

Research Article

Workplace Bullying in Indonesia: Regulatory Gaps and Legal Protection for Workers

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Abstract: Workplace bullying has emerged as a critical employment concern with far-reaching consequences for employees' psychological well-being, organisational culture, and overall workplace productivity. Although the issue is becoming more widespread in Indonesia, the country still lacks explicit legal provisions that regulate such conduct. This absence of clear protection mechanisms creates a substantial gap in safeguarding workers' rights and often deters victims from reporting incidents due to uncertainty over protection and fear of reprisals. This study adopted a descriptive qualitative approach, drawing on secondary sources that included scholarly publications, international studies, and regulatory frameworks from various jurisdictions. Through a comparative examination, the study reviewed established mechanisms used to address workplace bullying in Australia, Japan, and South Korea. The analysis indicates that each of these countries has developed comprehensive statutory systems, encompassing specific legislation, formalised complaint pathways, protective measures for affected workers, and enforceable penalties. Institutional support—such as Australia's Fair Work Commission, Japan's obligation for employers to institute internal preventive measures, and South Korea's combined administrative and criminal avenues for reporting—illustrates a strong institutional commitment to safeguarding employees. In contrast, Indonesia continues to experience a regulatory void, highlighting the urgency for broad labour law reform. Strengthening legal architecture is essential for fostering working conditions that prioritise safety, well-being, and productivity, and for ensuring alignment with global norms concerning the protection of worker rights.

Keywords: Workplace Bullying; Employment Regulation; Legal Protection; Policy; Workers.

1. Introduction

Over the past several decades, workplace violence, particularly in its non-physical manifestations such as bullying, has gained growing international attention [1]. Workplace bullying refers to repeated acts of verbal hostility, intimidation, coercion, social exclusion, or other degrading conduct carried out by supervisors, colleagues, or subordinates that result in psychological and professional harm for the targeted worker [2]. Such behaviour not only damages the mental and physical health of individual employees but also disrupts organisational productivity, workplace relations, and the public image of institutions [3].

The problem is supported by extensive empirical findings rather than being merely normative. According to an ILO [4], 22.8 percent of workers worldwide have experienced violence or harassment at work, with psychological intimidation constituting the majority of cases. In Asia, over 30 percent of employees in Japan have reported experiencing power harassment [5], whereas approximately 14 percent of South Korean workers have indicated exposure to bullying with severe effects on mental well-being [6]. Although comprehensive national statistics are limited in Indonesia, Indonesia Judicial Research [7] has documented a rise in complaints involving verbal insults, discriminatory treatment, and workplace exclusion. These incidents, despite not always being categorised as bullying, reflect similar patterns of abusive behaviour. The absence of an explicit legal definition further weakens case-handling mechanisms. Workplace bullying also carries significant economic implications. Safe Work Australia [8] estimates considerable financial losses attributable to reduced employee performance. Applied to the Indonesian context, such losses could hinder national labour competitiveness. Consequently, workplace bullying is not solely an ethical matter but constitutes a pressing problem that demands comprehensive regulatory intervention and the establishment of effective protection systems.

Globally, workplace bullying has been recognised as a major concern in employment and occupational health studies [9]. Several advanced economies, including Australia, Japan, South Korea, and various European nations, have introduced specific regulatory frameworks that address prevention, complaint procedures, and sanctions [10]. In Australia,

the Fair Work Act 2009 enables bullying victims to submit applications directly to the Fair Work Commission [11]. Japan's Power Harassment Prevention Law, enacted in 2020, obliges employers to implement preventive initiatives and to offer clear pathways for handling bullying allegations [12]. These statutory arrangements both safeguard victims and promote the development of a safe, constructive, and productive workplace environment.

In Indonesia, although bullying occurs in both formal and informal employment sectors, the issue has yet to receive substantial policy attention. National data on its prevalence remain scarce; however, media reports, academic literature, and civil society surveys indicate that intimidation, verbal abuse, exclusion, and psychological mistreatment continue to be prevalent, particularly within hierarchical work settings where power disparities are pronounced [13]. At present, there are no laws that explicitly set out definitions, categories, procedures for reporting, or penalties relating to workplace bullying [14]. The Manpower Act (Law No. 13/2003), amended by Law No. 11/2020 on Job Creation, includes general provisions concerning employee rights and employer duties but does not address bullying. Behaviour such as unfair treatment, intimidation, or verbal aggression is frequently dismissed as an internal issue or an ethical concern without clear legal ramifications. As a result, victims often receive insufficient support and may ultimately resign or suffer long-term psychological distress.

