Religious Harassment and Bullying in the Workplace

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Ann Marie Ryan and Danielle M. Gardner

Contents

Abstract

Globally, religious harassment and bullying in the workplace are on the rise. In this chapter, how and why religious bullying is similar to, yet distinct from, other forms of harassment is described. Relative to other social identities, religious identities may be viewed as controllable and disruptive which can lead to higher levels of harassment. Religious bullying may be seen as more acceptable and also may take on forms not prototypical of other types of workplace bullying

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(e.g. exoticization, assumptions of homogeneity, imposition of beliefs). Based on this, how the broader literature on individual- and organizational-level interventions to reduce discrimination and harassment might inform efforts to curtail religious bullying at work is discussed.

Consider the following religious harassment incidents in legal cases:

A woman in the United Kingdom (UK) gives a work colleague a book about a Muslim woman's encounter with Christianity, asking her to go to church (Mansfield, 2016).

A Christian man in Pakistan claims his colleagues harassed him to convert to Islam (Tanveer, 2015).

In the United States (USA), two managers made offensive jokes about Muslim and Native American employees' religious practices and traditions (JDSupra, 2017).

In Ireland, the only Catholic employee at a firm won a harassment suit when her boss shouted at her, "Tiochfaidh ár lá"—an Irish republican slogan which means "Our day will come" that was associated with religious conflict in the region (BBC, 2017).

In the USA, a convert to Islam won a harassment suit because her co-workers made harassing comments, calling her a "towel head" and referring to her hijab as "that thing on her head" (Stone, 2016).

In the USA, an atheist sued a former employer for harassing him because of his godlessness, including proselytizing and accusing him of theft because of his immorality (Mehta, 2014).

As these cases illustrate, religious identity has been a focus of bullying behaviour in the workplace. Religion is a central part of the identities of many workers; 84% of individuals around the globe identify themselves as belonging to a religion (Hackett, Stonawski, Potancokova, Grim, & Skirbekk, 2015), making religion a potential distinctive difference across individuals at work. Given the fact that historically religious tensions have often been associated with societal conflict (Fox & Akbaba, 2015; Wuthnow, 2007), it should not be surprising that religious diversity may occasionally be associated with conflict in the workplace (Gebert et al., 2014). Beyond a historical perspective, there is evidence of a rise in religious tensions that is spilling over to workplaces. A recent Pew Research Center report (Lovett, 2017) noted that social hostility and government policies have led to restrictions of religion increasing to high levels in 40% of countries. While harassment of religious groups by the government is highest in the Middle East and North Africa, the influx of refugees into Europe from Muslim-majority countries has led to Muslims facing social hostility in 71% of European countries (Lovett, 2017). Additionally, terrorist attacks in recent years have also created an environment where religious restrictions are on the rise (Fox & Akbaba, 2015). As Soylu and Sheehy-Skeffington (2015) note, bullying in the workplace can be a product of these broader societal inequalities and power struggles.

In this chapter, why a religious identity may become a focus of harassment and bullying in the workplace is discussed. Of note, non-believers and atheists also can be the target of discrimination and harassment; those identities are also considered in this chapter. A description of the unique characteristics of religious identity is followed by a discussion of how the broader literature on harassment behaviours applies or, in some cases, does not capture the experience of those subject to religious bullying. The chapter concludes with a focus on how research on targets, third-party interventions and organizational efforts to combat bullying is useful or limited for reducing religious harassment at work.

The focus of this review is restricted to harassment and bullying, the theme of the volume, rather than detailing laws and cases regarding discrimination in employment decisions and policies (e.g. not allowing individuals to observe a religious holiday or to wear their religious dress as an organizational policy; see Kerwood (2016) and Griffiths (2016) for reviews of religious discrimination cases in Europe and Ghumman, Ryan, Barclay and Markel (2013) for US law). That noted, we do draw on the broader literature on religious discrimination both inside and beyond the workplace to inform our discussion of religious harassment.

1   Religion as a Stigmatized Identity

Like gender and ethnic identities, religious identities can be stigmatized at work because of stereotyping. Indeed, unlike other identities where one specific group (men, Caucasians) may be much less likely to be the target of stigmatization, stereotypes and discrimination against many religious groups have been documented. For example, Christians have been stereotyped as naïve and close minded (Lyons, Wessel, Ghumman, Ryan, & Kim, 2014), Jewish people as greedy and disloyal (Wuthnow, 1982), Muslims as backward and menacing (Kamalipour, 2000; Pipes, 1990), pagans such as Wiccans, Druids and adherents of voodoo and Santeria as nonconformists (Tejeda, 2015) and atheists as untrustworthy (Edgell, Gerteis, & Hartmann, 2006; Gervais, 2011). This variability in who is the target of harassment is in part because majority status varies across cultural contexts (e.g. Coptic Christians as a stigmatized minority in Egypt, Hindu minorities in Pakistan, Uighur Muslims in China). Also, historical divisions, such as that between Hindus and Muslims in India (Bandukwala, 2006; Thorat & Attewell, 2007), leave legacies of stereotypes in the modern workplace. Further, even when a religious group is not in the minority, there can be workplace harassment of majority group members who outwardly express their religious identity because of a desire to preserve the secular nature of the workplace.

Ghumman and Ryan (in press) have discussed ways in which religious identity may be distinct in meaning and effects from other stigmatized identities. Specifically, in terms of Jones et al.'s (1984) model of characteristics of stigma, religion is seen as *controllable*, *concealable*, *disruptive* and *perilous*. Each of these characteristics may contribute to why religious harassment may occur.

