

**Developing Behavioural Observation Scales to Effectively  
Help Employees Reduce  
Interpersonal Mistreatment in the Workplace**

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## **Abstract**

This study explored the development of behavioural observation scales (BOS) based on the critical incidents of interpersonal interactions in the workplace. In particular, this study used a literature review and survey data (n=313) to gather 1126 critical incidents that detailed effective and ineffective behaviours related to interpersonal interactions between coworkers and interactions between managers and subordinates in the workplace. Then, using a coding process adapted from both the works of Brown and Hanlon (2004) and Latham and Wexley (1981), behavioural items were compiled to develop two separate BOS; one for interactions between coworkers and the other focusing on managerial and subordinate interactions. This study also provides insight on how these two BOS may benefit an organization and their employees and sets the landscape for a future study that will use these BOS to formulate goal setting interventions aimed at reducing the prevalence of workplace mistreatment.

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## **Introduction**

Positive interpersonal interactions among managers and employees in the workplace are important as they are crucial to the success and overall functioning of organizations (Erdogan & Enders, 2007). In addition, strong relationships with coworkers at work can improve employee well-being (Devonish, 2013). However, not all relationships at work are strong, cooperative or friendly; interactions between employees/managers at work can be negative due to interpersonal mistreatment. Interpersonal work mistreatment includes a wide variety of behaviours, such as abusive supervision, bullying, retaliation, ostracism and social undermining (Tepper & Henle, 2011).

As will be discussed in great detail in the literature review that follows, interpersonal mistreatment carries negative consequences for both the targets of interpersonal mistreatment as well as organizations (Hershcovis, Reich & Niven, 2015). Thus, much research has been conducted to understand the antecedents of mistreatment among employees in the workplace and to a lesser extent how to prevent such mistreatment. This review will examine the identified antecedents and consequences of interpersonal workplace mistreatment in order to underline the seriousness and pervasiveness of interpersonal mistreatment in the workplace, and the need for an effective intervention. Overall, little research has explored interventions to help reduce mistreatment or has failed to show much support for the current interventions of workplace mistreatment (Mikkelsen, Hogh & Puggard, 2011; Weiss & Feldman, 2006).

Ideally, for an intervention to be considered effective, it should not only help teach perpetrators of interpersonal workplace mistreatment how to change their behaviour, but also help targets of mistreatment cope with the mistreatment that they

receive. As the current research largely illustrates a gap in terms of interventions, this paper proposes that together, goal setting and behavioural observation scales (BOS) may be able to reduce instances of mistreatment in the workplace.

A BOS is an instrument that takes a list of behaviours that are critical and relevant to a particular job, and uses a scale to assess how often these behaviours are observed (Latham & Wexley, 1977). The specific aim of the research conducted for this study was to gather and examine critical incidents that surrounded both effective and ineffective interpersonal interactions in the workplace. Both the effective and ineffective incidents were then analyzed to formulate two BOS instruments comprised of positive/effective behaviours using the critical incident technique derived from Latham and Wexley (1981). The BOS are comprised of only positive behaviours as opposed to negative behaviours, as they can provide a better guide of desired behaviours for employees to try and model their behaviour after; thus, any negative behaviours that were significant to the formulation of the BOS were negatively coded to present a positive behaviour. The developed BOS will then be used in future studies, as they will be paired with goal setting interventions that seek to reduce the occurrences of workplace mistreatment in the workplace. Participants of these future studies will set behavioural goals, and then use the items from the BOS as a guide to model their behaviour after in order to achieve their desired goals and reduce interpersonal mistreatment.



## **Literature Review**

### *Interpersonal Work Mistreatment and its Consequences*

Interpersonal mistreatment at work can take many forms, including workplace bullying (Hauge, Skogstad & Einarsen, 2010; Nielsen & Einarsen, 2012), abusive supervision (Tepper, 2000), retaliation victimization (Cortina & Magley, 2003), social undermining (Duffy, Ganster & Pagon, 2002) and ostracism (Wu, Yim, Kwan & Zhang, 2012; Yang & Treadway, 2018). Each of these forms of mistreatment is distinct from the other forms and also differs in terms of their severity. Below, each form is examined individually, along with their consequences.

#### Workplace Bullying

A very serious form of workplace mistreatment is workplace bullying, which occurs when a targeted employee experiences repeated and persistent psychological mistreatment from coworkers (Hauge, Skogstad & Einarsen, 2010). Approximately 15% of employees have reported being a target of workplace bullying (Hershcovis, Reich & Niven, 2015), which includes behaviours such as teasing, insults, verbal abuse, gossiping and ostracism (Hauge, Skogsted & Einarsen, 2010). This form of mistreatment is usually accompanied with a power imbalance, where the target perceives they are in an inferior position without the necessary resources to retaliate (Hauge, Skogsted & Einarsen, 2010).

As explained by Hershcovis, Reich and Niven (2015) the consequences of bullying in the workplace include human costs, organizational costs and spillover costs. The human costs refer to both the psychological and physiological outcomes that negatively impact the target's health and well-being. The adverse health effects experienced by targets of workplace bullying are thought to be the most severe out of all

the forms of workplace mistreatment (Hauge, Skogstad & Einarsen, 2010). For example, targets of workplace bullying report psychological consequences, such as anxiety, depression, burnout, exhaustion, and even posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), while physiological outcomes include sleep problems and muscular aches and pains (Hershcovis, Reich & Niven, 2015). However, workplace bullying may not only impact the health and well-being of targets, as witnesses of bullying have also reported negative consequences (Emdad, Alipour, Hagberg & Jensen, 2012).

In a longitudinal study, Emdad, et al. (2012) examined the psychological impacts of being a bystander to workplace bullying in Sweden using a two-wave survey. The results demonstrated that observers of a bullying incident in the workplace reported symptoms of depression up to eighteen months after the occurrence of the incident (Emdad, et al., 2012). In a follow-up study to the Emdad et al. study, Nielsen and Einarsen (2013) found that depressive symptoms were only likely to be reported by observers of workplace bullying if the observer was a past target of bullying in the workplace. These two pieces of literature demonstrate that it is possible that the negative consequences of workplace bullying go further than just negatively affecting the target of such incidents (Emdad, et al., 2012; Nielsen & Einarsen, 2013).

The previously mentioned human costs can then result in organizational costs for employers, as employees suffering from psychological and physiological symptoms associated to workplace bullying are more likely to be absent for work, operate at a lower performance level, and display lower organizational citizenship behaviours (Hershcovis, Reich & Niven, 2015). There are also indirect organizational costs, as targets engage in more frequent counterproductive work behaviours directed towards their perpetrator in order to retaliate, as well targets of workplace bullying report lower job satisfaction,

organizational commitment and higher intentions to quit (Hershcovis, et al., 2012; Hershcovis, Reich & Niven, 2015).

The last noted “cost” associated with workplace bullying is referred to as spillover costs. This “refers to the extent to which an individual’s participation in one domain influences his or her participation and attitudes in another domain” (Hershcovis, Reich & Niven, 2015, p.11). A common example of such an incident would be when a target’s negative experiences from workplace bullying influences their home life and family relationships, as the target may act aggressively towards family members (Hershcovis, et al., 2015).

#### Abusive Supervision

Another common form of workplace mistreatment is abusive supervision. Tepper (2000), examined abusive supervision, defining it as “the extent to which supervisors engage in sustained display of hostile verbal and nonverbal behaviours, excluding physical contact” from the perspective of employees (p. 178). It is the subordinate’s perception of the supervisor’s behaviour that is important to note, as what one individual perceives as abusive supervision may not be perceived the same way by others. Supervisor attitudes that are commonly considered abusive include: publically criticizing, acting rudely or condescendingly, and throwing a tantrum directed at a subordinate (Tepper, 2000). According to Walter, Lam, van der Vegt, Huang and Miao (2015), abusive supervision is experienced by 13% of employees in the U.S. and as discussed in further detail below, abusive supervisions remains a prevalent occurrence in the workplace for a number of reasons.

The first noted reason why abusive supervision remains prevalent is that, similar to workplace bullying, abusive supervision is often accompanied by a power imbalance. The abused subordinate often feels as if he/she must stay in an abusive relationship because they are financially dependent on their perpetrator and/or have limited job opportunities elsewhere (Tepper, 2000). Secondly, it is thought by some perpetrators that acting abusively causes poor performers to improve their performance to avoid further abuse (Walter, et al., 2015).

A study performed by Tepper (2000), examined the negative outcomes associated with abusive supervision using longitudinal survey data from 362 research assistants from the United States. Abusive supervision was associated with many negative impacts for targets, including: lower affective and normative commitment; higher levels of depression, anxiety and emotional exhaustion; and lower job and life satisfaction (Tepper, 2000). Interactional justice was found to be a mediator between abusive supervision and each of these consequences, as higher perceptions of abusive supervision amongst subordinates lead to lower perceptions of interactional justice, which in turn lead to increased levels of depression and anxiety, lower levels of affective and normative commitment, and lower job and life satisfaction (Tepper, 2000).

Another study conducted by Walter, et al. (2015) examined the effects of abusive supervision on employee performance. The study used survey data from 169 supervisor-subordinate dyads, where subordinates rated their supervisor's level of abusive supervision, and the supervisor rated the subordinate's job performance. Walter, et al. (2015) explained that while some managers feel that acting in an abusive and/or threatening manner can motivate employees to improve performance in order to avoid confrontation from their managers, the research findings contradicted this idea, as not

only was there no positive correlation between abusive supervision and job performance, but there was actually a slight negative relationship between the two (Walter, et al., 2015).

### Retaliation Victimization

Another form of workplace mistreatment is retaliation victimization, which occurs when an employer mistreats an employee in retaliation for the employee voicing out to oppose “an unlawful employment practice or participating in any investigation, proceeding, or hearing related to such a practice” (Cortina & Magley, 2003, p. 248). For example, if an employee perceives to have been personally mistreated by their employer he or she may confront the perpetrator or voice their concerns to their coworkers in search of support. The supervisor may then respond to these actions with retaliation victimization by mistreating the employee. Thus, retaliation victimization is preceded by an initial form of mistreatment directed towards the target (ie: bullying, abusive supervision) along with the confronting act by the target in response to the initial mistreatment (Cortina & Magley, 2003).

Retaliation victimization can be broken down into two categories, work retaliation victimization (WRV) and social retaliation victimization (SRV). WRV involves documentable forms of mistreatment, such as termination, involuntary transfer, demotion, and providing a lack of career opportunities. Conversely, SRV includes antisocial behaviours targeted towards the employee, such as harassment, blaming, and ignoring (Cortina & Magley, 2003). What differentiates these behaviours from other forms of mistreatment is that the mistreatment is initiated in order to penalize the target for

previous behaviour, or at least is perceived by the target as such (Cortina & Magley, 2003).