The absence of dedicated regulations is compounded by inadequate mechanisms for reporting and resolving complaints. Employees who lodge grievances frequently encounter biased processes due to power imbalances, limited organisational backing, and the unavailability of an independent reporting channel [15]. This is further complicated by the lack of practical guidelines that companies can adopt when designing prevention and response procedures [16]. This regulatory vacuum has far-reaching consequences. Individually, victims face heightened risks of severe stress, depressive symptoms, anxiety disorders, and suicidal ideation [17]. For organisations, bullying erodes the work atmosphere, reduces productivity, contributes to higher absenteeism and employee turnover, and ultimately harms institutional credibility [18]. Such conditions run counter to principles of social fairness, protection of human rights, and governmental aspirations to cultivate a competitive and supportive employment landscape [19].

The absence of a structured legal framework in Indonesia leaves workers with limited avenues for protection or redress when bullying occurs. This gap poses a serious challenge, given the direct repercussions for employee mental health, organisational effectiveness, and national labour competitiveness. In response, this study seeks to examine Indonesia's regulatory landscape on workplace bullying, identify existing weaknesses, and compare legal frameworks from several countries to offer potential guidance for national reform. The study also presents policy recommendations that can be applied by government institutions, employers, and labour stakeholders to strengthen legal protection and build a work environment characterised by safety, respect, and the absence of bullying.

The importance of this research stems from its contribution to addressing gaps in scholarship and regulation concerning bullying in Indonesia. Academically, it provides conceptual insights into the necessity for legal definitions, dedicated reporting procedures, and enforceable sanctions. Practically, the study underscores the need for more progressive, adaptable, and responsive regulations that can inform policymakers, trade unions, and organisations in enhancing worker protection and improving the competitiveness of Indonesia's labour force.

2. Literature Review

Workplace bullying refers to a pattern of repeated and coordinated negative behaviour directed at undermining an individual's position within an organisation. [Rosander and Blomberg \[3\]](#) argue that such conduct extends far beyond ordinary workplace conflict, generating sustained psychological strain, social withdrawal, and reductions in work performance. [Putra and et al. \[14\]](#) explain that bullying may take verbal, non-verbal, or organisational forms, including misuse of authority. In Indonesia, the absence of a clear statutory definition often leads to confusion, with bullying frequently conflated with harassment, ethical breaches, or physical aggression [13].

The consequences of bullying are well documented. [Nielsen and Einarsen \[17\]](#) report that individuals subjected to this behaviour are more likely to experience anxiety, depression, and diminished productivity. At the organisational level, such conduct contributes to higher resignation rates, increased absenteeism, and deterioration in the work environment. Evidence from the [Indonesia Judicial Research \[7\]](#) suggests that many workers subjected to bullying resign rather than seek legal pathways, largely because no dedicated reporting mechanisms exist that guarantee safety or protection. These findings demonstrate that bullying has ramifications extending beyond the individual level, affecting wider economic and social conditions. The Manpower Act (Law No. 13/2003) and its subsequent amendments do not include bullying as a legally recognised category, restricting protection to matters such as sexual harassment, discrimination, and physical violence [20]. [Lu and et al. \[15\]](#) note that the lack of dedicated legislation undermines complaint systems and creates overlap with broader industrial relations issues, making it difficult for victims to obtain redress. Workers in informal employment face even greater vulnerability, as they often lack access to formal mechanisms for legal protection.

Several countries have adopted more advanced regulatory approaches to workplace bullying. Australia's Fair Work Act 2009 explicitly defines bullying and allows affected employees to seek intervention through the Fair Work Commission [21]. Japan's Power Harassment Law, implemented in 2020, requires employers to prevent bullying and authorises administrative penalties for perpetrators [1]. South Korea has gone further by criminalising bullying and imposing significant penalties [22]. These legislative measures, which include clear definitions, formal complaint systems, and enforceable sanctions, have contributed to improved worker protection and more constructive workplace cultures. The growing attention to workplace bullying in research and professional practice reflects its serious implications for mental well-being, organisational productivity, and the broader employment climate. Studies conducted in various countries have explored issues such as prevalence, psychosocial effects, contributing factors, and the effectiveness of organisational policies in prevention and response.