1.1   Controllable

Because individuals can change faith groups, religion is seen as controllable and not static. Controllable stigmas are viewed more negatively because individuals are seen as at fault for their stigma (Weiner, Perry, & Magnusson, 1988), so religious harassment may be seen as more acceptable because a person is "choosing" to be targeted. Soylu and Sheehy-Skeffington (2015) note that because membership in a religious category is seen as voluntary, the potential for punishment for that membership is increased. One area for further research is investigation of perceptions of the controllability of religious identity and connections to religious harassment and in particular to differences in controllability perceptions for different religious identity groups.

Controllability also comes into play in terms of religious expression. King and Franke (2017) note that since the adoption of religious practices varies within religious groups, religious expression at work can be seen as a conscious violation of norms. Harassment may be linked to the perception that one can choose not to engage in practices (e.g. abstaining from alcohol, prayers, wearing religious garb) because other members of a religious identity group do not engage in those practices. For example, as some Muslim women wear the hijab and some do not, perceptions that one has "chosen" to be different may lead to increased harassment (Reeves, McKinney, & Azam, 2012). The perception of controllability can lend itself to negative attributions as to why an individual engages in a practice when it is not "required". Research as to how and when controllability perceptions relate to negative attributions would help elucidate the processes underlying religious bullying.

1.2   Concealable

For many individuals religious identity is concealable, where the individual can choose not to disclose the nature of his or her beliefs or non-beliefs in the workplace. However, religious identity can be visual via markers and practices (e.g. headscarf, cross, yarmulke, praying, coloured beads; Hopkins & Greenwood, 2013; Tejeda, 2015). Visible, highly identified members of stigmatized groups experience more discrimination than when a stigma is relatively concealed (Branscombe, Schmitt, & Harvey, 1999; Major, Quinton, & McCoy, 2002; Sellers & Shelton, 2003), indicating that individuals who wear religious attire or engage in religious practices on work breaks may be more likely to be targets of harassment than those who do not outwardly display their religious identity. Further, individuals may specifically choose to not reveal their belief system at work, particularly if they fear it may lead to bullying and harassment. For example, Tejeda (2015) documented that the vast majority of pagans (Wiccans, Druids, shamanists, African traditional religion (ATR) followers) report anxiety over their faith being disclosed in the workplace. Better statistics as to how many individuals conceal religious identity or non-belief at

work, as well as the reasons for concealment, would be useful in understanding concerns regarding religious bullying.

This particular aspect of religious identity—an expected lack of visibility—may play an important role in workplace norms regarding religious expression. That is, in many workplaces there may be tolerance of religious diversity, but that is accompanied with an expectation that religious expression at work is counternormative (Gebert et al., 2014). That is, co-workers may feel you can believe whatever you would like, but belief and practice should not be visible in the workplace. Thus, individuals who make their religious identity visible at work—through dress or expression—may be subjected to bullying for their violation of norms (King & Franke, 2017). Indeed, Scheitle and Ecklund (2017) demonstrated the paradox of religious expression in that the more often religion comes up as a topic at work, the greater an individual's perception of religious discrimination. Assessing how workplace norms regarding expression—of religious beliefs as well as of other aspects of religious identity—relate to levels of harassment would be a useful addition to the literature on this topic.

An example of norms regarding visible expression of religion is described by Van Laer (2015). He discusses Belgian workplaces where being neutral for some organizations means denying prayer spaces to Muslims and banning wearing headscarves because they have never allowed prayer spaces for Christians or Jews or the wearing of crucifixes. Thus, organizations may view being religiously neutral as requiring no visibility of religion in the workplace. Research on the connections between beliefs about neutrality, visibility and harassment levels is warranted.

1.3   Disruptive

Religion can be seen as disruptive if accommodations affect the flow of work (e.g. religious holidays, allowing time and space to pray at work). As Griffiths (2016) notes in her discussion of Great Britain and the Equality Act of 2010, entering the workplace does involve giving away some of one's autonomy to meet the employer's need for an efficient and profitable business, and religious accommodation can be seen as disrupting that psychological contract. While court cases in various countries do consider the reasonableness of accommodation as an important factor in determining whether an employer has to accommodate a request (e.g. for certain days off, for religious dress), co-workers may view what is legally mandated as disruptive and harass an individual who has been accommodated. Colella's (2001) model of co-worker reactions to disability accommodations may have some relevance to whether religious accommodations by employers are met with negative reactions by co-workers. For example, her model notes that co-workers will make judgements as to whether the accommodation is truly needed or warranted as well as to whether it was equitable. The former judgement (needed or warranted) may be negative for many religious accommodations for reasons noted above in our discussion of controllability; the latter judgement (equitable) may also be negative if the co-worker feels his or her work is being disrupted by the religious accommodation of

another. Research is needed to understand how often and when religious accommodation by a manager or organization leads to harassment from co-workers.

Interestingly, controllability perceptions may lead to enhanced perceptions of disruptiveness. An example is provided by Khiat, Montargot and Maukkes (2015) in their discussion of Algerian workplaces during Ramadan. They note that individuals tend to intensify their religious expression at work during this time period (e.g. more individuals choosing to pray at work, longer prayer times), which can affect scheduling and productivity. Khiat and colleagues also note that fatigue from fasting can accumulate over the month, especially when Ramadan takes place during summer months, causing challenges for managers seeking to accommodate religious expression while also dealing with employees who may be late to work more often, less able to concentrate or sustain physical effort or just more edgy and prone to conflict. In this case, variability in expression in comparison to other times of the year may lead managers and co-workers to see that expression as more controllable and also more disruptive. Further, whether religious harassment increases during times of greater religious observance would be an interesting focus for research.

