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A Scoping Review of Bullying and Harassment in Nonprofit and Voluntary Organizations

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ABSTRACT

Approximately 15% of workers are exposed to bullying in their workplace. However, few studies appear to have been conducted in nonprofit and voluntary organizations. This scoping review explored prevalence and structural and contextual factors that influence bullying in nonprofit and voluntary organizations. From a capture of 671 papers, 54 were assessed for eligibility and 18 full-text articles were reviewed. Bullying is prevalent in nonprofit and voluntary organizations at the same or higher levels as other sectors, with sexual harassment appearing to be a serious problem in the context of fundraising. A synthesis of papers found a suite of factors presented in four themes; complex and unique power relations, the exploitation of virtuosity, the exercise of hegemonic power, and asymmetrical power and extreme dependency, which together act to stabilize the presence of bullying in nonprofit and voluntary organizations. Such dynamics need to be disrupted for intervention to occur. Further research is needed on how volunteers “sense-make” in the face of dissonance between organizational mission and behavior, intervention evaluation, and regulating philanthropic donation to reduce donor dependence.

1 | Introduction

Although many terms have been employed to describe the various manifestations of negative interpersonal behavior in the workplace, bullying is the most frequently studied (D’Cruz and Noronha 2021). Bullying is understood here as an especially detrimental form of negative behavior incorporating a range of aggressive interpersonal actions (Nielsen and Einarsen 2018). Based on a meta-analysis of 86 samples from the international literature, it is indicated that between 10% and 20% of workers are exposed to bullying in their place of work (Einarsen, Hoel, and Notelaers 2009), signifying a serious problem in contemporary workplaces. The impact of bullying on employee health is incontrovertible. Further to a meta-analysis of 66 studies, Nielsen and Einarsen conclude that bullying is most strongly associated with psychological health in the form of post-traumatic stress symptoms, depression, and anxiety. It is also associated

with organizationally linked outcomes such as quitting the job, intent to leave, low commitment, job dissatisfaction, and absenteeism (Nielsen and Einarsen 2018). Despite these high costs to individuals and organizations, organizational response is typically poor (Hodgins, MacCurtain, and Mannix McNamara 2020; Thirlwall 2015), and we lack evidence-based pathways for organizations to adopt in tackling the issue.

Given that intervention studies are elusive, scholars have studied bullying in different workplace contexts, often asking whether clues as to its extent (or lack thereof) might be found in sectors. These authors were surprised to realize that the nonprofit and voluntary sector, a term we use here for organizations that include work that is unpaid, non-compulsory and that benefits others, has not received systematic attention. We thought that firstly, the nature of the work undertaken by nonprofit and voluntary organizations gives them exposure

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to situations of injustice and ill-treatment and thus they will have an awareness of the impact and outcomes from abuse with concomitant skills to deal with bullying situations. This would point to an absence or low risk of bullying in voluntary organizations. Secondly, we wondered if a gap between the “myth of pure virtue” and the reality of a toxic workplace might be found. This myth is described as a “saintly self-perception and persona” (Salamon 1994, 118) arising from religious and moral endeavor that originally underpinned the mission basis of the work of many nonprofit and voluntary organizations, and the attendant presumption of a genial and empathic work environment (Ward and Greene 2018). While belief in this ‘myth’ may seem naïve or artless to the academic community, the fact remains that those who seek work there may believe it (Kreutzer and Jager 2010), and they are the populations at risk if the myth is unfounded. Furthermore, the possibility of such a gap triggers a uniqueness about nonprofit and voluntary organizations that we wished to explore. These factors served to spark a curiosity that there may be dynamics at play in the nonprofit and voluntary sector that other sectors may potentially learn from. Unfortunately, it soon became apparent that very few studies on workplace bullying appear to have been conducted on nonprofit and voluntary organizations (Ward and Greene 2018; Dawood 2013).

In the context of limited empirical study and likely research gaps regarding the influential factors in the context of nonprofit and voluntary organizations, a scoping review is indicated (Arksey and O’Malley 2005). This paper reports on a scoping review undertaken on staff (including paid, unpaid, and volunteer) bullying in nonprofit and voluntary organizations to address this deficit in the academic literature. We wanted to explore the extent of bullying in nonprofit and voluntary organizations, based on the nature of work and “virtuous” context. Our second research question sought to explore if the organizational, structural, and cultural context of being “nonprofit and voluntary” had an impact on the dynamics of workplace bullying.

We found that nonprofit and voluntary organizations are far from immune to workplace bullying. Instead, we discovered particularities to working in these organizations that may increase the risk for staff of being harmed from being bullied or harassed. We found dynamics that cued silence around the issue of bullying, reinforced by funding arrangements. Worker’s commitment to the organization’s mission leaves them particularly vulnerable to silence, prolonged exposure and thence further damage. Nonprofit and voluntary organizations cannot risk betraying their less-than-optimal morality when they engage in immoral treatment of their staff, which stifles complaints and may deter complaints being taken seriously and acted upon. Their need to see themselves and be seen by funders and users as moral impedes their ability to accept that they engage in bullying and expose their staff to harassment, leaving intervention very problematic.

2 | Workplace Bullying

Workplace bullying is the primary concept addressed in this article. Workplace bullying is described as an especially detrimental form of negative behavior incorporating a range of aggressive

interpersonal actions (Nielsen and Einarsen 2018), for example, verbal abuse or incivility harassment based on ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation (Hoel, Lewis, and Einarsdottir 2014; Nielsen and Einarsen 2018) and micropolitical game-playing for personal gain (Hodgins and Mannix McNamara 2017). It also includes more subtle enactment of punitive, neglectful and unfair management practices (Fevre et al. 2011; Hodgins et al. 2018), such as exclusion from key processes or assigning unreasonable duties (Einarsen 1999). Bullying is a notoriously difficult and contested construct. There are many definitions offered (Crenshaw 2009; Keashly, Tye-Williams, and Jagatic 2020), reflecting the range of behaviors it encompasses, which often focus on a particular aspect, calling to mind the blind men and elephant fable. Bullying is presented here as the superordinate concept with harassment based on ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation, and verbal abuse or incivility as subordinate concepts.

Bullying surfaces or presents as negative behaviors enacted by one or more perpetrators, towards a target, where the process and pattern are particularly important. The “behaviors” are often the focus of identification and enquiry, yet the context, intent and perceived goal of perpetration are crucial to the experience of being bullied (Keashly 2010), and as they include both subtle tactics and subjective interpretation, this renders bullying difficult to identify and prove. Few, if any definitions capture the “whole elephant,” although the most frequently employed definitions (Einarsen et al. 2011; Namie and Namie 2000) refer to a process or pattern of aggressive or harassing behaviors, that is systematic and targeted, from which targets feel unable to escape and which is damaging to the target in terms of health, well-being, self-respect and identity. Early approaches to the study of sexual harassment maintained it to be conceptually distinct from bullying on the basis that it was seen to be about sex and gender conflict, whereas bullying or psychological violence was deemed gender neutral (Zapf et al. 2020). However, evidence of overlap has been found in both the gendered nature of bullying (Rosander et al. 2020) and the refocusing of sexual harassment to include sex-based harassment as an expression of power and dominance in a variety of contexts in order to reinforce an existing gender hierarchy (Berdahl 2007; Cortina and Areguin 2021; Jones 2006). Accepting the overlap between bullying and sexual harassment facilitates an understanding of violence being located in both societal or structural factors, presenting or playing out through organizational and individual factors.

Challenges with the use of the term “prevalence,” an epidemiological term associated with precision notwithstanding, multiple estimates of prevalence across occupations, sectors and cultures have been published (e.g., Giaccone et al. 2015; Einarsen, Hoel, and Notelaers 2009). Based on a meta-analysis of 86 samples, an average level of bullying in the workplace of 14.6% is reported, while cautioning against comparisons without due consideration of the methodological moderators of location, instrument, and sampling strategy (Nielsen and Einarsen 2018). Some occupational sectors experience considerably higher levels, for example, health and social services, public administration and education, which are chiefly public sector in most countries (Zapf and Vaartia 2020), while some types of organizations have particular challenges (e.g., military, police) (Archer 1999; McKay 2014) demonstrating the importance of institutional context.

Workplace bullying is a complex phenomenon in a complex setting. Bullying has a negative impact on both the individual and the organization. Bullying increases the risk of a range of physical and mental health difficulties including sleep problems, headache, Musculo-skeletal conditions, depression, anxiety, and suicide ideation (Nielsen and Einarsen 2018). Known aspects of work and organization that contribute to bullying include authoritarian or laissez-faire leadership, role conflict, role ambiguity, high demands, workload, pressure, perceived power imbalances, and organizational change (Feijo et al. 2019; Salin and Hoel 2020). Organizational outcomes include higher levels of sick leave, stress, job dissatisfaction, and economic costs (Cullinan et al. 2020; Kivimäki, Elovainio, and Vahtera 2000; Quine 1999), which are significant but to date have not prompted effective intervention. Simple linear relationships are insufficient to capture the workplace setting; rather a systems perspective is required which accommodates convoluted interactions and recursivity.