[Nielsen and Einarsen \[17\]](#) highlight that bullying is closely associated with unequal power relations and inadequate regulatory safeguards. In Japan, [Yokouchi and et al. \[1\]](#) observe that the enactment of anti-bullying legislation has encouraged organisations to introduce more robust internal policies and secure reporting channels, although obstacles persist due to hierarchical work structures and inconsistent enforcement of sanctions. Research in Australia by [Squelch and Guthrie \[21\]](#) similarly finds that specific legislation is more effective in reducing bullying than reliance on general employment laws. The presence of independent complaint mechanisms and strong organisational leadership also contributes to healthier workplaces. Within the Asian region, [Siu and et al. \[10\]](#) note that although many countries lack specific anti-bullying statutes, multinational corporations often implement policies aligned with international standards,

resulting in reductions in bullying incidents. However, bullying remains common in small and medium-sized enterprises, where oversight is limited and procedures for handling complaints are unclear.

Studies in Indonesia remain comparatively scarce. [Putra and et al. \[14\]](#) document increasing instances of bullying in sectors such as health and education, particularly through verbal intimidation and exclusion. The absence of a clear legal framework and a consistent reporting pathway often leads to unresolved cases. Their study recommends that the government develop specific regulations integrated into national labour policy. [Kusumawati and et al. \[13\]](#) further reveal that workers frequently refrain from reporting bullying due to concerns about job security and workplace stigma. Their findings also indicate that organisational cultures that tolerate or normalise bullying practices contribute significantly to the persistence of the problem.

3. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative methodology using a library-based research design, centred on examining statutory provisions, policy documents, and scholarly works concerning workplace bullying in Indonesia and comparable jurisdictions. This design was selected because the concept of workplace bullying remains relatively undeveloped within Indonesian labour legislation [13], creating a need to review and contrast regulatory models applied in other countries [10]. The sources consulted comprised legal instruments such as Indonesia's Manpower Law, regulations relating to worker protection, and relevant international conventions issued by the International Labour Organization. Additional materials included peer-reviewed journal articles, institutional reports produced by bodies such as the ILO, OECD, Safe Work Australia, the National Commission on Violence Against Women, and LBH Jakarta, as well as policy documents from Australia, Japan, and South Korea. Data collection involved systematic searches of academic databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar, alongside legal archives and publications issued by international institutions. The search covered literature published between 2010 and 2024 in order to capture recent developments.

Approximately 43 documents were selected for analysis. Inclusion criteria comprised: (1) publications from the last fifteen years; (2) studies addressing workplace bullying or workplace harassment from legal or sociological perspectives; and (3) sources originating from credible, verifiable outlets such as indexed journals, international organisations, or official state documents. Excluded materials included: (1) popular opinion pieces lacking empirical support; (2) publications restricted to school bullying with no workplace relevance; and (3) documents with unverifiable credibility.

The study applied a qualitative content analysis approach. Each document was reviewed and coded according to thematic categories, including definitional aspects of bullying, complaint procedures, sanctions, and mechanisms of worker protection. Coding was undertaken manually through a deductive framework informed by existing theory and prior research, while also allowing inductive identification of additional themes emerging from the data. For the comparative component, a comparative legal analysis method was implemented to systematically contrast Indonesia's regulatory landscape with that of selected countries. Four core elements guided the comparison: (1) the presence of a statutory definition of workplace bullying; (2) procedures for reporting and investigation; (3) the range of administrative and criminal sanctions; and (4) the extent of both formal and informal protection for workers. This analytical structure enabled the identification of regulatory shortcomings in Indonesia and facilitated the extraction of insights from international practice. Consequently, the methodology employed is not solely descriptive but also analytical and comparative, providing a comprehensive understanding of workplace bullying regulation in Indonesia and its implications for safeguarding workers' rights.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Workplace Bullying Situation in Indonesia

Workplace bullying constitutes a form of non-physical aggression involving repeated intimidation, verbal mistreatment, deliberate exclusion, or psychological coercion that inflicts harm on the targeted individual [Plimmer and et al. \[23\]](#). Its effects extend beyond the emotional and mental well-being of workers, influencing productivity levels, organisational dynamics, and the stability of industrial relations [19]. Nevertheless, in Indonesia the issue continues to receive limited attention, both in legal discourse and in the context of worker protection. In the Indonesian setting, workplace bullying manifests through various behaviours such as derogatory remarks, social isolation, and threats related to professional advancement. Several widely publicised incidents illustrate this troubling

pattern. For instance, in 2023 a female employee at a logistics firm in Jakarta reported persistent verbal intimidation and unreasonable pressure from her supervisors, while a junior nurse in a private Surabaya hospital experienced exclusion by colleagues after a workplace error. In both cases, the actors faced no meaningful disciplinary action, reflecting deficiencies in the current regulatory system [7].