1.4   Perilous

Religion may be thought of as perilous as the belief systems and world views of other employees may be challenged (see Greenberg, Pyszczynski and Solomon (1986) for a review). As an example, ATRs such as voodoo and Santeria have been portrayed in films as dangerous and necromantic (Tejeda, 2015), leading others to consider adherents as suspicious. A co-worker's religious expression may seem as a threat to other employees' faith or views (Beane, Ponnapalli, & Viswesvaran, 2017), such as when an employee expresses a religious belief regarding same-sex marriage or abortion. Harassment may result from a fear stemming from poor understanding of others' religious beliefs or from well-understood but diametrically opposing views to one's own.

When Jones et al.'s (1984) model of stigmatization is considered, it is clear that religious identity may differ from commonly studied stigmatized identities like gender and ethnicity as it is more controllable, more concealable and also potentially seen as more disruptive and perilous. All of these characteristics can contribute to others in the workplace harassing an individual based on religious identity or practice. In the next section, how the general literature on harassment and bullying needs expansion when considering religious bullying in the workplace is discussed.

2   Harassment and Bullying Behaviours and Religion in the Workplace

Aquino and Thau (2009) note that many kinds of aggressive behaviour can be considered under the broad umbrella of workplace victimization: harassment (Nye, Brummel, & Drasgow, 2014), bullying (Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996), mobbing

(Zapf, Knorz, & Kulla, 1996), incivility (Cortina, Magley, Williams, & Langhout, 2001), abusive supervision (Tepper, 2000) and other terms. Other chapters across the *Handbooks of Workplace Bullying, Emotional Abuse and Harassment* review the determinants and outcomes of these behaviours, and these likely hold for religious harassment and bullying as well (e.g. organizational climate will affect levels of harassment; victims of religious harassment will experience depression, diminished well-being, lower levels of job satisfaction, etc.). However, there is a lack of research to verify the generalizability of these findings to religious harassment.

While much of the broader research on bullying and harassment should apply to religious harassment, there are several points where we think workplace victimization on the basis of religious identity may be different from other types of harassment. Specifically, religious harassment may differ from other types of harassment in the forms of harassment and the acceptability of harassment.

2.1   Forms of Harassment

Certainly, religious harassment can take the form of verbal abuse and social isolation as does harassment based on gender or ethnicity (see chapters ▶ "Workplace Bullying and Gender: An Overview of Empirical Findings" by Salin, this volume, and ▶ "Ethnicity and Workplace Bullying" by Bergbom and Vartia, this volume). While typologies of harassment forms developed for gender harassment, sexual orientation harassment and ethnic harassment (e.g. Fitzgerald, Drasgow, Hulin, Gelfand, & Magley, 1997) have value for understanding types of harassment on the basis of religion, other forms of mistreatment more specific to religion may emerge. For example, Nadal et al. (2012) documented different types of microaggressions faced by Muslim Americans; while some are equivalent to forms of mistreatment experienced by other minority groups (e.g. being subjected to stereotyping, name calling, exclusion), others are more unique to religious identities as we describe below.

2.1.1   Exoticization

One example of a different form of harassment is what Nadal et al. (2012) call exoticization, where people see religious garb and practices (e.g. hijab, Sikh turban) as foreign and non-normative. Even in cases where religious dress is permitted in the workplace and/or there are societal provisions for religious accommodation of dress (e.g. Bader, Alidadi, & Vermeulen, 2013; Griffiths, 2016), exoticization leads to an employee being treated differently by others because the dress and/or practices are seen as not the norm. For example, Carrim (2015) describes how using the services of traditional healers (which may call for long absences from the workplace) has been an increasing practice in South Africa post apartheid, leading to a need for employers to consider these as ways of seeking medical assistance and not to exoticize them. The view of religious practices as foreign is illustrated in a study by Soylu and Sheehy-Skeffington (2015), where an individual who does not consume alcohol for religious reasons noted he or she was perceived as "an alien who came from outer space" (p. 1114).

Practices may also lead to harassment from ignorance regarding whether the behaviour actually has a religious motivation. Mahadevan (2015) provides several examples from German companies of Muslim and Hindu employees not providing a religious explanation for a practice such as diet restrictions or meditation (e.g. "It is just something I do, it's a tradition"). These non-religious explanations for religious practices may be motivated by avoiding bringing religion into the workplace but can ironically lead to uncertainty, confusion and lack of tolerance by co-workers who do not see the practice as a religious expression but just as odd or unusual behaviour.

2.1.2   Assumption of Homogeneity

Another example provided by Nadal et al. (2012) of how religious harassment may take forms different from harassment on the basis of other identities is assumptions of religious homogeneity (assuming that others hold the same beliefs). In this way, minority religion may be akin to minority sexual orientation, in that assumptions about others and an individual's violation of those assumptions can lead to harassment. For example, harassment may occur when an individual does not participate in religious holidays such as Christmas in Christian-majority countries. Assuming homogeneity is a means of reinforcing dominance of a social group (Soylu & Sheehy-Skeffington, 2015) and can also be associated with societal beliefs regarding the importance of assimilation (King, Bell, & Lawrence, 2009). As King, Bell and Lawrence (2009) note, cultural norms regarding the assimilation of immigrant groups in terms of language, dress and other aspects of life may extend to assumptions about religious assimilation. Also, non-believers may experience harassment because of violating assumed homogeneity. Research is needed on violations of homogeneity assumptions and whether they relate to increases in bullying.