Despite evidence that bullying has a substantial negative impact, both for individual health (Hogh, Mikklesen, and Hansen 2011; Nielsen and Einarsen 2018) and organizational productivity and costs (Cullinan et al. 2020; Giga, Hoel, and Lewis 2008; Hoel, Sparks, and Cooper 2001), organizations fail to prevent or ameliorate it, as evidenced by studies on turnover intention and quit rates, self-reported actions taken (or not taken), and qualitative accounts of targets experiences of organizational responses (Hodgins, MacCurtain, and Mannix McNamara 2020; Thirlwall 2015). Workers have a significant need and expectation for fairness and reasonable protection in their workplaces. When it fails to materialize, and the perpetrator of psychological abuse or violence is not reprimanded or sanctioned, there is further negative impact on worker health and well-being (Ferris 2004).

Many definitions of workplace bullying include an imbalance of power where the bully is seen as having power over the target; hierarchical, emotional or with superior resources. Indeed, to understand the dynamics of workplace bullying and why organizations are so poor at dealing with it, requires a nuanced view which embraces the centrality of power abuse. The power relations within nonprofit and voluntary organizations include volunteers as well as paid workers, and in some cases volunteer management boards, likely to introduce added complexity. Although the dynamics of bullying and harassment are broadly similar across organizations, how they are experienced, surface, play out, and are responded to are very much a function of context.

The dominant theoretical perspective is that bullying is a multilevel problem, caused by an interaction between individual factors and work environment factors (e.g., Einarsen 1999; Johnson 2011; Salin 2003; Samnani and Singh 2016), offering the best prospect of exploring the complex, systemic nature of bullying. A systemic approach, we argue, captures the complexity and convoluted nature of bullying and harassment in the workplace, and guides the synthesis of papers in the review.

3 | The Nonprofit Voluntary Sector

The nonprofit and voluntary sector travels under various names, for example, the third sector, the social economy, or the

independent sector. It incorporates nonprofit organizations, social enterprises, mission-based organizations, cooperatives, and mutual benefit organizations, which together embrace an extremely wide variety of institutions (Salamon and Sokolowski 2014). The classification of nonprofit organizations issued by the United Nations is a widely accepted approach to defining the sector. The nonprofit sector is defined as institutions that are; organized (a legal entity and having an organizational identity), private (nongovernmental), nonprofit distributing, self-governing, and noncompulsory (involving meaningful uncoerced individual participation) (European Commission 1999; Salamon and Sokolowski 2014).

Nonprofit organizations include registered charities, civic and social organizations, noncommercial foundations, cultural organizations, religious organizations, advocacy organizations, trade and labor unions, professional associations, amateur sports and recreation associations, community benefit associations, humanitarian, and community organizations (Salamon and Sokolowski 2014). A feature that binds these diverse organizations together is that they exist for “social purpose” or the “public good” and as such they have a moral mandate (Gocmen 2013). The noncompulsory criterion is more frequently described as voluntary, and includes work that is unpaid and non-compulsory, such as benefitting others outside one’s own household, individually and within organizations (Salamon and Sokolowski 2014). In this article, we specifically focus on mission-based, charitable nonprofits and voluntary organizations, where the public good aspect holds a specific focus on addressing social disadvantage, social justice issues, rights-based causes or humanitarian work, through support, advocacy, or service provision. Still diverse, ranging from small community-based grass roots endeavors wholly staffed by volunteers to large international charities with paid staff and structures that mirror the corporate world, this subcategory is unique in its underpinning commitment to justice or charitable mission. They rely on occasional or regular volunteers for their activities (Mannarini, Pozzi, and Marta 2024) normally alongside paid workers (Nichols 2013) and have several unique features, which render them of potential interest to a study of workplace bullying.

In the public eye, such nonprofit and voluntary organizations, being either philanthropic or emancipatory in nature, will be assumed to live up to the values they espouse (Gocmen 2013) and that staff will not bully or harass one another, articulated by Salaman as “the myth of pure virtue” (1994, 118). Such nonprofit and voluntary organizations are usually created by individuals or groups (often religious or activist) in response to a need driven by charitable or social justice motives for civil society. Management draws on collective commitment to values on the part of paid staff and volunteers (Lunenburg 2012) who are likely to expect reciprocal standards (Ward and Greene 2018). In addition, the nature of altruistic work suggests sharpened sensitivity and sympathy needed and weak power positions for the organizations’ users. Such sensitivity and operational skills could be used to grasp and understand internal conflict such as workplace bullying far earlier and more effectively than workers in less moral-based work (Mellor and Webster 2013). Nonprofit and voluntary organizations are perceived to create social added value through the

provision of services and a willingness to create cooperative community networks (Mannarini, Pozzi, and Marta 2024). Notwithstanding their ethos of altruism and anticipated sensitivity and skills, there are contextual features of nonprofit and voluntary organizations that signpost risk for bullying and harassment to which we now turn.

Nonprofit and voluntary organizations have a range of funding sources and funding can be irregular, unpredictable, and inadequate to meet their aspirations for service users (Parry et al. 2005). Funding is often project-linked such that only specific achievements are funded, and an imperative placed on the organization to deliver quickly to agreed volumes of help to end users (Schubert and Boenigk 2019). All staff in nonprofit and voluntary organizations know the pressures of funding and that withdrawal of funds is possible. Any poor press coverage tainting the nonprofit and voluntary organization's reputation is anticipated to rub off on funders' own reputation, potentially prompting withdrawal of funds (Tang et al. 2022). Thus the importance of a clean reputation is grasped by staff at all levels, with failure risking damage to the organization, colleagues and service users (ibid). Larger charities work in a competitive funding environment, which engenders complex contesting accountabilities to internal stakeholders; trustees and funders, as well as their own paid and unpaid workers and users of the service (Schubert and Boenigk 2019; Parry et al. 2005) with inherent tension between liabilities.

Further complexities arise for status and role with unpaid volunteers, part- or fully-paid workers, temporary, outsourced, or permanent (Velthuis 2010; Ward and Greene 2018), leading to role ambiguity, which is a well-established risk factor for bullying (e.g., Salin and Hoel 2020). Further, the psychological contract may be interpreted differently for paid and volunteer workers (Nichols 2013), and the contrasting identities of paid workers and volunteers has been acknowledged by Kreutzer and Jager (2010) as a basis for intraorganizational conflicts. Standard work relations therefore may differ or be absent for some staff, rendering the possibility of bullying of particular interest, which could not be captured with a broader NP focus.

Finally, nonprofit and voluntary organizations may be run by paid or unpaid boards or committees, which makes them subject to complex decision-making processes (Parry et al. 2005; Ford and Ihrke 2020) adding to the normal hierarchical structures.

This ground of complexities in power relations could cushion employees from workplace bullying and ensure fast resolution or alternatively engender silence. The researchers could not predict how the mistreatment dynamics would work.

A scoping review is indicated where an area has not been comprehensively reviewed before (Arksey and O'Malley 2005), where there is a need to better understand complex issues (Peters et al. 2020) and where it is useful to identify the key factors that relate to the topic and to map an area of study as a necessary first step to posing more specific research questions (Aromatras and Munn 2017). On this basis, a scoping review of workplace bullying and harassment was undertaken, using

a systems approach to inform our synthesis and research recommendations.

4 | Methods

Given the lack of empirical attention to bullying in the nonprofit and voluntary sector we followed Arksey and O'Malley's (2005) framework (see Figure 1) to conduct a scoping review in order to answer the following research questions.

- What is known about the extent and nature of bullying and harassment of staff (including paid, unpaid, and volunteer) in donor-based, non-commercial nonprofit and voluntary organizations?
- What are the organizational, structural, and contextual factors relevant to understanding bullying and harassment in nonprofit and voluntary organizations?

Based on the findings from the research questions above, we will highlight priorities for future research.

4.1 | Identifying Relevant Studies (Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria)

In identifying studies, it is recommended to balance feasibility, breadth, and comprehensiveness (Aromatras and Munn 2017). The search strategy began with a preliminary review of terms employed in other scoping or systematic reviews of workplace bullying and harassment (e.g., Feijo et al. 2019; Gaudine, Patrick, and Busby 2019; Gillen et al. 2017; Lever et al. 2016; Nielsen, Notelaers, and Einarsen 2011) and search terms were then piloted in relevant databases. The second stage of the search strategy involved a full search of databases using specific search strings (see Table 1). Terms were grouped to distinguish behaviors and also organizations. As "mobbing" is a term employed in avian studies, "birds/aves" were excluded. Exclusions were also set for child and school. We excluded children and minors as the sexual abuse of children extends a range of legal, criminal, and policy factors (e.g., child protection legislation and regulation) that we felt both altered and diluted the focus of the study to the ethical and legal responsibilities of organizations in respect of child protection. The focus of the study was on the mission-based nonprofit as a workplace. No limits were set on study types, as recommended for scoping reviews (Munn et al. 2018).

