Relat. J.* **2018**, *49*, 473–491. [CrossRef]
6. Nielsen, M.B.; Einarsen, S. Outcomes of exposure to workplace bullying: A meta-analytic review. *Work Stress* **2012**, *26*, 309–332. [CrossRef]
7. Hutchinson, M.; Vickers, M.; Jackson, D.; Wilkes, L. Workplace bullying in nursing: Towards a more critical organisational perspective. *Nurs. Inq.* **2006**, *13*, 118–126. [CrossRef]
8. Clegg, S.R. *Frameworks of Power*; SAGE Publications Inc.: New York, NY, USA, 1989.
9. Kelly, D. Workplace bullying—A complex issue needing IR/HRM research? In *21st Century Work: Proceedings of the 20th Conference of the Association of Industrial Relations Academics of Australia and New Zealand*; Pocock, B., Provis, C., Willis, E., Eds.; University of South Australia: Adelaide, SA, Australia, 2006; pp. 274–284.
10. Yildirim, A.; Yildirim, D. Mobbing in the workplace by peers and managers: Mobbing experienced by nurses working in healthcare facilities in Turkey and its effect on nurses. *J. Clin. Nurs.* **2007**, *16*, 1444–1453. [CrossRef]
11. Hodgins, M.; MacCurtain, S.; Mannix-McNamara, P. Workplace bullying and incivility: A systematic review of interventions. *Int. J. Work Health Manag.* **2014**, *7*, 54–72. [CrossRef]
12. Lewis, M.A. Nurse bullying: Organisational considerations in the maintenance and perpetration of healthcare bullying cultures. *J. Nurs. Manag.* **2006**, *14*, 50–58. [CrossRef]
13. Kemp, V. Antecedents, consequences and interventions for workplace bullying. *Curr. Opin. Psychiatry* **2014**, *27*, 364–368. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
14. MacCurtain, S.; Murphy, C.; O'Sullivan, M.; MacMahon, J.; Turner, T. To stand back or step in? Exploring the responses of employees who observe workplace bullying. *Nurs. Inq.* **2017**, *25*, e12207. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
15. Teresi, M.; Pietroni, D.D.; Barattucci, M.; Giannella, V.A.; Pagliaro, S. Ethical Climate(s), Organizational Identification, and Employees' Behavior. *Front. Psychol.* **2019**, *10*, 1356. [CrossRef]
16. Goldman, A.; Tabak, N. Perception of ethical climate and its relationship to nurses' demographic characteristics and job satisfaction. *Nurs. Ethics* **2010**, *17*, 233–246. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
17. Demirtas, O.; Akdogan, A.A. The Effect of Ethical Leadership Behavior on Ethical Climate, Turnover Intention, and Affective Commitment. *J. Bus. Ethics* **2014**, *130*, 59–67. [CrossRef]
18. DeRue, D.; Ashford, S. Who will lead and who will follow? A social process of leadership identity construction in organizations. *Acad. Manag. Rev.* **2010**, *35*, 627–647.
19. Ambrose, M.L.; Arnaud, A.; Schminke, M. Individual Moral Development and Ethical Climate: The Influence of Person–Organization Fit on Job Attitudes. *J. Bus. Ethics* **2007**, *77*, 323–333. [CrossRef]
20. Mayer, D.M.; Kuenzi, M.; Greenbaum, R.L. Examining the Link between Ethical Leadership and Employee Misconduct: The Mediating Role of Ethical Climate. *J. Bus. Ethics* **2010**, *95*, 7–16. [CrossRef]
21. WRC; HSAb. *Code of Practice for Employers and Employees on the Prevention and Resolution of Bullying at Work*; WRC: Dublin, Ireland; HAS: Dublin, Ireland, 2021.
22. Lutgen-Sandvik, P.; Namie, G.; Manie, R. Workplace bullying, causes consequences and corrections. In *Destructive Organisational Communication: Processes, Consequences and Constructive Ways of Organising*; Lutgen-Sanvik, P., Davenport Sypher, B., Eds.; Routledge: New York, NY, USA, 2009; pp. 27–52.
23. Hodgins, M.; MacCurtain, S.; Mannix-McNamara, P. Power and inaction: Why organizations fail to address workplace bullying. *Int. J. Work Health Manag.* **2020**, *13*, 265–290. [CrossRef]
24. D'Cruz, P.; Noronha, E. Workplace bullying in the context of organisational change: The significance of pluralism. *Ind. Relat. J.* **2013**, *45*, 2–21. [CrossRef]
25. Beale, D.; Hoel, H. Workplace bullying and the employment relationship: Exploring questions of prevention, control and context. *Work Employ. Soc.* **2011**, *25*, 5–18. [CrossRef]
26. Thompson, P.; Vincent, S. *Labour Process Theory and Critical Realism*; Springer Science and Business Media LLC: Berlin/Heidelberg, Germany, 2010; pp. 47–69.