2.1.3   Imposition of Beliefs

A third form of harassment that is somewhat unique to religious bullying would be imposition of beliefs, as one way a hostile work environment can develop is through proselytizing (Cantone & Wiener, 2017). Examples include cases where organizational leaders require participation in practices such as prayers or urge attending services of a particular religion. For instance, Soylu and Sheehy-Skeffington (2015) describe how Islamists in Turkey questioned the religious practices of those who were more secular and pushed prayer attendance. Another example would be harassment of homosexual employees in the name of religion. Koopmans (2015) showed how fundamentalist views among both Christians and Muslims were associated with hostility towards out-groups (e.g. homosexuals, Jewish people) in Western Europe, which can bleed over towards workplace harassment of individuals in the name of religion (see also chapter ▶ "Sexual Orientation and Bullying" by Hoel, Lewis and Einarsdottir, this volume). Research is needed to more clearly identify when expressing one's own beliefs bleeds over into bullying others to agree with those beliefs and where boundary lines might be drawn.

One specific group that has reported harassment in the form of imposition of beliefs are atheist or agnostic employees. Atheists are negatively stereotyped as immoral, materialistic and culturally elite, as well as shameful or stupid, and report

experiences of exclusion and harassment (Brewster, Hammer, Sawyer, Elklund, & Palmer, 2016; Doane & Elliott, 2015). In some countries, atheists face physical danger from professing their non-belief (e.g. murders of atheist bloggers in Bangladesh, Uras, 2015; laws against apostasy in the Middle East and North Africa, Theodorou, 2014).

Brewster, Hammer, Sawyer, Elklund and Palmer (2016) discuss the pressure to "pretend to believe" which leads atheist or agnostic individuals to conceal their viewpoints in the workplace. This pressure has also been associated with an unwillingness to accommodate atheistic viewpoints. In a US court case (HR Specialist, 2016), a heating and air conditioning company owned by a Christian had the company's mission printed on the back of employee identification badges, which described the company as not just a business but a ministry with a goal of pleasing the Lord. An atheist employee who was fired for covering up the mission statement argued that taping over the back of the badge was a reasonable accommodation of his beliefs, and the courts ruled that his case could proceed to trial (Mathis v. Christian Heating and Air, no. 13-3740, ED PA, 2016). Another example of pressure to conform was a US soldier being told, after refusing to join prayer on Thanksgiving Day, to sit at another table (Kaya, 2008).

These forms of harassment—exoticization, assumptions of homogeneity and imposition of beliefs—may occur for other identities but in the case of religious harassment may be more prevalent and are added to "prototypical" harassment such as slurs, jokes and exclusion.

2.2   Acceptability of Harassment

The second area where there are differences between religious bullying and other kinds of harassment is in the *general acceptability of religious harassment.* That is, while blatantly mistreating an individual based on a (relatively) immutable characteristic like gender or race may be taboo in many workplaces around the world, because religion involves a set of adopted beliefs, individuals may feel more freedom to comment on or express negative views of an individual's religion. Further, as Ghumman and Ryan (in press) note, the increasing religious diversity in Western countries due to immigration (Trinadafyllidou, 2011) coupled with religious nationalism (Rahman, 2003; Ghassem-Fachandi, 2012) and rising religious restrictions in many countries (Pew Research, 2012) leads to greater potential for religious differences in the workplace to create situations of harassment. To elaborate, there are many places with laws regarding blasphemy (e.g. United Arab Emirates (UAE), Lebanon, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Qatar; http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Expression/ICCPR/Bangkok/StudyBangkok_en.pdf), although these are often discussed in terms of limits of free speech and repression of alternative views (e.g. agnosticism) rather than protections of religious speech at work. Rudgard (2017) notes that in the UK, part of the rise in religious harassment may be due to the unacceptability of sexist jokes but the acceptability of poking fun at religion.

In further support of the idea that religious harassment might be more acceptable, Cantone and Wiener (2017) noted that they did not find any effect of the "unwelcomeness" of behaviour on judgements of whether religious discrimination occurred in studies using scenarios of both verbal harassment of co-workers and supervisor proselytizing. They noted this is in stark contrast to studies on sexual harassment where unwelcomeness is a consideration in judgements of whether there is discrimination. Additional evidence of the acceptability of religious discrimination comes from a study of evaluations of hypothetical Muslim and atheist job applicants, in which study participants indicated they used applicant religion in making judgements even though it was not relevant to job suitability (Van Camp, Sloan, & ElBassiouny, 2016).

The acceptability of harassment of certain groups is often tied to societal stratification. Gebert et al. (2014) referred to religious status diversity as the extent to which religious denominations differ in power and prestige within the organization, often as a reflection of societal-level differences in income, education and occupations. For example, Thorat and Attewell (2007) note how religion and caste are both historically and currently associated with employment and economic differences in India (see chapter ▶ "Caste and Bullying: Propensity to Bully, Harass and Discriminate" by Noronha, this volume, for a fuller discussion of caste and bullying). Soylu and Sheehy-Skeffington (2015) note how these status differences produce asymmetric intergroup bullying, where the lower-status religious groups will be the target of a disproportionate amount of bullying. They illustrate this by examining the change in Turkey from a militant secularism to an Islamist-leaning government and the accompanying rise in workplace bullying of secularists. Thus, one explanation for the general acceptability of religious harassment is the connection of religion to societal status.