Beyond individual situations, systemic forms of bullying are observable across sectors such as manufacturing and healthcare, where newcomers may be subjected to harsh treatment or compelled to undertake tasks outside their formal responsibilities under the guise of a "loyalty test" [14]. Such practices indicate that certain abusive behaviours have become embedded within workplace culture, making intervention nearly impossible without firm legal standards [24]. Indonesia's statutory landscape still lacks an official definition of workplace bullying. Neither the Manpower Law (Law No. 13/2003) nor the Job Creation Law (Law No. 11/2020) explicitly addresses non-physical patterns of intimidation. Only discrimination, sexual harassment, and physical violence receive regulatory attention, leaving psychological and emotional abuse without clear legal recognition. Consequently, victims struggle to obtain formal protection, and perpetrators often escape administrative or criminal accountability.

This legal ambiguity frequently leads to bullying being misclassified as ordinary disciplinary or ethical infractions. Verbal harassment may be dismissed as a minor breach, while exclusionary behaviour is sometimes normalised as part of organisational adjustment. Many complaints are handled solely through internal mechanisms without the involvement of labour authorities, increasing the likelihood of biased outcomes [25]. Victims may even be blamed for the conflict or pressured to resign in order to maintain the organisation's public image [26]. Furthermore, most Indonesian companies do not possess standardised procedures for addressing bullying. Existing reporting channels rarely guarantee confidentiality or protection, and internal inquiries often lack transparency, especially when alleged perpetrators occupy senior or influential roles [27]. This stands in stark contrast to countries such as Japan, Australia, and South Korea, where the legal architecture governing workplace bullying is well established, encompassing statutory definitions, formalised reporting systems, and both administrative and criminal sanctions [9]. Such comparisons reveal a significant gap between Indonesia and nations with comprehensive worker-protection regimes.

In summary, the persistence of workplace bullying in Indonesia underscores the fragility of legal safeguards and reflects a broader absence of commitment to workers' welfare. The issue must no longer be relegated to the realm of ethics but should instead be recognised as a violation of labour rights that warrants explicit regulation. The development of dedicated legal provisions addressing workplace bullying is therefore essential to fostering a fair, safe, and supportive work environment.

4.2 Legal Regulatory Gap: The Absence of the Term Bullying in the Employment Law

Workplace bullying in Indonesia has not yet received substantive recognition within the national labour regulatory framework. This is evident in the absence of an official concept or legal definition in current legislation. Neither the Manpower Law of 2003, the Job Creation Law of 2020, nor their derivative regulations designate bullying as a distinct violation requiring legal intervention. Consequently, a wide spectrum of intimidating conduct, verbal humiliation, psychological coercion, and persistent hostile treatment lacks a direct statutory foundation that would enable victims to seek legal recourse or oblige authorities to impose sanctions.

This definitional vacuum directly affects avenues for reporting and enforcement. In practice, workers rarely pursue formal complaints because no specific procedure exists, no specialised unit is mandated to manage such cases, and labour inspectors do not possess an explicit mandate to address bullying [28]. When complaints are submitted, they are often reclassified under other categories such as sexual harassment, inappropriate conduct, or breaches of workplace ethics. As a result, many cases stagnate without resolution, leading victims to withdraw or resign, while perpetrators frequently avoid accountability [29]. The absence of a precise legal category also means there are no explicit preventive measures or sanctions [30]. In contrast, several countries have established dedicated legal tools. Australia incorporates a formal definition of workplace bullying within the Fair Work Act 2009, empowering the Fair Work Commission to issue protection orders [31]. South Korea enacted the 2019 Workplace Harassment Prevention Act, obliging employers to set up reporting channels and enforce penalties [32]. Japan's 2020 Power Harassment Law similarly strengthens safeguards against psychological abuse by superiors [33]. Indonesia has yet to adopt comparable statutes. The absence of mandatory organisational policies, reporting mechanisms, or preventive programmes perpetuates the perception that bullying is an internal managerial matter rather than an infringement of workers' rights.

The challenges are even more pronounced in the informal sector.