Cortina and Magley (2003) compared the consequences experienced from retaliation victimization. Survey results from over 1000 American public sector employees showed that employees subjected to retaliation victimization, specifically SRV, experience negative psychological and physiological impacts. These impacts included high levels of anxiety, sadness, somatic complaints (e.g. pain or fatigue), and low life satisfaction (Cortina & Magley, 2003). However, the psychological and physiological impacts experienced by employees who did not speak out against the initial mistreatment that he or she received were even more severe. This suggests that although those who refrain from confronting their perpetrator or seeking support avoid the possibility of experiencing retaliation victimization, the negative consequences that an employee experiences are often worse than if they had spoken out against their mistreatment (Cortina & Magley, 2003).

### Ostracism

Ostracism, which is defined by Ferris, Brown, Berry and Lian (2008) as “the extent to which an individual perceives that he or she is ignored or excluded by others” (p. 206), is another form of workplace mistreatment commonly experienced by employees, as some research estimates that 66% of employees in the United States have been targets of ostracism in the workplace (Yang & Treadway, 2018). The ostracizing of an employee can happen both intentionally and unintentionally; however, it is the intentional ostracizing of a targeted employee that leads to the more serious consequences

for that individual; however, there is evidence that it can negatively impact an individual regardless of whether or not the ostracism was intentional (Yang & Treadway, 2018).

Wu, Yim, Kwan and Zhang (2012) examined workplace ostracism using survey data from 215 employees from China's oil and gas sector. The findings suggested that there was a positive relationship between being a target of workplace ostracism and experiencing psychological stress, including job tension, emotional exhaustion and depressive mood at work (Wu, et al., 2012). However, ingratiation and political skill both worked together to moderate this positive relationship. Ingratiation is defined as the attempt "by individuals to increase their attractiveness in the eyes of others", (Wu, et al., 2012, p. 179), while political skill is referred to as one's ability to influence others in a way that benefits one's self.

The positive relationship between being ostracized at work and experiencing psychological distress was weakest when one had a high level of ingratiation as well as high political skill. However, this relationship was strongest when one had a high level of ingratiation and a low level of political skill (Wu, et al., 2012). Thus, it appears that if an employee does not have the political skill to effectively execute any attempts of ingratiation, then he or she is at the most risk of experiencing psychological distress from being ostracized (Wu, et al., 2012).

### Social Undermining

Another common form of workplace mistreatment is social undermining. This is a behaviour directed towards a target with the intention of "hinder[ing], over time, [their] ability to establish and maintain positive interpersonal relationships, work-related success, and favorable reputation" (Duffy, Ganster & Pagon, 2002, p. 332). It is important

to note that in order for a behaviour to be considered social undermining, it must not be a serious behaviour causing severe effects like physical harm. Instead, social undermining behaviours are slight behaviours that persist over time, such as a coworker routinely belittling a target (Duffy, Ganster & Pagon, 2002).

Social undermining and its effects on targets was studied by Duffy, Ganster, and Pagon (2002) using survey data from 685 police officers from Slovenia. Findings demonstrated that targets of social undermining experience both negative work-related and health-related impacts, as social undermining from a supervisor results in reduced self-efficacy and organizational commitment, while social undermining from either a supervisor or coworker results in increased counterproductive behaviours and somatic complaints (Duffy, Ganster & Pagon, 2002).

Lee, Kim, Bhawe, and Duffy (2016) also examined social undermining in the workplace, using longitudinal survey data from 191 Korean bank employees. Findings suggested that there was a positive relationship between being a target of social undermining in the workplace and being a subsequent perpetrator of social undermining (Lee, et al., 2016). This means that if an employee experienced social undermining from a coworker, he or she was more likely to then engage in acts of social undermining towards other employees. However, this relationship was moderated by moral identity, as targets with a high level of moral identity (ie. considered themselves to have valued moral traits, such as compassion, consideration, and empathy) were not as likely to engage in subsequent social undermining compared to those with a low level of moral identity (Lee, et al., 2016). Thus, social undermining has what is referred to as trickledown effects (Hershcovis, Reich & Niven, 2015), where one employee engaging in the interpersonal



behaviour towards other employees causes those employees to subsequently engage in the same behaviour.

### Summary

Through the examining of individual types of workplace mistreatment, it is evident that there can be a plethora of negative consequences for both targets and organizations. Consequences for targets include health and job impacts, and these in turn can result in costs for organizations, as targets of interpersonal mistreatment are more likely to be absent from work and perform work at a lower level of efficiency (Hershcovis, et al., 2015). As well, witnesses of workplace mistreatment are also affected, they may be prone to experiencing distress after observing an incident of interpersonal mistreatment at work (Emdad, et al., 2012). Finally, another negative consequence of interpersonal workplace mistreatment is that in many cases it can cause further acts of mistreatment (Hershcovis, et al., 2015; Lee, et al., 2016). Given the many serious consequences of interpersonal mistreatment, it is important to also consider the research on the predictors of workplace mistreatment and the interventions to help prevent these behaviours in the workplace.

### *Predictors of Workplace Mistreatment*

In order to understand the antecedents of workplace mistreatment, researchers have examined the impact of workplace environmental factors. These factors include supportive leadership, role ambiguity and role conflict, job security, the pre-existence of a climate of mistreatment. As well, individual factors have also been examined, such as

personality traits, cognitive ability, behaviours, and the gender of both targets and perpetrators (Barling, Dupré & Kelloway, 2009; Kim & Glomb, 2010).

### Environmental Factors

Workplace environments have been examined to find any potential factors that may predict bullying in the workplace. Hauge, Einarsen, Knardahl, Lau, Notelaers, and Skogstad (2011) studied whether workplace bullying was more or less frequent in workplace environments with supportive leadership, role ambiguity, and role conflict. Data was gathered by surveying 10,652 Norwegians from various industries. Hauge, et al. (2011) found that participants either reported being a target of workplace bullying or observed workplace bullying more frequently in work environments with less supportive leadership, and increased role ambiguity and role conflict.

Work environments with high levels of job insecurity have also been studied to examine if there is an association between job insecurity and workplace bullying. De Cuyper, Baillien and De Witte (2009) used survey data from 693 Belgian workers in the financial and textile industries. Results demonstrated that there was a positive correlation between job insecurity and both targets' and perpetrators' reports of bullying in the workplace (De Cuyper, et al., 2009).

Another condition that has been examined as a possible predictor of workplace mistreatment is a work environment where workplace mistreatment is already prevalent or tolerated. This potential predictor of mistreatment was examined by Hauge, Skogstad and Einarsen (2009). In their study, survey data was gathered from 2,359 Norwegian workers. The survey asked respondents about whether they have been targeted by or exposed to workplace bullying. Also, perpetration was measured by asking respondents if

they had exposed coworkers to bullying in the workplace (Hauge, et al., 2009). The results illustrated that both those who reported being targeted by workplace bullying and those exposed to witnessing the bullying of others in the workplace were more likely to self-report as a perpetrator of workplace bullying compared to a respondent who was not targeted by or exposed to workplace bullying (Hauge, et al., 2009). Although the anonymity of participants was guaranteed, the self-reporting method of perpetration may be considered a limitation, as those may still not want to admit to being a bully in the workplace, even if they know their identity will remain unknown. That being said, the study provides the notion that those exposed to an environment that fosters workplace mistreatment may be more likely to engage in subsequent mistreatment themselves (Hauge, et al., 2009).

#### Personal Factors of Targets

Lind, et al. (2009) found, on average, that targets reported higher levels of conscientiousness and lower levels of agreeableness compared to non-targets of bullying in the workplace. Kim and Glomb (2010) surveyed targets of workplace bullying and measured their cognitive ability, along with personality traits such as agency and communion. Agency refers to the propensity to act independently in the workplace, and the tendency to put one's needs and interests ahead of the group. On the contrary, communion refers to "the integration of the individual in a group, and it involves cooperation, attachment, and caring" (Kim & Glomb, 2010, p. 890). A positive relationship was found between one's cognitive ability and their likelihood of being bullied in the workplace; this relationship was moderated by both an individual's level of agency and communion, as agency strengthened this relationship and communion

weakened the relationship. This means that employees with a high level of cognitive ability are more likely to be a victim of bullying in the workplace, especially if they are high in agency and low in communion (Kim & Glomb, 2010).

Trait anxiety and trait anger were also examined as potential antecedents to being a target of workplace bullying, by Vie, Glasø and Einarsen (2010). A sample of 466 Norwegian workers answered a survey measuring both the trait anxiety and trait anger of respondents, as well as asking whether respondents considered themselves to be or have been a target of workplace bullying. The results showed participants who demonstrated trait anxiety, trait anger, or both, were more likely to label themselves as a victim of bullying in the workplace. Thus, there is evidence to suggest that trait anxiety and trait anger predict workplace bullying (Vie, et al, 2010).

Tepper, Moss and Duffy (2012) examined the antecedents of abusive supervision. Their study used survey data from 183 supervisor-subordinate dyads from the health sector in the United States. They analyzed the level of abusive supervision that the subordinate perceived to receive as well as the job performance of subordinates and the level of similarity between the dyads that the supervisor perceived there to be. The findings suggested that subordinates who were perceived as being dissimilar from their manager were more likely to receive abusive supervision (Tepper, et al., 2012). However, this relationship was moderated by job performance of the employee, as the relationship between dissimilarity and abusive supervision was weaker when the employees were good performers (Tepper, et al, 2012). Thus, being dissimilar from one's manager and being a poor performer may be antecedents of being a target of abusive supervision.

In another study by Tepper, Duffy, Henle and Lambert (2006), 334 supervisor-subordinate dyads were examined to assess negative affinity as a predictor for being a

target of abusive supervision. Subordinates with a higher level of negative affinity were more likely to perceive that they were a target of abusive supervision; however, it is important to note that what might be perceived as abusive supervision by one employee may not be perceived by another. Thus, it is difficult to discern whether being predisposed with a negative affinity is an antecedent that makes one more likely to be abused by supervisors, or whether one with a negative affinity is more likely to perceive that they have been targeted by abusive supervision due to their propensity to view situations in a negative context (Tepper, et al., 2006).

Milam, Spitzmueller and Penney (2009) examined personality traits of targets to identify potential predictors of incivility. Survey data was gathered from 179 participants about the level of incivility the participants had experienced at work, as well as their Big Five personality traits: agreeableness, neuroticism, extraversion, openness and conscientiousness (Milam, et al., 2009). Employees were more likely to be a target of workplace incivility if they had a low level of agreeableness or a high level of neuroticism (Milam, et al., 2009).

#### Personal Factors of Perpetrators

Overall the traits of those who perpetrate workplace mistreatment have also been extensively studied. The most common traits examined among perpetrators of workplace aggression are trait anger and negative affinity. Trait anger refers to an individual's propensity to react to situations with hostility, while negative affinity refers to an individual's predisposition to feel more negative emotions, such as hostility, fear and anxiety (Hershcovis, et al., 2007). Trait anger and negative affinity are commonly

associated with workplace aggression (Barling, Dupré & Kelloway, 2009; Hershcovis et al., 2007).