Interestingly, vigilant attention to religious status inequalities can heighten focus on religion in the workplace as employees are attuned to any differential outcomes that might be associated with religion. Al Ariss and Sidani (2016) provide the example of Lebanon, where 18 religious communities (called confessions) are recognized and the government explicitly set up power distribution across them (see also Messarra (2014) for a discussion of religious diversity in Lebanon). This resulted in norms of strict positive discrimination (quotas) in the workplace, increasing the salience of religion and the potential for religious conflict and harassment. As another example, Indonesia has six legally acknowledged religions (Muslim, Catholic, Protestant, Hindu, Buddhist and Kong Hu Cu), and citizens are required to be registered as a member of one of these, making religiosity support at work a sensitive topic (Afrianty, Issa, & Burgess, 2015). Thus, heightened attention to religion in the workplace may not necessarily lead to less harassment.

Examining data from 177 countries, Fox and Akbaba (2015) noted that nations often treat religious minorities differently, with Christians experiencing the highest levels of discrimination when in the minority, except in Western democratic societies where Muslim minorities experience greater state restrictions on practices and institutions. However, they also note that government restrictions on minority religions are not uniform, with Muslim-majority countries such as Burkina Faso,

Gambia, Niger, Senegal and Sierra Leone having no societal-level restrictions and Christian-majority countries in Latin America also having low levels of restrictions on minority religious groups.

As an interesting aside, research suggests that it is not just being a numerical minority but perceiving oneself to be in the minority that may contribute to perceived harassment. Parent, Brewster, Cook and Harmon (2018) found that Christians who perceived themselves to be in the minority even when in a majority Christian country showed evidence of stress from perceived faith-based discrimination.

Another factor that likely contributes to the acceptability of religious harassment is the expectation (often implicit rather than explicit) of assimilation of minorities to dominant value systems (Al Ariss & Sidani, 2016; Davidson, 2008). While we noted earlier that a religious expression at work may in and of itself be considered counternormative, expressions that are contrary to dominant values (e.g. to Judeo-Christian beliefs in the Western world, to Muslim beliefs in Islamic states) will be seen as an acceptable basis for exclusion and ridicule. As an example, in France, the importance of assimilation to French culture leads to the position that bans on headscarves are important to preserve national identity. Similarly, a bill introduced in Quebec, Canada, in 2013 to forbid government employees from wearing religious symbols such as turbans, kippas and hijabs was promoted as a means of ensuring that the value of neutrality of the government was honoured by not having any religious symbols in public sector environments (O'Sullivan, 2017). As a final example, Bauman and Ponniah (2017) discuss how Hindus in India and Buddhists in Sri Lanka may harass Christian minority group members as their proselytization is seen as a politically motivated practice antithetical to nationalism, not necessarily a religious one. Thus, harassers may feel their behaviour is a justified defence of a societal value system.

In other cases, the historical context may promote strong religious identity but also a valuing of no conflict in the workplace. For example, Bagire and Begumisa (2015) describe how Islamic and Christian traditions in Uganda evolved in ways that have not bred the level of intolerance seen in some neighbouring contexts.

A further factor in some locales, particularly in Europe (Bader, Alidadi, & Vermeulen, 2013), would be a fear of a revival of a repressing and dominating role of religion in society. As Bader, Alidadi and Vermeulen (2013) noted, secularism is written into the constitution or foundational laws in France and Turkey; that is, some countries have strictly relegated religion to outside of public life. Others, such as the Netherlands, have a pluralistic view of allowing all religions equal footing, while countries such as the UK, Denmark and Bulgaria have established churches linked with the state at least nominally. Thus, it is important to acknowledge that the historical role of religion in society may affect how individuals feel about any form of religious expression in the workplace. Indeed, in reviewing the ruling of the European Court of Human Rights on religious diversity, Medda-Windischer (2017) notes that there is no uniform concept of religion or uniform view of when states can restrict freedom of religion. In this regard, different responses to similar situations across countries are seen as allowable, as European nations are given a broad "margin of appreciation" because of the societal variation in the significance

of religion. Thus, religious harassment may be considered acceptable because of a historical past where religious authority played a repressive role in a society.

Finally, as indicated earlier, religious harassment may be viewed as acceptable because religious expression is seen as counternormative. King and Franke (2017) found that negative reactions to workplace religious expression are not based on the particular identity group membership but are influenced by perceptions of the inappropriateness of expression of religious beliefs at work. For example, Sharma and Pardasani (2015) note how religious symbols such as idols, screen savers, pictures and other forms of religious decoration are common in Indian workplaces; in other countries such displays might not only be frowned upon but prohibited. Morgan (2005) discusses in particular how immigrant groups to the USA may express their faith at work naturally and be less steeped in a traditional American view that expressing faith at work is not appropriate. Research on when, where, why and by whom religious expression is seen as acceptable would be useful for understanding when harassment is more or less likely to occur.