According to 2023 national statistics, over 60 per cent of Indonesian workers operate outside the formal employment structure. Domestic workers, casual labourers, street vendors, and ride-hailing drivers frequently work without written contracts, possess limited bargaining power, and lack avenues for reporting [7]. These conditions heighten their exposure to bullying and related psychosocial risks. Although Ministerial Regulation No. 2 of 2015 addresses certain fundamental labour protections for domestic workers, it does not cover bullying or other forms of psychological harm [34]. As a result, the informal sector remains largely unprotected from hostile workplace behaviours. Collectively, these gaps demonstrate that Indonesian labour regulations remain insufficient for addressing psychosocial risks and emotional harm at work. Without comprehensive legal provisions, bullying is likely to persist as an entrenched workplace norm, undermining workers' psychological well-being, eroding organisational climates, and diminishing broader economic productivity. Updating labour regulations to include a clear definition of workplace bullying, structured reporting systems, and enforceable sanctions has therefore become an urgent and unavoidable necessity.

4.3 Comparison of Regulations in Other Countries

The issue of workplace bullying has emerged as a significant global concern and has been addressed extensively in countries with well-established labour governance systems. Many jurisdictions have adopted explicit legal definitions, established structured complaint procedures, and introduced firm sanctions to safeguard employees. An examination of the approaches adopted in Australia, Japan, and South Korea demonstrates potential pathways that Indonesia could follow in developing its own regulatory framework. Australia was among the earliest countries to institute formal protection through the Fair Work Act 2009, which characterises bullying as repeated, unreasonable conduct that endangers a worker's health or safety [21]. A key strength of the Australian framework is the presence of the Fair Work Commission (FWC), an autonomous agency empowered to receive complaints, mediate disputes, and issue stop-bullying orders. Accessible reporting avenues, available both digitally and through direct channels, further support victims seeking assistance [31]. Although the sanctions are primarily administrative, the regulatory pressure has proved effective in encouraging employers to adopt preventive measures seriously [11].

Japan's challenge is closely tied to its hierarchical work structures, which have contributed to the prevalence of power harassment. In response, the government introduced the 2020 Power Harassment Prevention Law [5]. This legislation identifies six forms of abusive conduct, encompassing verbal aggression, physical mistreatment, exclusionary practices, and unreasonable workload allocations. Employers are legally required to establish anti-harassment policies, form internal complaint bodies, and conduct routine educational programmes [12]. Sanctions include administrative penalties and the possibility of civil legal action initiated by victims [33]. As a result, the Japanese model emphasises both incident management and preventive education embedded within organisational systems. South Korea strengthened its labour protections by revising the Labour Standards Act in 2019 and introducing the Workplace Harassment Prevention Act. The law defines bullying as behaviour that inflicts psychological or physical harm or disrupts the working environment [32]. South Korea's system is distinctive due to mandatory internal reporting mechanisms and strict timelines for case handling [35]. Penalties are severe: companies or perpetrators may face administrative fines of up to thirty million won, alongside potential criminal liability [10]. In addition, legal safeguards prohibit retaliation against complainants, offering stronger assurance to those who report incidents [22].

Despite differences in emphasis, these three jurisdictions share common pillars: preventive obligations, punitive measures, and continuous education. Prevention is achieved through mandatory company policies and public education efforts. Punitive measures operate through administrative and criminal sanctions that create deterrence. Education is delivered through awareness campaigns and workplace training initiatives. The clarity of legal definitions allows more precise categorisation of cases, while systematic reporting procedures enhance workers' trust that complaints will be addressed impartially. When viewed from an Indonesian perspective, these comparisons highlight a pronounced regulatory gap. The absence of a formal definition, specialised reporting pathways, and tailored sanctions leaves Indonesian workers more susceptible to hostile treatment. This contrasts with Australia, Japan, and South Korea, all of which regard bullying as a serious labour rights violation. Consequently, Indonesia would benefit from comprehensive legal reform that draws on the established practices of these countries. Implementing such reforms would enhance worker protection and promote a safer, healthier, and more productive labour environment. Table 1 presents a comparison of workplace bullying regulations in Australia, Japan, and South Korea.