4.2 | Information Sources

Using Gussenbaurer and Haddaway's (2020) list of 28 search systems, platforms, and databases, we identified four meta-databases appropriate to the aims of this review; Web of Science, EBSCO, SCOPUS, and ProQuest. Search terms and results for each meta-database can be seen in Table 1. Limiters included dates (2000–2021), English language only, and availability of abstract. Following identification and selection of key papers for the full-text review, any other papers of interest found in reference lists were added if not uncovered in database searching.

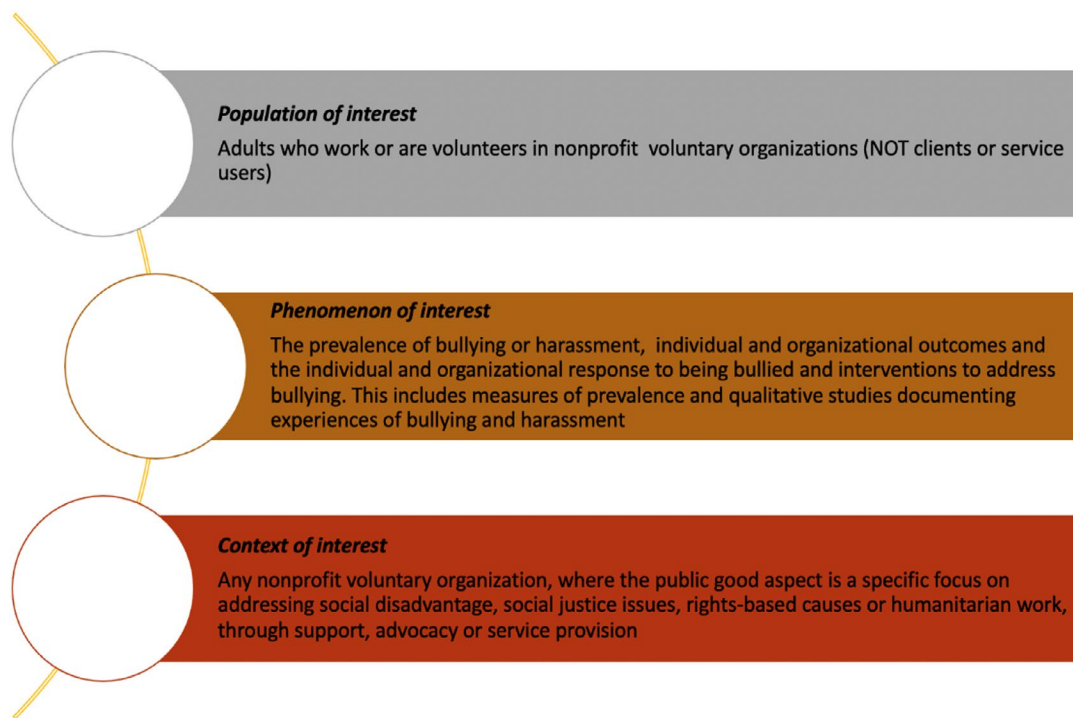


FIGURE 1 | Framework for scoping review.

TABLE 1 | Search terms, results, and information sources.

	Terms searched under title, abstract, and key word fields in each database	EBSCO	Web of science	Scopus	ProQuest
Behavior terms #1	ill*treatment OR “bad leader*” OR “destructive leader*” OR “toxic leader*” OR “abusive supervision” OR mobbing OR “emotional abuse” OR victimi*ation OR bully* OR harassment OR incivility	53,900	59,030	62,707	88,157
Organization terms #2	charit* OR ngo OR non*governmental*organi*ation OR cbo OR community*based*organi*ation OR voluntary*organi*ation OR not*for*profit OR non*profit OR self*help*organi*ation	95,477	38,040	72,474	105,213
#3	#1 AND #2	337	89	179	461
Excluded terms #4	student* OR school* OR adolescen* OR bird OR aves				
	#3 AND NOT #4	242	66	178	344
Following database removal		240	29	144	248

4.3 | Study Selection and Screening

All identified records following duplication removal ($n = 661$) were imported to COVIDENCE software. A second deduplication within the software resulted in identification of 25 further duplicates. Ten records were added after identification in the screening process. Two reviewers (M.H. and Y.I.) independently assessed titles and abstracts to identify studies that appeared to meet the inclusion criteria for the review. A third reviewer (C.R.) was available to resolve differences of opinion. Less than 10% of records required third reviewer adjudication.

After deduplication and screening on title and abstract, 60 records remained for eligibility assessment, 44 of which were retrieved (see Figure 2: PRISMA chart). This next stage involved both further screening on title and abstract and some full text screening where required.

4.4 | Charting Identified Papers

The screening process resulted in 18 articles identified for full-text review, including empirical studies and conceptual papers.

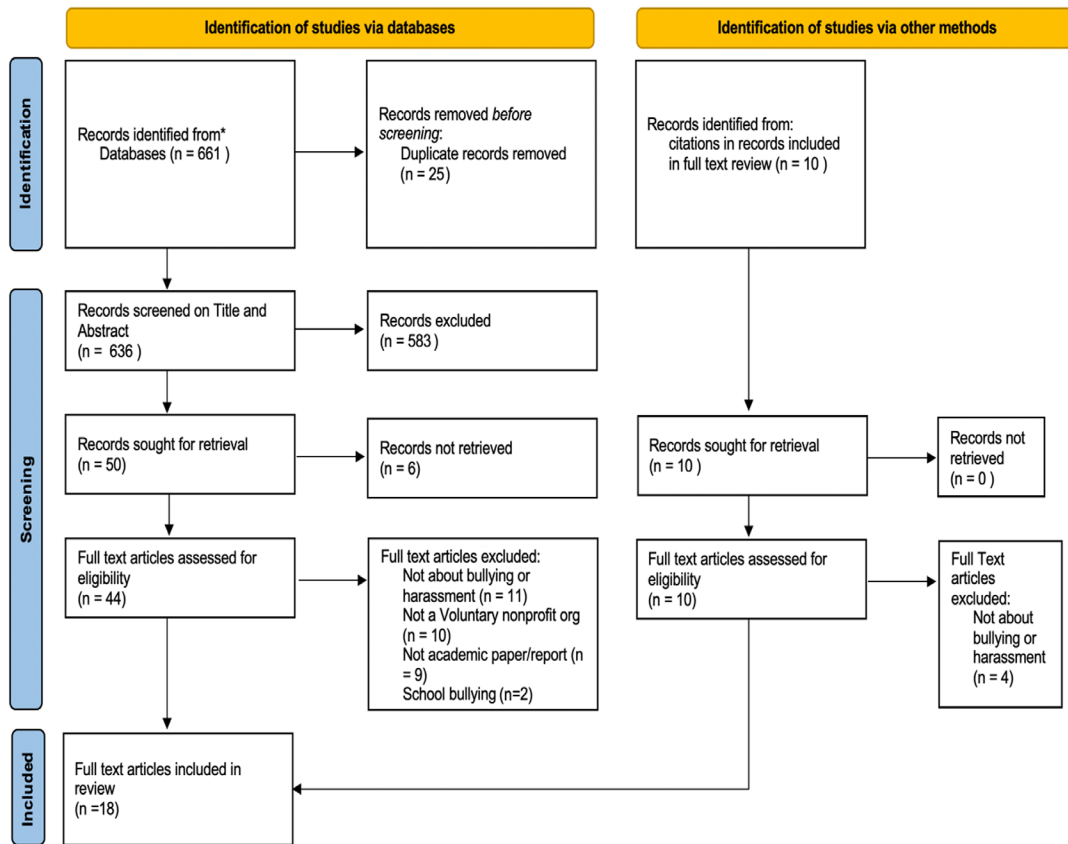


FIGURE 2 | PRISMA flow chart.

All papers were read by at least two members of the research team. The general characteristics of studies were collated and charted, and the extent of bullying was estimated along with the nature of bullying as per measured outcomes.

4.5 | Synthesis: Collating, Summarizing, and Reporting the Results

The team members independently produced a summary of the key findings and observations. A full discussion on all papers was held by the team leading to iterative assessment. Informed by a systemic theoretical stance, it became clear that contextual factors appeared to drive bullying and harassment in these reports. Summaries were subsequently synthesized using a narrative analysis and the key findings identified are presented below.

5 | Results

The general characteristics of studies are first presented, followed by a synthesis of studies focusing on the extent and nature of bullying and harassment, and organizational, structural and contextual factors.

5.1 | General Characteristics of Studies

Table 2 contains a chart of the data extracted: authors, year of publication, geographical location, study type/methods, populations,

methods, and theoretical base. Seven studies were undertaken in the United States, five in the United Kingdom, one in the United States and Canada, three across international NGOs, one in Australia, and one in Pakistan. There were nine peer reviewed papers, four reports, four dissertations, and one book chapter. The samples from empirical studies were staff in nonprofit and voluntary organizations, or broader nonprofit samples that could have included nonprofit and voluntary organizations. Two studies focused on fundraisers and three on international aid organizations. Four of the studies focused on sexual harassment, one on destructive leadership, while all others focused on bullying. A range of methods were employed within the studies; documentary analysis (2), interviews (8), focus groups (1), surveys (8), and case studies (2) with some studies using more than one method. Less than half (6) of the papers mentioned a theoretical stance.

