From Threats to Scars: Who does HR go to? Understanding Workplace Violence Towards HR Professionals

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"Let's commit to recognising and addressing the mental wellbeing needs of HR professionals, ensuring they have the tools and support necessary to thrive personally and professionally"

(Wilmore, 2024)

Acknowledgments

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Terms of References

WPV - Workplace Violence

HR – Human Resources

SME - Small and Medium Enterprises

HSE - Health and Safety Executive

ONS - Office for National Statistics

PTSD - Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

WHO - World Health Organization

PESTLE - Political, Economic, Sociological, Technological, Legal and Environmental

VUCA - Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous

EAP - Employee Assistance Programme

EDI - Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

TA - Transactional Analysis

DA - The Drama Triangle

ED - Empowerment Dynamic

PX - Participant X (X=Number of Participant)

UWSTD - University of Wales Trinity Saint David

CA – Content Analysis

DSA - Descriptive Statistics Analysis

SGM – Safeguarding Measures

Abstract

Purpose:

This dissertation will focus on understanding and exploring workplace violence towards HR professionals and evaluate current safeguarding measures to identify its adequacy, following the rise of violence towards HR professionals. The research will also explore the implications experiencing workplace violence towards mental health. This was undertaken following the identified gaps in literature supporting this topic. Therefore, the following research question was formulated:

"Is safeguarding adequate within the private HR sector when experiencing Workplace Violence?".

Methodology:

Mixed-methods research was used to explore this research. The participant data used for the analysis was collected through both closed and open-ended surveys. Data collected from participants was analysed using content and descriptive statistics analysis.

Key Findings:

Based on the review of findings, the researcher can demonstrate that there is a prevalence of WPV towards HR professionals in the private sector. From the 19 participants that partook in the survey, the findings indicated that HR professionals who experience WPV, exist in a microcosm of organisational culture. Additionally, safeguarding measures within the HR private sector is not adequate to safeguard HR professionals, rendering them vulnerable.

Implications:

This study raises awareness and outlines workplace violence towards HR professionals and addresses a literature review gap that was identified. The existing literature and collected data suggest a need for viable business changes to adequately safeguard HR professionals.

These recommendations consist of workplace violence policies, implementation of workplace violence and manager training, increase employee engagement and build organisation trust and finally, implement mental health and wellbeing support systems for HR professionals to engage with, following workplace violence incidences.

Conclusion:

The research question to answer was "Is safeguarding adequate within the private HR sector when experiencing Workplace Violence?". The answer based on this study is no, safeguarding is not adequate within the private sector to safeguard HR professionals. Although WPV is prevalent within the HR sector, more research is needed within this field for a definitive answer as there is a lack of research and literature gaps.

1. Introduction and Research Rationale

1.1 Background

Workplaces in the UK are undergoing significant transformations which has led to an increase of reported incidences of workplace violence (WPV) (Samnani and Singh, 2012; Santaularia et al, 2022); given rise by key factors such as economic uncertainties, financial constraints and negative external perceptions of the company and HR itself (Patmore, 2017; Ryu and Fan, 2022). According to the Office for National Statistics (ONS, 2023) there has been a 20% increase in offences of violence against individuals compared to pre-COVID-19.

This substantial rise warrants an analysis of WPV, including its impact and the key elements which contribute to workplace aggression and hostility.

1.1.1 Evolution of HR in the Private Sector: Historical Background and Evolved Responsibilities

Originating in the UK in the early 20th century, the HR professional started its beginnings as welfare officers. During the industrial revolution, tensions started to increase between the employer and employees due to poor industrial working and health and safety practices. Welfare officers were responsible for managing unwell and injured employees from being exploited in inhumane conditions (Velvikaite, 2017).

The role of HR underwent a transformation during the economic fluctuations of the 1980s and 1990s (Jeffery, 2021). Characterised as the boom-and-bust period (Hayes, 2024), the UK experienced financial crisis which resulted in businesses downsizing and restructuring. This started to create negative views of HR as they were perceived as being complicit partners in the dismissal and restructuring

processes and enforcers of rules and policies (Namely, 2018). However, this period underlined the need for HR to transcend its traditional administrative role and adopt a strategic stance.

Today HR has evolved to become a pivotal strategic partner in businesses. In addition to managing compliance with employment laws and regulations, HR professionals are tasked with strategising organisational initiatives to adapt to economic changes, optimise the labour force and mitigate workplace tensions to support businesses to thrive (Ballinger et al, 2013; Pophal, no date; Watson, 2010).

HR's growth has influenced workplace environments by promoting improving employment rights and fair practices, leading to legislative changes such as the Employment Relations (Flexible Working) Act 2023 and influence campaigns including ""Flexible Working Requests as a Day One Right" (CIPD, 2022a; GOV.UK, 2023).

HR's function within the private sector varies based on the organisational size, structure and industry. Private sector businesses are inherently market-driven enterprises, focused on selling products or services to generate profit based on customer demand. This differs from public and nonprofit organisations which are typically created and/or funded by the government (Farnham, 2015, pp.66–70).

HR departments within the private sector often comprise of generalists and operate within smaller teams due to the nature and resources stakeholders provide (Berns, 2021), such as the imperative of "stack em high, sell em cheap" model (Skidmore, 2012). In comparison, HR roles within the public sector tend to be more specialised and sustained by public funding (Hayes, 2016; Personnel Today, 2004).

The profit-driven ethos prevalent in private sector businesses can influence employee engagement, potentially fostering negative resistance to certain decisions of the business (Nelson and Henry, 2024). This, coupled with the decline of trade union representation (Department for Business & Trade, 2023) (Figure 1), and lone working among HR professionals may contribute to increased incidents of WPV within the private sector.
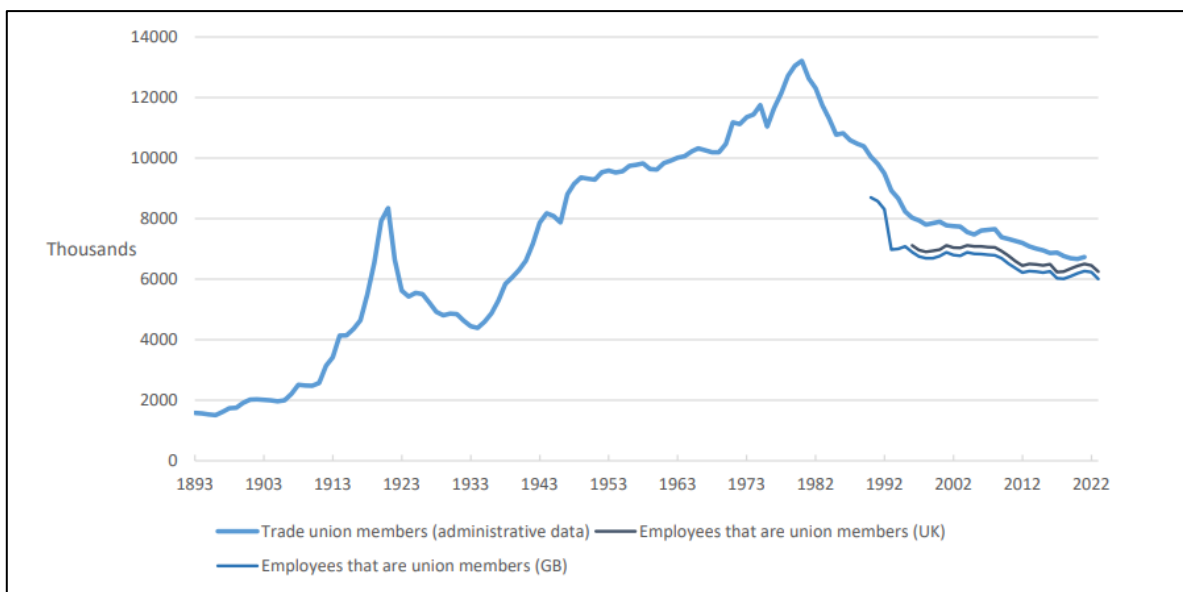
Figure 1 *Trade Union Membership Levels Among Employees in the UK and Great Britain, 1892 to 2022 (Department for Business and Trade, 2023).*

1.1.2 Violence in the Workplace

According to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE, 2024a), WPV represents "any incident in which a person is abused, threatened, or assaulted in circumstances relating to their work", along with verbal abuse, threats or physical attacks.

HSE (2024b), estimated incidents of WPV- including assaults and threats - of 649,000. In comparison to the 2020 HSE report, WPV incident levels have remained similar for the last decade (see Figure 2) despite preventative measures, such as laws and regulations, to minimise risk of harm (CIPD, 2022b; Bensimon, 1994;

Health and Safety at Work Act, 1974; The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations, 1999).
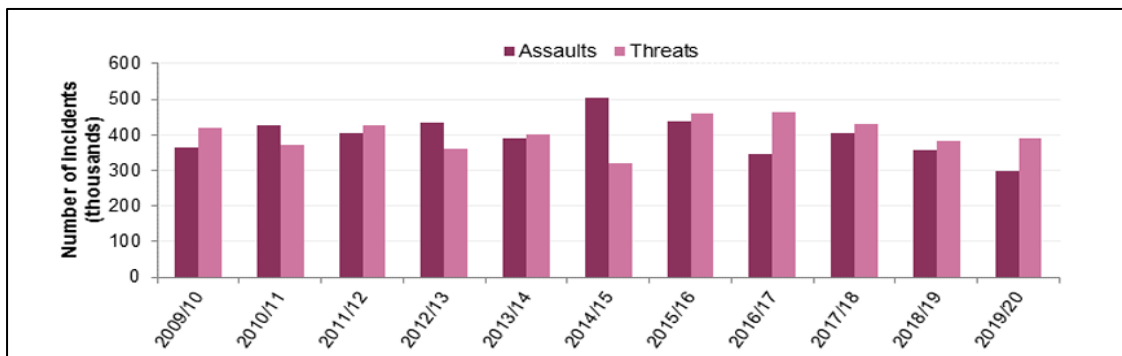
Figure 2 *Estimated Number of Incidents of Violence of Work for Adults of Working Age in Employment 2009/10 - 2019/20 (HSE, 2020).*

The 2020 HSE report (Figure 3) shows violence directed towards "Managers, Directors and Senior Officials" accounted for 1.9% of incidents increasing to 3.2% in the 2024b report where they were categorised in the top five highest risk occupational groups (Figure 4). This increase has escalated substantially, with the 2011 report by the HSE suggesting this group were low risk of experiencing WPV.

Percentages			Adults of working age in employment[2]	
	Assaults	Threats	All violence at work	Unweighted base-number of adults
	Percentage victims once or more			
Managers, Directors and Senior Officials	0.8	1.2	1.9	4,029
Corporate managers and directors	0.6	0.9	1.4	2,724
Other managers and proprietors	1.1	1.9	2.9	1,305

Figure 3 *Excerpt of Reported Incidents (HSE, 2020).*
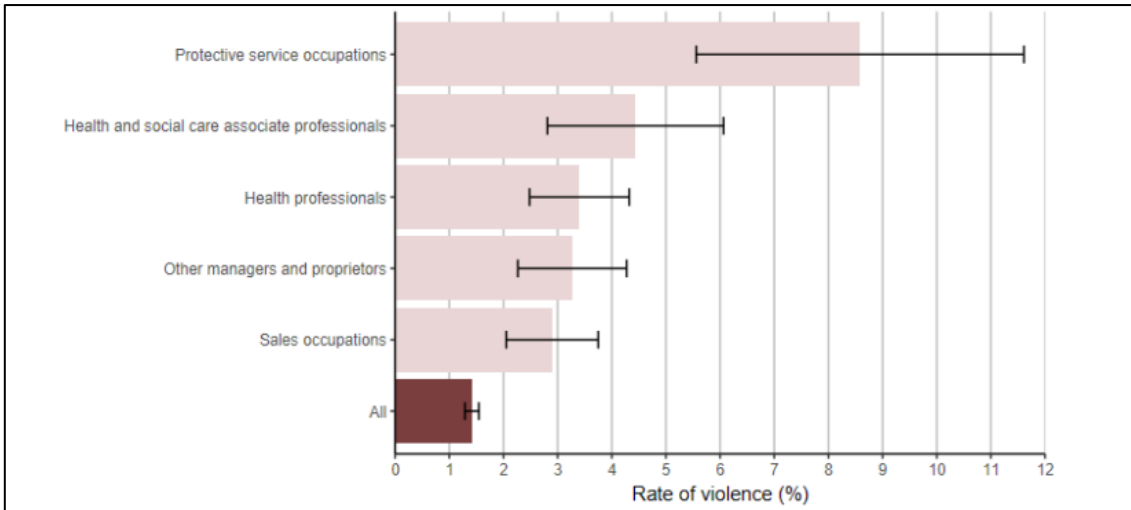
Figure 4 *Violence Experienced by Occupation (HSE, 2024b).*