2.3   Intersectionality

It is also important to note that *intersectionality* may be of particular influence in advancing our understanding of religious bullying. Researching intersectionality involves simultaneously considering the meaning and consequences of multiple categories of identity (Cole, 2009; Crenshaw, 1993). As all individuals belong to multiple social categories (e.g. gender, ethnicity, age, religion, sexual orientation, etc.), how, when and why someone is the target of religious harassment may be influenced by whether they are male or female and whether they are an ethnic minority or a majority group member. For example, a female Muslim employee from Somalia working in a European organization may face harassment on the basis of religion, gender, ethnicity and national origin; the religious bullying may be manifested in different ways and with different intensity because of her other identities. Researchers may consider whether the intersection of religious identity with other stigmatized identities leads to greater levels of harassment.

Intersectionality may also play an impactful role in one's ability to disclose or conceal one's religious identity, particularly in situations in which one's standing on another identity (i.e. race) may lead to external assumptions of one's faith. For instance, a number of individuals of South Asian and Arab descent have been assumed to be Muslim in the USA and have subsequently become targets of Islamophobia (Basu, 2016; Wang, 2017).

Further, intersectionality considerations may be related to the legal environment. When Halrynjo and Jonker (2016) compared legal cases in the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and Denmark, they found that intersectionality was not emphasized by plaintiffs in cases regarding hijab discrimination, as all complaints focused on religious and not gender discrimination, although the actual court considerations in some cases focused on gender and not religion as a basis for a claim. Some researchers have also pointed to the fact that workplace discrimination law may

prioritize or privilege certain identities in terms of protection. For example, in Canada, conflict between feminist activists arose regarding how promoters of gender equality and those of religious rights might not be advocating the same legal stance in terms of wearing the hijab (Lépinard, 2010).

An intersectional perspective may also be of value in considering harassment experiences of certain groups in certain contexts. For example, divorced women may face greater religious harassment in cultural contexts where divorce is taboo in majority religions. Similarly, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) individuals may face greater religious harassment in cultures where majority religions promote heterosexist viewpoints (e.g. Bradshaw, Heaton, Decco, Dehlin, Galliher, & Crowell, 2015).

In summary, religious identities differ from other stigmatized identities in ways that may lead to greater workplace bullying and ways in which the expressions of religious harassment may differ from other forms of harassment. In the remainder of the chapter, the focus is on how the literature on intervening to prevent discrimination and bullying may or may not be helpful in combating religious harassment at work.

3 What Can Be Done? Individual- and Organizational-Level Interventions

Other chapters in the *Handbooks of Workplace Bullying, Emotional Abuse and Harassment* (see Volume 3, Section A) address interventions to combat workplace bullying. Here, we provide a quick review of the relevance of various interventions with respect to religious identity harassment, noting which methods may be particularly applicable compared to those that may not be as effective in the case of religious harassment. This review is organized around interventions that focus on the harassment of targets, third parties and the organization as a whole.

3.1 Targets

Targets of religious harassment and bullying may seek methods to prevent being bullied as well as ways to lessen the negativity they experience. Singletary and Hebl (2009) outlined the *provision of individuating information* as a potential tactic for targets to lessen interpersonal negativity. That is, making others aware of one's unique characteristics, traits and skills leads to less reliance on categorization and group stereotypes. To counteract the stigma-ridden stereotypes associated with a religious identity, introducing positive, counter-stereotypic information may distinguish the individual as distinct and separate from the identity (Lindsey, King, McCausland, Jones, & Dunleavy, 2013). With respect to religious identity, King and Ahmad (2010) found that individuals dressed in traditional Muslim attire who did not provide counter-stereotypic, individuating information faced more discrimination than those who did communicate such details.

Singletary and Hebl (2009) also identified *increased positivity* as a tactic available to targets seeking to decrease interpersonal negativity related to a stigmatized identity, based on research on the visible characteristics of ethnicity (Shelton, Richeson, & Salvatore, 2005) and obesity (Miller, Rothblum, Felicio, & Brand, 1995). That is, through both verbal and non-verbal signals of approachability and likeability (e.g. smiling more, using more positive language), individuals can get others to see them in a positive vein and as distinct from a negative group stereotype. However, as we have noted, religion may be expected to be concealed at work, and thus this strategy may be less effective as the positive behaviours might not be linked to the religious identity.

Tactics such as providing individuating information and showing increased positivity share a common feature in that they tend to pre-emptively reduce instances of incivility rather than respond after the fact. What then are the options for those currently experiencing religious bullying and harassment? One avenue is *prejudice confrontation*, defined as "verbally or non-verbally expressing one's dissatisfaction with prejudicial and discriminatory treatment to the person who is responsible for the remark or behavior" (Shelton, Richeson, & Vorauer, 2006). Despite the potential effectiveness of confrontation in reducing displays of prejudice (Czopp, Monteith, & Mark, 2006), the confronting prejudiced responses (CPR) model highlights a number of barriers that may prevent targets from pursuing confrontation in cases of religious harassment (Ashburn-Nardo, Morris, & Goodwin, 2008). As confrontation may be associated with being disliked (Czopp, Monteith, & Mark, 2006) or being seen as a complainer (Kaiser & Miller, 2001), many targets may decide not to confront, particularly in situations of ambiguous perpetrator intent (Gardner & Ryan, 2017). Tye-Williams and Krone (2017) discuss the "paradox of workplace bullying advice" as explaining this tendency to not confront: advice givers typically advocate a rational, calm confrontation of bullies, but advice seekers seldom follow that advice, largely because the advice ignores the emotionality associated with being harassed. Further, Cortina and Magley (2003) demonstrated that those who voiced against mistreatment either directly or indirectly (e.g. sought social support) experienced more social retaliation compared to those who stayed silent, especially when the mistreater was powerful. In the case of religious harassment, confrontation would involve further expression of one's religious identity (i.e. engaging in counternormative behaviour) and making religious identity more salient, so confrontation may be a less used strategy than with other forms of harassment.