27. Tead, O.; Goodrich, C.L. The Frontier of Control: A Study of British Workshop Politics. *Politics Sci. Q.* **1921**, *36*, 535. [CrossRef]

28. Burawoy, M. Between the labour process and the state: The changing face of factory regimes under advanced capitalism. *Am. Sociol. Rev.* **1983**, *48*, 587–605. [CrossRef]

29. Degiuli, F.; Kollmeyer, C. Bringing Gramsci back in: Labor control in Italy's new temporary help industry. *Work Employ. Soc.* **2007**, *21*, 497–515. [CrossRef]

30. Anderson, C.; Brion, S. Perspectives on Power in Organizations. *Annu. Rev. Organ. Psychol. Organ. Behav.* **2014**, *1*, 67–97. [CrossRef]

31. Vallas, S.P.; Hill, A. Conceptualizing Power in Organizations. In *Organizational Imaginaries: Tempering Capitalism and Tending to Communities through Cooperatives and Collectivist Democracy*; Emerald Group Publishing Limited: Bingley, UK, 2012; Volume 34, pp. 165–197. [CrossRef]

32. Mannix McNamara, P.; Fitzpatrick, K.; MacCurtain, S.; O'Brien, M. Workplace Bullying, Power and Redress Procedures: Experiences of Teachers in Ireland. *Qual. Res. Organ. Manag.* **2018**, *13*, 79–97. [CrossRef]

33. Arthurs, H. The Constitutionalization of Employment Relations: Multiple Models, Pernicious Problems. *Soc. Leg. Stud.* **2010**, *19*, 403–422. [CrossRef]

34. Kahn-Freund, O. *Labour and the Law*; Stevens and Sons: London, UK, 1972.

35. Carstensen, M.B.; Schmidt, V.A. Power through, over and in ideas: Conceptualizing ideational power in discursive institutionalism. *J. Eur. Public Policy* **2016**, *23*, 318–337. [CrossRef]

36. French, J.R.P., Jr.; Raven, B.H. The bases of social power. In *Studies in Social Power*; Cartwright, D., Ed.; Institute for Social Research: Ann Arbor, MI, USA, 1959; pp. 150–167.

37. Clegg, S.R.; Haugaard, M. The SAGE Handbook of Power. In *The SAGE Handbook of Power*; SAGE Publications Inc.: New York, NY, USA, 2009.

38. Donaghey, J.; Cullinane, N.; Dundon, T.; Wilkinson, A. Reconceptualising Employee Silence: Problems and Prognosis. *Work Employ. Soc.* **2011**, *25*, 51–67. [CrossRef]

39. Gordon, R. Power and Legitimacy: From Weber to Contemporary Theory. *SAGE Handb. Power* **2013**, 256–273. [CrossRef]

40. Arnold, D.; Bongiovi, J.R. Precarious, informalizing, and flexible work: Transforming concepts and understandings. *Am. Behav. Sci.* **2013**, *57*, 289–308. [CrossRef]

41. Baccaro, L.; Howell, C. A common neoliberal trajectory: The transformation of industrial relations in advanced capitalism. *Politics Soc.* **2011**, *39*, 521–563. [CrossRef]

42. Thompson, P.; Broek, D.V.D. Managerial control and workplace regimes: An introduction. *Work. Employ. Soc.* **2010**, *24*, 1–12. [CrossRef]

43. Burawoy, M.; Wright, E.O. Coercion and Consent in Contested Exchange. *Politics Soc.* **1990**, *18*, 251–266. [CrossRef]

44. Barley, S.R.; Kunda, G. Design and Devotion: Surges of Rational and Normative Ideologies of Control in Managerial Discourse. *Adm. Sci. Q.* **1992**, *37*, 363. [CrossRef]

45. Barker, J.R. Tightening the Iron Cage: Concertive Control in Self-Managing Teams. *Adm. Sci. Q.* **1993**, *38*, 408. [CrossRef]

46. Einarsen, S.; Skogstad, A. Bullying at work: Epidemiological findings in public and private organizations. *Eur. J. Work Organ. Psychol.* **1996**, *5*, 185–201. [CrossRef]

47. Hall, R.; Lewis, S. Managing workplace bullying and social media policy: Implications for employee engagement. *Acad. Bus. Res. J.* **2014**, *1*, 128–138.