Further statistics (HSE, 2024) report 41% of incidents resulted in injuries (see Figure 5). Furthermore, 38% of victims knew their offenders, with 4% of perpetrators of WPV being colleagues (Figure 6).
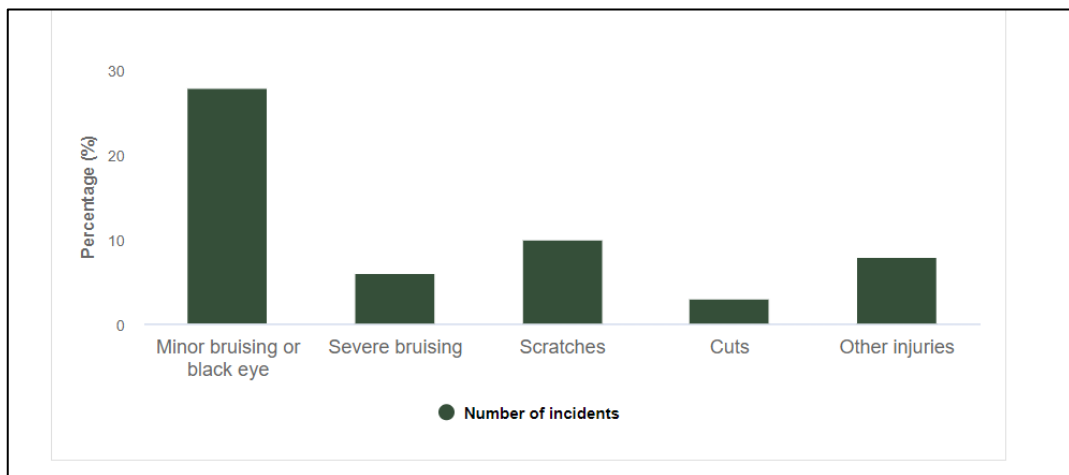
Figure 5 *Type of Injury Resulting from Assaults, 2022/23 as a Percentage of all Assaults Resulting in an Injury (HSE, no date).*
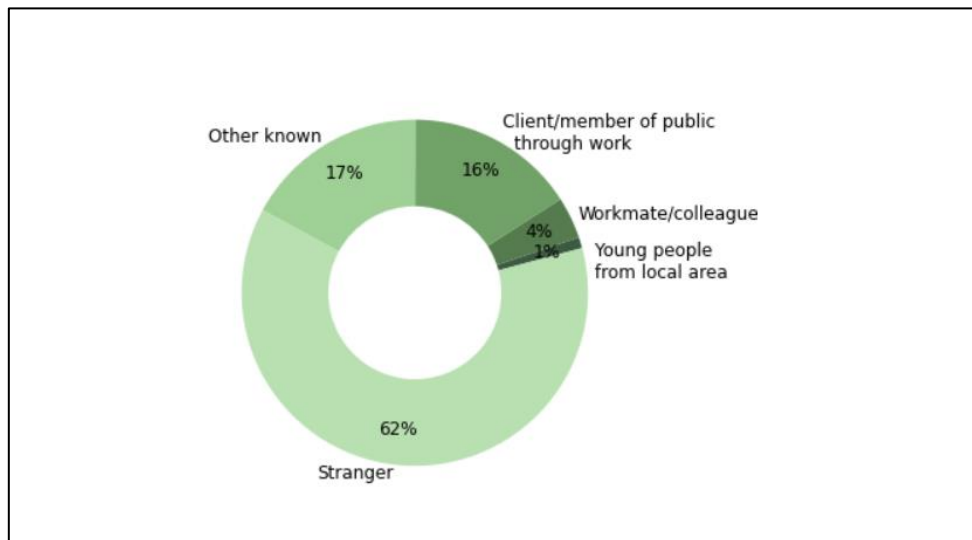
Figure 6 *Offender - Victim Relationship for Adults of Working Age in Employment, 2022/23 (HSE, no date).*

1.1.3 Exploring the Causes of WPV

Considering the dramatic changes globally post 2020, there have been many potential factors that have affected WPV within the UK workforce, including the cost-of-living crisis, recession and drop in Gross Domestic Product (Brein et al., 2022). Although this did not lead to serious long-term economic decline, it did impact public health, education and socioeconomics (The British Academy, 2021). To evaluate the current economic state affecting WPV, a PESTLE analysis (CIPD, 2024b) (Appendix 1) has been provided to evaluate what could be impacting increased WPV. The PESTLE analysis displays multiple factors, especially the economy and social factors have had a significant impact on the public. Additionally, it suggests that UK workforces are navigating through a Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous (VUCA) environment (Bennett and Lemoine, 2014; Cavusgil, et al. 2021).

Furthermore, the recent COVID-19 pandemic may have contributed to incidences of violence, such as lockdown isolation and social anxiety (Hwang et al., 2020; Kindred and Bates, 2023), as well as a 25% global increase in anxiety and depression (World

Health Organisation [WHO], 2022). The uncertainty and unpredictability of COVID-19, both during and post-pandemic, may have impacted individuals' responses within the workplace, potentially leading to increases with WPV incidences. Additionally, as shown in the previous section, this paradigm shifts from pre- to post-COVID-19 has seen a rise in WPV towards higher management throughout the UK (HSE, 2011; 2020; 2024).

Consideration of recent economic changes are not the only reason that violence occurs. Woods (1997) also states that there are other factors that influence hostile aggression, including biological explanations and social influences.

Whilst the socio-economic changes are not the only reason for rises in WPV, other factors such as biological and social influences, beyond the global situation, must be considered. For example, the role of testosterone in aggression. Whilst extrapolating from animals poses some difficulties, Woods (1997), explains Wade and Tavris's experiments of the role of aggression in male monkeys, finding that aggression increased with age, when compared with their female counterparts. These findings emerged on a study of war veterans, where blood samples indicated higher testosterone levels correlated with a history of elevated aggression (Dabbs and Morris, 1990). However, this study highlighted the need for a larger population sample, as well as acknowledging other factors, such as, social class, as influences of aggression. Whilst both studies have complications when making comparisons to the general population and the workforce, they do highlight testosterone as a potential factor for aggression, which is further supported with recent research (Geniole et al., 2020).

Furthermore, another factor to consider is whether aggression is a socially learnt behaviour, as proposed by Bandura (1965); theorised aggression can be developed through observing or modelling the actions of others. Individuals may mimic aggressive behaviours demonstrated by influential or powerful figures within their lives, both real and fictional. Beyond the biological, social and behavioural factors, there are external influences, such as drugs and alcohol, which can heighten aggression towards others (Becks and Heinz, 2013; Marten, 2022).

1.2 Rationale

Several scenarios of WPV towards HR professionals were observed which perceived a lack of adequate safeguarding measures (SGM) (Figure 7). Despite implementing SGM, UK-based WPV incidents have persisted over the past decade, particularly targeting management roles, with many HR professionals disclosing they have experienced WPV and fears of WPV and aggression worsening (Grey, Myers and Myers, 1999; Maurer, 2019).
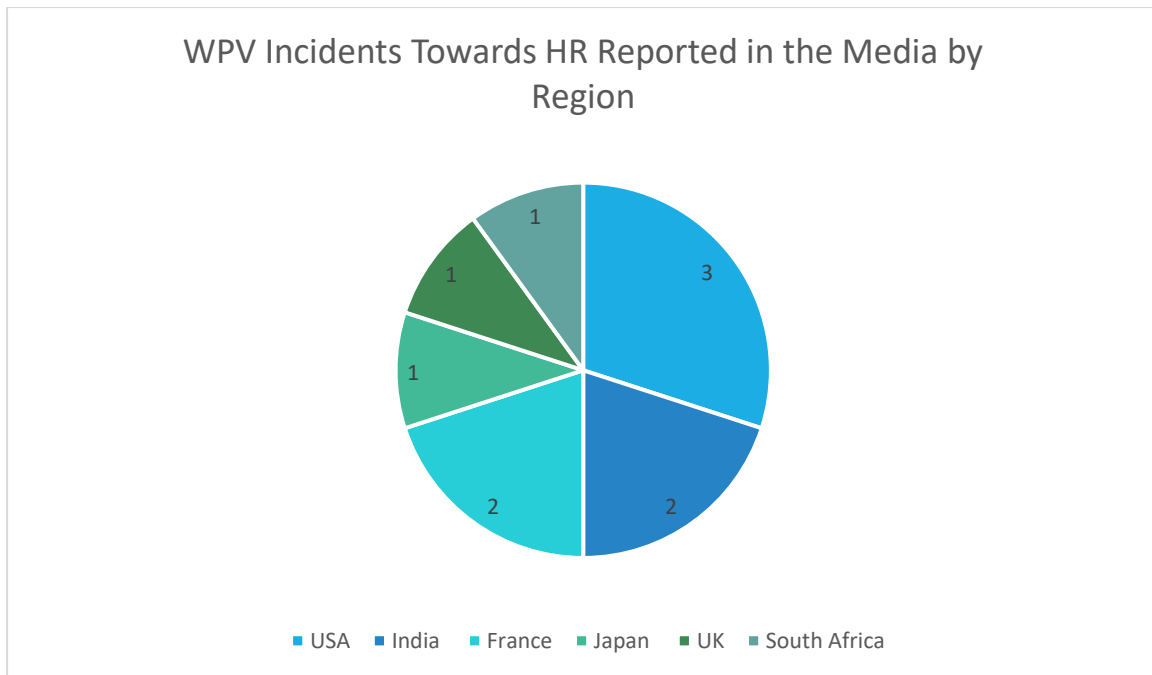
Figure 7 *WPV Incidents Towards HR Report in the Media by Region (Ailworth and Barratt, 2019; Albrecht, 2022; BBC, 2021; Chambers, 2016; People Matters, 2009; Prasad, 2012; Prosser, 2022; The Times of India, 2022; Willsher, 2015).*

The repercussions significantly affect both individual well-being, organisational stability and financial burden for companies. Evidently, workplace conflict costs UK businesses approximately £28 billion annually (Webber, 2023). However, these studies predominantly address interpersonal conflicts, rather than violence directed at HR professionals, suggesting a literature gap, notably, smaller-scale surveys and research papers. Therefore, research was included which focused on WPV towards managers or those with an authoritative role, and internationally sourced research.

The scope of the research focuses on the private sector, due to a literature gap as well as the author's personal experience with private sector HR, this became an inclusion criteria for the participants selected and a basis of the research design.

The author's own personal exposure during their career within HR suggests that private sector HR professionals experience WPV more frequently, due to broader responsibilities, compared to public sector, which is typically more specialised due to organisational size and complexity. Therefore, it was deemed most suitable to focus research within the UK. The reason for this choice is firstly, time and resource constraints limit the scope to national research. Secondly, foreign countries adopt different laws, socio-cultural expectations, which influence functionality and behaviours of employees (Hall-Jones, 2019).

The point of this research is to explore and discuss WPV towards HR professionals and raise business awareness. Often the HR community or businesses do not discuss this side of the role, and the researcher hopes it will show that this needs to be a consideration. This will be an opportunity to demonstrate this as there is a lack of research in this area, moreover, it was noted a concerning lack of SGM implemented for the protection of HR professionals themselves, rendering them vulnerable within the profession.

1.3 Research Aims, Question and Objectives

This research aims to explore WPV targeting HR professionals within the UK private sector. Specifically, the preconceptions towards HR, how WPV is managed and its ongoing effects. This should lead to practical recommendations regarding safeguarding for HR professionals, creating safer working environments. Therefore, creating the overall research question of:

"Is safeguarding adequate within the private HR sector when experiencing Workplace Violence?".

1.3.1 Objectives

1. Through review of the literature, explore violent events experienced by HR professionals, analyse and identify underlying patterns of violence and why this occurs.

2. To establish the perceptions of HR professionals by its employees and contributing factors that increase the risk of WPV.

3. To analyse existing behaviour theory and its relevance as to why HR professionals are subjected to WPV.

4. To explore current SGM in the private sector for HR professionals.

5. To conduct primary research with participants to evaluate firsthand accounts of WPV and how participants reacted.

6. To make valid and realistic recommendations to businesses, to reduce the risk of WPV.

2. Literature Review

The review will explore the perception of HR and employers in recent years, focusing on trust and power dynamics that potentially impact the workforce. Followed by evaluating HR's response to WPV, underpinned by research models and theories in relation to WPV such as Karpman's Drama Triangle (1968) and transactional analysis (Berne, 1961).

The review will also evaluate the current support employers provide to keep employees safe from impairments experienced from WPV. In conclusion, this review will influence this dissertation's primary research, which will provide informed and realistic recommendations implemented to mitigate violence and show greater safeguarding processes.

2.1 Violence and Perceptions in the HR profession

The global HR profession appears to be experiencing an escalation of violent outbursts and attacks by employees in the workplace, as presented in a survey conducted by Maurer (2019). showing nearly half of 1,416 HR professionals surveyed had experienced incidents of WPV, due to in part negative preconceptions of the role. Another study by Metlife (Drysdale, 2016), reported that one in seven HR professionals felt physically threatened while managing workplace disputes. A recent case of this was the HR murders in France (BBC, 2021). Dubbed the "HR killer", a former employee, Gabriel Fortin, targeted HR professionals involved in his termination process, which sadly led to their deaths as he believed that they were responsible for "ruining his career" (Armstrong, 2023).

A similar case occurred in Aurora, Illinois, whereby an employee, Gary Martin, shot and killed 5 colleagues, these included a plant manager, HR manager and HR intern.

Sadly, through investigations Gary had previously threaten that if he were terminated, he would kill anyone involved, however this went unreported by his colleagues as they didn't take him seriously. After this tragic event, the company, Henry Pratt, offered counselling and other employee assistance programmes (EAP) to help support its employees (Hutchinson, 2019).

HR professionals are perhaps experiencing instances of WPV due to the negative preconceptions of the duties within the role. As mentioned in the introduction, WPV can be caused by many factors, one of which is a result of COVID-19. Whereby employees have struggled to integrate back into a face-to-face workforce and additionally not being able to handle stressful work situations or processes demonstrated more aggressive outbursts and incivility toward management (Porath, 2022). Especially hostility towards HR who manage these processes, as shown by Wade Macdonald (Sriganthan, 2023), more than half of HR professionals claimed they are dealing with more employee relations (ER) issues than before COVID-19, indicating a lack of trust when dealing with these processes.

Ryan (2016) explains that HR professionals are frequently perceived as solely protecting the interests of the organisation and often refer to policy enforcement instead of displaying empathic consideration deeming them untrustworthy as professionals (Bolsu, 2019; Daruszka, 2014; Hammonds, 2005; Heathfield, 2022; Muller, 2014).

KnowledgeCity (2022) highlights that HR are stereotyped and feared by the workforce. Often the involvement of HR is perceived by employees that they're getting dismissed. This leads to negative preconceptions surrounding the HR role,

causing difficulty for HR personnel to be productive and navigating a working environment. However, there is a lack of literature that can definitively prove this.

Despite this, a study by Paukert, Guay and Kim (2021) suggests that Millennials and Generation Z think that HR is changing positively, however negative perceptions still exist. They suggest that HR professionals should understand why people in the organisation think negatively about the function and strive to change these views for employee engagement.

A key factor for the negative perception is the lack of trust held towards HR professionals due to its company culture and power dynamics within the role as studies above suggest. According to Michels (2019), nearly two-thirds of global senior executives believe that trust within their businesses is in decline in the current climate. Additionally, although CEOs identify this as a threat to the business growth, little has been done to increase trust in businesses, considering high trust companies are more productive (PwC, 2016; Wietrak and Gifford, 2024; Zak, 2017).

Hope-Hailey, Searle and Dietz (2012) further suggest that employees perceive a lack of trust towards their HR representatives, due to the lack of consistency applying policies. However, CIPD (2011), argued that to repair this trust, businesses and HR need to create and open and transparent culture. HR must realise they are tasked with the challenge of mediating without compromising the legal security of the organisation, while safeguarding employee wellbeing.

2.2 HR's Response to WPV

Throughout recent decades, external organisations and government have put laws in place to keep people safe at work and combat WPV, such as Health and Safety at Work Act (1974), The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations

(1999), The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (2013) and Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Act (2007). These laws are reinforced in the workplace through internal policies are managed and enforced by HR departments.