Despite the potential costs associated with confrontation, targets may ultimately decide to stand up to instances of religious bullying. Research has shown that certain confrontation strategies may be more effective than others. For instance, Martinez, Hebl, Smith and Sabat (2017) found that those who confronted prejudice towards gay men in a non-hostile yet direct style as compared to those who were hostile and direct received more positive ratings by observers of the situation. Further, Parker, Monteith, Moss-Rascusin and Van Camp (2018) found that evidence-based confrontation (i.e. referencing specific evidence that a person acted in a prejudiced manner) was more effective than confrontation with no evidence in situations of gender bias. Therefore, it seems that there are potential options to optimally confront religious

harassers if the target chooses to do so, although no specific research exists on confrontation of those harassing others based on religious identity. However, given the acceptability of religious harassment noted above, as well as the societal and historical traditions that reinforce it, confrontation may not have as much effectiveness for religious harassment as for other kinds of harassment.

3.2   Third Parties

While target confrontation is one option to reduce religious bullying and harassment, the effort to create a more inclusive work environment should not fall entirely on the shoulders of those targeted. Indeed, Skarlicki, O'Reilly and Kulik (2015) have noted that for every victim of workplace mistreatment, there are multiple third parties who either witness or learn about the mistreatment and could potentially act. Consequently, observer intervention (i.e. assistance by an individual who hears about or witnesses harassment occurring and chooses to help; Bowes-Sperry & O'Leary-Kelly, 2005) is another option to be considered when seeking to reduce instances of religious harassment.

Ghumman, Ryan and Park (2016) have shown that situations of bystander intervention with respect to religious harassment have a number of similarities to interventions for sexual harassment and sexual orientation harassment (Bowes-Sperry & O'Leary-Kelly, 2005; Ryan & Wessel, 2012). For example, when observers witness religious harassment, they are more likely to intervene if they feel that the harassment is intentional and is likely to recur. They are less likely to intervene if they have a less close relationship with the victim or target or if they are closer to the harasser. Individuals with a stronger religious commitment and/or more of a prosocial orientation are also more likely to intervene when religious harassment occurs.

In sum, we know that whether third parties will intervene in religious harassment situations is a complex decision that is influenced by many context-specific factors as well as by target and bystander characteristics. In the case of religious harassment, the observer's own belief system as well as views about the secular nature of the workplace may also influence their actions. Skarlicki, O'Reilly and Kulik (2015) note that third parties can restore justice cognitively as well as behaviourally, and one way of doing so is by derogating innocent victims as a way to maintain a belief in a just world (Lerner, 1980). Victim derogation may occur with greater prevalence in instances of religious harassment, in which the target can be viewed as somehow responsible for the issue of religion arising in the workplace. This is troubling, as it is not addressing or even worsening the circumstances for the victim while allowing the observer to feel that the bullying is somehow justified. A lack of support by bystanders or inappropriate/unhelpful support can result in a victim feeling more isolated.

Further, third-party intervention may not be confrontational and punishing; third parties may try to defuse situations or mediate (Ryan & Wessel, 2012) or offer emotional support to the target (Skarlicki, O'Reilly, & Kulik, 2015). An interesting

question is whether in cases of religious harassment, third parties have a different threshold for engaging in punishing transgressors and/or for helping targets relative to other forms of harassment. The acceptability of religious harassment noted earlier suggests this may be the case.

Research has also explored how third-party reactions may be "hot" or "cold", that is, through reflexive emotional processes or deliberative cognitive processes, respectively (O'Reilly & Aquino, 2011). A hot reaction is a strong emotional one (e.g. anger, frustration); a cold reaction would be a more dispassionate reaction, such as discussing a rationale or providing an analysis of the situation. As an example of a hot reaction, individuals may experience "moral anger" when witnessing or hearing about religious harassment. O'Reilly and Aquino (2011) note that both emotions and cognitions (e.g. why an act is problematic) may influence whether bystanders choose to respond to religious harassment. Research on the relative extent of hot and cold reactions to religious harassment would advance our understanding of why and how others choose to intervene.

Despite the barriers and situational conditions often required before bystanders intervene, research has shown that observer confrontation may be particularly effective in harassment (Czopp & Monteith, 2003; Drury & Kaiser, 2014; Rasinski & Czopp, 2010). Collectively, these findings suggest that third parties do indeed have unique power in combating religious harassment. Research on the relative efficacy of third party versus target confrontations of those who harass is needed to confirm these suggestions.

3.3   Organizational Level

One obvious strategy for organizations is to *adopt and enforce general non-bullying and civility policies* and to provide internal grievance procedures for individuals who wish to report religious bullying. Ruggs, Martinez and Hebl (2011) suggest such diversity and inclusion policies communicate a lack of organizational tolerance for identity-related discrimination or incivility, fostering an inclusive organizational climate. Further, opportunities to communicate such values arise when employees report instances of religious harassment; to the extent that religious bullying is investigated thoroughly, and sanctioned swiftly, justly and consistently (Pearson, Andersson, & Porath, 2000), the organization may convey to its employees that such behaviour is not taken lightly. Strong enforcement of policies has been consistently linked to reduction in sexual harassment (Gruber, 1998; Willness, Steel, & Lee, 2007); however, research is needed to determine the effectiveness of policies regarding religious harassment.

