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**NIGHTMARES, DEMONS AND SLAVES...
STUDY EXPLORES THE PAINFUL METAPHORS OF WORKPLACE BULLYING
RESEARCH PUBLISHED IN SAGE'S MANAGEMENT COMMUNICATION QUARTERLY**

Thousand Oaks, California, London, United Kingdom, and New Delhi, India (October 27, 2006) – Workplace bullying negatively impacts employees' physical and mental health, leading to higher company costs including increased employee illness, use of sick days, and medical costs, ultimately affecting productivity. Studies report that 25-30% of employees experience bullying and emotional abuse sometime during their work life.

In a recent study researching organizational conflict, emotion, wellness and work-life balance, published in the November issue of SAGE Publication's *Management Communication Quarterly*, communication researchers Sarah Tracy, Pamela Lutgen-Sandvik, and Jess Alberts used metaphor analysis to better understand the emotional pain experienced as a result of workplace bullying.

The study, which was supported by a grant from Research and Economic Affairs at Arizona State University, and is part of "The Project of Wellness and Work-Life," collected qualitative data through focus groups, narrative interviews and target drawings, allowing participants the freedom to describe their workplace harassment as "a battle," "water torture," "a nightmare," or "a noxious substance." Bullies were described as "two-faced actors" and "devils" and the workers were left feeling like "vulnerable children," "slaves," or "prisoners" in these situations. As one employee explained, "I feel like I have 'kick me' tattooed on my forehead."

Using metaphoric analysis not only helped the participants to communicate, it also helped managers and colleagues to better understand. Managers may be more likely to act on these negative workplace situations, which could result in earlier intervention. The research showed that "emotion can serve as a warning sign that organization interaction is askew. The goal of the research was to further define the emotional trauma and encourage organizational intervention as well as prevention."

The *Management Communication Quarterly* article, "Nightmares, Demons and Slaves– Exploring the Painful Metaphors of Workplace Bullying" can be accessed at no charge for a limited time at <http://mcq.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/20/2/148>. For more information on this and related research projects, please see <http://www.asu.edu/clas/communication/about/wellness/>

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About Management Communication Quarterly

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