Hope-Hailey, Searle and Dietz (2012) state that HR's policies and procedures are critical as they are influential in any business operations, however HR's involvement to these policies have been criticised as it's alleged that HR have inappropriate control in monitoring and enforcing these procedures or poorly apply them (Legge, 2005; Neal et al., 2023). However, as seen in Figure 2, incidence of WPV has remained unchanged for over a decade.

2.2.1 The Fixer Mentality: HR's Role and Emotional Burden in WPV

An aim of HR is to mitigate WPV through policies and procedures. However, when HR professionals experience WPV themselves, they often feel it's their responsibility to fix and resolve the issue, assuming a "fixer" role due to the trust and power that comes with a HR position (Hayes, 2024). Perhaps this comes from HR's historical origins, contributing to helping individuals and resolving issues. However, having a "fixer" mentality has been criticised for having serious disadvantages to a person's character, often associated with a need for control, validation and linked to perfectionism (Mckenna, 2023). This inevitably will lead to unsustainable work levels, stress and burnout (Bailey, 2024).

HR professionals may believe that it is part of their role to resolve WPV incidents before escalating the issue or following established processes (HSE, no date; UNISON, 2013). As HR are often relied on to implement these strategies to reduce

WPV (Ghosh, Jacobs and Reio, 2011), it can also exacerbate this fixer mentality and placing themselves at risk.

The underreporting of WPV still remains a problem at both subordinate and management levels (Arnetz et al., 2015; Hughes, 2001; Saleem, Shenbei and Hanif, 2020), as shown by Jossi (1999) six in ten cases of WPV are not reported. This could be the case for HR professionals whereby they try to resolve the matter informally to avoid perceptions of failure (UNISON, 2013) and could be the reason that they do not report WPV to their local authorities.

Over time the HR profession has become complex due to its expanding responsibilities (Ellehave and Ulrich, 2021; Ferrer, Saville, and Pyman, 2023). Kulik et al. (2009) refers to this as the "dark side" of HR, where the emotional intensity of the role could cause overworking, leading to emotional and physical personal challenges. Similarly, Granter et al. (2018) and Tehrani (2009) describe such intense demands as "extreme work." To combat this, Bingham (2020) implies that HR leaders need to adapt to employees needs in uncertain times, particularly embracing the complexity and collaborating with employees to create inclusive working cultures and interpersonal relationships to mitigate WPV.

Contrary to this, Granter, McCann, and Boyle (2015) argue that "extreme work" should be referred to those in high-risk roles such as emergency services and military positions where there is a direct threat to life. However, they also recognise that increase work responsibility and intensity in less risky roles, like HR, can lead to similar stressors, such as longer working hours, increase workload and work-life spillover (Bunting, 2004; McCann, Morris, and Hassard, 2008) that we've seen for HR professionals in recent years that have led to burnout (Gamber, 2020; Roberts,

2023). There are also comparisons between HR to healthcare professionals, sharing a tendency to downplay the emotional impact of their work, stating, "it's what they signed up for" (McCann et al., 2013), however this could lead to trauma based on the situations they handle (Duran and Woodhams, 2022; Jethmalani, 2024; Salston and Figley, 2003).

Further to this Daniel (2017) describes HR professionals as "toxic handlers," absorbing the emotional burdens of employees who expect HR to resolve their problems. This role requires high levels of emotional intelligence and control.

2.2.2 Theories of Responsibility and Conflict in HR's Role Addressing Workplace Violence

As discussed, HR professionals often adapt a "fixer" mentality, believing it is their responsibility to resolve conflict and WPV due to their positions having trust and authority (Hayes, 2024). To better understand why HR professionals, assume this responsibility and why they may experience higher instances of WPV, it is essential to examine theories that explain responsibility roles and conflict dynamics.

2.2.2.1 The Drama Triangle

The Drama Triangle (DT) was developed by Karpman (1968) (Figure 8) and adapted from Berne (1964), Transactional analysis model (TA). The TA model provided a framework to analyse and understand adult interactions by categorising three ego states – Parent, Adult and Child. These ego states shape how individuals think, feel and behave during communications with each other. An adult-to-adult style of communication is essential to avoid conflict (Liddle, 2017; Murray, 2023).

Building on this, the DT is a social model of destructive human interpersonal interactions, it depicts three dysfunctional relationships or "states" in the

circumstances of "drama" or conflict, the Victim, the Persecutor and the Rescuer (Branford, 2023).

Each person can change and their roles during an interaction depending on the circumstance, whereas each role has associated toxic characteristics and emotional strains (Lac & Donaldson, 2020), especially if the cycle of emotionally charged situations continue (Brandford, 2023; Lac and Donaldson, 2020). Berne (1961) suggests that people adopt these roles drawing from childhood experiences. Particularly, the wanting of their needs met, without stating their needs directly. People within these roles prioritize their own needs without consideration for others, trapping them in the cycle. (Burgess, 2005).

2.2.2.2 Roles in the DT

1. The Victim

   Depicted as the role that feels persecuted seeking rescue, often presenting themselves as powerless to their circumstances, or unwilling to take responsibility (McKimm & Forrest, 2010). (McMahon, 2005; Shmelev, 2015). While they may seek sympathy, their refusal to address conflict can frustrate others and reinforce perceptions of incompetence (Balfour, 2024).

2. The Persecutor

   This role is associated with aggression and a need for control. They adopt hypercritical behaviours, seeking to assert dominance, (Balfour, 2024; McKimm & Forrest, 2010), often justifying their actions but risk perpetuating toxic work environments through anger and frustration (Shmelev, 2015).

3. The Rescuer

   Although rescuers have good intentions, they risk burnout by overburdening themselves when saving others while neglecting their own wellbeing

(Leadership Tribe, 2023). Rescuers may exhibit a sense of self-importance or justice, believing they know best how to resolve issues. However, this approach can unintentionally undermine others' ability to address their challenges and create further conflict (Burgess, 2005; Shmelev, 2015).

Figure 8 *The Karpman Drama Triangle and the Different 'Actors' (Branford, 2023).*

In the leader context, Thiemann (2023) describes the DT as a manifestation of toxic behaviours; Micromanaging (Rescuer), authoritarian tactics (Persecutor) and Avoidance (Victim). Inevitably. This will have an impact on business growth through increased absenteeism, employee turnover and decreased productivity (Corne and Rensburg, 2022).

To mitigate these potential risks, Jones (2020) suggested that businesses should adapt to the Empowerment Dynamic (ED) (Emerald, 2016) (Figure 9). This model reframes the DT roles into constructive counterparts:

- The Victim will transition into the Creator, learning how to take ownership and proactively communicate more positively to seek solutions.

- The Persecutors will transition into the Challengers, providing feedback more constructively and progressively pushing others to grow and develop their skills.

- The Rescuers will transition into a Coach, guiding others to resolve problems, developing their problem-solving skills and advising where improvement is needed constructively.
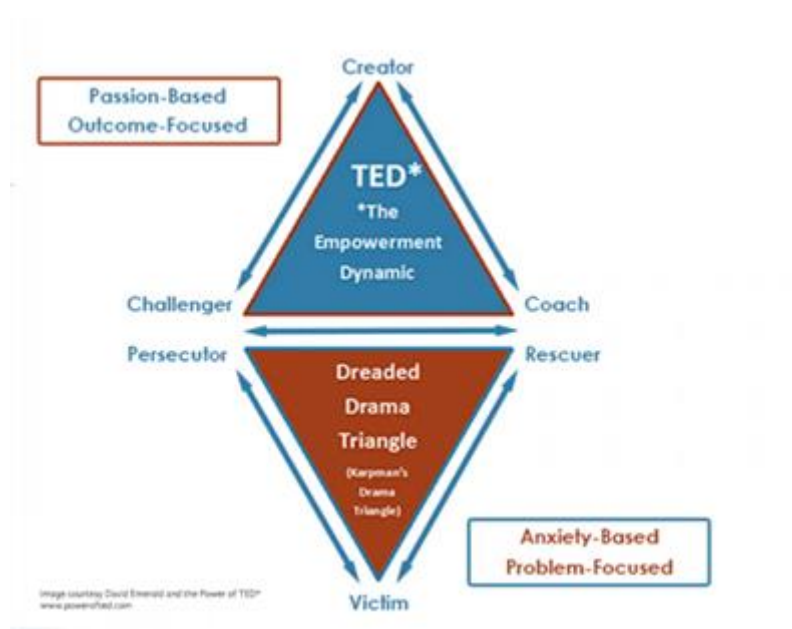
Figure 9 *The Empowerment Dynamic (Potter, 2023).*

2.2.2.3 Applications of Models within the HR Role

Both the DT and TA are both valuable insights to HR's interactions with employees when experiencing WPV. HR professionals often assume the role of Rescuer and parent, attempting to mediate conflicts between employees, however it can leave HR professionals overextended and hinder their ability to balance their responsibilities effectively (Dethmer, 2023; Jones, 2020). Although they have good intentions and try to resolve these issues, they may face emotional strain and increased risk of experiencing WPV.

By adopting the ED framework and pursuing more Adult-to-Adult interactions, it can assist HR professionals navigate situations of conflict more effectively. By setting boundaries, supporting others with their problem-solving skills and maintaining emotional intelligence, this can reduce the risks of WPV, improve HR's productivity, and enhance overall well-being (Balfour, 2024).

2.3 Evaluation of WPV Impact on HR and Current SGM

As explored in the introduction, WPV has a detrimental impact on the business' productivity and profits. This section will further analyse the impact on victims of WPV and HR professionals and evaluate SGM that are in place.

2.3.1 Impact of WPV on Victims and HR Professionals

Surrounding research indicates that experiencing WPV can lead to the development of mental health disorders such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Bremner, 2006; NHS Wales, no date)

Traumatic experiences trigger the brain's protective mechanisms, which can disrupt cognitive functions, including memory formation, learning, and emotional regulation (NHS Wales, no date.).

If left unaddressed, the psychological toll of WPV can escalate, manifesting as chronic depression, burnout, substance abuse, or suicidal ideation or completion (Briggs et al., 2012; Fox et al., 2020).

These findings highlight the urgent need for effective intervention strategies, including timely access to counselling, mental health support, and organisational policies aimed at preventing WPV. Addressing the long-term consequences of WPV not only mitigates harm to individual employees, through burnout, but could also reduce broader socio-economic impacts on businesses. (Duan et al., 2019; Folkman and Lazarus, 1991; Olafsson & Johannsdottir, 2004).

2.3.2 How WPV impact HR professionals

HR professionals face unique challenges when exposed to WPV, often experiencing its effects indirectly or directly while managing ER related cases (Roper, 2024). Turney (2024) argues that due to the fast-paced nature of the HR role, it does not allow the opportunity for professionals to reflect on the traumatic experiences, leading to enhanced emotional strain as depicted above. During COVID-19, Kelly (2022) noted that HR professionals were unable to evaluate their own burnout levels or wellbeing concerns due to workload pressures. This can exacerbate the feeling of burnout, compassion fatigue, decreased job satisfaction and role effectiveness (Fischbach, 2003; Poynter, 2002). Bashford (2018) points out that HR professionals often neglect their own health and wellbeing by prioritising other's needs. This is captured in a HR professional statement:

"The expectations on HR have never been higher. People feel stretched, challenged, and quite often unsupported. ... Pressure on HR is increasing. HR is being expected to engineer solutions to profound cultural problems [like mental health and diversity and inclusion] at the same time as their day job ...We are supposed to be the strong,

resilient type. If we show signs of weakness ourselves, then who can the business trust?"

In recent studies, a prevalence of burnout among HR professionals has been observed. Both Jethmalani (2024) and Tornone (2023) highlight that HR professionals need to adapt to an dynamic VUCA environment, however 98% of HR professionals are feeling burnout and experiencing vicarious trauma.

This is reinforced in CIPD's (2023a) research that states the physical and emotional demands from HR professionals since COVID-19 have impacted the level of burnout among the profession with raised expectations and negative interactions within the business (Truworth Wellness, 2024) (Figure 10).
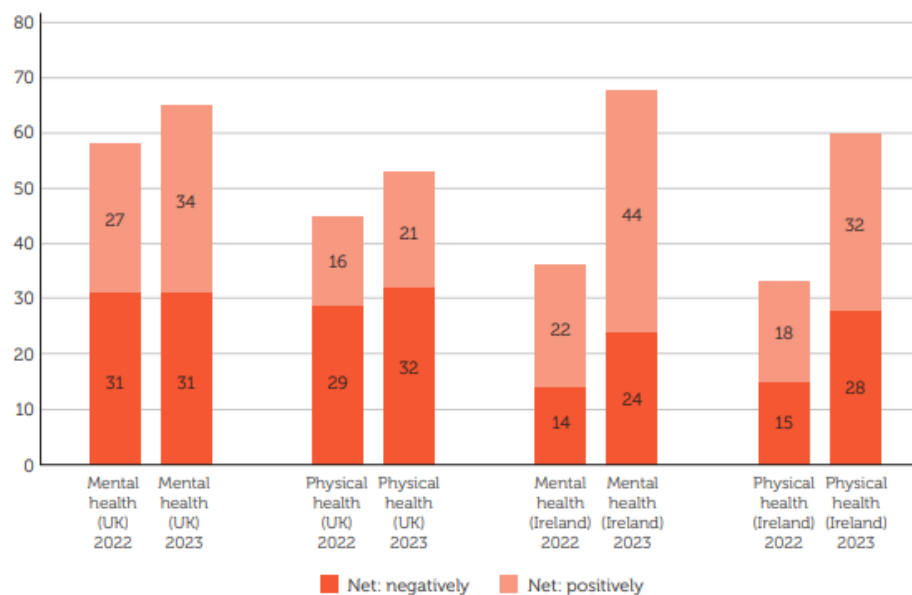
Figure 10 *The number of respondents stating that work positively affects their physical and mental health has risen in 2023 (CIPD, 2023b).*

To address these challenges, Turney (2024) suggests that HR professionals need to acknowledge their trauma, seek professional support and adopt effective coping mechanisms, including self-care practices and boundary-setting.

2.3.3 Current SGM

Within the public sector, the NHS' healthcare staff experience a considerable volume of WPV as it is public facing. As a result, the NHS is under more scrutiny to implement effective SGMs. SGM include comprehensive risk assessments, training, security officers, and tools such as body-worn cameras and panic buttons (NHS, 2020; NHS England, 2022) These measures provide a degree of protection and act as deterrents while offering evidence for legal action when necessary.