Another study performed by Penney and Spector (2002) linked narcissism to perpetrators of counterproductive work behaviour (CWB). Although, CWB does not necessarily always involve interpersonal behaviours, mistreatment and aggressive behaviours fall under the umbrella of CWB (Penney & Spector, 2002); thus, any findings surrounding CWB may be of potential interest. The study gathered data by administering a questionnaire to 215 employed psychology and management undergraduate students at a Florida university. The findings suggested that there was a positive relationship between narcissism and being a perpetrator of CWB, and that this relationship was mediated by trait anger (Penney & Spector, 2002).

Ferris, Rosen, Johnson, Brown, Risavy and Heller (2011) studied the link between self-esteem and mistreatment. A sample of over 450 participants was recruited, comprised of both undergraduate students and working employees. Analysis of the survey data revealed that those who have a lower core self-evaluation were more likely to display negative interpersonal behaviours, thus demonstrating that one's self-esteem level could be a predictor of becoming a perpetrator of workplace mistreatment (Ferris, et al., 2011).

Apart from examining personality traits of perpetrators to identify potential antecedents, gender has also been examined by researchers to identify which gender is more likely to perpetrate workplace mistreatment. However, findings in this area have been contradictory. A review by Barling, Dupré and Kelloway (2009) illustrated that while most of the literature posits that males are more likely to engage in workplace mistreatment compared to females, some studies have failed to find a link between gender

and workplace mistreatment, and a few studies have found that females are more likely to engage in mistreatment in the workplace than men.

### Summary

Overall the research provides valuable insights about both environmental and individual antecedents of workplace mistreatment. Work environments with less supportive leadership, increased role ambiguity and role conflict, and lower job security have all been demonstrated to increase incidences of interpersonal mistreatment in the workplace (De Cuyper, et al., 2009; Hauge, et al., 2011). As well, work environments that tolerate acts of interpersonal mistreatment and fail to handle them accordingly are at risk of fostering subsequent incidences of workplace mistreatment (Hauge, et al., 2009).

Also, there are certain individual traits that employees possess that increase their risk of being the target of workplace mistreatment. For example, those with low levels of agreeableness or high levels of conscientiousness, neuroticism, trait anger, anxiety, negative affinity, cognitive ability and agency are more likely to be targets of mistreatment (Kim & Glomb, 2010; Lind et al., 2009; Milam, Spitzmueller & Penney, 2009; Tepper, et al., 2006; Vie, Glasø & Einarsen, 2010). As well, those that are dissimilar from their manager are at risk of experiencing abusive supervision if their job performance is low (Tepper, Moss & Duffy, 2012).

Interestingly, much of the individual antecedents for being a target of mistreatment are similar to the antecedents associated with being a perpetrator of mistreatment. This is true for neuroticism, trait anger, and negative affinity, as individuals with high levels of each of these traits are more likely to perpetrate workplace mistreatment (Barling, Dupré & Kelloway, 2009; Hershcovis et al., 2007; Penney &

Spector, 2002). In addition, a low level of self-esteem is another predictor of being a perpetrator of mistreatment in the workplace (Ferris, et al., 2011).

The above information surrounding the antecedents of an employee becoming a perpetrator or target of interpersonal workplace mistreatment is extensive. However, the research identifying viable intervention methods to help prevent mistreatment or help targets cope with experienced mistreatment is limited. Below, the pairing of goal setting with a BOS will be examined as a potential intervention method for interpersonal mistreatment.

### *Goal Setting and Behavioural Observation Scales*

As researchers continue to search for interventions to help reduce workplace mistreatment among employees, one avenue that has not yet been studied is the use of goal setting. The existing literature surrounding goal setting and BOS provides some evidence to suggest that these can be combined to form an effective intervention to help reduce workplace mistreatment.

As shown through the decades of well-developed literature on goal setting, setting certain types of goals has been found to be an effective intervention in a variety of workplace contexts, as it can increase one's effort towards achieving the outlined goals, while reducing any behaviours that are not goal related (Locke & Latham, 1990). A seminal study that examined the impact of goal setting was conducted by Latham and Yukl in 1975. For uneducated wood workers, employees using participative goals saw an increase in their productivity levels. A goal is considered participative when employees choose their own "difficult but attainable" goals, as opposed to having goals assigned to them, or being told to "do your best" (DYB) (Latham & Yukl, 1975, p. 300). When



participative goal setting is used, employees tend to set more difficult goals for themselves compared to goals that are assigned to them (Latham, Mitchell & Dossett, 1978). Goal setting research has continued to progress along this theme over several decades. As explained by Locke and Latham (2002), goal difficulty is positively and linearly related to goal performance; thus, there is considerable reason to suggest that goal setting, especially participative, can be used to alter employee performance.

However, to be effective, not all goals have to be performance related, as goal setting can also be used to set learning goals and behavioural goals (Latham, Seijts & Slocum, 2016). Performance goals might be ideal for outcome-related targets; however, performance goals are not always the most appropriate type of goal to be used in every situation. For example, learning goals are effective for situations when an employee is faced with an unfamiliar complex task (Latham, et al., 2016). This involves setting goals pertaining to the acquisition of new skills rather than focusing on the performance level of the new task. As well, behavioural goals are effective for developing core behaviours that are necessary to complete a task or one's job (Latham, Seijts & Slocum, 2016).

Brown and Latham (2002) examined the impacts of both learning and behavioural goals on teamwork and group problem solving. The study comprised of 50 business students at a Canadian university who were placed into groups of 4-6 members. Each group was given either multiple learning, behavioural, or DYB goals while they performed a problem solving/decision-making task (Brown & Latham, 2002). Results of the study illustrated that the groups who performed behavioural goals displayed higher teamwork behaviour compared to those who performed learning or DYB goals. These findings suggest that behavioural goals can effectively improve desired behaviours in a team setting (Brown & Latham, 2002). These findings also provide us some evidence that

if we set desired behaviours in terms of how to treat others in the workplace, those who participate in these types of interventions may effectively perform the desired behaviours and thus reduce the occurrence of workplace mistreatment.

Furthermore, behavioural goals were also examined in individual settings by Brown, Warren and Khattar (2016). In the study a sample of 172 participants in a managerial development program were placed into one of three groups: behavioural outcome goals, behavioural specific goals and rank ordered behavioural goals. The researchers compared the transfer level of interpersonal skills across the three groups using a BOS. Findings suggested that behavioural outcome goals increased the level of transfer of the interpersonal skills compared to the other types of behavioural goals, as assessed by the BOS (Brown, Warren & Khatter, 2016). Thus, there is evidence to suggest that pairing behavioural outcome goals with a BOS can be used effectively to alter the behaviours of employees (Brown, Warren & Khatter, 2016).

As mentioned previously, a BOS takes a list of behaviours that are deemed critical to a particular job, and then uses a scale to assess how often these behaviours are observed (Latham & Wexley, 1977). The behaviours that are assessed by a BOS are critical behaviours that are seen as necessary to effectively perform the assessed job. These behaviours are determined by gathering information from a variety of possible sources, such as experts, supervisors, peers, and subordinates (Latham & Wexley, 1981). A BOS consists of numerous behaviours, which are referred to as behavioural items. Similar items on a BOS are grouped together to form a criterion. For example, a criterion on a BOS could be, "Effective Communication". This criterion group would then contain behavioural items that would be necessary for one to communicate effectively in the assessed job role. The rater(s) assess each item and provides a score to the ratee using a

numerical scale. An example of such a scale would be a scale from 1-5, where 1 represents poor or infrequent behaviour, 3 represents average behaviour and 5 represents good or frequent behaviour. The scores from all of the behavioural items can then be added up to give an overall score to the ratee (Latham & Wexley, 1981).

An alternative to using a BOS can be to simply use the instrument to gauge how often employees display certain behaviours. However, this method fails to adequately provide the critical behaviours that one must examine for a given job, thus one may not know what behaviours to look out for while observing. Therefore, one of the key benefits to developing and using a BOS to its full potential is that, due to using the critical incident technique, it provides a list of desired behaviours to guide participants along their path to achieving their desired goals (Latham & Wexley, 1981).

Although the BOS has been typically used to assess employee job performance, it has also been examined to determine its effect on goal setting. For example, Tziner and Latham (1989) studied the pairing of goal setting with a BOS to determine if it positively impacted work satisfaction more than using a BOS with no goal setting. To test this, 20 managers and 125 subordinates were assigned to different groups. In one of the groups, managers provided feedback to subordinates using a BOS and set goals with the subordinates based on the BOS, while in the other group, feedback was given using just a BOS. When the work satisfaction of the subordinates of these two groups was compared, it was determined that employees who were given feedback with the BOS and goal setting had a higher level of work satisfaction (Tziner & Latham, 1989).

In another study using goal setting paired with BOS, Brown, McCracken and Hillier (2013) examined how pairing a BOS with three different types of goal setting (learning goals, behavioural goals and do-your-best goals) affected employee transfer of

training. Results demonstrated that transfer of training was high when combining the BOS with each type of goal setting, especially do-your-best goals (Brown, McCracken & Hillier, 2013).

Therefore, based on the studies of both Tziner and Latham (1989) and Brown, et al. (2013) there is evidence to suggest that pairing a BOS with goal setting can be used to influence employee attitudes and behaviours, which leads into the purpose of the current study. This study seeks to gather and examine critical incidents that involve both positive and negative interpersonal interactions in the workplace in order to develop BOS instruments that will be later paired with goal setting interventions aimed at reducing interpersonal mistreatment in the workplace.

In effect, this literature review covers the various forms of and negative outcomes associated with mistreatment. The current study results in two BOS instruments. In particular, the BOS were designed after the examination of critical incidents surrounding mistreatment in the workplace. Designing these BOS instruments is the first step in creating an intervention that will be aimed at changing negative behaviours consistent with mistreatment, into positive workplace behaviors. The methodology of the collection and examination of critical incidents that resulted in the BOS instruments is explained in detail below.

## **Methodology**

### **Phase 1**

For the first phase of this study, a focused literature review was conducted in the area of interpersonal mistreatment behaviours in the workplace. This was performed specifically to examine the behaviours that are considered relevant in the area of

workplace mistreatment, and thus important in the development of successful BOS. In order to gather the necessary literature, an online database was used to find articles that used meta-analyses in the area of workplace mistreatment. This technique provided a long list of negative interpersonal behaviours that came from two meta-analyses, one performed by Hershcovis (2011) and the other by Tepper and Henle (2001). These negative behaviours were later used to help categorize critical incidents that were detailed by the survey method explained below.

## **Phase 2 & 3**

### ***Sample***

This study used the surveys in order to obtain data regarding both effective and ineffective interpersonal behaviours in the workplace. Surveys were administered and completed using an online research and networking tool. Data was received from 409 completed surveys in total. However, of this number, 94 surveys were not used due to the responses being illegible or unrelated to interpersonal treatment in the workplace. This left 313 completed surveys (77%). Of the 313 participants, 167 were female (53.35%) and 146 (46.65%) were male. In total, the average age of the population was 37.23 years old.