5.2 | Synthesis: The Extent and the Nature of Bullying and Harassment

Nine of the 18 articles attempted to measure the extent of workplace bullying and/or harassment in some manner. These estimates, along with definitions, measurement instruments employed, and any subgroup analysis and outcomes are presented in Table 3 below.

As can be seen, each study employed a different methodology and/or instrument. Two measured bullying and harassment with a behavioral checklist; the Negative Acts Questionnaire (Einarsen, Hoel, and Notelaers 2009). Three used self-labelling

TABLE 2 | Data extraction chart.

Author and year	Type of publication	Title of publication	Study location	Population/ participants	Study aim/research question(s)	Methodology	Theoretical base
Beaton, LePere-Schloop, and Smith (2022)	Peer Reviewed paper	A review of Sexual Harassment Prevention Practices: Towards a Non-Profit Research Agenda	USA	Documents (webpages) identified following Google search ($n = 25$) providing associated hyperlinks $n = 95$ webpages	To explore anti-harassment practices recommended to nonprofit practitioners. To compare practices to academic research and assess contribution to knowledge	Qualitative analysis (thematic, inductive iterative coding, and comparison) of web pages	None given
Beaton, LePere-Schloop, and Smith (2021)	Peer Reviewed paper	“Whatever it takes”: Sexual harassment in the context of resource dependence	USA	Fundraisers ($n = 36$) Purposive, snowballing sampling	How do boundary spanners experience sexual harassment in the context of efforts to mitigate organizational resource dependencies	Qualitative feminist narrative, phenomenological approach, using interviews	Resource Dependence theory
Boddy (2017)	Peer Reviewed paper	Psychopathic Leadership: A Case study of a Corporate Psychopath CEO	UK	Case Study: The case studied here is that of an individual organization, described as a UK Charity	To compare organizational outcomes for a CEO with a high corporate psychopathy score with a previous CEO in the same organization, who was reportedly an authentic, effective and transformational leader	Case study based on two in-depth interviews and follow up e-mails	None given
Ciancio (2021)	Dissertation	The Crisis of Burnout in Human Services and Changing the Course of the Nonprofit Work	USA	Participants from urban and rural rape crisis centers, a foster care agency, a child welfare agency, and a dual rape crisis and domestic violence center	(1) Degree of burnout and emotional labor experienced by nonprofit human service professionals. (2) Perceived relationship between leadership, burnout, and voluntary turnover	Qualitative phenomenological approach using interviews	Human Resource Theory
Chesler (2014)	Dissertation	The impact of workplace bullying on employee morale, job satisfaction and productivity within nonprofit organizations	USA	Participants were Survey Monkey members who self-identified as working in or having worked in nonprofit organizations	To investigating the relationship between workplace bullying and job satisfaction, employee morale, and productivity within nonprofit organizations	Survey	None described

(Continues)

TABLE 2 | (Continued)

Author and year	Type of publication	Title of publication	Study location	Population/ participants	Study aim/research question(s)	Methodology	Theoretical base
Clarke (2021)	Peer Reviewed paper	The Credibility of International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) and the Oxfam Scandal of 2018	INGOs	Documents and reports produced by organizations directly involved in the response to the scandal, print, broadcast and online media	(1) What factors led to the Oxfam scandal? (2) What was response of Oxfam GB, Oxfam International, and others? (3) What extent are INGOs credible development actors?	Documentary and qualitative analysis of interviews with key individuals at the heart of the scandal	Gourevich Analytical framework: credibility for NGOS
Avula, McKay, and Gallard (2019)	Published report	Amnesty International (AI) Staff Wellbeing Report	Worldwide (AI)	Staff of one international voluntary organization (AI) ($n = 475$ for survey, 75 for focus groups)	What can AI learn from the tragic suicide of a staff member. Provision of recommendations to ensure adequate support to staff	Qualitative focus groups, semi structured interviews ($n = 75$), open door email ($n = 20$) and policy document review; and quantitative electronic survey ($n = 475$)	None given
Vijfeijken (2019)	Peer reviewed paper	Culture Is What You See When Compliance Is Not in the Room": Organizational Culture as an Explanatory Factor in Analyzing Recent INGO Scandals	INGOs	Policy brief based on interview data and practitioner experience	Exploration of cultural factors that contribute to an explanation for sexual abuse scandals in INGOs	Practitioner reflection on scandals in context of interview data	Fiedler's Contingency-based Leadership Theory
O'Neil and Sandoval (2018)	Published report	Professional Harassment Survey (Prepared for The Chronicle of Philanthropy and The Association of Fundraising Professionals)	USA and Canada	Fundraisers through Assc. of Fundraising Professionals ($n = 1040$)	To measure prevalence of sexual harassment in fundraisers	Quantitative survey of fundraisers	None given

(Continues)

TABLE 2 | (Continued)

Author and year	Type of publication	Title of publication	Study location	Population/ participants	Study aim/research question(s)	Methodology	Theoretical base
Spencer (2016)	Report based on Masters Dissertation	Cowboys and Conquering Kings. Sexual harassment, abuse and exploitation in the Aid Sector	International NGOs	Based on interviews with 29 Aid workers across the world	An exploration of abuse within the international Aid sector	Qualitative study of experiences of Aid workers in international NGOs	None given
Paull and Omari (2015)	Peer Reviewed paper	Dignity and respect: Important in volunteer settings too!	Australia	Volunteers, workers and managers in the voluntary sector (with overlapping paid and unpaid roles in organizations) at an annual volunteering symposium plus snowball sampling ($n = 136$ in total)	An investigation of whether workplace bullying is an issue for (unpaid) volunteers and (paid or unpaid) volunteer managers	Qualitative online survey of participants	None given
Salamon and Sokolowski (2014)	Peer Reviewed paper	Workplace Sexual Harassment in Non-Governmental Social and Development Sector a Case Study of District Peshawar, Pakistan	Pakistan	Women working at different NGOs with minimum experience of 4 years in nongovernmental social and development sectors in Peshawar ($n = 216$)	To investigate the relationship between attractiveness, office setup, organizational policy, and work ethics and exposure of female staff to SH at work	A cross sectional survey ($n = 216$) using a sexual harassment experience questionnaire incorporating 4 elements: Attractiveness; Office setup; Organizational Policy; and Work ethics(SHEQ), (Fitzgerald, Gelfand, and Draggow 2015)	None given

(Continues)

TABLE 2 | (Continued)

Author and year	Type of publication	Title of publication	Study location	Population/ participants	Study aim/research question(s)	Methodology	Theoretical base
Hitchcock (2015)	Dissertation	The Relationship Between Toxic Leadership, Organizational Citizenship, and Turnover Behaviors Among San Diego Nonprofit Paid Staff	USA	Convenience sample of San Diego nonprofit paid staff members whose organizations use a large HR firm. Also, a small sample from a local nonprofit professional networking organization	Exploring (1) the effect toxic leader behaviors have on Organizational citizenship behavior (and turnover behavior), (2) the influence of commitment on the effect of toxicity	Survey employing Destructive Leadership Questionnaire (DLQ), including measure of OCB and turnover behavior, including open ended question	OC and DL
O'Hara and Omer (2013)	Book Chapter	Virtue and the organizational shadow: exploring false innocence and the paradoxes of power	US	Case material gathered over two decades on social service, educational organizations dedicated to that engage in unjust treatment	Examination of harmful behavior occurring in organizations pursuing virtuous causes	Analysis of case material	None given
Dawood (2013)	Peer reviewed paper	Prevalence and forms of workplace bullying in the voluntary sector: Is there a need for concern?	Leicester, UK	Staff of voluntary organizations ($n = 178$)	To investigate the nature and prevalence of workplace bullying in the voluntary sector	Survey employing NAQ with additional items about social isolation, aggression, and sexual harassment	None given
Dawood (2008)	Peer reviewed paper	Perception and nature of workplace bullying among the voluntary sector workforce: a qualitative analysis	Leicester, UK	Staff of voluntary organizations ($n = 22$ respondents across 29 organizations)	To investigate the perception and nature of workplace bullying in the voluntary sector	Qualitative interviews, thematic analysis	None given

(Continues)

TABLE 2 | (Continued)

Author and year	Type of publication	Title of publication	Study location	Population/ participants	Study aim/research question(s)	Methodology	Theoretical base
Dawood (2008)	Dissertation	Prevalence and forms of workplace bullying in the voluntary sector: is there a need for concern?	Leicester, UK	Staff of voluntary organizations (n = 178 workers across 29 voluntary organizations)	To investigate the nature and prevalence of WB, and to explore the utility of "Routine Activity Theory" (RAT) in explaining WB	Survey employing NAQ with additional items about social isolation, aggression and sexual harassment. Qualitative interviews, thematic analysis	Routine Activity Theory
Hoel and Cooper (2000)	Published report	Destructive Conflict in Work	UK	5300 workers across 70 organizations, including voluntary (n = 123 individuals)	To measure prevalence of workplace bullying	Quantitative survey	None given

questions, two with and one without a definition, one conducted a qualitative online survey, and one measured perceived bullying culture and related factors as part of a broader review of staff well-being. Three measured sexual harassment only, and one measured destructive leadership with an instrument that included questions on bullying. Three of these articles did not offer a working definition of bullying.