Table 1 illustrates that Australia, Japan, and South Korea have

developed comprehensive and systematic regulatory frameworks to address workplace bullying. In Australia, the Fair Work Act 2009 provides an explicit statutory definition, assigns authority to the Fair Work Commission as an autonomous adjudicating body, and offers accessible reporting options supported by administrative penalties. Japan's 2020 Power Harassment Law identifies six principal categories of bullying behaviour and obliges employers to implement internal preventive policies, conduct continuous information dissemination, and recognise the possibility of civil litigation for affected workers. South Korea, through the 2019 Workplace Harassment Prevention Act, mandates the establishment of internal complaint channels, requires timely case-handling procedures, and imposes sanctions that include substantial fines and potential criminal liability. Across all three jurisdictions, several consistent elements emerge: the presence of a precise legal definition, the provision of safe and reliable reporting mechanisms, the integration of preventive measures within organisational policy, and the enforcement of strict penalties against perpetrators as well as non-compliant employers. These findings reinforce the need for a robust and holistic regulatory framework to ensure safe working conditions and uphold effective worker protection.

Table 1. Comparison of Workplace Bullying in Various Countries

Aspect	Australia (Fair Work Act 2009)	Japan (Power Harassment Law 2020)	South Korea (Workplace Harassment Prevention Act 2019)
Legal Definition	Bullying: Unwanted, repeated behaviour that compromises workplace safety	Power Harassment: 6 categories of behaviour such as verbal, physical, excessive workload, social exclusion	Workplace Harassment: Behaviour that causes physical/mental suffering or unreasonably disrupts working conditions
Supervisory Institution	Fair Work Commission (FWC), independent body	Special unit in the company for handling complaints	Internal company units and government supervision
Reporting Procedure	Formal and informal mediation at the FWC, onlinesocialization and face-to-face reporting	Internal company complaints, regular socialization	Internal reporting channels, follow-up obligations within a certain period of time
Preventive Approach	Mediation and bullying cessation orders	Mandatory internal policies, training, regular socialization	Company obligations to provide reporting channels and whistle-blower protection
Sanctions	Bullying cessation orders (administrative)	Administrative fines, civil lawsuits for psychological harm	Fine up to 30 million won, criminal penalties for perpetrators or companies that ignore
Victim Protection	Protection during the mediation process	Protection against retaliation, right to compensation	Prohibition of retaliation against whistle-blowers, additional legal protection
Sector Coverage	Formal and informal, especially the formal sector	Formal sector, with company obligations	Formal sector, government supervision

Source: Compiled by the authors (2025).

4.4 The Urgency of Preventing Workplace Bullying for the World of Work and Worker Protection in Indonesia

Workplace bullying constitutes a significant concern with extensive implications for both individual welfare and organisational resilience [36]. Without explicit regulation within Indonesian labour law, this phenomenon risks generating multi-layered consequences. At the individual level, targeted workers frequently endure considerable psychological strain, including persistent stress, heightened anxiety, depressive symptoms, and in some cases, more severe mental health disorders [37]. These emotional pressures are often compounded by physical ailments such as chronic fatigue, sleep disturbances, recurrent headaches, and stress-induced illnesses. Such conditions not only compromise personal well-being but also diminish employees' capacity to perform effectively [38].

Within organisational settings, the absence of structured mechanisms for addressing bullying erodes workplace culture. Environments characterised by intimidation and psychological hostility undermine morale, reduce work engagement, and increase absenteeism and employee turnover. The departure of skilled personnel creates financial burdens, damages organisational reputation, and disrupts internal cooperation and innovation [39]. Over time, this cumulative strain can weaken an organisation's competitive position. The lack of specific legal instruments also generates uncertainty in case handling. Numerous victims avoid reporting incidents due to limited assurance of protection or fear of reprisals from perpetrators or management. Consequently, many cases remain unresolved, allowing psychological aggression to become normalised within the workplace [40]. From an industrial relations perspective, this regulatory void heightens power imbalances between employers and employees and has the potential to trigger broader disputes that may affect national labour stability [8].

Given these risks, Indonesia must urgently reinforce its regulatory framework concerning workplace bullying. National legislation or supplementary regulations under the Manpower Law should directly address this issue. Establishing a precise legal definition of workplace bullying is a fundamental starting point, ensuring that all forms of detrimental behaviour can be properly categorised. Such clarity will promote shared understanding among employees, employers, and legal authorities. Regulations should also mandate reliable, accessible reporting systems that provide safeguards against retaliatory actions. Transparent and accountable complaint-handling procedures are essential for ensuring that victims feel secure when submitting reports [41]. Preventive initiatives must be emphasised, including mandatory awareness campaigns, anti-bullying training programmes, and efforts to cultivate inclusive and respectful workplace cultures. Company codes of conduct outlining behavioural expectations can serve as an important preventive mechanism [16].