48. Seifert, R.; Ironside, M. Tackling bullying in the workplace. In *Bullying and Emotional Abuse in the Workplace*; CRC Press: Boca Raton, FL, USA, 2002; pp. 383–398.

49. Seifert, R. Bullies, Managers, Workers and Trade Unionists. In *Concepts, Approaches and Methods*; Springer Science and Business Media LLC: Berlin/Heidelberg, Germany, 2021; pp. 265–292.

50. Hutchinson, M.; Jackson, D. The construction and legitimation of workplace bullying in the public sector: Insight into power dynamics and organisational failures in health and social care. *Nurs. Inq.* **2014**, *22*, 13–26. [CrossRef]

51. Wilson, F.; Thompson, P. Sexual Harassment as an Exercise of Power. *Gend. Work Organ.* **2001**, *8*, 61–83. [CrossRef]

52. Lukes, S. *Power: A Radical View*; New York Press: New York, NY, USA, 1986.

53. Jaros, S.J. Marxian critiques of Thompson's (1990) 'core' labour process theory: An evaluation and extension. *Ephemera* **2005**, *5*, 5–25.

54. Kärreman, D.; Alvesson, M. Resisting resistance: Counter-resistance, consent and compliance in a consultancy firm. *Hum. Relat.* **2009**, *62*, 1115–1144. [CrossRef]

55. Pinder, C.C.; Harlos, K.P. Employee silence: Quiescence and acquiescence as responses to perceived injustice. *Res. Pers. Hum. Resour. Manag.* **2004**, *20*, 331–369. [CrossRef]

56. Milliken, F.J.; Morrison, E.W.; Hewlin, P.F. An Exploratory Study of Employee Silence: Issues that Employees Don't Communicate Upward and Why*. *J. Manag. Stud.* **2003**, *40*, 1453–1476. [CrossRef]

57. Collinson, M.; Collinson, D. "Its's only Dick": The sexual harassment of women managers in insurance sales. *Work Employ. Soc.* **1996**, *10*, 29–56. [CrossRef]

58. Archer, D. Exploring 'bullying' culture in the para-military organisation. *Int. J. Manpow.* **1999**, *20*, 94–105. [CrossRef]

59. Randle, J.; Stevenson, K.; Grayling, I. Reducing workplace bullying in healthcare organisations. *Nurs. Stand.* **2007**, *21*, 49–56. [CrossRef]

60. Karatuna, I. Targets' coping with workplace bullying: A qualitative study. *Qual. Res. Organ. Manag. Int. J.* **2015**, *10*, 21–37. [CrossRef]

61. Lutgen-Sandvik, P. Intensive Remedial Identity Work: Responses to Workplace Bullying Trauma and Stigmatization. *Organization* **2008**, *15*, 97–119. [CrossRef]

62. Thirlwall, A. Organisational sequestering of workplace bullying: Adding insult to injury. *J. Manag. Organ.* **2015**, *21*, 145–158. [CrossRef]

63. Ng, K.; Niven, K.; Hoel, H. 'I. could help, but.': A dynamic sensemaking model of workplace bullying bystanders. *Hum. Relat.* **2020**, *73*, 1718–1746. [CrossRef]

64. Deetz, S. *Transforming Communication, Transforming Business: Building Responsive and Responsible Workplaces*; Hampton Press: Cresskill, NJ, USA, 1995.

65. Lewin, D. Individual voice: Grievance and other procedures. In *Handbook of Research on Employee Voice*; Wilkinson, A., Donaghey, J., Dundon, T., Freeman, R.B., Eds.; Edward Elgar: Cheltenham, UK, 2014; pp. 281–297.

66. Harlos, K.; Knoll, M. Employee Silence and Workplace Bullying. In *Concepts, Approaches and Methods*; Springer Science and Business Media LLC: Berlin/Heidelberg, Germany, 2021; Volume 2, pp. 201–229.

67. Kennedy, S. An Exploration of Empowerment amongst Final-Year Undergraduate Nursing Students while on Clinical Placement in Ireland Using Social Domain Theory. Ph.D. Thesis, University of Salford, Salford, UK, 2016.