Comparison, as noted above is challenging. With regard to studies that focused on bullying, only the Hoel and Cooper (2000) study can provide a meaningful comparison having surveyed 16 sectors. The voluntary sector subsample of 108 persons gave a self-labelling rate (with a definition) of 10.7% in the past 6 months and 26.7% in the past 5 years, compared with 10.6% and 24.7%, respectively, for the full sample. Self-identified direct experience of bullying and witnessing of bullying for the 5 year time-span was 26.7% and 55.6%, respectively, in voluntary organizations, compared with 24.7% and 46.5%, respectively, for the full sample.

Given the variations in both measurement instrument and in the way in which nonprofit and voluntary organizations have been sampled, no further comparisons can be offered. However, estimates overall hover around 20%–30%, which is consistent with the wider literature, and indicates that the extent of bullying does not appear to be discernibly less in nonprofit and voluntary organizations.

With regard to the three studies measuring sexual harassment, different populations, methods, and measures were employed. The poll conducted in partnership with the UK-based Association of Fundraising Professionals of 1040 members who work full or part-time at a nonprofit, or whom have a fundraising aspect/function to their job, found that "one in five fundraising professionals describe sexual harassment as being rampant within their profession" (2), with 26% saying they have been told about sexual harassment, 16% having witnessed it and 21% having personally experienced sexual harassment within the fundraising profession. Regarding gender, 25% of female fundraisers versus 7% of male fundraisers reported experiencing sexual harassment, and 96% of perpetrators were male. Thirty-nine percent cited harassment by a colleague, while 65% of fundraisers who had been harassed said at least one incident involved a donor. The most frequent form was inappropriate sexual comments or unwanted touching or contact. For those who have been harassed, "it is not typically a one-time occurrence ... 74% had at least two experiences and 51% had three or more." (3) (O'Neil and Sandoval 2018). Similarly, while Spencer did not measure prevalence, in interviews with 29 aid workers across a range of international aid agencies, 50 incidents of sexual abuse or exploitation (SEA) were described. She presents SEA as rampant across the sector (Spencer 2016). Jalal reported 93% of their female respondents reported sexual harassment of some kind, although no breakdown of coercion, unwanted attention or gender harassment was given. In the absence of any other estimates of the extent of sexual harassment, this can be taken as indicative of a substantial problem in the sector.

Across the studies, outcomes of bullying included anxiety, depression, exhaustion, headaches, insomnia, musculoskeletal

TABLE 3 | Prevalence of bullying and harassment in voluntary organizations.

Author (date)	Population/sample	Definition employed in study	Measure of bullying or harassment employed	Prevalence	Witness	Subgroup differences	Outcomes
Dawood (2008)	N=178 from 29 voluntary organizations Leicester, UK (included nonprofit health, arts etc.)	Not given	Self-labelling question and Negative Acts Questionnaire (Einarsen, Hoel, and Notelaers 2009), revised version (Hoel and Cooper 2000) with additional questions on sexual harassment and social isolation (from Psychological Workplace Inventory (Bjorkqvist, Osterman, and Hjelt-Back 1992) and Leymann Inventory of Psychological Terrorization (Leymann 1996)	With criterion of "over past year" self-labelling no definition: 15.2% With criterion of last 5 years, self-labelling no definition: 28% Behavioral checklist with one act in past year: 25%	40% observed or witnessed	No difference by gender or status of perpetrator	Negative effects for social isolation, negative effects on psychological and physical health, poorer self-reported job performance, negative effects on personal life and relationships
Chesler 2014	N=141 Survey Monkey members who self-identified as working or having worked in a nonprofit organization	Workplace bullying is defined as the repeated mistreatment of an individual employee by a person or a group that takes the form of verbal abuse, behavior that is humiliating, threatening, or intimidating, or sabotage of the targeted person's work	Self-labelling with a definition; Workplace Culture Survey (Namie and Namie 2000)	Bullied now, not witnessed: 1% Bullied now and witnessed: 3% Bullied previously, witnessed others: 28%	Bullied now and witnessed: 3% Bullied previously, witnessed others: 28% Not bullied but witnessed: 30%	Targets 38% female, 18% male	Bullied impacted on productivity, (20%) decline in morale (44%), work team disruption (33%), and no impact (3%)

(Continues)

TABLE 3 | (Continued)

Author (date)	Population/sample	Definition employed in study	Measure of bullying or harassment employed	Prevalence	Witness	Subgroup differences	Outcomes
Hoel and Cooper (2000)	N = 121 a subsample of 5288 respondents from 70 voluntary organizations in UK	Bullying was defined 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	Self-labelling question, with definition, Negative Acts Questionnaire (Einarsen, Hoel, and Notelaers 2009)	Self-labelling with def 11% in past 6 months, 27% in past 5 years (compared with 11% and 25% for entire sample) 12.7% report bullying is serious pressure in my workplace, 22.9% report bullying is serious problem in my workplace	55% had witnessed in past 5 years compared with 47% in entire sample	n/a	For voluntary organization respondents, 28% perceived it effects motivation, 26% effects satisfaction and 33% efficiency For those currently and previously bullied across entire sample sig. elevated mental ill-health, but no breakdown given for voluntary organization subsample
Paull and Omari (2015)	Attendees (n = 136) at an event for volunteers and managers of volunteers, invited to participate and to snowball the invite	No definition given	Have you been subject to or witnessed bullying in volunteering	“Approximately one third” indicated that they had been subjected to bullying behaviors, describing behaviors that are typical of studies of bullying	n/a	n/a	n/a

(Continues)

TABLE 3 | (Continued)

Author (date)	Population/sample	Definition employed in study	Measure of bullying or harassment employed	Prevalence	Witness	Subgroup differences	Outcomes
Avula, McKay, and Galland (2019)	N = 475 Amnesty Intl. staff, and 75 persons interviewed	No definition given	Study specific survey (Wellbeing) with questions about bullying behaviors and mistreatment	19% reported a disrespectful work environment 17% reported regular experience of microaggressions 15% bullying management style Numerous reports of bullying, racism, sexism and abuse of power, discrimination and unfair treatment of staff in interviews	n/a	Bullying (with conflict and poor treatment) perceived as a cause of physical and psychological health issues Poor handling of grievances very stressful	n/a
O'Neill & Sandoval (2018)	Professional Assoc. poll of members (fundraisers) N = 1040	Sexual harassment (SH) defined as "inappropriate comments, touching, sexual assault"	Questionnaire devised for purpose of poll, included perceptions of SH in organization, personal experience of, witness of and organizational response to SH	One in five fundraising professionals describe SH as being rampant within their profession, and 21% having personally experienced SH within the fundraising profession	16% witnessed SH, 26% said they have been told about SH	25% of female fundraisers vs. 7% of male fundraisers reported experiencing SH, and 96% of perpetrators were male. 39% cited harassment by a colleague, while 65% of fundraisers who had been harassed said at least one incident involved a donor	35% of those who experienced SH experienced negative impact on job/career

(Continues)

TABLE 3 | (Continued)

Author (date)	Population/sample	Definition employed in study	Measure of bullying or harassment employed	Prevalence	Witness	Subgroup differences	Outcomes
Spencer (2016)	Interviews with 29 aid workers across a range of international aid agencies	Sexual exploitation: any actual or attempted abuse of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another, sexual abuse defined as the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, by force or under unequal or coercive conditions	Not reported	50 incidents of sexual abuse or exploitation (SEA) were described	n/a	n/a	n/a
Jalal et al. (2015)	Women (n = 182) from nonprofit social and development organizations in Pakistan	Any unwelcome sexual advance, request for sexual favors or other verbal or written communication or physical conduct of a sexual nature or sexually demeaning attitudes, causing interference with work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment, or the attempt to punish the complainant for refusal to comply to such a request or is made a condition for employment	Sexual Harassment Experience Questionnaire (SHEQ) (Fitzgerald, Gelfand, and Drasgow 2015) containing three subscales: gender harassment, sexual coercion, and unwanted sexual attention	93% of women experienced some form of sexual harassment, but no subscale breakdown was provided	n/a	n/a	n/a

(Continues)

TABLE 3 | (Continued)

Author (date)	Population/sample	Definition employed in study	Measure of bullying or harassment employed	Prevalence	Witness	Subgroup differences	Outcomes
Hitchcock (2015)	N = 471, across nonprofits in a US city (variety of nonprofits i.e., including arts, health, etc.)	Toxic leadership defined as managerial incompetence, threatening, controlling and illegal behaviors, and physical and nonphysical abuse that are intentionally hostile or detrimental to both individuals and groups	Destructive Leadership questionnaire (25 items) (Shaw, Erickson, and Harvey 2011)	Almost 300 respondents (63%) indicated they experienced toxicity, and had worked for an abusive supervisor, and the DLQ items dealing with brutal, bullying, inconsiderate and tyrannical behavior had the highest means	n/a	85% of those experiencing toxicity were female. White respondents experienced toxic leadership at a lower rate relative to their representation in their sample of 471 staff (i.e., White respondents had a high representation overall, but lower experiences of toxic leadership), while Hispanic respondents were over-represented	No significant relationship with turnover

Note: Term as used in wider literature.

complaints, and panic attacks (Avula, McKay, and Galland 2019; Dawood 2008). Of note is the observation of O'Hara and Omer, based on their therapeutic work with staff of nonprofit and voluntary organizations, that the negative experiences of people who have been mistreated in what they term "virtue-driven organizations" are extreme (2013).

