



Mini Review

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Recognizing the Warning Progressive Signs of Academic Bullying and Harassment: The GGRID Tactics

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Minireview

It is increasingly being understood that the targets of academic bullying and harassment develop a wide range of mental and physical symptoms which may last for decades [1-4]. Perpetrators and their supporters do not seem to be concerned about the adverse consequences of their actions to targets mainly because the possibilities for any repercussions will be slim [5]. Institutional responses to reports of bullying and harassment frequently involve their legal teams and consultants to minimize a risk of any future consequences [6].

Although institutions have thorough policies against academic bullying and harassment and even encourage targets to speak up, their actions (even in following their own policies) are highly questionable [7]. Targets who speak up face systemic and procedural obstacles including denial, disbelief, and hominem attacks. Decision makers can do quite a lot to ensure that universities comply with duties to protect human rights and to act with care and due diligence. By insisting on a duty of care and a duty of due diligence, the law seeks to ensure that a certain institution does not fall below a certain standard of behaviour. If it does, gatekeepers (e.g., funding agencies and ministries of sciences) should impose sanctions against them.

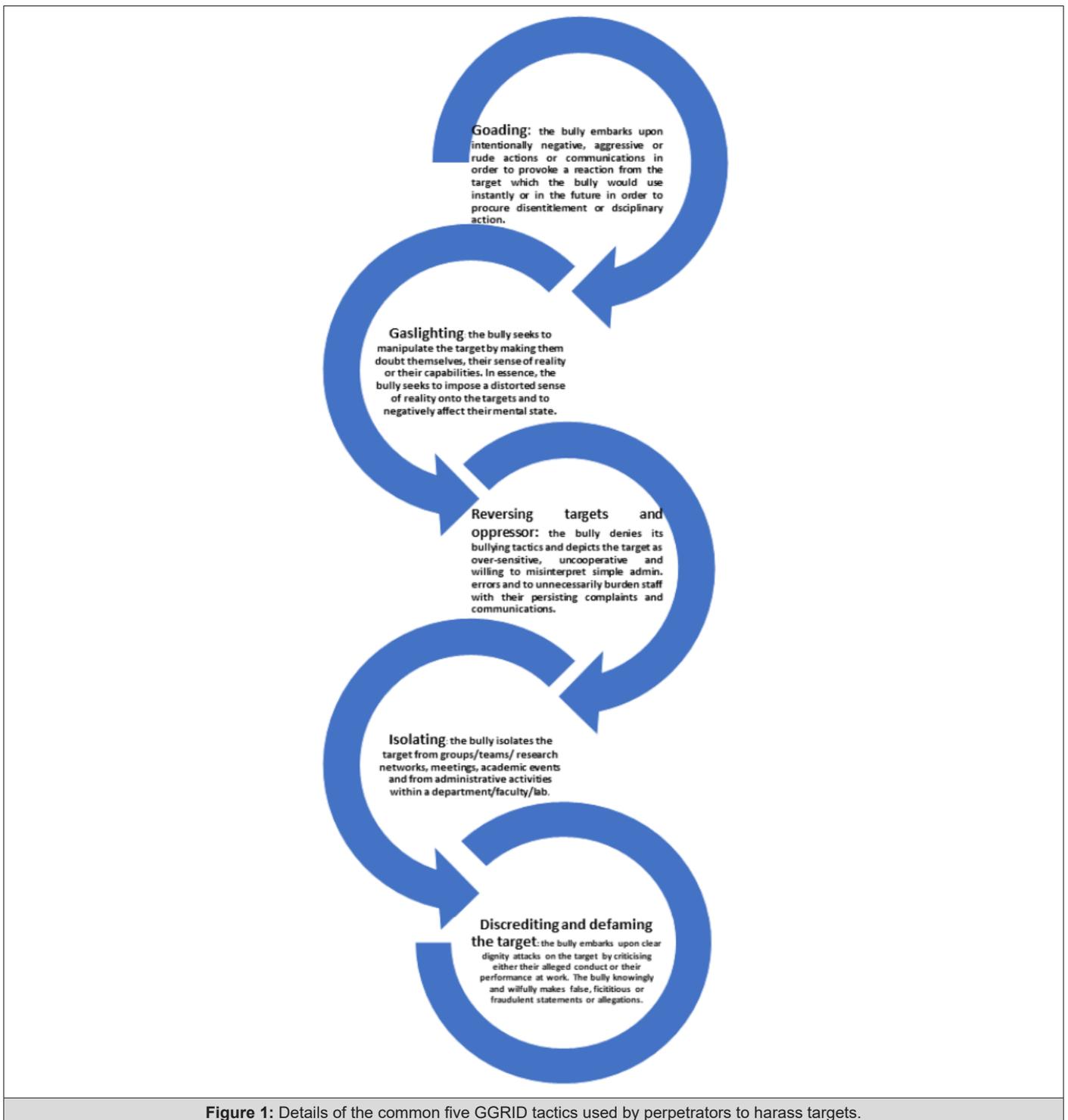
Smart sanctions for violators of employees' human rights could include publicity, naming and shaming, exclusion, or reduction of state funding or even removal of the teaching Licence. Regulators could also ensure that universities comply with data protection regulations, have operational and effective grievance procedures, and even produce an annual statement incorporating all information about complaints, grievances and bullying and harassment incidents as mentioned above. The judicial remedies option is always

available, but the high cost of litigation, the reduction or non-availability of legal aid, fear and intimidation tactics pursued by the law firms representing universities, lack of impartiality by the judiciary when public authorities are involved in litigation and 'institutional capture', since universities often have close connections with government departments and cabinet offices, are inhibitive factors.

For the above-mentioned reasons, the prevention of academic bullying and harassment and of their progressive escalation are very important. Aside from the role of stakeholders, targets and witnesses of academic bullying and harassment can arm themselves with awareness about the five warning and progressive signs of bullying and harassment tactics by perpetrators which are

- i. Goading
- ii. Gaslighting
- iii. Reversing victim/aggressor subject positions
- iv. Isolating the targeted employee
- v. Discrediting or defaming them (Figure 1).

These form a standard, bullying behavioural script and, therefore, targeted academics knowing about GGRID techniques should be able to act early to reduce and/or neutralize threats to their physical and mental health and well-being, career, and reputation. These form a standard, bullying behavioural script and, therefore, targeted academics knowing about these warning signs techniques should be able to act early to reduce and/or neutralize threats to their physical and mental health and well-being, career and reputation.



The use of these common five GGRID tactics by perpetrators are both harmful and unlawful [5]. Exposure to goading and gaslighting even for a short period of time leads to tearfulness, irritability, low morale, and low mood, suspicion and insomnia [8,9]. Following a longer period, the targets may have a mental breakdown and be diagnosed with depression and even cardiovascular diseases [10].

Post-traumatic stress disorder also emerges from the combination of stress, mistrust, exposure to traumatic encounters, fear, and alarm [11]. Recovery is usually more difficult owing to the imposed isolation of the targets and their fear of more severe retaliation if they expose the bully and/or their tactics. Over time, the targets' self confidence and self-esteem become eroded thereby making it

more difficult for them to resist the aggressor's sabotaging, interfering, or impeding their work performance, professional reputation and private and family life [12].

The perpetrators of these behaviours are contravening international human rights and fundamental freedoms [7], the law and the University's own mission to maintain a safe and healthy workplace for the advancement of knowledge.

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