Participants of the study completed one of two surveys. One survey asked respondents to describe two positive and two negative interpersonal incidents that occurred between a manager and an subordinate in the workplace, while the second survey asked participants to describe two positive and two negative interpersonal incidents that occurred between two coworkers. Thus, each respondent detailed four behaviours total. Managerial/subordinate and coworker interactions were separated into two surveys as it was thought that different types of mistreatment might be more

prevalent depending on the type of an interaction. For example, the research surrounding abusive supervision focuses on interactions between a manager and subordinate (Tepper, et al., 2006).

Of these two positive and two negative incidents that participants were asked to detail for each survey, respondents were asked to describe one incident that he or she had personally been involved in with a manager or coworker and one that he or she has witnessed between a manager and a subordinate or between two coworkers. For every behaviour that a respondent provided, he or she was asked to explain why they thought the behaviour was either positive or negative. The manager/subordinate survey can be seen in Appendix A while the coworkers survey can be seen in Appendix B.

Upon accessing the survey, respondents were randomly assigned to the manager-subordinate (MS) survey or to the coworker-coworker (CC) survey. Protocols were in place to try and ensure each survey would have an equal number of participants so that 50% of respondents completed the MS survey, while 50% completed the CC survey. However, in some instances for the CC survey, participant's detailed incidents that involved managers, thus their responses were resorted with the responses from the MS survey. Thus, 630 (54%) incidents detailed manager/subordinate interactions and 496 (46%) detailed coworker interactions.

## **Procedure**

The positive and negative critical incidents that were received from the surveys were then used to develop two separate BOS comprised of positive behaviours in order to help provide employees with a list of desirable behaviours to help model their behaviour. One of these BOS was for interactions between a manager and subordinates while the

other was for interactions between coworkers. As stated by Latham and Wexley (1981), when using critical incidents to develop a BOS, it is required that observers who provide the critical incidents “are aware of the aims and objectives of a given job and who see people perform the job on a frequent basis” (p.49). Thus, using job incumbents to detail the critical incidents satisfies this requirement.

As well, the development of a BOS to help employees reduce and cope with workplace mistreatment was chosen over the development of a behaviour measurement scale. This is because by using a BOS, not only will the scale measure how often a specific behaviour is completed, but the scale also provides a list of behaviours that are required in order to effectively interact with one’s managers, coworkers and subordinates (Latham & Wexley, 1981). In comparison, a behaviour measuring scale would only be able to measure certain behaviours, without providing detail into which behaviours are considered critical to effective interpersonal mistreatment. Thus, it was thought that a BOS would be more appropriate to help guide employees to reduce and cope with workplace mistreatment.

The BOS were developed using a coding process that was adapted from both the works of Brown and Hanlon (2004) and Latham and Wexley (1981). A table that summarizes these steps, along with the rest of the methodology can be found at the end of this section. The following are the detailed steps:

**Step 1:** The first step was to collect the critical incidents from the participants, and organize them into different classifications, depending on the survey that was completed (MS or CC), whether the described incident was positive or negative, and whether the incident was enacted or witnessed by the participant. This left a total of eight classifications: (1) MS-Witnessed-Positive (MSWP), (2) MS-Witnessed-Negative

(MSWN), (3) MS-Enacted-Positive (MSEP), (4) MS-Enacted-Negative (MSEN), (5) CC-Witnessed-Positive (CCWP), (6) CC-Witnessed-Negative (CCWN), (7) CC-Enacted-Positive (CCEP), (8) CC-Enacted-Negative (CCEN). Both positive and negative behaviours were gathered as both types were used to develop the BOS. As an example, the incidents in the first grouping are positive incidents that were between a manager and subordinate that the participant witnessed. Of all the collected incidents, 10% were set aside, as was advised by Latham & Wexley (1981). This was done in order to assess content validity, which will be explained later in step 6.

**Step 2:** In the second step, two researchers separately took the remaining 90% (1126) of critical incidents and grouped similar or identical incidents into behavioural categories, based on their classification. Many of these behavioural categories were developed using the negative behaviours that were produced from the focused literature review in phase 1. The total number of categories for each classification were: 17 for MSWP, 27 for MSWN, 17 for MSEP, 27 for MSEN, 13 for CCWP, 29 for CCWN, 13 for CCEP, and 32 for CCEN. The list of these behaviours is in Appendix C. After each researcher completed their sort separately, their sorts were compared to assess the level of agreement. Any critical incidents that were grouped into different behavioural items by the two researchers were then discussed. The researchers could then choose to either agree with the other researcher based on their rationale and change their sorting of the incident or disagree with the other researcher and keep their original sorting. The researchers only switched their classification of an incident if they felt that they had a valid reason to do so. Each mismatch incident was then placed in a table that contained each researchers' initial sorting, the agreed upon sort after reconsideration, and the reason why the incident was switched to match the other researcher.



In most cases, the reasoning for altering the initial categorisation was due to one of three reasons. The first was that after having viewed how the other researcher sorted the incident, the primary researcher concluded that they had misinterpreted the incident, and essentially in the end agreed with the other researcher. An example of this was when participants explained how they witnessed or experienced a coworker yelling in the workplace. One researcher originally sorted this type of behaviour into “Ineffective communication amongst workers” while the other researcher labeled this behaviour as a “verbal attack”. Although yelling at a coworker could definitely be described as an ineffective communication method, it is more in line with the literature to describe this as behaviour as a verbal attack, as Johnson, Demass Martin, and Markle-Elder (2007) describe yelling as a bullying tactic and verbal abuse.

The second reason why one of the researchers changed a previous classification of an incident was due to some of the behaviours being described as quite similar, thus causing some confusion. For example, incidents that fell into one of the two positive interpersonal behaviours, “helping others with tasks” and “working together with others” were often times where there was disagreement. Although these behaviours are similar, they differ in the fact that in one instance an employee requires assistance from another, while in the other scenario, both are working together to mutually benefit one another. Disagreement based on incidents like this occurred several times. One example of this type of incident was worded as “I was trying to problem solve with my manager about registering more people for a class I was offering. There weren’t enough people and I felt he really worked with me to generate more interest.” (MSEP, 19). This incident was labeled as “helping others with tasks” by one researcher and “working together with others” by the other. Although, this incident could be viewed as a manager assisting an

employee with a task, after discussion both researchers determined that this incident was merely two employees working together to solve a problem due to the word choice, “problem solve with my manager” and “he really worked with me”.

The third reason why a researcher changed their original classification was because in some instances participants provided a scenario that detailed two interpersonal behaviours, leading to confusion as to which of the two behaviours should be classified. These instances were often easily resolved as participants were also asked why he or she thought that their described incident was good or bad. Based on the reasoning by the participant, the researchers further discussed how to best label the behaviour. For example, one of the researchers classified an incident as “provides mentoring” because the participant noted that “We had a new employee start work and I decided to show them the ropes and how to do everything the right way.” However, the other researcher labeled this behaviour as “appreciating others”, as later, in the same incident the respondent stated, “this new worker was so appreciative that they ended up buying me lunch.” Thus, there were two behaviours being displayed in this incident, the mentoring of one employee to the other, and the appreciation displayed by the employee to the mentor. After reconsidering the incident, both researchers agreed that the incident belonged under the “provides mentoring” category, as the respondent further explained that the incident was positive due to the mentoring specifically. Overall, this analysis of agreement process lead to a positive result, as there was a 97% level of agreement between the two raters. A small sample of the disagreement and reconsideration by the researchers can be seen in table 1.

<b>Table 1 - Mismatched Manager/Subordinate Witnessed - Positive</b>					
<b>Item</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>Rater 1</b>	<b>Rater 2</b>	<b>Final</b>	<b>Reasoning</b>
1. Provide Positive Feedback	290	1	20	20	States that the positive behaviour was making the employee feel appreciated.
	78	1	18	1	States that the positive feedback positively impacted the coworker.
2. Provide Constructive Feedback	134	2	1	1	States that the employee was provided positive feedback.
	276	2	14	14	The manager engaged in a friendly manner with the subordinate.
3. Provide Mentoring	50	3	6	Disagreement	
4. Provide Job Training	28	4	8	4	States that the positive behaviour was the good education.
	97	4	5	5	The manager mentored the new employee.
	15	4	2	2	The employee was praised publically in a meeting.
	34	4	4	Disagreement	
	279	4	11	11	The manager helped the employee with a project.
	85	4	11	4	States that the behaviour was positive as the employer learned the task.

**Step 3:** In the third step of the sorting process, two researchers took the behavioural categories developed from step 2, and wrote them as behavioural items to be used on a BOS. This required taking any negative behaviours and positively coding them to make them positive behaviours. Two researchers then took these behavioural items and sorted similar items into BOS criterion. The total number of BOS criteria for each classification was 9 for the Manager and Subordinate BOS (MS BOS) and 8 for the Coworker and Coworker BOS (CC BOS). For the MS BOS, these criteria were: (1)

Employee Recognition, (2) Employee Consequences, (3) Employee Development, (4) Employee Feedback, (5) Communication, (6) Ability to Work in a Team, (7) the Respecting of Others, (8) Integrity of Work, and (9) the Caring of Others. Again, the overlap between the two BOS was high, as the CC BOS contained the same BOS criteria as the MS BOS, except for the fact that the “Employee Consequences” criterion did not appear on the CC BOS, thus leaving the BOS with 8 criteria.

**Step 4:** The fourth step assessed the inter-judge agreement of sorting the behavioural items into BOS criteria. In order to ensure rigor, the behavioural items and criteria (separately and in random order) were provided to five human resource professionals. These individuals were asked to sort the items into the previously developed BOS criteria. As outside human resource management professionals, these individuals are not only experts in their field, but provided an unbiased sorting of items into the criteria provided as they were unaware of the original sorting of items and were not involved in the design of the research study or the collection of data.

According to Brown and Hanlon (2004), the level of agreement among raters should be calculated by taking the number of items that both the original sort and second sort had placed into a particular criterion and dividing that number by the total number of items that both sorts placed into that criterion; if the percent of agreement is 80% or higher for a given BOS criterion, then the criterion is accepted.

**Step 5:** The fifth step is to reconsider and alter the behavioural items or criteria, based on the interrater agreement. Unfortunately, the aforementioned method of Brown and Hanlon (2004) to establish interrater agreement was not effective for this study for two reasons. The first being that this study used five HR professionals and the primary researchers as raters compared to the two used by Brown and Hanlon (2004), thus

establishing agreement between six raters in total seemed to be more difficult than establishing agreement between two. For example, there were multiple instances where five of the raters had an agreement level greater than 80%, however one rater was below 80%. Thus, according to Brown and Hanlon (2004) each of these items and criteria must be reconsidered. As well, the current study contained less items per criteria than did Brown and Hanlon's (2004) study, as many of the criteria in this study contained just two or three items. Thus, there was very little margin for error, as disagreement on one item would leave the level of agreement at 66% or 75%, and below the necessary requirement. Due to these limitations, the method of measuring interrater agreement was slightly adapted and is described in detail below.