With regard to organizational protection from bullying and harassment, it is notable that in the first instance, few studies measured the availability of policies to address bullying, although several measured or explored how the problem of bullying was addressed. Dawood found only 19% of her sample reported the availability of a policy, while 33% did not know (Dawood 2013). Just over 60% of Hitchcock's respondents who described themselves as working under toxic leadership intended to quit (Hitchcock 2015). While O'Neil and Sandoval (2018) found a high level of satisfaction with sexual harassment policy coverage (69%), over one quarter (27%) did not take any action following incidents of sexual harassment, with one quarter of those who reported incidents having it downplayed or not acted on and up to 60% stating it was not properly investigated. Amnesty's supports for bullying were found to be wholly inadequate (Avula, McKay, and Galland 2019); 15% of their respondents felt unable to voice opinions about bullying in the organization without fear of retribution, while Spencer (2016) found a high level of organizational blindness to the problem of sexual harassment in NGOs, and the response to be extremely poor, characterized by diversionary and delaying tactics, compartmentalism and poorly thought-out policies:

Sexual harassment policy exists but ... is undermined, underfunded and overruled ... aid agencies only engage in efforts to 'mask over' the problem and take action on sexual exploitation and abuse ... only when the media shines a spotlight on them. Without media attention the issue is deprioritised. Surface level work is undertaken—reports are written and then shelved, policies developed and never implemented—as a means to prove that action has been taken whilst not implementing anything or a practical nature ...

(ibid:2).

In summary our response to the first research question of extent, methodological differences notwithstanding, bullying appears to be a problem in nonprofit and voluntary organizations with at least 20% of staff having direct experience. There is certainly no justification for the case that nonprofit and voluntary organizations are at lower risk for bullying or outcomes are any less severe. Power differentials are important, with the strongest evidence in respect of gender and sexual harassment. Sexual harassment seems particularly prevalent, even endemic, in fundraising organizations and INGOs, (O'Neil and Sandoval 2018; Spencer 2016) and is significantly more likely to be perpetrated by men, on women, consistent with the wider literature (Cortina and Areguin 2021).

Our second research question explored the systemic factors; organizational, structural, and cultural that influence

bullying and harassment in nonprofit and voluntary organizations. Organizational factors were identified in several studies. Chesler (2014) found a negative impact on productivity, team disruption, and morale. The review of staff well-being conducted in the aftermath of suicides associated in Amnesty International reported serious management failures; inefficiencies and mistakes, poor communication, organizational practices described as “downright harmful” and workload issues, reflecting a lack of trust in the senior leadership team and a toxic polarization between workers and management (Avula, McKay, and Galland 2019). A similar litany of deficient internal processes and procedures, inadequate investigations, and poor investment in robust protections for staff was outlined in the review of the failings of Oxfam GB (Clarke 2021). However, further to management failures, we identified a number of systemic factors present in nonprofit and voluntary organizations, all of which related to complex pathologies of power. We present these as four themes: (1) complex and unique power relations, (2) the exploitation of virtuosity, (3) the exercise of hegemonic power, and (4) asymmetrical power and extreme dependency.

5.2.1 | Complex and Unique Power Relations

In addition to the typical power hierarchy in work organizations, a unique structural feature of nonprofit and voluntary organizations that emerged in these studies is the complex mix of staffing such as paid employees and unpaid volunteers, and in some cases volunteer management boards (Bekkers 2002). Articles reviewed showed these features had the potential to exacerbate bullying. For example, Paull and Omari’s (2015) qualitative study focused exclusively on 136 volunteers, where complex power relations facilitated opportunities for bullying. Patterns were identified for unique forms of bullying;

The types of bullying events described included: volunteer on volunteer; volunteer on manager of volunteers; management committee on volunteers; Chief Executive Officer on volunteer/s; committee members on committee members; senior management on volunteers; clients on volunteers; paid staff on volunteers; volunteers on paid staff; groups of volunteers on individual volunteers; paid staff on groups of volunteers; and paid staff on paid staff. There were also references to parents of club members, committee executive, and members of the public and clients as perpetrators. Totally, 20 different identifiers were ascribed to the “perpetrators”

(Paull and Omari 2015, 248).

Similarly, O’Neil and Sandoval (2018) found at least 13 categories of perpetrator in the survey of fundraisers, with donors, colleagues, and Board Members being the most likely to perpetrate. The mix of paid and unpaid workers seems to trigger a two-way contextual bullying dynamic with each responding to the other, for example, instances of volunteers bullying paid staff or managers by refusing to adhere to guidelines and demanding the right to vet new volunteers, paid staff bullied

by volunteer management committees into “volunteering” beyond their paid work hours, or volunteers being bullied to sign codes of conduct not seen to be applicable to volunteering and subjected to autocratic and belligerent behavior from members of those volunteer management boards (Paull and Omari 2015; Dawood 2008). The question whether “volunteers” are even covered by organizational policy (as they are unpaid and not employees) also arose (Beaton, Lepere-Schloop, and Smith 2021). The relationships between paid and volunteer staff and paid and volunteer management were discussed in relation to status and power. Clearly, there are tensions created when volunteers perceive themselves as more valuable due to their sacrifice, which prompts them to exercise power as “moral” workers, but also when management perceives volunteers to be dispensable and free to leave, giving the managers license to step outside the normal boundaries of industrial relations. In these instances, nonprofit and voluntary organizations can be seen to hold far greater complexity than other sectors in their power relations.

5.2.2 | The Exploitation of Virtuosity

There were numerous egregious reports of abuse of power, discrimination, and other unfair treatment and processes of staff in the reviewed articles. Exploitation is an abuse of power, where powerful interests exercise power to ensure their interests are served above the interests or rights of others. The number of accounts the survey team for Amnesty received of “bullying,” “racism,” and “sexism” is disconcerting in the context of the stated mission of the organization—to protect and promote human rights (Avula, McKay, and Galland 2019, 30). Spencer’s report on sexual exploitation and abuse in INGOs and Clarke (2021) analysis of INGOs mirrored these concerns.

The mission-basis of the work of nonprofit and voluntary organizations clearly requires mission-attached workers. There were references in the qualitative studies to passion for the work, that it is “not just a job,” and represents “something far more psychologically important” (O’Hara and Omer 2013, 173), indicating a higher order commitment to a cause. However, this commitment seems to place staff at higher risk for a culture of martyrdom in which people were allowed, even encouraged to sacrifice their own wellbeing in the context of “the critical importance of the work” (Avula, McKay, and Galland 2019, 15), an offensive exercise of power. Because of their commitment, workers appear less likely to set healthy boundaries to their work environment, and that the organization takes advantage of this, allowing staff to be treated poorly because they “want” to work in this environment, and that they “should be grateful” to the organization for providing them with this opportunity. In this way, virtuosity and ideology are exploited. The adversarial and toxic aspects of culture were described as beyond normal failures of management in high-pressure contexts, and as contrasting in a disturbing way with the organizational purpose. Similarly fundraisers in Beaton et al.’s study felt they had little choice in the matter when harassed and because “it is their responsibility to keep the organization’s lights on, to fund colleagues salaries, and to ultimately serve the disadvantaged” (Beaton, Lepere-Schloop, and Smith 2021, 625). While virtuosity provides a necessary frame for nonprofit and

voluntary organizations rarely found elsewhere, the actual processes around it give rise to unique abuses of power.

5.2.3 | The Exercise of Hegemonic Power

Hegemonic power refers to a covert, even sinister form of power. Building on theories of power that describe those with power subjugating power overtly and visibly over others, hegemonic power is power exercised to set the agenda, or to define the rules of the game. It is exercise involves the power to decide how issues are conceptualized and therefore to prevent certain conflicts or problems being even vocalized or exposed. This is described as hidden power (Gaventa 1980). Issues raised in a number of the reviewed articles evidenced hegemonic power.