68. Hauge, L.J.; Skogstad, A.; Einarsen, S. Relationships between stressful work environments and bullying: Results of a large representative study. *Work Stress* **2007**, *21*, 220–242. [CrossRef]

69. Whiteside, D.B.; Barclay, L.J. Echoes of silence: Employee silence as a mediator between overall justice and employee outcomes. *J. Bus. Ethics* **2013**, *116*, 251–266. [CrossRef]

70. Harrington, S.; Rayner, C.; Warren, S. Too hot to handle? Trust and human resource practitioners' implementation of anti-bullying policy. *Hum. Resour. Manag. J.* **2012**, *22*, 392–408. [CrossRef]

71. Braun, V.; Clarke, V. Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qual. Res. Psychol.* **2006**, *3*, 77–101. [CrossRef]

72. Smith, J.; Firth, J. Qualitative data analysis: The framework approach. *Nurse Res.* **2011**, *18*, 52–62. [CrossRef]

73. Miles, M.B.; Huberman, M.A.; Saldana, J. *Qualitative Data Analysis: A methods Sourcebook (Utg. 4) Los Angeles*; Sage Publications: New York, NY, USA, 2020.

74. Namie, G.; Lutgen-Sandvik, P.E. Active and Passive Accomplices: The Communal Character of Workplace Bullying. *Int. J. Commun.* **2010**, *4*, 343–373.

75. Hodson, R.; Roscigno, V.J.; Lopez, S.H. Chaos and the abuse of power: Workplace bullying in organizational and interactional context. *Work Occup.* **2006**, *33*, 382–416. [CrossRef]

76. Alvesson, M.; Willmott, H. Identity Regulation as Organizational Control: Producing the Appropriate Individual. *J. Manag. Stud.* **2002**, *39*, 619–644. [CrossRef]

77. Johnson, S.L. Workplace bullying, biased behaviours and performance review in the nursing profession: A qualitative study. *J. Clin. Nurs.* **2019**, *8*, 1528–1537. [CrossRef] [PubMed]

78. Holgate, J.; Pollert, A.; Keles, J.; Kumarappan, L. Geographies of Isolation: How Workers (Don't) Access Support for Problems at Work. *Antipode* **2011**, *43*, 1078–1101. [CrossRef]

79. Wilmott, H. Manging the academics: Commodification and control in the development of university education in the UK. *Hum. Relat.* **1995**, *48*, 993–1027. [CrossRef]

80. Budhwar, P.; Sparrow, P.R. An integrative framework for understanding cross-national human resource management practices. *Hum. Resour. Manag. Rev.* **2002**, *12*, 377–403. [CrossRef]

81. Germov, J. Managerialism in the Australian public health sector: Towards the hyper-rationalisation of professional bureaucracies. *Sociol. Health Illn.* **2005**, *27*, 738–758. [CrossRef]

82. Cooke, H. Seagull management and the control of nursing work. *Work Employ. Soc.* **2006**, *20*, 223–243. [CrossRef]

83. Freeney, Y.; Fellenz, M.R. Work engagement as a key driver of quality of care: A study with midwives. *J. Health Organ. Manag.* **2013**, *27*, 330–349. [CrossRef]

84. Wall, M. Nurses and Doctors Await Commission Report on Staff Pay. *The Irish Times*, 30 July 2018. Available online: https://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/nurses-and-doctors-await-commission-report-on-staff-pay-1.3580267(accessed on 11 December 2020).

85. McKay, R.B. Confronting workplace bullying: Agency and structure in the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. *Adm. Soc.* **2014**, *46*, 548–572. [CrossRef]

86. Burawoy, M. *The Politics of Production*; Verso: London, UK, 1985.

87. Wilmott, H. Rethinking management and managerial work: Capitalism, control and subjectivity. *Hum. Relat.* **1997**, *50*, 1329–1359. [CrossRef]

88. Braverman, H. Labor and Monopoly Capital. *Mon. Rev.* **1974**, *26*, 1–64. [CrossRef]

89. WRC; HSA. Press Release: Workplace Relations Commission/Health and Safety Authority Launch Code of Practice for Employers and Employees on the Prevention and Resolution of Bullying at Work. 2021. Available online: https://www.workplacerelations.ie/en/news-media/workplace_relations_notices/press-release-3-february-2021.html (accessed on 22 February 2021).

90. Tweedie, D.; Wild, D.; Rhodes, C.; Martinov-Bennie, N. How Does Performance Management Affect Workers? Beyond Human Resource Management and Its Critique. *Int. J. Manag. Rev.* **2019**, *21*, 76–96. [CrossRef]

91. Labour Relations Commission. *Code of Practice Detailing Procedures for Dealing with Bullying in the Workplace*; Labour Relations Commission: Dublin, Ireland, 2002.
92. Hoel, H.; Beale, D. Workplace Bullying, Psychological Perspectives and Industrial Relations: Towards a Contextualized and Interdisciplinary Approach. *Br. J. Ind. Relat.* **2006**, *44*, 239–262. [CrossRef]