For the sorted items, each item was placed under the criterion where the majority of raters placed it when they completed their rating. Any items that produced an agreement of less than 5 out of 6 (83%) raters were re-examined by the primary researcher and considered carefully to ensure that they were placed under the most appropriate criterion. By using this method, agreement was established and, importantly, the primary researcher revisited the previously sorted items considering the feedback of the HR professionals. After this step, twelve items from the MS BOS and eleven items from the CC BOS had 100% agreement. Further details on interrater agreement between the raters for each item can be seen in Appendix D.

**Step 6:** The sixth step followed in this study assessed the content validity of the BOS criteria using two methods. The first as explained by Latham and Wexley (1981), is to determine whether or not the BOS is comprised of items and criteria that are relevant to the job. Given this critical incident method has previously been used for job performance criteria, it is important to note that extending this use of the critical incident method to

workplace interpersonal interactions requires some adaption in how we think about job relevant criteria. I argue that this is satisfied in this study as the critical incidents were provided by employees who experienced or witnessed acts of interpersonal mistreatment first hand in the workplace setting. And as seen in the literature review, mistreatment in the workplace can lead to poor performance and thus is relevant to the job. The second test of validity is to take the 10% of critical incidents taken from step 1, and assess these incidents to determine if they present any new behavioural items or BOS criteria (Latham & Wexley, 1981). In this instance, the additional 10% of critical incidents that were set aside produced one new behavioural item for each BOS. For the MS BOS, the new item was “Respects professional boundaries with others”. This item appeared on the CC BOS and was placed under the “Respecting of Others” criterion by all 6 raters, thus it was also placed under this criterion for the SC BOS. For the CC BOS, the new behavioural item was “Effectively motivates others to improve performance”. Again, this item appeared on the MS BOS and was placed under the “Employee Feedback” criterion by 4 raters, thus it was placed under this criterion for the CC BOS.

**Step 7:** The final step in developing a BOS is to attach a 5-point Likert scale to the behavioural items on the BOS. The scale ranges from ratings of 0 to 4, where 0 refers to “Almost Never” and 4 refers to “Almost Always”. The rater or observer uses this scale to rate how often a particular behaviour is demonstrated by the job incumbent (Latham & Wexley, 1981). The two completed BOS can be seen in the results section. As well, a summary table of each phase and step of the methodology can be seen in table 2.

<b>Table 2 – Methodology Summary</b>	<b>Method</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
<b>Phase 1</b>	A focused literature review to provide negative behaviours.	Provided 21 negative behaviours.
<b>Phase 2</b>	Critical incident survey technique.	Resulted in 1126 critical incidents from 313 participants.
<i>Step 1</i>	Take critical incident responses from participants and organize into classifications. Set aside 10% of incidents for content validity.	8 classifications ex. Manager-Subordinate Witnessed-Positive
<i>Step 2</i>	Two researchers separately grouped similar or identical incidents into behavioural categories.	17 categories for MSWP 27 categories for MSWN 17 categories for MSEP 27 categories for MSEN 13 categories for CCWP 29 categories for CCWN 13 categories for CCEP 32 categories for CCEN
<b>Phase 3</b>	Develop two BOS	A Manager-Subordinate BOS (MS BOS) and a Coworker-Coworker BOS (CC BOS)
<i>Step 3</i>	Code the behavioural categories as positive behavioural items and sort similar items into BOS criterion.	9 BOS criteria for the MS BOS and 9 BOS criteria for the CC BOS.
<i>Step 4</i>	Assess the inter-judge agreement of sorting the items into BOS criteria using 5 new sorters. Done by taking the number of items that both the original sort and second sort placed into a given criterion and dividing that number by the total number of items that both sorts placed into that criterion; if the agreement is 80% or higher for a given BOS criterion, then the criterion is accepted.	This method resulted in inter-judge disagreement for each BOS criteria. Thus, a new method of inter-judge agreement was adopted in Step 5.

<i>Step 5</i>	BOS items were placed under the criterion where the majority of raters placed it. Any items that produced an agreement of less than 5 out of 6 (83%) raters were re-examined by the primary researcher and considered carefully to ensure that they were placed under the most appropriate criterion	For the MS BOS, there was agreement for 18 of the behavioural items, while 10 items had to be reconsidered. For the CC BOS, there was agreement for 16 of the behavioural items, while 9 items had to be reconsidered.
<i>Step 6</i>	Assess content validity of the BOS using two methods. First, by ensuring that the BOS is comprised of items and criteria relevant to the job, and second, by taking the 10% of incidents set aside in Step 1 and check to see if they present any new behavioural items or criteria.	Produced 1 new behavioural item for the MS BOS and 1 new behavioural item for the CC BOS.
<i>Step 7</i>	Attach a 5-point Likert scale to the behavioural items on the BOS.	Completed BOS Instruments

## Results

### Phase 1 & Phase 2

The focused literature review provided a list of 21 negative behaviours that are found in the mistreatment literature. The list of these behaviours can be seen in Appendix E. Comparatively, the analysis of each critical incident detailed in the surveys provided a total of 73 interpersonal behaviours. Of these behaviours, 22 were positive and 51 were negative. When examining the behaviours from both the focused literature review and the critical incident technique, there was some overlap between the two, as 18 negative



interpersonal behaviours were found through both methods. Importantly though, there were behaviours that were unique to each method, as the focused literature review produced 3 new negative behaviours that were not seen in the critical incident technique, while the critical incident technique produced 36 new behaviours not found focused literature review of meta-analyses on mistreatment.

The negative behaviours that appeared in the focused literature review, but not the critical incident surveys were: delay work to make someone look bad, disobey someone, and interrupt another person. Given that the vast majority of critical incidents that participants described in the survey were enacted by other coworkers, and that any time a participant was involved he or she was often the target of the described mistreatment behaviour, it would be difficult for the participant to determine whether or not the perpetrator was intentionally delaying their work or disobeying orders. Instead it seemed the participants who provided critical incidents saw mistreatment behaviours and labelled the coworker as being an ineffective worker. This can be shown in numerous examples where participants give responses that state they were negatively impacted due to the ineffective work of a coworker, due to the coworker working slowly or not completing tasks when asked. For example, one participant described how “my coworker got me in trouble because he was slacking off.” (CCEN, 175). In this instance, there is no way for the respondent to know whether the coworker intentionally slacked off to get the participant in trouble.

In another example from the survey responses, a participant describes an interaction between their manager and a coworker, saying that “my manager asked her nicely a couple of times to get to work and help us finish an inventory. Well she talked on the phone, had a coffee, yawned, stretched,” (MSWN, 267) and failed to complete what

was asked of her. Ultimately, from the critical incident it seems that a participant either did not specify or did not know for certain whether or not this coworker was intentionally disobeying their manager or was just an ineffective employee.

The third behaviour that emerged from the focused literature review but not the survey data was interrupting others. It may seem a bit odd that out of over 500 negative interpersonal incidents described by participants, not one mentioned being interrupted as a behaviour that they witnessed or experienced in the workplace. However, after examining the literature more closely, this is more understandable. Out of all the examined literature, only one article, Tepper and Henle (2011) examined the construct of interrupting others. The results demonstrated that interrupting one's supervisor is not a predictor of one's attitudes towards their supervisor (Tepper & Henle, 2011). This indicates that interrupting others may not be an impactful event in terms of mistreatment in the workplace.

In addition to these three behaviours (delaying work, disobeying others, and interrupting others), the poor interpersonal behaviours from the focused literature review were all described in the critical incidents survey data by participants. However, some of the behaviours are labeled slightly differently in this study. For example, "insulting someone" was used to describe any insults directed towards another coworker in the focused literature review, while the critical incident classification described this same behaviour as "verbal attack" in order to stay true to the critical incidents provided. Similarly, "devalue work/efforts" appeared in the focused literature review, however, any incidents from the survey data that involved the devaluating of other's work/effort were categorized as "undermining", once again to stay true to the data provided by participants.

In total, there were 36 negative behaviours that were not revealed by the literature review and thus emerged as new behaviours in the critical incident technique. Examples of these new behaviours that appeared in critical incidents include arguing with others, underappreciating others, lying to others, and taking credit for another's work. The sheer volume of behaviours described in the critical incidents further demonstrates the importance of acquiring primary data from the experiences of job incumbents when developing behavioural items for a BOS (Latham & Wexley, 1981).

### **Phase 3**

Both the focused literature review and the critical incident survey technique resulted in a list of 33 total behavioural items. These behavioural items were divided to produce two separate BOS, one for the interaction of managers with subordinates, and one for the interaction of coworkers with other coworkers. That being said, there was extensive overlap between the behavioural items of the two BOS, as of the 29 and 26 behavioural items that comprise the MS BOS and CC BOS respectively, 22 items are the same. The MS BOS can be seen below in Table 3, while the CC BOS can be seen on the following page in Table 4. It should be noted that although much of the methods in this study focused on gathering negative interpersonal behaviours, yet only positive interpersonal behaviours are included in the two BOS. This is because in order for the BOS to be effective, positive and desired behaviours must be used in order to provide direction for employees on how to behave. A BOS comprised of negative and undesirable behaviours would be inadequate, as it would fail to provide guidance to employees on how to behave effectively. Thus, negative behaviours gathered from the critical incidents were negatively coded to represent positive behaviours.