Vijfeijken (2019), for example described how the nature of the projects that are the *raison d'être* of nonprofit and voluntary organizations are often difficult social problems which require complex policy solutions, and in this context leaders with “take-charge,” even maverick-style approaches may be selected or come to the fore. These leaders are unconventional as they are not traditional person-focused follower-based forms of leadership. Those who enact this leadership style in taking on the architects of injustice on behalf of clients can then be cast in a “cowboy” or savior role. Vijfeijken argues that “sustained and persistent leadership behaviors coming out of the individual leadership traits (so) described send cultural signals to the rest of the organization that certain abuses of power may be condoned, if not sanctioned” (Vijfeijken 2019, 3). This defining of the rules of the game creates a situation “in which abuse of power, including sexual abuse, is more likely” (Vijfeijken 2019, 3). Where senior leaders believe such unorthodox approaches are required to address the mission of the organization, bullying behavior enacted by these maverick-style leaders, effectively, goes unchallenged.

Also emerging in our synthesis was reference to a “culture of niceness” (Vijfeijken 2019, 4; O'Hara and Omer 2013), that is the belief that as an organization with a commitment to social good or justice, and the promulgation of that conceptualization of the organizational ethos by those with power. When a nonprofit voluntary organization is threatened by evidence of bullying harassment and other forms of mistreatment and abuse this creates a dissonance between the culture of niceness, as articulated in “we are all nice people and we are doing our best” (ibid) with the reality of abuses of power, bullying, racism, or harassment as the lived employment experience. This dissonance is “resolved” by a collective refusal to accept that bullying and harassment are taking place, driven by the need to maintain the image of a positive, justice-oriented mission (Tang et al. 2022), which is an exercise of hegemonic power. Attempts to expose behaviors contradictory to the cause-basis of the organization evoke strong defenses, defining them as nonissues, which then becomes built into institutional narratives and cultural practices (O'Hara and Omer 2013). This exercise of power resonated with the culture described by Avula, McKay, and Galland (2019) in Amnesty. O'Hara and Omer identify lies, distortions of fact and “spin,” silencing or blaming victims, and gag orders as “false innocence strategies,” which sustain the narrative of innocence while carefully

obscuring the truth. This exposes how the narrative of those with the greater power will win over the that of the less powerful target, clearly an exercise of hidden or hegemonic power through controlling the parameters of a discussion (O'Hara and Omer 2013). As observed by O'Hara and Omer (2013), it reflects a power, which operates at deepest level of organizational culture (Schein 2004). They refer to the embeddedness of a culture of silence (Vijfeijken 2019) where it is particularly difficult to speak up about toxic workplace behaviors in nonprofit and voluntary organizations (Bekkers 2002), a cultural reality that involves tacit sanctioning of internal staff abuses and enables those with institutional power to continue to define what is a problem and what is not, and to remain in place and to perpetuate the cycle (Hodgins, MacCurtain, and Mannix McNamara 2020; Schubert and Boenigk 2019).

5.2.4 | Asymmetrical Power and Extreme Dependency

The work of Beaton, Lepere-Schloop, and Smith (2021) on sexual harassment in fundraisers exposes the power differential between nonprofit and voluntary organizations and their donor organizations as a very particular opportunity for exploitation from asymmetrical power relationships (McLaughlin, Uggen, and Blackstone 2012). Interviews with 36 fundraisers (31 of which identified as women) found all experienced some form of sexual harassment. Fundraisers are typically female, not highly paid, often with insecure contracts. Their work involves trying to secure donations from senior players in large corporations or philanthropic foundations, who are usually powerful men. The analysis highlights the sexualized context of fundraising events (in hotels, entertainment venues, etc.), which facilitate expectations of intimacy, donors' opportunities to take sexual advantage, and assumptions of entitlement. Fundraisers experienced limited agency, feelings of powerlessness, and being in an impossible situation, characterized by tensions between personal safety, self-respect, successful fundraising for the cause and keeping their job;

We find that ... (fundraisers) ... may experience harassment at the hands of resource providers. Our empirical data suggest that donors use the organization's dependence on their donation to sexually harass fundraisers. Donors may even attempt to coerce sexual favors for their donation. These donor behaviors put fundraisers in a position where they must choose between their personal dignity and the organization's mission

(Beaton, Lepere-Schloop, and Smith 2021, 629).

This study highlights a power imbalance that makes fundraisers particularly vulnerable where being dependent on donations (Bekkers 2002), the mission-commitment of fundraisers facilitates a “whatever it takes” effect. Worryingly, Beaton, and colleagues found employer organizations may knowingly place fundraisers in unsafe and impossible situations (2021).

The “blind-eying” of sexual harassment of fundraisers who are predominantly women mirrors the gender inequality and blindness to gender-based violence in wider society (Hodgins

et al. 2018). Relatedly, Spencer's account of sexual abuse and exploitation (SEA) in INGOs exposed gross disregard for the abuses perpetrated by principally white western men in senior positions in these organizations towards their own staff as well as local beneficiaries of the aid program (2016). She reports serious failures in the policy and investigation systems, generally but also specifically in cases involving national staff. If action was taken in cases of SEA it was most likely against national staff and least likely against western staff, interpreting this as an indifferent reproduction of racial and gender hierarchies in society, which has the effect of further empowering "western perpetrators to commit acts of SEA in the knowledge that they are less likely to be suspects" (Spencer 2016, 19). In this way, societal inequities can be reinforced rather than challenged by justice-based organizations.

In summary, our findings have addressed our two initial research questions. We have found considerable data to show that nonprofit and voluntary organizations have at least the same incidence levels of bullying. The nature of the bullying seems to be similar to other sectors. For research question two, we have indeed found a variety of systemic factors relating to power and culture in the voluntary sector, which appear to mitigate against the problem being recognized or dealt with effectively. These dynamics will be further discussed so that an agenda for research can be generated.

6 | Discussion

This scoping review aimed to explore the extent and nature of bullying and the structural and contextual factors that influence it in nonprofit and voluntary organizations. The 18 articles found covered a wide range of organizations and populations affirming the value of a scoping review approach (Arksey and O'Malley 2005). One contribution has been the employment of both bullying and sexual harassment in the review (rarely studied in the same frame in the academic literature), allowing a clearer view and closer examination of the upstream factors driving abusive relationships in organizations.

With regard to extent, consistent with the wider literature, we find considerable variation in approaches to measurement. Difficulties with comparison notwithstanding, bullying in nonprofit and voluntary organizations estimates appear to be broadly similar to those for organizations generally, and there is no support for a case that nonprofit and voluntary organizations are protected or low risk for bullying and harassment, given their core focus on humanitarian and justice. It is likely that sexual harassment in particular could be a serious problem in the sector, especially regarding fundraisers who "span" the space between nonprofit and voluntary organizations and philanthropic donors (O'Neil and Sandoval 2018; Beaton, Lepere-Schloop, and Smith 2021) and the complexity of this warrants further investigation. However, noting the variation and lack of consensus in approach regarding measuring "prevalence," and in the context of poor articulation regarding how the terms "voluntary" and "nonprofit" are understood and employed in sampling, we argue that additional so-called prevalence studies will not contribute in a meaningful way to future research. The outcomes at an individual level do not appear to differ discernibly from the

literature generally, although what is striking is that where measured or explored, organizational response was found to be extremely poor. While poor response is a well-established finding in the wider literature (e.g., Hodgins, MacCurtain, and Mannix McNamara 2020), from this scoping review there is sufficient evidence that bullying and harassment are not only present in nonprofit and voluntary organizations but also are not being addressed, sufficient to argue for a clear focus on understanding and intervening. Indeed, not to do so in the context of known damage to individuals and the perpetuation of inequitable structures can be argued to be an ethical issue in itself.

Management failures that form the context for workplace bullying in organizations were found to be present in these organizations. However, we also found institutional contextual features for bullying and harassment dynamics in voluntary organizations.

Being a nonprofit voluntary organization renders bullying and harassment particularly complex. We suggest that organizational, structural and cultural factors influence both the enactment of and the poor organizational response to bullying and harassment, driving a self-perpetuating process involving pathological technologies of power characterized by complex power relations, exploitation of virtuosity, and dissonance and denial arising from the exercise of hegemonic power. They are likely to completely undermine volunteer proactive behavior (Rogozinska-Pawelczyk and Sudolska 2024) and even volunteer learning which has been shown to be mediated by positive managerial support (Ma 2025). Furthermore, these technologies of power have potentially magnifying effects on those who experience or witness bullying or harassment. The context of the nonprofit voluntary organization places workers (paid or volunteer) in a bind, caught between their commitment to the mission and the "blind-eying" of behavior that is at odds with this mission, and therefore with limited recourse to redress (e.g., Vijfeijken 2019). The findings of this scoping review point to the development of a model of perpetual organizational abuse, which could be tested empirically in future studies.