In contrast, there is limited research on SGM in private-sector organisations, where HR departments often rely on reactive approaches to violence. Anfuso (1994) highlights that due to the high violent and murder crimes in the US, companies like Hardee's Food Services and Kraft General Foods HR departments have adopted extensive prevention strategies, such as pre-screening employees, training on managing violent behaviours, and developing clear protocols for reporting threats. Although Bollestad, Amland and Olsen (2022) and Sporleder (2022) argue that hybrid/remote working has mitigated risk of experiencing physical WPV as Managers can control the online setting (e.g., muting or removing perpetrators from calls).

HSE (no date) recommends that additional implementation of control methods such as CCTV, alarm systems, and de-escalation training for senior employees. Other wellbeing resources that businesses have implemented to support employee wellbeing include employee assistance programs and occupational health support (CIPD, 2024c). However, there is less literature explicitly depicting SGM for HR professionals.

2.4 Conclusion of Findings

The literature and research reviewed provides insights to the topic of understanding WPV towards HR professionals and if safeguarding is adequate within the private sector.

The findings demonstrate the negative perceptions held against HR within their roles, puts them at a higher risk of WPV. This is often linked to their duties involving ER related cases. Maurer (2019) showed that nearly half of 1,416 HR professionals surveyed had experienced incidents of WPV, due to in part the negative preconceptions from employees toward HR professionals. Hope-Hailey, Searle, and Dietz (2012) also highlighted employees' mistrust toward HR, which escalates these challenges.

Although external organisations and government have put laws in place to keep people safe at work, and combat against WPV, levels of WPV have failed to decrease over the recent decade. As HR feel responsible for this duty, HR's role as "fixers" places them in a position of heightened vulnerability, often leading to burnout and compassion fatigue. This could have a further impact on the HR professional, leading to severe and long-lasting repercussions.

Theories such as the DT and TA offer insight into these dynamics, demonstrating how HR professionals' tendency to rescue others can unintentionally perpetuate stress and conflict. To mitigate these risks, frameworks like the ED propose strategies to foster healthier interactions and empower HR professionals to set boundaries while supporting others. However, existing SGM, such as de-escalation training and remote work options, remain insufficient in mitigating WPV towards HR professionals.

3. Methodology

This section will explore the research design and philosophical underpinnings, which contributed to the data collection method and analysis relating to objective 4. Following this, this section will discuss the methods used to explore participant's accounts of WPV in HR. This will include sampling and participants, data collection methods, bias and ethical, methodological considerations, validity and quality control. Finally, this section will delve into the analytical method used to analyse data.

3.1 Research Design and Philosophical Underpinnings

Research methods are integral to a research project, defining how research will be undertaken to effectively explore the research questions accurately and objectively (Kumar, 2019). Before proceeding, researchers must understand their own research philosophy and preconceived beliefs, utilising reflexivity as a research tool (Haynes, 2012). Researchers' positionality influences the research design, such as data collection procedures and analysis methods. Therefore, uncovering their ontological and epistemology position and factors, which may influence how and why they undertake research.

A HARP analysis (Saunders et al., 2019) and research were used to determine the researcher's positionality; resulting in the use of critical realism (Bhasker, 1978). A critical realist perspective combines realist ontology and relativist epistemology (Bhasker, 1978; Fleetwood, 2005). This means, whilst there is no single objective truth, individuals construct their reality, relative to their experiences of a phenomenon (Reed, 2005). The use of critical realism allows HR professionals' accounts of WPV to be acknowledged, providing a concise, comprehensive exploration into how HR professionals interpret WPV and the potential impact on them. Furthermore, due to

the author's professional experience of HR, a position which accounts for both the researcher and participants construction of reality and experiences was deemed appropriate. Critical realism was, therefore, utilised as a philosophical basis for research.

Saunder, Lewis and Thornhill (2007) Research Onion (Figure 11) was used to guide the research design as discussed in the following sections:
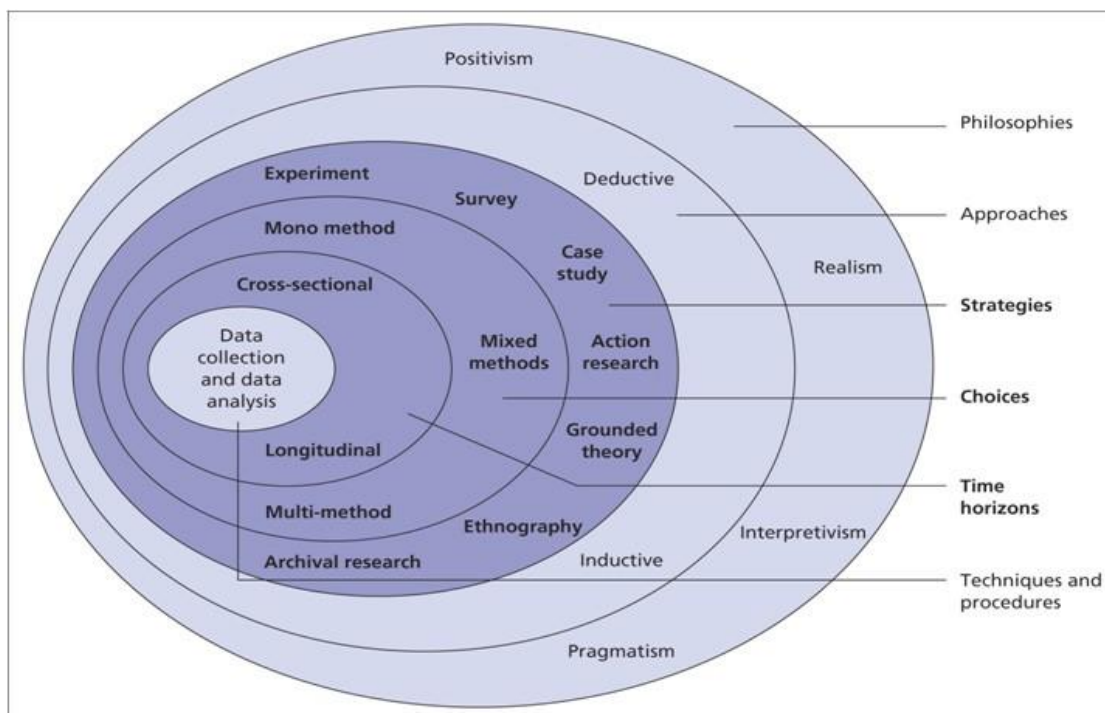
Figure 11 *The Research Onion (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2007).*

A mixed methods approach was implemented, due to the data collection methods used, research question and aims. Mixed methods allowed in-depth data and statistics to be collected surrounding the experiences of WPV in HR professionals, therefore, providing understanding of how these events occurred and why (Molina-Azorin et al. 2017).

Research used an inductive approach to answer the research question. Inductive research is based on detailed observation to create and develop a new research theory (University of Warwick, 2016). Once the theory is established, the researcher can identify patterns and relationships to develop their theory and compile a conclusion (Dudovskiy, 2011). Within this project, the researcher utilised participants' accounts of their experiences of WPV throughout their careers to formulate detailed conclusions and recommendations. This included both qualitative and quantitative survey data. Research is cross-sectional, as it entails participants to disclose their experiences of WPV within their professional HR careers, at a single point in time, in a retrospective manner (Johnson, 2010).

3.2 Sampling and Participants

The researcher used non-probability convenience sampling to select participants (Forster, 2001; Qualtrics, no date). Due to the specificity of the research question, participant datasets were included in the analysis and final write up, if they were compliant with the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Due to the criteria and literature mentioned, participants must be or were employed within HR, within the UK private sector.

The proposed sample size was between 50 to 100 participants. As research is mixed methods, this was justifiable as there would be enough participants to explore the research question. Although this may affect generalisability due to its size, it still allows the researcher to explore and analyse WPV towards HR professionals in the private sector. Whilst non-probability convenience sampling has been criticised for jeopardising the validity and generalisability of its findings (Hooghe et al, 2010), as this is mixed methods research, this is not of particular concern.

Upon closure of the final survey, there were 57 participants, 19 of which disclosed experiencing WPV, therefore the analysis will focus upon the responses from participants who disclosed experiences of WPV. One participant in the final survey did not consent to participation, therefore, was not included in the analysis or report. Of the 56 participants, 93% were women (n=52) and 7% were men (n=4) (Appendix 2). 95% were of white ethic background (Appendix 3), 46% being aged between 35-44 (Appendix 4). The lack of representation across age, gender and ethnicity is acknowledged, however, research used a convenience sample. Therefore, a sampling method which selects participants based on their demographic characteristics, for example, probability sampling, would be used in future research.

Participants were not required to disclose their names, allowing anonymity to be maintained, under Data Protection Act 2018. Participants were referred to as "Participant 1 (P1)" throughout research, to allow for differentiation, whilst maintaining anonymity. Further sociodemographic information is available in Appendix 5 and 6.

3.3 Data Collection Methods

Data was collected using mixed method surveys, distributed throughout the UK through social media platforms, such as HR Groups on Facebook and LinkedIn. Further surveys were distributed to colleagues in the University of Wales Trinity Saint David's (UWTSD) HR education department. The questionnaires will use both closed and open-ended types of questions to gather metrics and participants experiences about WPV (Rowley, 2014).

Before deciding how to collect participant data, the researcher considered other data collection methods, as demonstrated in Table 1 below.

Table 1 *Comparing and Contrasting Data Collection Methods.*

Data Collection Method	Advantages	Disadvantages
Survey/ Questionnaires	Access to large participant populations Allows participants to provide qualitative feedback Higher response rates Accessibility to collect data Low cost Easy to Implement Allows participant to maintain anonymity (Choudhury, 2015)	Participants may not complete the survey due to survey fatigue, thus, reducing completion rates. Participants may give incomplete answers Risk of social desirability effect Time consuming testing and data collection Difficult to develop relationships (Jones, Baxter and Khanduja, 2013)

Interviews	More in-depth qualitative data can be collected	Difficulty generalising findings due to small sample sizes.
	Flexible scheduling	
		Time consuming
	Opportunity to prompt for further detail	
		Risk of social desirability effect
	Can build a rapport with the interviewee.	
		Less anonymity
	(Bailey, 1994; Goyes and Sandberg, 2024)	(Sociology Group, 2019)
Focus groups	Can allow opportunity to have an open discussion	Participant can feel intimidated and or nervous and may not feel that they can speak opening or could also have a leading participant who gives more answers due to personal characteristics.
	Cost and time effective due to collective interviewing.	
	Participants collaboration	
	(Leung and Savithiri, 2009)	

		Can provide dishonest responses or "groupthink scenarios" Time consuming to conduct the focus group and analyse data Accessibility and scheduling participants to be available. (Flayelle, Brevers and Billieux, 2022)

The researcher chose the method of surveys as it allowed access to more participants that may have experience WPV. The survey was created using Microsoft Forms, with assistance from an online tutorial (Bradburn, 2022), other platforms were considered such as Survey Monkey, However, Microsoft forms' formatting and ease of use was the reasoning behind choosing this survey platform.

3.3.1 Pilot Study

A pilot test was undertaken before survey distribution to assess the relevance of questions and effectiveness to gather participants' experiences (Appendix 7). This was distributed to 4 selected HR professionals known to the researcher, who provided valuable feedback (Appendix 8) on the survey structure and line of

questioning. Additionally, participants provided brief responses, promoting in inclusion of more qualitative questions to produce detailed insights to answer the research question. Therefore, this influenced the final questionnaire (Appendix 9).

3.4 Bias, Ethical and Methodological Considerations

Ethical matters were considered prior the dissertation commencement, as it is vital when conducting a research project as this will define the standards of behaviour, influencing decision making (Mirza, Bellalem and Mirza, 2023). Specifically, the questionnaires may cause emotional distress for participants due to the subject matter of the research. To reduce the risks to participants, resources and services were be provided to the participant automatically after the questionnaire has been completed to reduce risk of emotional distress.

Before conducting this research and collecting the data from participants, the researcher also considered and followed the ethical behavioural standards set out by the University of Wales Trinity Saint David (2022) (UWSTD) for all students conducting research and implemented the following:

- Consent for the research conducted was gained from UWTSD, through the research proposal before any research or data collection took place and was circulated.
- Consent from participants was gained at the start of the survey (Appendix 10) and additional information was presented to the participants using informed consent and participant information forms (Appendix 11).
- Participants were informed about the right to withdraw their information and details from the questionnaire at any point up to 2 weeks following the completion of the questionnaire.

- Participants were informed that all data collected would remain confidential and anonymous.

- As there was a safeguarding risk, a debrief message was distributed to all participants after completion, signposting HR professionals to mental wellbeing resources. (Appendix 12).

- Reflexivity was also explored to remove the researchers' preconceived biases, as a HR professional that has experienced WPV.

- Reliability and validity were considered and applied to ensure research credibility, including addressing bias and accurate recording keeping (Morse et al., 2002; Noble and Smith, 2015).

3.4.1 Research Limitations

Throughout this research, several limitations were identified by the researcher, which may have influenced the outcomes of this dissertation. These limitations include:

1. Insufficient sample size for statistical measurements: During the data collection phase, the researcher anticipated a survey response from participants to be between 50 to 100, to obtain detailed and informative data. Although a usual survey response is usually above 250, due to the researcher's nuanced topic and research question, there was justification to decrease this. Out of the 57 participants that undertook the final survey, only 19 experienced workplace violence. Although not a large survey size, this could affect the generalisability in the results and statistic confidence.

2. Insufficient representation in the data set: although this was an open survey for HR professionals to participate there was a lack of diversity as most of the participants that took part were white females between 35-44 years of age.

Although the research Is intended to explore participants violent experiences, it cannot account for the wider representation.

3. Limited access to previous literature: The researcher experienced a lack of previous data and literature regarding HR experiencing violence at work and lack of safeguarding. The researcher therefore had to compare and include research of WPV towards managers or individuals in positions of authority and relevant international sources.

4. Methodological and design issues: As mentioned in section 3.3, surveys were used to collect data from participants. Although this method allowed the researcher to capture the feedback and experiences of the participants. This method can restrict the participants from fully expressing themselves.

Additionally, to allow for more in-depth data, the researcher could have conducted follow up interviews with selected participants, however due to lack of time the researcher was unable to conduct this.

3.5 Analytical Method

The analytical method of content analysis (CA) will be used to analyse the qualitative data and quantitative data with descriptive statistics (DS).