Table 3: Manager and Subordinate BOS

	Almost Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always
<b>Employee Recognition</b>					
Celebrates the successes and milestones of others	0	1	2	3	4
Rewards others for good work	0	1	2	3	4
Compensates others fairly	0	1	2	3	4
Shows appreciation for others	0	1	2	3	4
Praises others for good work	0	1	2	3	4
<b>Employee Consequences</b>					
Provides fair and consistent punishment	0	1	2	3	4
Holds others accountable for poor work/behaviour	0	1	2	3	4
<b>Employee Development</b>					
Provides job training to others	0	1	2	3	4
Provides development opportunities to others	0	1	2	3	4
Provides mentorship to less experienced workers	0	1	2	3	4
<b>Employee Feedback</b>					
Provides constructive feedback to others	0	1	2	3	4
Effectively motivates others to improve performance	0	1	2	3	4
<b>Communication</b>					
0	1	2	3	4	
Listens to the suggestions of others	0	1	2	3	4
Displays effective communication skills	0	1	2	3	4
Resolves disputes in a cordial and effective manner	0	1	2	3	4
When dismissing an employee, provides support and clear explanation to other employees	0	1	2	3	4
<b>Ability to Work in a Team</b>					
Works together effectively with others	0	1	2	3	4
Helps others when they require assistance	0	1	2	3	4
Is reasonable in one's requests and expectations of others	0	1	2	3	4
Demonstrates trust in abilities of others	0	1	2	3	4
<b>The Respecting of Others</b>					
Treats others in a respectful and considerate manner	0	1	2	3	4
Treats others fairly	0	1	2	3	4
Engages in a personable manner with others	0	1	2	3	4
Respects profession boundaries with others	0	1	2	3	4
Accommodates the needs of others	0	1	2	3	4
<b>Integrity of Work</b>					
Accepts blame for one's mistakes	0	1	2	3	4
Is honest with one's work and with others	0	1	2	3	4
<b>Caring of Others</b>					
Demonstrates concern towards other's problems	0	1	2	3	4
Shows support for others	0	1	2	3	4

Table 4: Coworker and Coworker BOS

	Almost Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always
<b>Employee Recognition</b>					
Celebrates the successes and milestones of others	0	1	2	3	4
Shows appreciation for others	0	1	2	3	4
Praises others for good work	0	1	2	3	4
<b>Employee Development</b>					
Provides job training to others	0	1	2	3	4
Provides mentorship to less experienced workers	0	1	2	3	4
<b>Employee Feedback</b>					
Provides constructive feedback to others	0	1	2	3	4
Effectively motivates others to improve performance	0	1	2	3	4
<b>Communication</b>					
Displays effective communication skills	0	1	2	3	4
Resolves disputes in a cordial and effective manner	0	1	2	3	4
<b>Ability to Work in a Team</b>					
Works together effectively with others	0	1	2	3	4
Helps others when they require assistance	0	1	2	3	4
Demonstrates trust in abilities of others	0	1	2	3	4
Performs work in a timely and effective manner when relied upon by others	0	1	2	3	4
<b>The Respecting of Others</b>					
Treats others in a respectful and considerate manner	0	1	2	3	4
Engages in a personable manner with others	0	1	2	3	4
Respects profession boundaries with others	0	1	2	3	4
Listens to the suggestions of others	0	1	2	3	4
Is reasonable in one's requests and expectations of others	0	1	2	3	4
<b>Integrity of Work</b>					
Accepts blame for one's mistakes	0	1	2	3	4
Is honest with one's work and with others	0	1	2	3	4
Follows through on one's word to others	0	1	2	3	4
Takes work responsibilities seriously	0	1	2	3	4
Demonstrates initiative in solving problems	0	1	2	3	4
<b>Caring of Others</b>					
Demonstrates concern towards other's problems	0	1	2	3	4
Shows support for others	0	1	2	3	4

Some examples of the items that were unique to the MS BOS include, “rewards others for good work”, “provides development opportunities to others” and “provides fair and consistent punishment”. These items only appeared in the MS BOS as the critical incidents describing these behaviours only emerged when participants were discussing interactions between managers and subordinates. Examples of the items that were unique to the CC BOS include, “covers the responsibilities of others when needed”, “demonstrates initiative in solving problems” and “takes work responsibilities seriously”. Again, these items only appeared in the CC BOS as the critical incidents describing these behaviours only emerged when participants were discussing interactions between coworkers.

### **Discussion**

The critical incident technique used in this study helped to develop two comprehensive BOS; the MS BOS, which is comprised of a list of 29 behavioural items and 9 BOS criteria, and the CC BOS, comprised of 25 behavioural items and 8 BOS criteria. As the next phase of study begins, it is important to emphasize again that there was overlap between the behaviours that arose from the critical incident technique with the behaviours found in the existing literature. It is not surprising to see BOS criteria such as communication, ability to work in a team and both the respecting and caring of others when examining previous literature. For example, Holtzhausen and Fourie (2011) found that when employers emphasized the practice of respecting their employees, this improved the employer-employee relationship and the interpersonal interactions between these two groups. As well, Smart and Featheringham (2006) demonstrated that those with

better communication skills had more positive interpersonal interactions than those with poor communication skills.

Importantly, the results from the critical incident technique used in this study lend support for the appropriateness of using the critical incident method paired with a focused literature review, as not only did the incidents present almost all of the mistreatment behaviours that emerged from the focused literature review, but it also provided many additional behaviours that may require further attention, and thus have been included on the BOS instruments. For example, employee development and integrity of work are not usually discussed in extant literature on interpersonal mistreatment in the workplace. These new behaviours demonstrate that literature surrounding interpersonal workplace mistreatment has potential gaps. We know that job training is commonly found to positively impact the attitudes of those employees being trained. For example, Sahinidis and Bouris (2008) found that trained employees held more positive attitudes to their employer, such as commitment, job satisfaction and motivation to work for their employer. Thus, it appears that providing training to employees can improve the bond between the trained employees and their employer and may have implications for interpersonal mistreatment. As well, when one's coworker worked with a lack of integrity, in terms of not working effectively or taking one's work seriously, participants frequently mentioned this as a reason for developing negative attitudes towards that coworker. Thus, based on this data, it could be reasonable to expect that working with more integrity could improve relationships amongst employees, especially when one's work depends on others. And key to the next phase of this work is using these behaviours to assist with a goal setting training intervention aimed at reducing interpersonal mistreatment in the workplace.

An important consideration going forward with the BOS created for this study is the fact that there is clearly an overlap between the MS BOS and the CC BOS, as all 8 of the CC BOS criteria appear on the MS BOS. With such a high degree of overlap, it appears that employers and employees may mistreat each other in similar ways. Even for behaviours that may be discussed in the literature as being enacted by managers for example in terms of abusive supervision behaviours, employees may still act hostile both verbally and non-verbally to their coworkers using behaviours similar to those discussed within the abusive supervision literature. Thus, being yelled at for example, may be viewed the same by a target whether the perpetrator is a manager or a coworker. This overlap is important to consider when designing the goal setting intervention, as setting similar types of goals between both the manager/subordinate group and the coworker/coworker group may be effective.

Overall, although these BOS have yet to be used in an intervention, there is substantial reasoning that they can provide the basis of a feasible intervention that is based in goal setting to help reduce interpersonal mistreatment in the workplace. One reason for this is that goal setting has been shown by Locke and Latham (1990) to increase the efforts of individuals to attain goals and reduce non-goal activities. In this case, the desired goal would be the increase display of positive interpersonal behaviours while the non-goal activities would be workplace mistreatment behaviours. As well, the BOS provides a list of behaviours explicitly linked to interpersonal interactions that have been experienced by individuals in the workplace. These behaviours are those that will be necessary for individuals to practice in order to achieve the outlined goals. Arguably then, this method is an important extension of the work that has already been conducted on mistreatment in the workplace.



This proposed intervention, although not yet tested, appears to be a favourable alternative compared to the intervention methods that have been examined by previous literature. These interventions for workplace mistreatment can be broken down into two categories: primary interventions and secondary interventions. Primary interventions are those that are put into place to prevent the mistreatment from occurring in the workplace, while secondary interventions focus on providing targets of interpersonal mistreatment with the necessary tools to cope with the mistreatment that they receive (Hershcovis, et al., 2015).

An example of a primary intervention is employee selection; and is perhaps the most commonly suggested method to eliminate incidences of workplace mistreatment (Neuman & Baron, 1998). The goal is to prevent prospective employees predisposed for conflict or aggressive behaviour from joining the company, through screening practices. This involves screening employees using background checks or pre-employment tests, such as interviews or personality tests (Neuman & Baron, 1998). Unfortunately, this is not always an effective method, as employees who are predisposed to mistreat may still have a clean background, and employees may engage in impression management techniques during pre-employment tests, in order to hide any undesirable behaviours (Weiss & Feldman, 2006).

A study performed by Hoel and Giga (2006) examined various primary interventions to determine their effectiveness in preventing interpersonal mistreatment amongst workers. The interventions that were examined included: policy communication, stress management training and negative behaviour awareness training. The goal of policy communication was to raise employees' awareness pertaining to the guidelines surrounding interpersonal workplace mistreatment as well as the duties of all employees

throughout the implementation of the policy. Stress management training aimed to reduce the levels of stress amongst employees in the workplace and/or help employees cope with stress in ways that do not involve enacting mistreatment against others (Hoel & Giga, 2006). Lastly, negative behaviour awareness training involved “raising the awareness of negative behaviour and its impact on individuals and the organisation, and developing a shared understanding of what acceptable/unacceptable behaviour is within the organization” (Hoel & Giga, 2006, p. 24).

To examine the effectiveness of policy communication, stress management training, and negative behaviour awareness training, the researchers sent out surveys at two points: pre-intervention and six months post-intervention implementation, in order to gather information pertaining to the prevalence of interpersonal mistreatment at both points in time (Hoel & Giga, 2006). The survey population comprised of 884 participants from five different organizations. Results from the study were inconclusive, as there was no data to suggest that either of the three intervention methods had effectively reduced incidences of interpersonal workplace mistreatment (Hoel & Giga, 2006).

Another study that examined the effectiveness of a primary intervention was performed by Gonzalez-Morales, Kernan, Becker, and Eisenberger (2018). This study tested supervisor support training to determine its relationship with abusive supervision. The results found that employees whose supervisors received the training program experienced less abusive supervision and high levels of supervisor support (Gonzalez-Morales, et al., 2018). Although, this study provides support for an effective intervention, it was only examined in its ability to reduce abusive supervision, which is only one type of interpersonal mistreatment.

An example of a secondary intervention is holding dialogue meetings between managers and employees. In these meetings, managers meet with subordinates to identify interpersonal problems in the workplace and to develop possible solutions to these problems. Participants of these meetings rated the intervention as positive, however no longitudinal data was recorded to determine the effectiveness of the dialogue meeting technique (Mikkelsen, Hogh, & Puggard, 2011).

Another secondary intervention that is similar to holding dialogue meetings is the Civility, Respect and Engagement in the Workforce (CREW) intervention. The goal of this practice, as stated by Osatuke, Moore, Ward, Dyrenforth, and Belton (2009), is to increase civility in the workplace among employees. To do this, a trained facilitator meets with a work group and their manager to discuss any interpersonal problems or concerns that are occurring within the work setting. The facilitator then holds a discussion between the employees and manager on how to develop solutions to these problems (Osatuke, et al, 2009), and the solutions are then developed by the employees and managers without the input of the facilitator. These meetings usually take place weekly over the span of about six months.

Osatuke, et al., (2009), administered the CREW model to 46 workgroups totalling more than 2100 participants. The workgroups were given a survey to assess the level of incivility within the group before and after the intervention was implemented. Results were then compared against control groups that also completed the surveys but did not receive the CREW intervention. Work groups that received the CREW intervention saw a significant reduction in interpersonal mistreatment post-intervention compared to control groups (Osatuke, et al., 2009). However, although this intervention method was positive, it focused on increasing civility at the group level, and did not aim to discover how to

help a sole perpetrator change their behaviour or how to help an individual target cope with the mistreatment that he or she endures.

