

[DOI: 10.20472/IAC.2016.027.004](https://doi.org/10.20472/IAC.2016.027.004)

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## **I CARE ABOUT MY JOB, BUT I AM NOT INSPIRED. EXPLORING WORKPLACE BULLYING OF TALENTED ACADEMICS.**

### **Abstract:**

The importance of talent and talent management in higher education institutions is well documented. Some research evidence suggest that talent management, when effectively applied, can lead to positive work related outcomes for academic staff such as work engagement, job satisfaction, motivation and productive organisational energy. For the institution, effective talent management can result in increased quality service delivery and organisational performance.

What has not been researched is the subtle psychological underpinnings and work relationship experiences of talented academic staff in the South African higher educational context. The main objective of this research was to explore incidences of workplace bullying that affect talented academic staff members in higher education institutions and the consequences thereof.

A qualitative research approach was followed. Data was gathered by means of semi-structured interviews with talented academics from selected South African higher education institutions (N=12). The sample group was representative of various ethnic groups, gender groups, age groups and job levels. The data was analysed using theme (content) analyses.

The findings revealed many themes relating to the type of bullying that academic staff members were experiencing. Some of the most prominent themes included unfair discrimination, victimisation, disregard for academic position, unfair promotion, sexual harassment, racism, bullying from students and bullying from administrative staff. The participants in particular indicated feelings of helplessness as higher educational policies do not protect them against workplace bullying. Other participants also highlighted that the power play in their institutions and fear for victimisation prevent them from reporting incidences of bullying. The findings further showed that academics experience high levels of work stress, burnout and depression as a result of their bullying experiences. Academic staff also indicated suicide ideation as a result of the helplessness and powerlessness to cope with unfair discrimination and victimisation practices. All the participants in this study indicated that they strongly considered quitting their job as a result of workplace bullying.

This study presented an in-depth analyses of the type of workplace bullying that occurs in higher education institutions and its consequences. The competitiveness and sustainability of higher education institutions depend of well-qualified and talented academic staff. Without key and competent academic staff, no higher education institution will be sustainable over the long term. Therefore it is strongly advised that higher education institutions implement policies and practices that will prevent incidences of workplace bullying among talented academic staff.

**Keywords:**

Academic staff, Higher education Institutions, Talent Management, Workplace Bullying

**JEL Classification:** J24