Sanctions should be strictly enforced—administrative, civil, or criminal—targeting both perpetrators and employers who fail to take appropriate action [42]. Effective enforcement will strengthen deterrence and demonstrate the state's commitment to safeguarding labour rights [43]. These protections must also extend to the informal sector, which remains largely unprotected despite comprising the majority of Indonesia's workforce. Adopting comprehensive and enforceable policies will facilitate the development of work environments that are safer, healthier, and more conducive to productivity. Strengthened legal safeguards against workplace bullying will enhance worker welfare, uphold human rights principles, and support wider sustainable development goals. Through such reforms, Indonesia can move towards an employment landscape that aligns with leading international standards.

5. Conclusion

Workplace bullying in Indonesia represents a significant challenge with far-reaching effects on employee well-being, organisational dynamics, and the overall sustainability of work environments. The lack of legislation explicitly addressing bullying leaves workers without sufficient legal safeguards. This regulatory gap not only exacerbates the psychological strain experienced by victims but also undermines organisational culture and diminishes long-term corporate competitiveness. Comparisons with countries such as Australia, Japan, and South Korea illustrate that clear statutory definitions, structured complaint procedures, and robust protections for victims contribute to a fairer and healthier employment system. These international practices highlight the essential role of the state in providing legal clarity while motivating employers to foster safe workplaces. Within Indonesia, the findings of this study underscore the urgent need for labour law reform aimed at preventing workplace bullying. Initial measures should include codifying a precise legal definition, establishing secure and transparent reporting channels, and enforcing sanctions that effectively deter misconduct. Implementing such reforms can transform Indonesian workplaces into environments that are healthier, more productive, and equitable for all employees.

6. Recommendations

This study advises that the Indonesian government promptly develop targeted regulations addressing workplace bullying, incorporating the following elements: 1) a detailed legal definition that encompasses psychological forms of bullying; 2) accessible reporting procedures that ensure the protection of complainants; 3) stringent sanctions for both offenders and companies that fail to act; and 4) preventive strategies, including employee training, awareness campaigns, and formal internal policies. Such legislation is essential not only to safeguard workers from psychological and physical harm but also to enhance workplace productivity, cultivate a positive organisational culture, and strengthen the

global competitiveness of Indonesia's workforce.

7. Research Implications

The absence of explicit regulations addressing workplace bullying in Indonesia carries significant consequences. From the perspective of worker protection, the lack of formal provisions renders victims vulnerable, as reporting channels and enforcement mechanisms remain ineffective. This regulatory void fosters a culture of silence, leaving numerous cases unresolved and allowing perpetrators to act with impunity. For organisations, the absence of legal safeguards hampers the creation of a healthy work environment. Unchecked bullying diminishes employee motivation, increases absenteeism and turnover, and undermines organisational reputation. Over time, these effects compromise overall productivity and weaken the competitiveness of both companies and the national workforce. From a legislative standpoint, this gap highlights the necessity for comprehensive labour law reform. Drawing lessons from Australia, Japan, and South Korea, Indonesia should urgently establish regulations that provide a clear legal definition of bullying, implement secure reporting systems, ensure effective protection for victims, and enforce strict sanctions against offenders and negligent employers. The implications extend beyond organisational productivity to encompass social and human rights considerations. Workplace bullying affects not only formal sector employees but also the predominantly informal workforce, who remain particularly susceptible to exploitation. Consequently, this research underscores the imperative for regulatory measures that are not only punitive but also preventive and educational. Only through a robust legal framework can Indonesian workplaces be transformed into safe, inclusive, and productive environments that align with international labour protection standards.

8. Limitations and Future Research Directions

This study has several notable limitations. Firstly, it relies exclusively on secondary sources, including academic publications, legal texts, and international reports, which prevents the capture of first-hand experiences from victims or insights from practitioners operating in the field. Secondly, the restricted number and scope of sources may limit the depth of analysis, particularly in exploring sector-specific variations in workplace bullying practices. Thirdly, the study employs a descriptive-comparative approach without conducting empirical investigations, rendering the findings largely exploratory. These limitations highlight opportunities for future research to build upon this work through field-based studies, quantitative surveys, or detailed interviews, thereby providing a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of workplace bullying.

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