3.5.1 Content Analysis

This analytical method was selected due to the primary objective to take large volumes of data and provide a concise summary of key results to form themes (Bengtsson, 2016; Erlingsson and Brysiewicz, 2017; Krippendorf, 2004). This method also provides the research to have flexibility when analysing the data and

encounter fewer ethical issues. However, this method can be considered as time intensive and may result in missing content as the method has been criticised as too subjective (Crosley, 2021). In addition, conceptual analysis will be used when analysing the collected data. According to Luo (2019), there are five steps to conduct CA as demonstrated in Table 2.

Table 2 *Five Steps of Content Analysis (Luo, 2019).*

Phase	Description
Select the content that will be analysed	Dependant on the question, the researcher will choose the text that need to be analysed. The researcher needs to decide: 1. The medium and genre 2. Inclusion Criteria 3. The boundaries such as date and location This have been explained in section 1 and 4.
Define units and categories to analyse	The level of chosen texts that need to be analyse. Including defining • Unit (s) meaning. • Set categorises – these can be objective or conceptual characteristics e/g age and trustworthiness
Develop rules for coding	Creating codes into defined categories. Coding inductive as deductive coding (pre-determined) codes didn't exist.
Code Text	Analyse each text and sort them into the relevant categorises

Analyse results and draw conclusions	Once the coding is completed and the data analysed, it will show patterns that the researcher can draw conclusions from

3.5.2 Descriptive Statistics Analysis

According to (Fisher and Marshall, 2009), descriptive statistics analysis (DSA), is used to analyse the primary features of a quantitative data set, by using graphical and numerical processes.

This method of analysis was chosen due to its features of analysing a basic but essential data set and helps identify potential issues within its collection. For this research, the use of inferential statistics will not be used.

3.6 Conclusion

By utilising the Research Onion framework (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2007), the researcher was able to construct the research design, including HARP analysis (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2019), to establish the philosophical underpinning of critical realism. These frameworks guided the researcher in selecting an inductive approach and employing a mixed-methods strategy, which involved collecting data through surveys over a cross-sectional timeframe.

Ethical considerations were addressed in accordance with the ethical standards set by the University of Wales Trinity Saint David (2022). Given the sensitive nature of the research on violence, potential emotional distress for participants was considered, and support channels were offered at the end of the survey to mitigate this risk.

The researcher also acknowledged certain limitations, including an insufficient sample size for statistical analysis, underrepresentation within the data set, limited access to prior literature, and some methodological and design challenges. Efforts were made to mitigate these limitations wherever possible.

Ultimately, the methodology led to the conclusion that mixed-method data analysis, including both content analysis and descriptive statistical analysis, was necessary to provide a deeper understanding of the data and address the research question effectively.

4. Results and Discussion

The following section will discuss and analyse data collected from participants to explore the experience of WPV targeting HR professionals and establish if safeguarding measures are adequate for HR professionals in the private sector. Analysing this data will enable the researcher to achieve the research aims, objectives and questions.

The mixed-method research used Krippendorf (2004) and Luo (2019) five stages of CA to analyse the qualitative and quantitative data collected from the surveys, as depicted in Table 2. Conducting this analysis will identify recurring codes relating to the types of violence and impacts it had on participants, by categorising comments and key words into themes and subthemes to draw from the context of participant responses. SDA will also be used to present basic statistics throughout the content analysis.

The data was collected from 56 participants as 1 participant refused consent for the research. It was established that 33.33% of participants (n=19) experience WPV within their HR roles. The other 64.91% (n=37) of participants didn't experience WPV within their roles.

The socioeconomic information was examined to establish if increased WPV was experienced relating to gender or age, shown in Figures 12 and 13, however due to lack of demographic representation within the data collected, the researcher could not establish this.
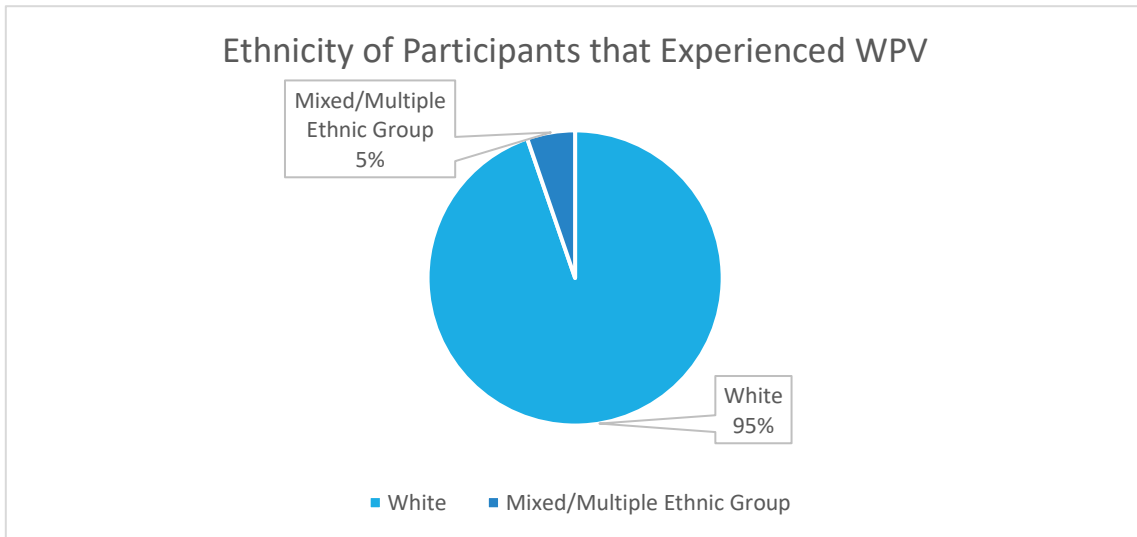
Figure 13 *Ethnicity of Participants that experienced WPV.*
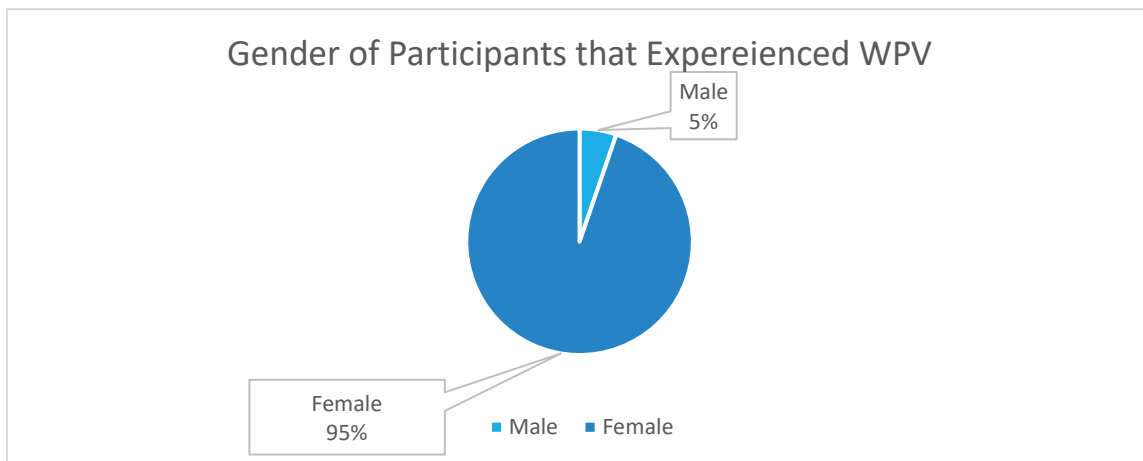
Figure 12 *Gender of Participants that Experienced WPV.*

Other HR related factors collected from participants was also considered, to establish if WPV increases were linked to age, length of career within HR and position, displaying in Figures 14, 15 and 16.
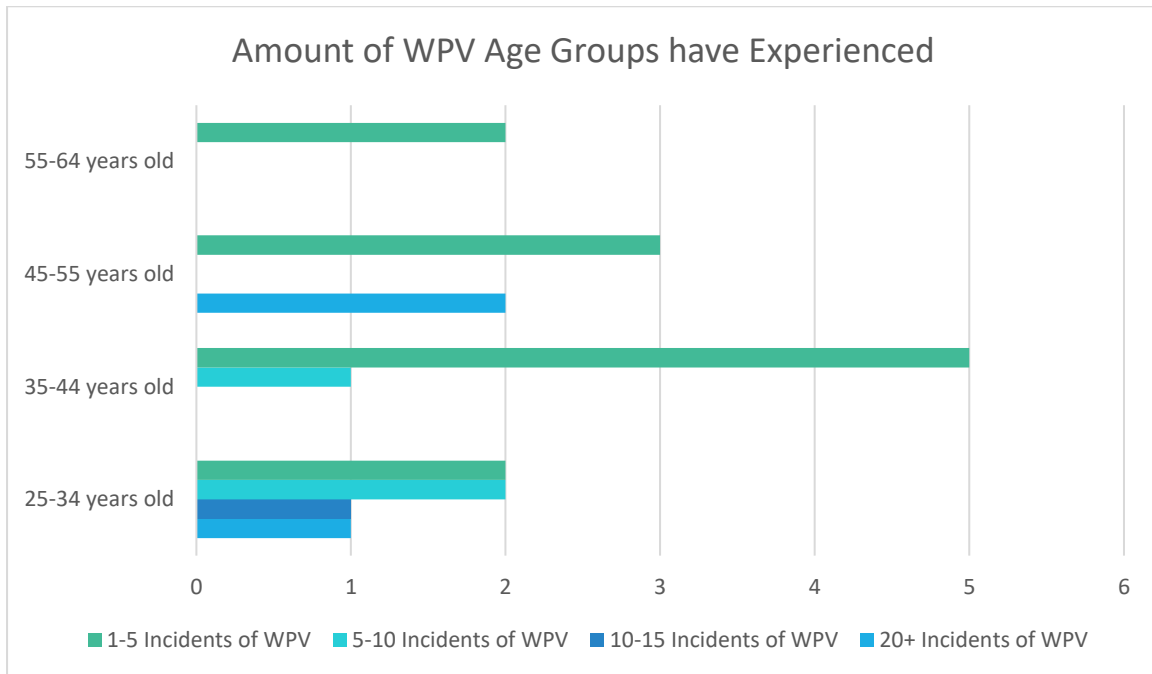
Figure 14 *Amount of WPV Age Groups have Experienced.*
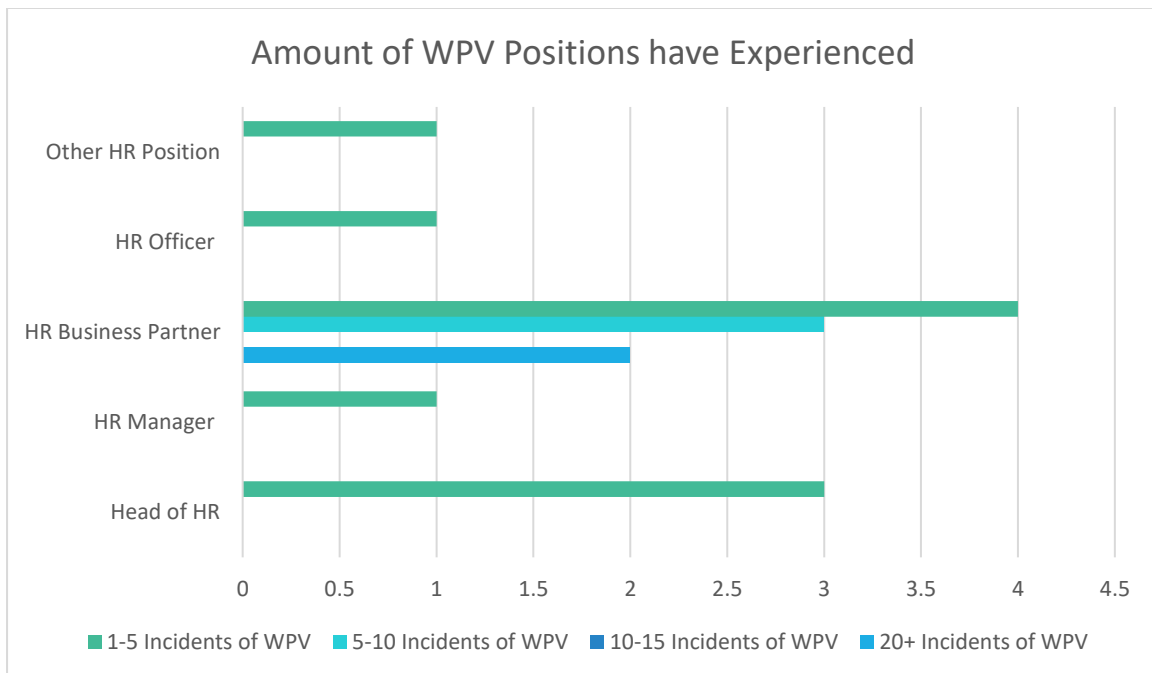
Figure 15 *Amount of WPV Positions have Experienced.*
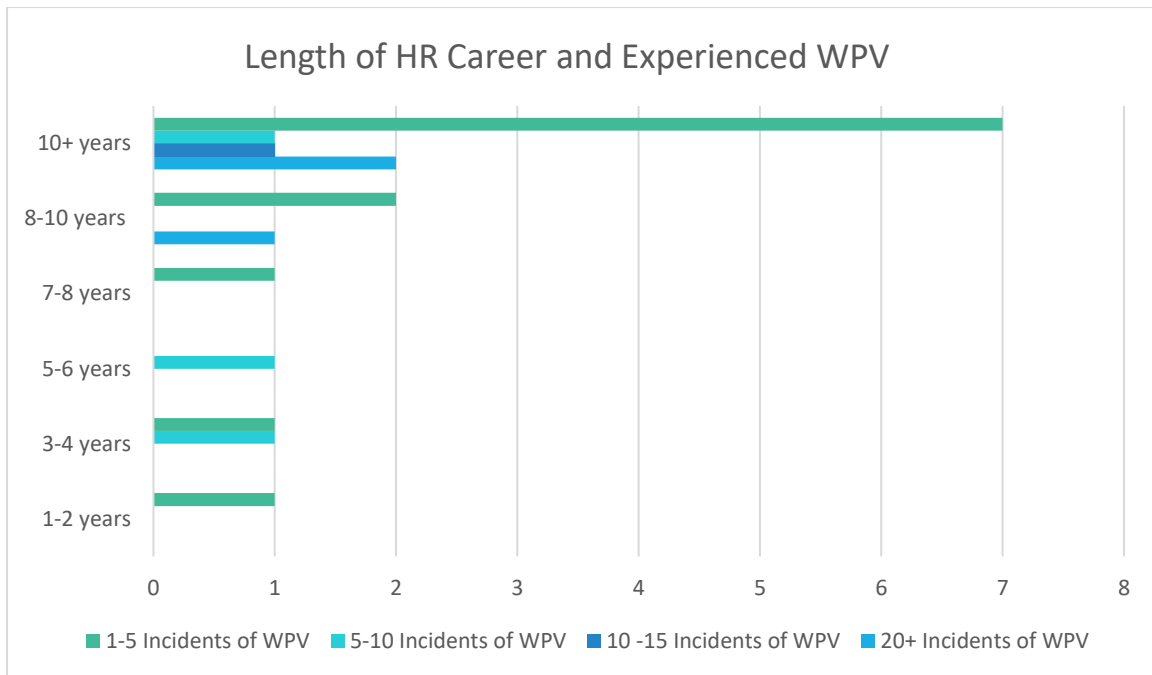
Figure 16 *Length of HR Career and Experienced WPV.*

As shown in Figure 14, participant age groups from 25 to 34 and 35 – 45 experienced the most WPV making up 63.15% (n=12) of participants.