An intervention that does aim to help targets cope with aggression received in the workplace is emotional regulation, which refers to the practice of managing the emotions that one experiences as well as how to effectively display desired emotions in particular situations (Niven, Sprigg, & Armitage, 2013). In a series of two studies performed by Niven, et al. (2013), survey data was collected from over 140 total respondents to examine whether emotional regulation was a viable coping method to deal with workplace aggression. Participants included both social workers and employees for an ambulance service in the United Kingdom.

First, Niven, et al. (2013) found that being exposed to nonphysical aggressive acts in the workplace was positively related to experiencing strain. Second, the use of emotional regulation was found to moderate this relationship, as when the use of emotional regulation was present, this positive relationship was less significant compared to when emotional regulation was not present (Niven, et al., 2013). This suggest that targets of workplace aggression were less likely to experience adverse effects, such as strain, associated with being a target if they used emotional regulation as a coping method (Niven, et al., 2013). Although, this study provides what seems to be an effective coping method for targets, this research, similar to the previously discussed intervention research, does not help perpetrators learn how to curtail their mistreatment behaviours.

Thus, through the examination of the existing literature pertaining to interventions for interpersonal mistreatment in the workplace, it is clear that a number of avenues have been tried and tested – some with more success than others. Primary intervention techniques that have been examined include improved employee selection and screening

practices, policy communication, stress management training, negative behaviour awareness training, and supervisor support training (Gonzalez-Morales, et al., 2018; Hoel & Giga, 2006; Neuman & Baron, 1998). These interventions unfortunately were found to be either ineffective, provided inconclusive results, or has only been proven effective in one area of mistreatment (Gonzalez-Morales, et al., 2018; Hoel & Giga, 2006; Weiss & Feldman, 2006). Proposed secondary interventions included dialogue meetings, the CREW model and emotional regulation (Mikkelsen, et al., 2011; Niven, et al., 2013; Osatuke, et al., 2009). Although there were positive results seen in each of these secondary interventions, the data was either too limited to conclude effectiveness, or the intervention failed to help curtail perpetration of mistreatment at the individual level (Mikkelsen, et al., 2011; Niven, et al., 2013; Osatuke, et al., 2009). Thus, although intervention research for interpersonal workplace mistreatment has seen some advancement, there still remains gaps in the literature, specifically, how to help perpetrators learn to alter their behaviour. This provides an opportunity for research to consider other intervention work, such as goal setting with the use of Behavioural Observation Scales (BOS), and apply these to interpersonal mistreatment situations, as the use of a BOS has been found to alter the behaviours of employees (Latham & Wexley, 1977).

### **Limitations and Future Research**

As this research was the first step in a multipart study, there are several limitations and many other areas for future research. First, the critical incidents that were used as the basis for this study rely on self-reported data, as each incident is based on the perception

of an individual respondent. Second, while the BOS instruments were developed for the purposes of this study, they have not yet been tested as part of a goal setting intervention.

Another limitation of this study is that it is yet to be determined whether these BOS will help reduce mistreatment and/or improve positive interpersonal behaviour. These may be different constructs that must be further examined. Next, it is important to note that there is a lack of discussion surrounding leadership and how it relates to the interpersonal treatment between managers and their subordinates. Leadership was not within the scope of this research, as this study also examined coworker to coworker relationships. It should be noted that there was substantial overlap between the manager-subordinate BOS and the coworker-coworker BOS, thus causing one to believe that leadership role may not have a significant impact on the type of interpersonal mistreatment experienced in the workplace; that being said, the further studies using different methodologies could examine in more detail the various differences that may exist in terms of the forms of mistreatment and how they are experienced when comparing employee to employee mistreatment versus leader to employment mistreatment.

As mentioned throughout this paper, the next step for this research is to test the BOS using an experimental design. The research team will provide the BOS to perpetrators of mistreatment in order to help reduce their enactment of mistreatment in the workplace by providing them with a list of ideal behaviours to help guide their actions. Then, participants will be separated into either a goal setting group, where participants use their BOS and set goals around it as an intervention, or a control group condition, where no goal setting would be used. This would help measure the effectiveness of the BOS and goal setting method as an intervention.

Another area of future research that is planned for this multipart study is to examine the effectiveness of the BOS and goal setting intervention using longitudinal data. The researchers will measure incidences of workplace mistreatment prior to the intervention, again after the intervention has occurred and then one year after time period one, to determine if the intervention effectively reduced the occurrence of mistreatment in the experimental group compared to the control group.

This study presents the basis of an intervention that will be paired with goal setting, with the hope that it will effectively reduce incidents of mistreatment in the workplace; however, it is unlikely that any intervention will completely eliminate the occurrence of workplace mistreatment all together. Another area of future research is to develop a BOS to more specifically help targets of workplace mistreatment cope with the mistreatment that they receive. This research could be performed by using a survey to gather critical incidents from employees or HR managers about effective coping methods that they have personally used or witnessed being used in the workplace to deal with mistreatment.

### **Conclusion**

Due to the seriousness of the negative impacts experienced by targets of interpersonal workplace mistreatment, it is important that organizations understand how to prevent or reduce future instances of mistreatment. Unfortunately, previous research examining interventions, such as screening employees, pre-employment tests and dialogue meetings have not provided conclusive results regarding their effectiveness (Mikkelsen, Høgh & Puggard, 2011; Weiss & Feldman, 2006).

The need for a viable intervention to reduce workplace mistreatment is highlighted by the fact that taking no action to prevent or resolve workplace mistreatment can lead to the intensifying of these consequences (Niven, Sprigg, Armitage & Satchwell, 2013). Although the developed BOS have yet to be paired with goal setting as an intervention to reduce workplace mistreatment, there are a variety of reasons why pairing the two as an intervention to reduce workplace mistreatment will be effective.

First, the two BOS instruments developed in this study provide a list of desired behaviours that can guide individuals towards behaving more positively and effectively towards their coworkers. Secondly, goal setting has been demonstrated by Locke and Latham (1990) to effectively increase an individual's effort towards completing a desired goal, while reducing behaviours that do not support the goal. Lastly, the use of goal setting and a BOS have been combined and shown to help positively influence employee behaviours (Brown, McCracken & Hillier, 2013; Latham & Yuk, 1975). Therefore, the use of goal setting paired with the BOS instruments developed in this study is proposed as a viable intervention technique to reduce interpersonal workplace mistreatment. As well, matching goal setting with a BOS instrument will provide a cost-effective intervention that can be easily implemented and help organizations save money.



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## **Appendix A**

### **Manager-Subordinate Survey**



## Positive and Negative Interpersonal Interactions in the Workplace

The goal of this research is to examine positive and negative interpersonal behaviours encountered by employees in the workplace. Interpersonal behaviour is a broad term that refers to behaviour and actions in relationships between people. Interpersonal behaviour can range from mild to severe, and from positive to negative.

### Positive Interpersonal Interactions

Think of interpersonal interactions in the workplace that you have personally **participated** in within the last 6-12 months **with a manager/supervisor** that you feel was effective/positive. **This interaction can be minor or more serious.** (1) What did you do? (2) Why was it effective?

(1) What did you do?	(2) Why was effective/positive

Think of interpersonal interactions in the workplace that you have personally **witnessed** within the last 6-12 months **between a co-worker and manager/supervisor** that you feel was effective/positive. **This interaction can be minor or more serious.** (1) What did you witness? (2) Why was it effective?

(1) What did you witness?	(2) Why was effective/positive

**Negative Interpersonal Interactions**

Think of interpersonal interactions in the workplace that you have **personally participated** in within the last 6-12 months **with a manager/supervisor** that you feel was ineffective/negative. **This interaction can be minor or more serious.** (1) What did you do? (2) Why was it ineffective?

(1) What did you do?	(2) Why was ineffective/negative

Think of interpersonal interactions in the workplace that you have personally **witnessed** within the last 6-12 months **between a co-worker and manager/supervisor** that you feel was ineffective/negative. **This interaction can be minor or more serious.** (1) What did you witness? (2) Why was it ineffective?

(1) What did you witness?	(2) Why was ineffective/negative

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender:

Male    Female    Non-Binary    Prefer to Self-describe \_\_\_\_\_

Prefer not to Say

Highest Education Level Completed:

None    Secondary    College Diploma    University Degree

Level of Employment:

Manager    Employee

Years of Work Service (Drop down box 1-50):

Years of Work Experience at **Current** Employer (Drop down box 1-50):

Work Industry:

Retail	Health Care and Social Assistance
Manufacturing	Educational Services
Public Administration Services	Professional, Scientific and Technical
Construction	Accommodation and Food Services
Transportation and Warehousing	Finance and Insurance
Wholesale Trade	Administration and Support
Agriculture/Fishing/Hunting	Information and Cultural Industries
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	Real Estate, Rental and Leasing
Mining, and Oil and Gas Extraction	Utilities
Management of Companies	Other Services

If at any point during the survey you feel distressed by the nature of this subject matter, you should contact a local employee assistance service or help line. For example, if located in Canada, participants can contact the Employee Assistance Services (EAS) at 1-800-268-7708 or 1-800-567-5803 (for those that are hearing impaired). More information about Canada's EAS can be found using the following link:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/environmental-workplace-health/occupational-health-safety/employee-assistance-services/information-employees-employee-assistance-services.html>

**Thank you for participating in our survey!**

**Appendix B**  
**Coworker-Coworker Survey**

## Positive and Negative Interpersonal Interactions in the Workplace

The goal of this research is to examine positive and negative interpersonal behaviours encountered by employees in the workplace. Interpersonal behaviour is a broad term that refers to behaviour and actions in relationships between people. Interpersonal behaviour can range from mild to severe, and from positive to negative.

### Positive Interpersonal Interactions

Think of interpersonal interactions in the workplace that you have personally **participated** in within the last 6-12 months **with a co-worker** that you feel was effective/positive. **This interaction can be minor or more serious.** (1) What did you do?  
(2) Why was it effective?

(1) What did you do?	(2) Why was effective/positive

Think of interpersonal interactions in the workplace that you have personally **witnessed** within the last 6-12 months **between co-workers** that you feel was effective/positive. **This interaction can be minor or more serious.** (1) What did you witness? (2) Why was it effective?

(1) What did you witness?	(2) Why was effective/positive

**Negative Interpersonal Interactions**

Think of interpersonal interactions in the workplace that you have **personally** participated in within the last 6-12 months **with a co-worker** that you feel was ineffective/negative. **This interaction can be minor or more serious.** (1) What did you do? (2) Why was it ineffective?

(1) What did you do?	(2) Why was ineffective/negative

Think of interpersonal interactions in the workplace that you have personally **witnessed** within the last 6-12 months **between co-workers** that you feel was ineffective/negative. **This interaction can be minor or more serious.** (1) What did you witness? (2) Why was it ineffective?