We argue that power dynamics facilitate the enactment of bullying and prevent bullying being surfaced and addressed. Bullying or harassment can manifest through the potential for the emergence of maverick leadership styles (Vijfeijken 2019), which accommodate a level of aggression and norm violation effective in some ways for emergency response projects, but dysfunctional in normal office settings or staff interactions. Where workers experience abuse from such leaders, they may find themselves in a difficult even conflicted or dissonant position regarding labeling the abuse and reporting it. Commitment to the mission of workers may lead them to tolerate or disregard bullying from an "organizational hero." Management may similarly protect such "heroic" leaders from reprimand if their leadership style segues into bullying or harassment, as they are perceived as critical to the mission (Vijfeijken 2019). Relatedly, an exploitation of virtuosity can occur where the mission-commitment of workers leads to them being taken for granted and makes it hard for them to set boundaries on over-work, challenge (dis)respectful behavior, or lodge a complaint. In this way, power is being exercised to define what is and is not bullying, in an exploitative manner. This exploitation of virtuosity may have the effect of workers

not being taken seriously if they raise issues of bullying, thus normalizing bullying, as found in the Amnesty investigation (Avula, McKay, and Galland 2019). These dynamics both facilitate bullying and also act as inhibitors for appropriate response and redress. Together these inhibitors prevent, off-set or limit complaints effectively silencing targets and witnesses (Avula, McKay, and Galland 2019).

The public image of a nonprofit and voluntary organization includes external relational goods (Mannarini, Pozzi, and Marta 2024) and is critical insofar as it relies on external funding from the state and/or donor organizations (Tang et al. 2022). While commercial organizations stand to experience possible loss of profit with publicly known bullying cases causing reputational damage, for nonprofit and voluntary organizations reputational damage could lead to obliteration, arresting funding streams or state support. Our synthesis exposes this disturbing and highly potent aspect of organizational context as a strong inhibitor for nonprofit and voluntary organizations to acknowledge bullying and harassment or deal with it. This can be seen most clearly in Beaton, Lepere-Schloop, and Smith's (2021) study where complex dependencies and power dynamics facilitate a situation whereby having to deal with unwanted sexual attention and even sexual coercion were seen as part of the job, implying employers' complicity in effectively closing off avenues for redress.

Poor organizational response stems from a deep need to maintain a myth of innocence in the context of public image, described as an "organizational shadow" (O'Hara and Omer 2013), suggesting shades of awareness. Central to the dynamic interplay of factors facilitating bullying and preventing action to prevent or sanction it is a contradiction between "virtuous-organization-identity" and the abuse or exploitation of staff. This contradiction drives robust dissonance-reducing organizational defenses such as misrepresentation, distortion, and deceit, including the silencing and even blaming of victims. As such, the problem becomes obfuscated and distracts from potential intervention. Hence, we see the whole context as one of perpetuating harassment and bullying.

In addition to highlighting the need to explore the dynamics of a self-perpetuation cycle, the review raises the issue of moral inversion, where despite the commitment to dismantling injustice and supporting disenfranchised populations, by not addressing bullying and harassment in their staff, nonprofit and voluntary organizations are ensuring that power remains in the hands of those who are already powerful (typically White, western men), and as such reinforces or maintains social inequity (Spencer 2016).

These contextual power dynamics, we argue, have two important effects. Given that bullying has a negative impact on health (Nielsen and Einarsen 2018), and denial and inaction on the part of the organization has been observed to more damaging than the bullying experience in and of itself (Ferris 2004), the extreme defensiveness and denial exposed in this review of the nonprofit and voluntary sector is likely to have a particularly negative impact on workers who experience or witness it, given their personal value system and commitment to the organization mission. "Sense-making" in this context is likely to be very

difficult, as noted by O'Hara and Omer (2013), and is very likely to exacerbate worker injury and damage. This clearly warrants further investigation.

Second, because defensive strategies both reduce dissonance and are driven by economic dependency, they are powerfully effective at keeping the dysfunctionality of bullying and harassment "alive and well," creating a powerful self-perpetuating cycle. While these complexities and contextual factors are pathologies of power, which create a culture of tacit sanctioning of bullying and harassment in wider society as well as within any one organization, they are important to acknowledge as they provide clues as to effective intervention. Does a narrative that insists on a myth of innocence, or on "doing what it takes" to secure funding for disadvantaged groups or communities in fact maintain a damaging exploitative dynamic as well as serving the interest of the powerful in society?

7 | Conclusions and Recommendations

A scoping review offers the potential to signpost gaps in the literature where the evidence base can be strengthened. The charting of the 16 articles here revealed a clear bias towards English speaking populations, indicating a need for more nuanced study embracing wider cultural reach and investigation. The limitations this westernized focus places on insights into bullying and harassment has been observed (e.g., D'Cruz and Noronha 2021) and is particularly relevant given the international reach of NGO aid organizations. It is evident too, that greater clarifications should be provided regarding the type of organization sampled, to facilitate a more refined field of study. The UN classification, for example, could be utilized to structure research.

Further to these recommendations, we conclude that bullying is present in nonprofit and voluntary organizations at least at the same or higher levels as other sectors. Although the nature of the work undertaken by nonprofit and voluntary organizations gives them the skills to see and deal with situations of injustice and ill-treatment in clients, internal bullying and harassment appear to remain rarely challenged. Sexual harassment appears to be a serious problem in the sector, especially regarding fundraisers and staff in receipt of aid in host countries and their clients. Given the problem generally with estimating prevalence of bullying and harassment and comparisons across sectors (León-Pérez, Escartín, and Giorgi 2021), including the delimiting of the third sector within it (Salamon and Sokolowski 2014), further prevalence studies are unlikely to add value to the literature.

We argue that it is more useful now to explore how the dynamics of bullying in nonprofit and voluntary organizations could be utilized to find entry points for intervention, rather than further so-called prevalence studies. Our research has found a suite of factors underpinned by pathological power dynamics; denial, deceit, and dissonance, which together stabilize the presence of bullying and harassment in voluntary organizations. Such dynamics need to be disrupted for intervention to occur. With regard to sexual harassment in INGOS, the extreme polarization of power between donors and management on one hand and

local aid workers and volunteers and the risk of perpetuating inequity rather than reducing it should be prioritized for analysis.

We recommend that future research should focus on contextual factors and the extent to which these create a toxic self-perpetuating dynamic. Ethnographic methodologies should be considered for this purpose. We note the potential for exploring how a contrasting self-perpetuating dynamic such as that reported by Rogozinska-Pawelczyk and Sudolska (2024) in which inclusive leadership and a positive psychological contract in nonprofit organizations are both directly and positively associated with proactive work behavior.

We recommend exploring in more detail the experiences of people who have been bullied and harassed. Sector findings show contradictions inherent in the organization's mission and it is behavior and how this plays out vis-à-vis the worker's own commitment to the ideals of the work exacerbating stress and dissonance at individual and organization levels (Avula, McKay, and Galland 2019). O'Hara and Omer (2013) also argue that the impact on the health and well-being of targets of bullying will be particularly severe, as they will have extreme difficulty with "sense-making" accounted for by the dissonance we have labeled. The people they interviewed used the word evil, a narrative they argue is justified by the trauma these experiences cause, evoked when there is no way to make sense acts or experiences, and invites further discussion (ibid). Further exploration could usefully include those who stay and those who leave. This would allow us to see how sense-making operates (or not) and how and in what way volunteers and staff are damaged.

Relatedly, given that the inclusion of volunteers and volunteer management boards increases the complexity of power relations by adding a layer to the hierarchy, complicating relations, with the possibility of inversions, exploring differences between volunteers and paid workers in the context of mistreatment would facilitate a greater understanding of further nuances of power relations in the context of bullying and harassment.

Noting the paucity of theoretical approaches to research conducted we recommend heightened engagement with the theoretical literature. Beaton et al.'s deployment of resource dependency theory, for example, could be extended to the developing of a model self-perpetuation reinforced by external dependencies and power relations including both internal dynamics and external boundary spanners relations.

The review is consistent with the systemic theoretical perspective (Johnson 2011). Bullying in voluntary organizations is embedded in a larger societal system. Critical to the problem is the ripple effect of donor dependence, which induces silence and inaction (e.g., Clarke 2021). Nonprofit and voluntary organizations can find themselves in impossible situations; accountable to a particular moral code internally and to service users, but also reliant on donor organizations who may not share the same value base (e.g., Beaton, Lepere-Schloop, and Smith 2021). Further research could explore how fundraising and philanthropic donations could be influenced or regulated extending Bekkers's (2002) accreditation perhaps into the removal of

hospitality and sexualized environments by channeling funds through centralized clearing houses.

Finally, we note an absence in the literature regarding the protection (or not) of volunteers in terms of employment contracts nor other legal safeguards afforded paid employees. The overrepresentation of female staff and the increased risk of sexual harassment points to a need to consider feminist methodologies (as used by Beaton, Lepere-Schloop, and Smith 2021) and not to assume a gender-neutral perspective in researching nonprofit and voluntary organizations.

While our starting point, seeking to use nonprofit and voluntary organizations' capability to prevent and tackle bullying and harassment has been shown to be optimistic, the potential nevertheless remains. Research to understand the complex dynamics could lead to better release of nonprofit and voluntary organizations' focus and energy, but this time to help themselves.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Data Availability Statement

The data underpinning this paper comprise published literature on workplace bullying in the voluntary sector and are available through databases and library services.

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