An argument can be made that younger HR professionals are experiencing more violence due to their attitude and awareness of violence within the workplace. However, this could be due to a lack of personal exposure when dealing with instances of conflict.

Additionally, when evaluating the position and length within career, it showed that HR business partners (this included 8 HR business partners and 1 advisor) accounted for 57.36% (n=9) of WPV towards the professional as shown in Figure 15. Figure 16 also demonstrated that the most violence was experienced by those who have been in the HR field for 10+ years, accounting for 57.89% (n=11) of participants.

4.1 Content Analysis

The CA identified five primary themes, which each are divided into subthemes (Figure 17). Due to word constraints, some of the themes and sub-themes were not presented in the write up as they were less prevalent within the analysis.

Sections of participant responses were isolated into 'meaning units' and subsequently divided into themes and subthemes to identify contextual meaning of their responses. The 19 responses were collectively isolated into 232 meaning units, which comprised of 5 themes and 16 subthemes.

In addition, the key words and phrases that were identified, were grouped into categories and codes to provide a statistical insight into the qualitative data.

The categories and themes developed for this analysis were drawn from the final survey questions 9, 12, 14 and 18. Other questions asked within the survey will be presented as SDA and will be added into each section of the analysis it relates to.

Participants will be identified as P'X', referring to their number within the survey submission. I.e., Participant 21 will be identified as P21.
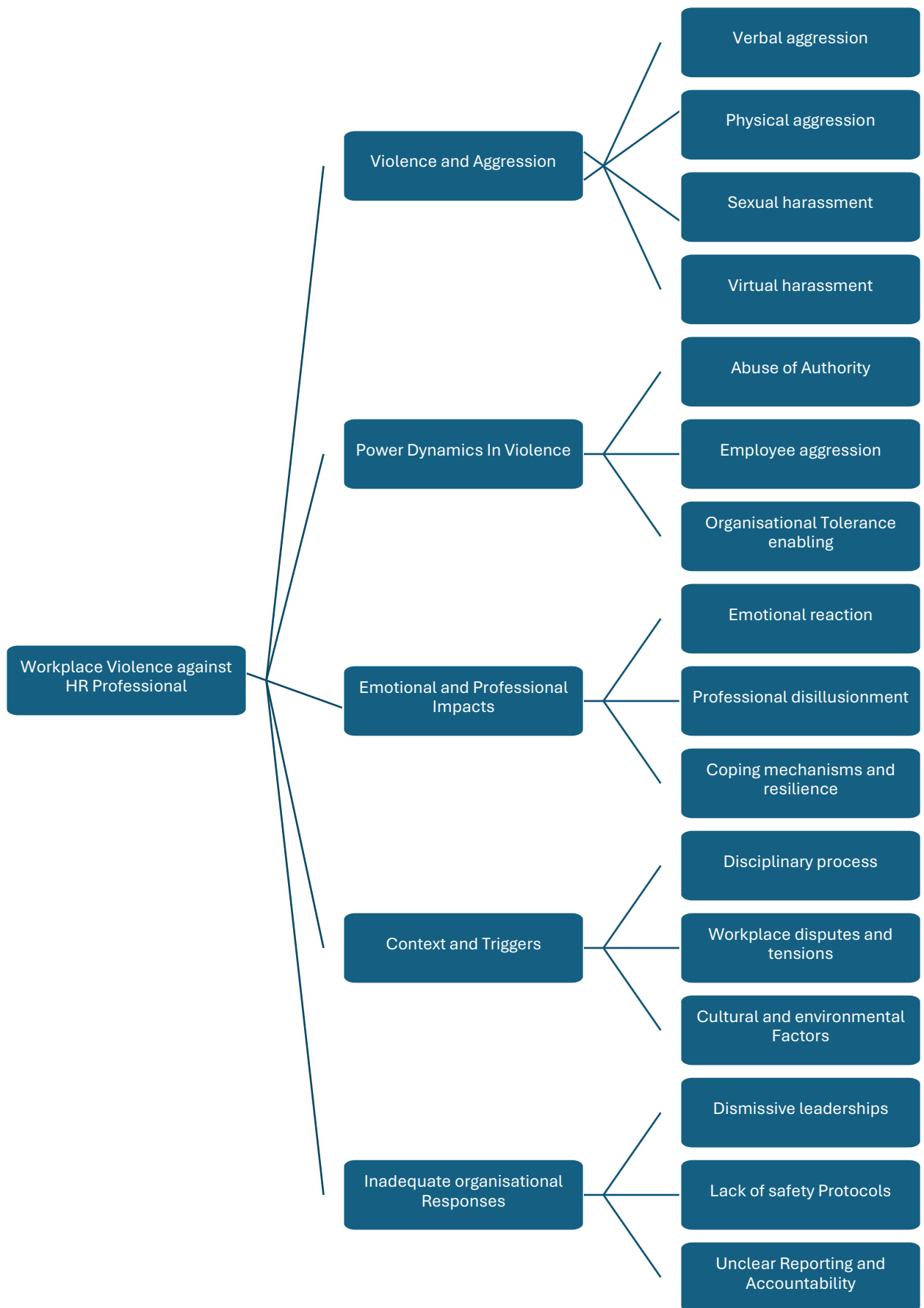
Figure 17 *Diagrammatical Representation of Themes and Sub-Themes.*

4.1.1 Violence and Aggression

Participants revealed that they experienced incidents of violence and aggression, including verbal, physical, social and virtual abuse. 33.33% (n=19) of participants experienced WPV as set out in Figure 18.
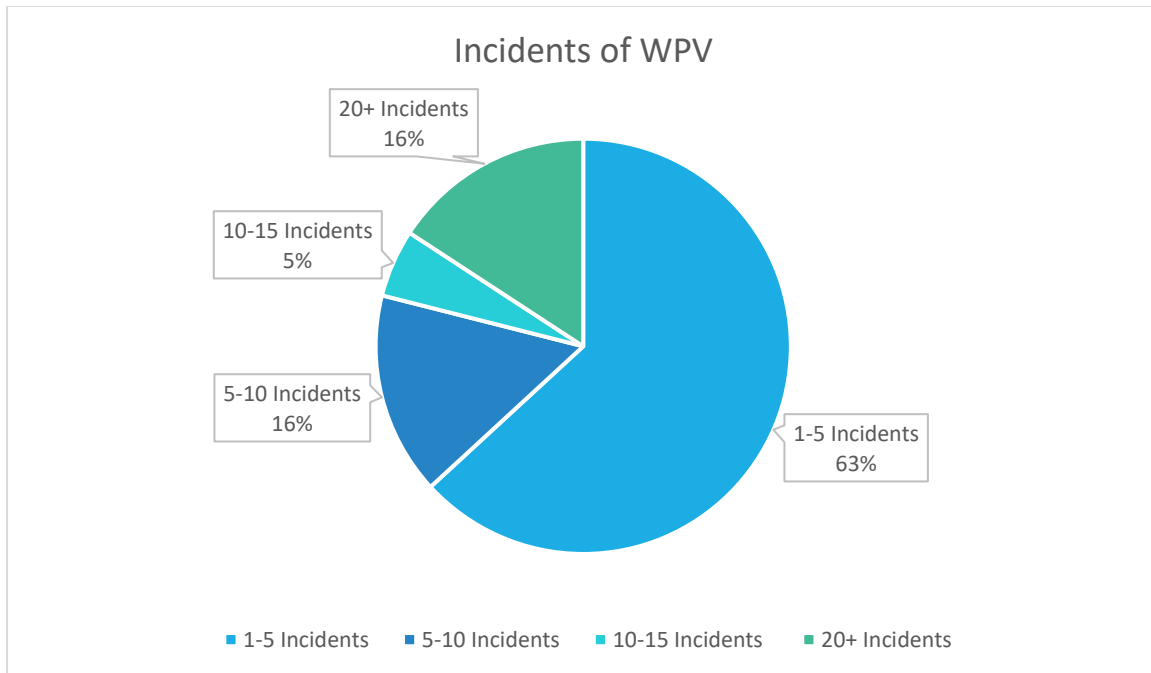
Figure 18 *Incidents of WPV.*

These experiences were frequently triggered from employees within ER related processes such as disciplinaries or senior leadership staff that disagreed with HR decisions or role. Figure 19 and 20 below outlines participants experience of this.

Theme	Subtheme	Frequency	Occurance per meaning unit (%)
Violence and Aggression		59	25.43%
	Verbal aggression	20	8.62%
	Physical aggression	16	6.90%
	Sexual harassment	8	3.45%
	Virtual harassment	4	1.72%

Figure 19 *Frequency of Sub-Theme relating to Violence and Aggression.*

Category	Code	Frequency	Occurance per meaning unit (%)
Form of Abuse		83	35.78%
	Physical violence	12	5.17%
	Threaten	20	8.62%
	Verbal abuse	27	11.64%
	Intimidation	19	8.19%
	Aggression	11	4.74%
	Sexual abuse	8	3.45%

Figure 20 *Frequency of Codes Relating to Violence and Aggression.*

4.1.1.1 Verbal aggression

Verbal aggression emerged as the most frequent form of violence within the analysis. Participants reported that they experienced this from employees and senior leaders, as they showed anger through shouting or derogatory comments. P1 recounts experiencing verbal aggression, that made them feel shocked and unsupported when experiencing the account of WPV.

"A Chief Executive completely lost their temper with me as an Assistant Director of People at an internal meeting. They were out of control and used language which was unacceptable"

P1 describes an incident whereby their senior leader lost their temper and shouted at the HR professional within the meeting using language that was inappropriate in front of their colleagues. Another example of verbal aggression comes from P14. P14 describes:

"I have been verbally shouted at due to a payment being incorrect. I felt scared, sad, worried".

Some experiences of verbal aggression, became more serious, developing into threats to life, as stated in P40's comments:

"threat to my life" "I know where you live, be careful"

4.1.1.2 Physical Aggression

While physical violence was less prevalent than verbal abuse, these were mostly experienced during disciplinary meetings and by employees. P34 stated that they experienced WPV following a dismissal of an employee.

"Chair thrown within a meeting following dismissal. Shocked by reaction and taken aback."

P34 also stated they were physically assaulted following a grievance meeting, whereby an employee threw a stapler at the participant.

"Stapler thrown in a meeting following grievance overview. Thankfully Quick reflexes and just found the behaviour so inappropriate."

P37 also describes an employee throwing a table after being confronted that he stole from the company.

"Disciplinary meeting, note taker retail. Individual caught on CCTV taking money from till. Didn't realise that CCTV had caught him. Threw table in air. Tv went flying. Manager left room leaving me sitting pinned in corner"

P39 Also experienced a similar incident, whereby an employee threw a chair at the participant during a disciplinary hearing, physically assaulting the P39 due to their perception that HR was corrupt.

"Employee threw a chair at me during a disciplinary hearing. The

chair hit my arm and whilst no damage, I knew something was

coming as he made comments about HR being corrupt"

These sections show that WPV is prevalent within the HR private sector. From the experiences depicted above, it seems that WPV is linked with the perception of HR professionals, which is indicated in MetLife (Drysdale, 2016) and Wade Macdonald (Sriganthan, 2023), studies demonstrating that HR are experiencing more WPV due to the perceptions linked to their role.

4.1.2 Violence in Power Dynamics

Throughout the data, it was demonstrated by participants that violence in power dynamics, particularly through abuse of authority (7.33%) and organisational tolerance (9.05%) related to their senior leaders.

Figure 21 and 22 below outlines participants experience of this.

Theme	Subtheme	Frequency	Occurance per meaning unit (%)
Violence in Power Dynamics		29	12.50%
	Abuse of Authority	17	7.33%
	Employee abuse	4	1.72%
	Organisational Tolerance or enabling	21	9.05%

Figure 21 *Frequency of Sub-Theme relating to Violence in Power Dynamics.*

Category	Code	Frequency	Occurance per meaning unit (%)
Leader impact		46	19.83%
	Senior staff	21	9.05%
	Expectations	9	3.88%
	Bad decision making	5	2.16%
	Management staff	6	2.59%
	Dismissive	19	8.19%

Figure 22 *Frequency of Codes Relating to Violence in Power Dynamics.*

4.1.2.1 Abuse of Authority

When analysing the data, it became prevalent that HR professionals were experiencing abuse of authority from their senior leaders (7.33%). Senior leaders either seemed to contribute to WPV, shouting or intimidating HR professionals, or permitting the WPV to happen without their intervention. This is demonstrated in P52's experience of WPV, whereby an employee, who was the manager's son, intimidated and physically threatened P52 with a drill. The manager took no action against his son.

> *"I was approached and threatened by a factory worker on the stairs with a drill (revving it up) who was not going to let me pass him […] He was the managers (consented) son who did as he pleased […] I hoped the managing director would resolve the issue which he did eventually"*

P1 experienced this abuse of authority from their chief executive, whereby the chief executive verbally abused P1 in front of the leadership team, leaving the participant with deep emotional scars.

> *"A Chief Executive completely lost their temper with me […] at an internal meeting. They were out of control and used language which was unacceptable."*

P40 also experienced verbal WPV from a senior manager. The manager perceived HR as interfering with management decisions when it is part of a HR professional's duty to make sure the business is compliant.

"The manager screamed at me for doing my HR compliance. I had a

finger pointed at me and a raised voice, reminding me that

management does not need HR interfering in their decisions."