A second organizational-level strategy to combat religious bullying would be through *training*. Research on civility interventions is limited, but training to promote healthy discourse and a culture of mutual respect can be effective (Pearson & Porath, 2009; Osatuke, Moore, Ward, Dyrenforth, & Belton, 2009). However, the history of training and sexual harassment in the USA suggests that training is not a

simple or efficacious solution. Buckner, Hindman, Huelsman and Bergman (2014) noted that while sexual harassment training was mandatory in many locations and organizations, sexual harassment remained a pervasive problem. They noted that training may sensitize individuals (i.e. make them aware that harassment may occur) but does not necessarily increase accurate identification of what is harassment or lead to any reduction in the occurrence of harassment. Indeed, Williams, Fitzgerald and Drasgow (1999) found training had no independent effect on reducing sexual harassment beyond organizational policies regarding sanctioning harassers. While trainings can vary in their ultimate success, it would seem that based on the extent to which messages of religious tolerance and acceptance are communicated and internalized during such trainings, a reduction in religious bullying and harassment may follow.

Gebert et al. (2014) note that because expressing religious identity at work will be seen as a voluntary disclosure, it may be important to train individuals on *how to express* their religious identities in ways that will be seen as inoffensive, not proselytizing, but respectful of others' identities and workplace "appropriate". For example, they noted those who score higher on measures of religious fundamentalism speak about their religious identity in ways that are one sided and judgemental (Hunsberger & Jackson, 2005), increasing perceptions of dissimilarity and increased conflict. Lund Dean, Safranski and Lee (2015) also note that individuals sometimes "worsened" their outcomes in legal religious discrimination cases by demanding a specific way of resolving a complaint rather than accepting any suggested alternatives, whereby organizations tried to balance their religious expression with the rights of others. Making individuals aware of what might be limits to religious expression in the workplace may aid in reducing incidences of religious harassment.

Relatedly, King and Franke (2017) note that focusing on tolerance and acceptance is likely to be insufficient in dealing with religious discrimination. Instead, they advocate for focusing on clarifying social norms as to what is acceptable and unacceptable expression at work. In particular, multinational organizations may need to give particular consideration to the multiple local cultural contexts in which they operate. King and Franke (2017) note that an organization can adopt a strong global policy that might be very open or closed with regard to religious expression but will always have to consider local laws.

Gebert et al. (2014) also note that interventions should simultaneously focus on training on *how to interpret* others' expression of religious identity (i.e. as being informative rather than as dogmatic attempts to convert). That is, workers may ask *why* this individual is revealing his or her beliefs and make the attribution of proselytism regardless of actual intentions. Training to lessen that automatic attribution may be helpful in reducing complaints about bullying through imposition of beliefs, especially in cases where individuals were merely seeking to express their religious views, not to impose them.

Beyond formal organizational policy and training, informal *leader commitment* to diversity and employee equity may influence organizational climate for religious tolerance. Organizations tend to have fewer instances of blatant discrimination when

authority figures establish clear expectations for courteous behaviour and model non-discriminatory values and conduct (Cortina, 2008). Further, research has indicated that some leadership styles may deter bullying (Astrauskaite, Notelaers, Medisauskaite, & Kern, 2015; Ertureten, Cemalcilar, & Aycan, 2013). Conversely, lack of managerial intervention can exacerbate bullying (Zapf, Knorz, & Kulla, 1996). In examining manager responses to bullying behaviour, Woodrow and Guest (2017) found that managers did not always constructively respond. That is, managers often had "incomplete management" of a harassing situation, such as paying lip service to a complaint and not following up, or "disengaged management" where there was a lack of any attempt to do anything or a direct refusal to intervene. In the case of religious harassment, a manager might be particularly unwilling or unable to engage in constructive responses due to concerns over being seen as endorsing a religious viewpoint or in promoting a non-secular workplace. Therefore, consideration of informal messaging of expectations may be as relevant to reducing religious harassment as formal organizational policies.

4   Conclusion

This chapter noted the rising religious diversity in many workplaces due to globalization, migration and a desire for greater religious expression and discussed how these forces can lead to greater levels of religious bullying. However, opportunities to increase understanding of workplace religious bullying abound. As discussed in this chapter, while models of other forms of identity-based harassment may be useful for understanding religious bullying in the workplace, the unique aspects of religious identity warrant development of religion-specific models. Information surrounding how, why and under what circumstances individuals decide to disclose or conceal religious identity may also be of interest. Further, investigations surrounding the specific effectiveness of various interventions, both at the individual and organizational policy levels, are needed to understand how to most effectively address religious harassment. Finally, research focusing on the intersection of religion with other potentially stigmatized identities is crucial to understanding the complexities of the phenomena at play.

In closing, the reader should be reminded of how societal forces such as changing economic circumstances, new forms of government and laws and changing cultural viewpoints can foster pluralism, greater sense of belonging and a recognition of common principles across religions (Chioco, 2017). Just as in the broader literature on workplace diversity, there is a recognition that diversity need not lead to conflict and, indeed, if well managed can lead to better performance and innovation (Roberson, Ryan, & Ragins, 2017), so too should we recognize that religious diversity need not result in harassment and bullying but can provide positive outcomes for organizations.

5 Cross-References

6 Cross-References to Other Volumes

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