(1) What did you witness?	(2) Why was ineffective/negative

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender:

Male      Female      Non-Binary      Prefer to Self-describe

\_\_\_\_\_

Prefer not to Say

Education Level:

None      Secondary      College Diploma      University Degree

Level of Employment:

Manager      Employee

Years of Work Service (Drop down box 1-50):

Years of Work Experience at **Current** Employer (Drop down box 1-50):



Work Industry:

Retail	Health Care and Social Assistance
Manufacturing	Educational Services
Public Administration Services	Professional, Scientific and Technical
Construction	Accommodation and Food Services
Transportation and Warehousing	Finance and Insurance
Wholesale Trade	Administration and Support
Agriculture/Fishing/Hunting	Information and Cultural Industries
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	Real Estate, Rental and Leasing
Mining, and Oil and Gas Extraction	Utilities
Management of Companies	Other Services

If at any point during the survey you feel distressed by the nature of this subject matter, you should contact a local employee assistance service or help line. For example, if located in Canada, participants can contact the Employee Assistance Services (EAS) at 1-800-268-7708 or 1-800-567-5803 (for those that are hearing impaired). More information about Canada's EAS can be found using the following link:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/environmental-workplace-health/occupational-health-safety/employee-assistance-services/information-employees-employee-assistance-services.html>

**Thank you for participating in our survey!**

**Appendix C**  
**Behaviour Categories**

	Manager/Subordinate Witnessed - Positive	Manager/Subordinate Witnessed - Negative	Manager/Subordinate Enacted - Positive	Manager/Subordinate Enacted - Negative
1	Provides Positive Feedback	Fails to Effectively Perform Work	Provides Positive Feedback	Fails to Effectively Perform Work
2	Provides Constructive Feedback	Fails to Address Concerns of Others	Provides Constructive Feedback	Fails to Provide Help When Needed
3	Provides Mentoring	Fails to Listen to the Ideas of Others	Provides Feedback and Rewards	Fails to Address the Concerns of Others
4	Provides Job Training	Threatens Others	Provides Mentoring	Fails to Listen to the Ideas of Others
5	Provides Development Opportunities	Makes Unreasonable Requests	Provides Job Training	Threatens Others
6	Recognizes Others' Potential	Undermines Others	Provides Development Opportunities	Makes Unreasonable Requests
7	Accommodates the Needs of Others	Talks Down to Others	Recognizes Others' Potential	Undermines Others
8	Helps Others with Tasks	Fires Employees	Accommodates the Needs of Others	Talks Down to Others
9	Collaborates with Others	Reprimands Employees	Helps Others with Tasks	Fires Employees
10	Demonstrates Concern Towards Others' Problems	Punishes Employees	Collaborates with Others	Reprimands Employees
11	Engages in a Friendly Manner with Others	Criticizes Others	Demonstrates Concern Towards Others' Problems	Criticizes Others
12	Celebrates Others	Demonstrates a Lack of Trust	Engages in a Friendly Manner with Others	Blames Others
13	Holds Employees Accountable for Poor Behavior	Not Having Someone's Backs	Celebrates Others	Demonstrates a Lack of Trust
14	Listens to the Suggestions and Concerns of Others	Argues with Others	Listens to the Suggestions and Concerns of Others	Not Having Someone's Backs
15	Rewards Employees for Good Work	Talks Behind Someone's Backs	Rewards Others for Good Work	Goes Behind the Backs of Others
16	Having Others' Backs	Ineffective Communication Amongst Workers	Having Others' Backs	Ineffective Communication Amongst Workers
17	Appreciates Others	Unreceptive to Feedback	Appreciates Others	Unreceptive to Feedback
18		Provides Special Treatment		Provides Special Treatment
19		Underappreciates Others		Underappreciates Others
20		Too Lenient on Others		Gives Extra Work Responsibilities
21		Provides Extra Work Responsibilities		Verbal Attack
22		Verbal Attack		Rude and Disrespectful Behavior
23		Rude and Disrespectful Behavior		Racism
24		Aggressive Behavior		Lies to Others
25		Gender/Sexual Harassment		Fails to Accommodate Needs of Others
26		Lies to Others		Deals With Sensitive Content
27		Fails to Accommodate Needs of Others		

	<b>Coworker/Coworker Witnessed - Positive</b>	<b>Coworker/Coworker Witnessed - Negative</b>	<b>Coworker/Coworker Enacted - Positive</b>	<b>Coworker/Coworker Enacted - Negative</b>
1	Provides Positive Feedback	Fails to Effectively Perform Work	Provides Positive Feedback	Fails to Effectively Perform Work
2	Provides Constructive Feedback	Fails to Provide Help When Needed	Provides Constructive Feedback	Fails to Provide Help When Needed
3	Provides Mentoring	Fails to Address the Concerns of Others	Provides Mentoring	Fails to Address the Concerns of Others
4	Provides Job Training	Fails to Take Work Seriously	Provides Job Training	Fails to Follow Through on One's Word
5	Listens to the Suggestions and Concerns of Others	Fails to Follow Through on One's Word	Shows Initiative	Poor Team Work
6	Shows Initiative	Poor Team Work	Works Together with Others	Complains About Work
7	Works Together with Others	Complains About Work	Helps Others Out	Makes Unreasonable Requests
8	Helps Others Out	Nags Others	Covers Responsibilities of Others	Undermines Others
9	Covers Responsibilities of Others	Ignores Others	Demonstrates Concern for Others' Problems	Ignores Others
10	Demonstrates Concern for Others' Problems	Talks Down to Others	Engages in a Friendly Manner with Others	Ostracizes Others
11	Engages in a Friendly Manner with Others	Ostracize Others	Separates One's Differences	Fires Employees
12	Celebrates Others	Pushes Work Duties onto Others	Having Others' Backs	Criticizes Others
13	Appreciates Others	Criticizes Others	Appreciates Others	Withholds Information
14		Blames Others		Pushes Work Duties onto Others
15		Unhealthy Competition Amongst Workers		Provides Extra Work Responsibilities
16		Withholds Information		Takes Credit for Someone's Work
17		Argues with Others		Demonstrates a Lack of Trust
18		Verbal Attack		Argues with Others
19		Rude and Disrespectful Behavior		Oversteps Where One Doesn't Belong
20		Aggressive Behavior		Retaliates Against Others
21		Teases Others		Verbal Attack
22		Performs Work Unsafely		Rude and Disrespectful Behavior
23		Gender/Sexual Harassment		Aggressive Behavior
24		Racism		Harasses Others
25		Ineffective Communication Amongst Workers		Gender/Sexual Harassment
26		Talks Behind Someone's Back		Racism
27		Goes Behind Someone's Back		Ineffective Communication Amongst Workers
28		Expects Special Treatment		Goes Behind Someone's Back
29		Steals		Unreceptive to Feedback
30				Lies to Others
31				Cheats
32				Gets too Close to Others

## **Appendix D**

### **Interrater Agreement for Behavioural Items**

<b>Manager and Subordinate Behavioural Items</b>		
<b>Behavioural Item</b>	<b>BOS Criteria</b>	<b>Agreement</b>
Celebrates the successes and milestones of others.	Employee Recognition	100%
Rewards others for good work.	Employee Recognition	100%
Provides fair and consistent punishment.	Employee Consequences	100%
Provides job training to others.	Employee Development	100%
Provides development opportunities to others.	Employee Development	100%
Provides mentorship to less experienced workers.	Employee Development	100%
Provides constructive feedback to others.	Employee Feedback	100%
Displays effective communication skills.	Communication	100%
Works together effectively with others.	Ability to Work in a Team	100%
Accepts blame for one's mistakes.	Integrity of Work	100%
Is honest with one's work and with others.	Integrity of Work	100%
Demonstrates concern towards other's problems.	Caring of Others	100%
Compensates others fairly.	Employee Recognition	83.33%
Holds others accountable for poor work/behaviour.	Employee Consequences	83.33%
Resolves disputes in a cordial and effective manner.	Communication	83.33%
Helps others when they require assistance.	Ability to Work in a Team	83.33%
Treats Others Fairly	The Respecting of Others	83.33%
Shows support for others.	Caring of Others	83.33%
Praises others for good work.	Employee Recognition	66.66%
Effectively motivates others to improve performance.	Employee Feedback	66.66%
When dismissing an employee, provides support and clear explanation to other employees.	Communication	66.66%
Demonstrates trust in the abilities of others.	Ability to Work in a Team	66.66%
Treats others in a respectful and considerate manner.	The Respecting of Others	66.66%
Accommodates the needs of others.	The Respecting of Others	66.66%
Shows appreciation for others.	Employee Recognition	50%
Listens to the suggestions of others.	Communication	50%
Is reasonable in one's requests and expectations of others.	Ability to Work in a Team	50%
Engages in a personable manner with others.	The Respecting of Others	50%
Respects professional boundaries with others	The Respecting of Others	N/A

<b>Coworker and Coworker Behavioural Items</b>		
<b>Behavioural Item</b>	<b>BOS Criteria</b>	<b>Agreement</b>
Displays effective communication skills.	Communication	100%
Works together effectively with others.	Ability to Work in a Team	100%
Covers the responsibilities of others when needed.	Ability to Work in a Team	100%
Demonstrates trust in the abilities of others.	Ability to Work in a Team	100%
Treats others in a respectful and considerate manner.	The Respecting of Others	100%
Respects professional boundaries with others.	The Respecting of Others	100%
Accepts blame for one's mistakes.	Integrity of Work	100%
Is honest with one's work and with others.	Integrity of Work	100%
Follows through on one's word to others.	Integrity of Work	100%
Takes work responsibilities seriously.	Integrity of Work	100%
Demonstrates concern towards other's problems.	Caring of Others	100%
Provides mentorship to less experienced workers.	Employee Development	83.33%
Provides job training to others.	Employee Development	83.33%
Provides constructive feedback to others.	Employee Feedback	83.33%
Demonstrates initiative in solving problems.	Integrity of Work	83.33%
Shows support for others.	Caring of Others	83.33%
Celebrates the successes and milestones of others.	Employee Recognition	66.66%
Praises others for good work.	Employee Recognition	66.66%
Resolve disputes in a cordial and effective manner.	Communication	66.66%
Helps others when they require assistance.	Ability to Work in a Team	66.66%
Is reasonable in one's requests and expectations of others.	The Respecting of Others	66.66%
Shows appreciation for others.	Employee Recognition	50%
Performs work in a timely and effective manner when relied upon by others.	Ability to Work in a Team	50%
Engages in a personable manner with others.	The Respecting of Others	50%
Listens to the suggestions of others.	The Respecting of Others	50%
Effectively motivates others to improve performance	Caring of Others	N/A

## **Appendix E**

### **Behaviours from the Focused Literature Review**



1. Insult someone
2. Talk behind someone's back
3. Delay work to make someone look bad
4. Withhold information
5. Made to feel incompetent
6. Talk down to someone
7. Give silent treatment
8. Destructive criticism
9. Made derogatory remarks
10. Ignore
11. Ostracizing
12. Teasing
13. Verbal abuse
14. Devalue work/efforts
15. Neglect opinions/views
16. Abusive supervision
17. Bullying
18. Undermining
19. Gossiping
20. Disobey
21. Interrupt