Due to the level of trust and responsibility of the HR role, there is an expectation that they would be supported by the business, however from the data collected from the participants, this suggests that senior leaders contribute to WPV or allow WPV to happen. Perhaps this is due to lack of training and professional standards and allow the opportunity for leadership and management training at this level.

4.1.2.2 Organisational Tolerance Enabling

Following form section 4.1.2.1, as identified, there seems to be an organisational tolerance to enable WPV from senior leaders or employees (9.03%), without any action to resolve these incidents. P40 states that following the incident when a manager screamed that them, they expressed their concerns to their HR manager who avoided them and P40 was further told to ignore the manager comments and was later thanked for not raising a grievance.

"Concerns dismissed as exaggerated, told to ignore, or threatening

to stay out of it, avoided by own HR manager, thanked for not raising

any grievance."

P40 also describes another incident, whereby an employee threatened P40's life, stating "I know where you live, be careful". However, when the participant raised concerns to their general manager about this, they laughed it off and did not take P40 seriously or put any safeguarding measures in place.

"I shared my concern with my General Manager, and he laughed it

off"

P55 further states that they feel that their company expects HR to deal with WPV incidents although this was directed to them.

> *"It was expected that HR would deal with these types of incidents because it's what we do."*

Participants demonstrate that there is an organisational tolerance towards HR experiencing WPV. Concerns are not taken seriously, and this exacerbates the perception that HR professionals are expected to deal with WPV. However, this leaves a gap within accountability. This raises a concern that it is unclear what procedures HR professionals follow when they themselves are victim to WPV and are not taken seriously. This leaves the professional in a state of vulnerability.

4.1.3 Emotional and Professional Impacts

The WPV experienced had an impact on participants, ranging from HR professionals feeling fear (2.59%) and vulnerability (6.47%) during or following the incidences. As shown in Figure 23 and 24 and below outlines participants experiences in relation to emotional and professional impacts.

Theme	Subtheme	Frequency	Occurance per meaning unit (%)
Emotional and Professional Impacts		39	16.81%
	Emotional reaction	23	9.91%
	Professional disillusionment	8	3.45%
	Coping mechanisms and resilience	6	2.59%

Figure 23 *Frequency of Sub-Theme relating to Emotional and Professional Impacts.*

Category	Code	Frequency	Occurance per meaning unit (%)
Psychological Impacts		56	24.14%
	Fearful	6	2.59%
	Shock	4	1.72%
	Anxious	12	5.17%
	Emotional harm	14	6.03%
	Frustration	5	2.16%
	Stress	5	2.16%
	Burnout	2	0.86%
	Resilience	7	3.02%
	Vulnerable	15	6.47%

Figure 24 *Frequency of Codes Relating to Emotional and Professional Impacts.*

In question 17, participants were asked if they had the opportunity to self-reflect following the WPV incident. 26.31% (n=5) said they didn't have the time to self-reflect on this incident, while 73.68% (n=14) said they did.

Additionally, participants were asked in question 19 if they had developed any physical or mental impairments following the incident, 73.68%, said that they did not develop any mental impairment, whilst 21.05% (n=4) said that they develop a mental condition attaining to depression, anxiety, burnout or stress. 1 participant didn't answer this question.

73.68% (n=14) expressed within the survey they didn't feel that they received any support from their employers following WPV. However, HR professionals that did receive support (36.31%) stated that they received support from EAP's or private counselling.

4.1.3.1 Emotional Reactions

The majority of participants stated that they experienced a negative emotional rection after WPV. This subtheme occurred 9.91% within the data and displayed

behaviours of having experienced emotional harm (6.03%), anxiousness (5.17%) and feeling vulnerable (6.47%).

This was demonstrated by P22 answering question 19, where they experienced verbal abuse from an employee in front of a trade union representative, it left the P22 feeling nervous when dealing with any volatile employees:

"Nervous when dealing with volatile employees."

P39 felt similar after experiencing WPV when dealing with an incident of physical violence when an employee threw a chair at them, making physical contact. This caused the participant to become anxious when managing any future hearings.

"Any further hearings caused me anxiety."

4.1.3.2 Professional Disillusionment

There were several participants that expressed professional disillusionment after the WPV they experienced from both employee and sector leaders (3.45%). This was in part due to the lack of support or encouragement following the WPV incidents for the business. P1 said that following the verbal aggression they experienced from the Chief executive, he felt disappointed and discouraged that this colleague did not call out this behaviour

"I felt shocked and disengaged with the senior management team for not 'calling this out' at the time."

There was also a lot of professional disillusions, in relation to accepting what had happened to them and believed that its part of the role. P34 expresses that they became used to hostile and aggressive behaviour as it's part of the profession

"But you become use to it as part of the profession."

61

With similar expression to this from P49, stating

"It's seen as part of the job."

It is evident that WPV causes victims to experience some sort of emotional reaction as seen in the participants codes and data. Although within the survey, most participants had the opportunity to self-reflect and didn't develop any physical or mental impairment from the WPV they experienced, participants may be affected later in life if they have not addressed or recognised how WPV has affected them. This is shown in by Briggs et al., (2012) and Fox et al., (2020) stating that if WPV is not addressed, this could impact an individual's psychological wellbeing, manifesting chronic depression, burnout or PTSD.

4.1.4 Inadequate Organisational Responses

The participant's responses relating to inadequate organisational responses varied, reporting both safety concerns and lack of support when experiencing WPV.

Within the survey, 73.68% (n=14) participants said that they didn't receive any form of support from their business after experiencing WPV. Additionally, 63.15% (n=12) said that there was no SGM in place for them when recalling incidences.

After the incident was experienced 100% (n=19) of participants did not contact the police or local authority following the WPV they experienced, as they said it was not substantial enough or accepted it was part of their role.

The following themes were generated to give more context to the code generated from the data relating to the incident itself (see Figure 25 and 26).

Theme	Subtheme	Frequency	Occurance per meaning unit (%)
Inadequate organisational Responses		51	21.98%
	Dismissive leaderships	12	5.17%
	Lack of safety Protocols	25	10.78%
	Unclear Reporting and Accountability	14	6.03%

Figure 25 *Frequency of Sub-Theme Relating to Inadequate Organisational*

Responses.

Category	Code	Frequency	Occurance per meaning unit (%)
Safety and Support		39	16.81%
	Safety concerns	9	3.88%
	Felt unsafe	9	3.88%
	Secure	3	1.29%
	Support Provided	2	0.86%
	Unsupported	33	14.22%

Figure 26 *Frequency of Codes Relating to Inadequate Organisational Responses.*

4.1.4.1 Dismissive Leadership

Participants commented that leadership held dismissive attitudes towards them and

incidents of WPV. Although the subtheme only occurred 5.17% within the data,

participants were not directly asked to comment on senior leadership behaviour

toward WPV. The subtheme of being unsupported had an occurrence 14.22%, this is

demonstrated by P40 stating:

> *"I shared my concern with my General Manager, and he laughed it*
>
> *off"*

Another example that P40 shared was regarding another WPV incident, however when trying to engage with their line manager about the incident they were ignored, stating:

"After the event, I shared this with my HR director who avoided me

for one month to avoid talking about this."

Further to this, P39 also said that they requested to conduct a disciplinary on Microsoft teams as the employee was known to be volatile, however the business leaders declined the request, stating:

"Employee was known to be volatile and our request to hold hearing

on teams was declined by the business."

No participants commented at any point that their concerns were taken seriously by senior leaders, and it appears that senior leadership took limited accountability for WPV. Participants mentioned feeling support, appeared 0.86%, and this was not by the business but rather by family or friends.

This demonstrated that senior leaders may be disengaged or avoiding the incidents of WPV. This further supports that leaders are offloading the responsibility of conflict to HR professionals, as stated by P55 "It was expected that HR would deal with these types of incidents".

4.1.4.2 Lack of Safety Protocols

There is a high frequency of comments relating to safety concerns, during and after WPV. Safety concerns showing a frequency of 3.88% and feeling unsafe at 3.88%. In contrast to committing that they felt secure at 1.29%.

A lack of safety protocols was demonstrated by P41:

"A disgruntled ex-employee still had access to the building and got in

up to the HR office where I was alone."

This is further expressed by P51, when reflecting on the incident, where they commented that they were left with no escape route when the employee demonstrated physical violence after punching a wall.

"myself and the note taker were backed into the back of the office

with no route out."

This was also reflected in P37's account of WPV, when an employee threw a table in the air during an investigation meeting and the manager left the room leaving the HR professional alone.

"Manager left room leaving me sitting pinned in corner."

This supports a link established within the literature review of a lack of safeguarding measures within the private sector, demonstrating that there is a deficiency in appropriate protocols and safeguarding measures for HR professionals experiencing WPV.

4.2 Discussion

The analysis provided significant evidence to suggest that there are multiple factors that increase the risk and instigates WPV. Within the CA, several sub-themes were predominant within the participants responses, as seen in Figure 12.

Both physical and verbal violence were equally prevalent within the private sector. The responses themselves seem to imply that senior leaders have delegated the responsibility of handling sensitive and emotional interactions solely to the HR department, which channels most negative interactions between employees and the

company through HR. This delegation reinforces the negative perception towards HR as this increases the frequency of negative and difficult interactions with these HR representatives. Additionally, the lack of training and the delegation of responsibility provides senior leaders an opportunity to avoid conflict entirely as the workplace culture adopts the norms that sensitive interactions can only be processed through HR.

Therefore, the developing negative workplace culture breeds tolerance within both HR and senior leaders towards WPV, through desensitisation with HR and ignorance with management. This relationship enables employees to use HR as a means to vent professional and personal frustrations despite that HR are not employed to handle personal frustrations.

The distinction to make is that HR's purpose in this setting is to resolve and mediate professional challenges. However, the 'fixer' mentality from HR and the 'victim' mentality from employees makes it difficult to identify the differences and act accordingly. This results in an overlap between frustration towards their personal circumstances within the business and towards the HR professional, resulting in WPV. This relates back to the drama triangle and how negative behaviours can reinforce toxic work environments (Branford, 2023; Karpman, 1968; Lac & Donaldson, 2020).

The ignorance from senior leaders results in less support towards their HR colleagues, with 73.68% of participants stating they didn't receive adequate support from their employers. Equally, due to the desensitisation, HR professionals also lack the capacity to support themselves internally, so they resort to external support as 36.31% stated they sought private counselling.

Due to lack of business support and self-support, HR professionals are becoming at risk to developing physical or mental impairments. Over time, as the number of incidences are likely to increase in an individual HR professional's career, their desensitisation may accumulate and diminish their resilience resulting in Burnout. Unfortunately, the HR professional at this point may not be equipped or have the proper resources to identify this decline in professional capacity and further develop into a more serious mental impairment.

Within HR communities and departments, their own desensitisation to WPV exposure leads to internal coping mechanisms which lessens the seriousness of these instances, which further allows senior leaders to dismiss HR concerns as their perception of towards HR becomes altered, as the perception of conflict and WPV is 'normal' within HR.

Overall, the findings show a prevalence of WPV towards HR professionals and the systemic acceptance of this behaviour, not only from the violence being enacted within the workplace, but how lacking procedures, support and safeguarding within the companies themselves, are indirectly allowing this behaviour to continue. Therefore, safeguarding measures within the private sector are not adequate for HR professionals.

4.3 Research Limitations and Gaps

Although the data shows that HR business partners and HR professionals over 10 years within the field experience the most WPV, the participants may have experienced these incidents earlier within their career and in different positions. And therefore, this point cannot be fully concluded.

It can be assumed that participants with longer careers would naturally be exposed to more incidents. However, this point cannot be fully concluded due to the considerations of additional factors. Primarily the chronological distribution of incidences, and if incidents of WPV were being correctly identified due to the changing perceptions of WPV.

The socioeconomic information was examined to establish if increased WPV was experienced relating to gender or age, however due to lack of demographic representation within the data collected, the research could not establish this.

Due to word count constraints not all themes and sub-theme could be explored within the analysis, however this allows an opportunity for further discussion and research. Additionally due to word and time constraints the researcher used the private sector as an inclusion factor for participants. However, it would be valuable to provide further study and comparisons to the UK's public and third sectors, to explore WPV within these fields.

A limitation of acquiring qualitative data is effectively applying the information to make comparative assumptions. The qualitative data refers to the comments and accounts from the participants, but this information is at risk of being inaccurate or modified by the participants recollection of the events. The responses provided are subject to social desirability and their personal opinions on their recalled events. It needs to be considered that one participant may consider someone's behaviour has hostile however, another may perceive the same person's behaviour as entirely acceptable. In hindsight, it may have been beneficial to establish the criteria between participants as to what is considered WPV. Fortunately, in most participant's

responses, they provided detailed accounts of the actions of the hostile employees, which allows the researcher to set a standard for the criteria for WPV.

It is also worth considering the level of emotional response accounted by the participant at the time of the incidence of WPV. Again, what constitutes as being 'fearful' in someone's opinion, may not qualify for that emotion in another. However, this issue was diminished by not considering the exact emotional state of the participant, but that at least they expressed some form of negative emotional response to the stimuli or experience.

5 Conclusion

This dissertation focused on understanding and exploring WPV towards HR professionals due to the rise of reported incidents (HSE, 2024).

The authors own personal exposure to WPV within the HR private sector influenced the starting point of this research and when further explored the researcher identified a lack of literature and discussion within HR communities about this topic. Therefore, the research was formulated to investigate WPV towards HR professionals and to raise awareness.

Consequently, the aim of this dissertation was to explore WPV targeting HR professionals within the UK private sector with a focus on safeguarding measures. Specifically, identifying the preconceptions towards HR, how WPV is managed and its ongoing effects. This should lead to practical recommendations regarding safeguarding measures for HR professionals, creating safer working environments. This led the researcher to formulate the following objectives that have been achieved through this research:

1. Through review of the literature, explore violent events experienced by HR professionals, analyse and identify underlying patterns of violence and why this occurs.
2. To establish the perceptions of HR professionals by its employees and contributing factors that increase the risk of WPV.
3. To analyse existing behaviour theory and its relevance as to why HR professionals are subjected to WPV.
4. To explore current SGM in the private sector for HR professionals.

5. To conduct primary research with participants to evaluate firsthand accounts of WPV and how participants reacted.

6. To make valid and realistic recommendations to businesses, to reduce the risk of WPV.

Considering the above, this formulated the research question that needed to be answered within this dissertation: "Is safeguarding adequate within the private HR sector when experiencing Workplace Violence?".

5.1 Research Contributions

Throughout the research for this dissertation, it was identified that there was a lack of literature within the field of WPV directed to HR professionals. The rationale outlined there was a rise of WPV against HR professionals demonstrated in Figure 7 and Maurer (2019) study of HR professionals experienced incidents of WPV, due to in part negative preconceptions of the role.

The repercussions of experiencing WPV significantly affected both the individual's well-being, organisational stability and financial challenges for companies. Evidently, workplace conflict costs UK businesses approximately £28 billion annually (Webber, 2023). Despite implementing SGM, UK-based WPV incidents have persisted over the past decade, particularly targeting management roles (HSE, 2024b) (Figure 3). There were also several factors that further influenced the rise in WPV as seen in the PESTLE analysis (Appendix 1), relating to economic and social factors, COVID-19 and genetic influences.

Within the literature review, it was demonstrated that the negative perceptions held against HR within their roles, puts them at a higher risk of WPV. This is often linked to their duties involving ER related cases due to in part the negative preconceptions

from employees toward HR professionals. Hope-Hailey, Searle, and Dietz (2012) also highlighted employees' mistrust toward HR, which escalates these challenges.

As HR professionals feel responsible for mitigating conflict and WPV, they often assume a "fixer" mentality role, which places them in a position of heightened vulnerability, often leading to burnout and compassion fatigue.

Theories such as the DT and TA offer insight into these dynamics, demonstrating how HR professionals tend to rescue others, by taking on a hero or parent state, and can unintentionally perpetuate stress and conflict within teams. To mitigate these risks, frameworks like the ED propose strategies to foster healthier interactions and empower HR professionals to set boundaries while supporting others.

There was also a lack of research relating to private sector SGM's. Compared to public sector industries, such as the NHS, private sector SGM seem inadequate and remain insufficient in mitigating WPV towards HR professionals.

Participant data was collected through mixed method surveys, producing 58 participants. 1 participant refused consent, and 19 participants out of 57 experienced WPV. This provided insightful information, involving participant experiences, and comments of safeguarding precautions. The analysis provided the following findings:

1. Out of 57 participants, 33.33% (n=19) experienced WPV and 64.91% (n=37) participants didn't experience any WPV within they're roles.
2. 63.15% (n=12) participants said that their companies safeguarding measures were not adequate to protect them at the time of the incident. Additionally, 73.68% (n=17) participants said they didn't receive any support from their businesses following WPV.

3. 100% (n=19) of participants that experienced WPV didn't contact the police or local authorities after the incident. As they said it was not substantial enough or accepted it was part of their role.

4. 21.05% (n=4) said that they developed anxiety, burnout, depression and stress. However, 73.68% (n=14) said they didn't develop mental impairments, although they may affect participants later in life if they have not addressed or recognised how WPV has affected them.

5. Participant experienced more verbal violence then other forms of violence within the data.

6. There was an unanticipated variable where participants experiences WPV from senior management than from the primary workforce within the business.

7. Participant age groups from 25 to 34 and 35 – 45 experienced the most WPV making up 63.15% of participants.

It is clear from the findings that HR professionals that experience WPV, is a microcosm of organisational culture. These findings highlight the need for effective intervention strategies, including timely access to counselling, mental health support, and organisational policies aimed at preventing WPV. Addressing the long-term consequences of WPV not only mitigates harm to individual employees, through burnout, but could also reduce broader socio-economic impacts on businesses. (Folkman, 1982; Olafsson & Johannsdottir, 2004; Duan et al., 2019).

5.2 Limitations

Throughout this research there have been research limitations and gaps that the researcher has identified that could have potentially impacted the research outcomes.

Firstly, responses to collect data from a survey is usually above 250 participants, although the decrease in responses was justifiable as there would be enough participants to explore the research question. Although this may affect generalisability due to its size, and the researcher anticipated a response rate between 50 to 100 participants. The survey was distributed throughout the UK through social media platforms, such as HR Groups on Facebook and LinkedIn and to colleagues in the University of Wales Trinity Saint David's (UWTSD) HR education department. However, although the survey was open to participants for 1 month, only 58 participants undertook the survey, providing 19 participants experiencing WPV, which was not the sample size intended for this research. To further collect qualitative data, usually the researcher would select several random participants to conduct follow up interviews, however due to time constraints this was not possible for the researcher at the time.

Additionally, although this survey was distributed on social media platforms in HR related groups, the researcher did not have control of the type of participant that engaged in the survey. Therefore, it is not possible to establish if the individual experienced this violence within the UK or another country. Additionally, although the survey was titled "Workplace Violence towards HR Professionals in the Private Sector Questionnaire", 15.78% (n=3) participants stated that they currently work in the public sector, and the researcher is unaware if they experienced WPV when the participant worked in the private or public sector.

The lack of demographic representation also provided a limitation within the study. The researcher added the characteristics of age, gender and ethnicity within the survey to conduct a short analysis on if certain characteristics influence increased

WPV, however due to the sample size of participants there was not enough participant demographic data to establish if WPV is related to gender or ethnicity.

The researcher originally intended to use thematic analysis to analyse the qualitative data gathered in this study, however participants tended to give short answers rather than detailed answers within the survey.

5.3 Closing Statement

In conclusion, the research question to answer was "Is safeguarding adequate within the private HR sector when experiencing Workplace Violence?". The answer based on this study is no, safeguarding is not adequate within the private sector to safeguard HR professionals.

Based on the review of findings, the researcher can demonstrate that there is a prevalence of WPV towards HR professionals in the private sectors from the 19 participants that partook in the survey. Although WPV is prevalent within the HR sector, more research is needed within this field for a definitive answer as there is a lack of research and literature gaps in terms of safeguarding in the private sector compared to the public. HR professionals also do not discuss the violence they experience and are only seeing this in recent research. Therefore, considering the above, there is an opportunity for future research to be conducted due to the gap in literature.

The researcher hopes that this dissertation will raise awareness within the HR field about the importance of prioritising safety for HR professionals within their roles. Additionally, due to the literature gap this will provide an opportunity for further research, as this study highlights a concerning lack of SGM's implemented.

6 Recommendations

Through a comprehensive evaluation of the literature review and analysis, the below recommendations provide realistic solutions to mitigate and safeguard HR professionals from experiencing WPV.

The viability of the recommendations stated below may vary depending on the unique circumstances of each business and should be considered on a case-by-case basis. Viability can be influenced by the budget, logistical challenges and internal resources. However, these should be considered as return of investments as demonstrated within the case studies. Positive impacts of these recommendations are improved employee wellbeing and organisational culture, leading to an increase of productivity.

Recommendation 1: Incorporate WPV policy with Zero Tolerance Consequences and implementation of Safeguarding Measures.

When reviewing participant data, all 19 participants on question 13, did not report their incident of WPV to the local authority. Analysed participants did not report these as they believed it either was not substantial enough or seem to accept the incident as if it were a part of the role, relating to the fixer mentality.

Additionally, 4 participants in question 20, stated they wanted their business to have policies to include WPV, and consequences. Although this is outlined in most disciplinary policies as acts of gross misconduct (ACAS, 2024), there is a need to incorporate clear procedural steps when experiencing these incidents. This should also be reflected in the organisations code of conduct, outlining acceptable professional behaviours in the workplace.

An example of this in the NHS England (2022), where patient to staff violence is more prevalent, the NHS have developed a violence prevention and reduction programmes standard document. This created a risk-based framework to safeguard NHS staff, outlining procedures and risk management alongside their code of conduct (NHS, 2020).

This will not cost the businesses directly; it will be an internal staffing and resource cost of adding this and incorporated in the policy and procedures.

12 participants felt that SGM were not adequate within their businesses in question 11, 4 suggested the following SGM:

- Panic buttons: SafetyLine (2022), states it is a valuable tool for distressed employees to quickly request assistance during an emergency. Notifying senior staff and emergency services of your location (Chubb, 2024).

- Security guards: Trained in dealing with violent scenarios, a rapid response team, they can operate as a deterrent for WPV (G3 Security, 2024).

- Door code or access passes: By using door codes or access panels, it enhances workplace security by restricting access to authorised staff to more sensitive locations such as HR departments. However, employers must ensure proper staff authorisation levels and promptly deactivate this access to ex-staff and individuals who may pose a threat (Mehl, 2024)

- Additional representation in meetings: This could include representation with another colleague or trade union representation for the employee. This will be an internal cost to the business in terms of time. Providing fair impartial representation such as trade union representatives at meetings could act as deterrents to aggressive behaviours

Table 3 below outlines these options, explore providers and costs. These options can explore beyond the HR Department the implantation of these features will improve the functionality of the whole business.

Table 3 *Breakdown of Safeguarding Measure Options.*

Safeguarding Measure	Provider	Product	Estimated Cost
Panic Buttons	Quicksafe	V3 Man Down Alarm	£249.98
	Screwfix	Yale Sync Panic Button	£29.99
	Ultra Secure	Wireless KPB Shop Panic Alarm - Multi-tone Siren - Flashing Strobe - 4 x Panic Buttons	£253.63
Security Guards	Stonewall Security	General security officer	From £15 per hour
	MEC Security	Retail Security Guards	From £10 to £20 per hour
Door codes/ Access Cards	Foxmoor Fire and Security	Access control systems per door	£300 to £1200

	Amazon	HAIFUAN Security Digital Keyless Code Door Lock, Unlock with Code Card and Key (HFAM10B-R-NB)	£119.00

Recommendation 2: Implement Workplace Violence and Management Training

From question 20 of the survey, 3 participants stated that more training should be given to employees surrounding WPV, specifically surrounding de-escalation and awareness of WPV.

Within the analysis, 6 participants said that they experienced incidents of WPV from their senior leadership team, as they were either the cause or avoided the matter entirely. This could relate to CIPD (2024a) report on increased workers views of work is purely transactional and suggests that employees are demotivated, uncommented and unproductive. Potentially contributing to the avoidance of managing conflict and WPV. This is an opportunity for leadership and management training, to develop their skills in management and emotional intelligence.

To mitigate the risk of WPV, HR professionals should mandate yearly WPV prevention training and highlight potential consequences for displaying this behaviour towards HR and all workplace employees alike.

By implementing WPV prevention strategies this can decrease WPV as shown in Cai et al. (2023) research amongst nurses. This was also demonstrated in a community health care facility (Anderson, 2006) established an increased awareness of WPV following training.

Estimated costs are in Table 4 below.

Table 4 *Breakdown of Workplace Violence and Management Training Courses.*

Training Activity	Training Partners	Course	Estimated Cost
Workplace Violence prevention Training	Internal E-learning Platforms or one-to-one training	Workplace Violence prevention and leadership and management	Internal costs for use of resources e.g. time to present and develop training
	London School of Business Administration	Professional Certificate in Assessing the Impact of Training Programs on Workplace Violence Prevention	£140
	Human Focus	Violence and Aggression Training	£25.00
	Kiwi Education	Understanding Workplace Violence	£500.00

		and Harassment – Level 2	
Leadership and Management Training	ICS Learn	ILM Level 5 Certificate Leadership & Management	£1075
	Learn Direct	CMI Diploma in Management and Leadership Level 5 (RQF)	£2,299.99
	Salford Professional development	ILM Level 5 Coaching and Mentoring (Certificate Programme)	£2200 + VAT
	University of Oxford	Effective Leadership through Emotional Intelligence (online)	£465.00
	Hemsley Fraser	Emotional Intelligence training	£3000 + VAT

Recommendation 3: Employee Engagement and Building Organisational Trust

Throughout the background, literature review and analysis, it was clear that WPV towards HR was a microcosm of organisational culture. Participants stated that the WPV they experienced was either from an employee within an ER related process or from senior management staff that disagreed with a HR related duty or process.

Bolsu (2019), Daruszka (2014) and Ryan (2016) all describe the employee perception towards HR as untrustworthy and suggested that a key factor for the negative perception is the lack of trust held towards HR professionals due to its company culture and power dynamics within the role. Hope-Hailey, Searle and Dietz (2012) further suggest that employees perceive a lack of trust towards their HR representatives, due to the lack of consistency applying policies. However, CIPD (2011), argued that to repair this trust, businesses and HR need to create and open and transparent culture.

To alleviate employee defiance and build trust, HR professionals need to focus on employee engagement strategies, building relationships to reduce conflict by putting the needs of the employees first and balancing business demands (CIPD, 2012; Ladika, 2021). Additionally, HR professionals must self-reflect and change their leadership styles to adapt a full transparency approach with employees. They must also avoid micromanagement approaches moving away from the DT hero state to become a coach to managers and employees (Morree, 2021; Pulley, 2021).

Severn Trent (Powell, 2022) demonstrate building trust with their employees by taking caring and trusting approaches of leadership, allowing autonomy and open collaboration. This created a more productive and welcoming workforce (Posner, 2020).

Recommendation 4: Implementing Mental Health and Wellbeing Support for HR professionals Following WPV

4 participants developed a mental impairment from the WPV they experienced in question 19, this included anxiety, burnout, depression and stress. Additionally, 14 participants said that they did not receive any support from their businesses following

the incident in question 15, however those 5 participants who did receive support, said they were provided with EAP, increased security and private counselling.

Providing wellbeing support as well as and inclusive culture towards mental health is important to the entire workforce to feel psychologically safe, as mental wellbeing is the reason for most sickness absence within the UK (Mental Health Foundation, 2023).

Workplace conflict costs UK businesses approximately £28 billion annually (Webber, 2023), by introducing wellbeing support for workplace professionals, this will mitigate the impact of WPV and reduce mental health.

Another consideration is implementing mental health first aiders within companies. Providing a point of contact to engage with people who are specialised in emotional distress can support employees in getting the appropriate help (MHFA England, 2023; Westfield Health, 2022). Generali Employee Benefits Network (2021) explored Fujitsu's implementation of EAP, whereby Fujitsu reported 50% of absence related to mental health, as a result they implemented an EAP, whereby it was utilised by 14%, this created an open working culture and made employees feel supported (HR Grapevine, 2022).

Table 5 below outlines mental health and wellbeing options and cost that maybe considered by businesses.

Table 5 *Estimated Cost of Support measures for Employees.*

Support Measure	Provider	Included	Estimated Cost
EAP programmes	Health Assured	24/7, 365 confidential helplines	£1.21 per month per employee

| | | Access to Wisdom app

10 or 12 structured counselling sessions

4 Life and Leadership coaching sessions | (based on 100 employees) |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Vitality | Health and life insurance | £15.94 per month per employee |
| Private counselling | Based on provider | One-to-one private counselling | £40 - £70 per 50-minute session. |
| Mental health first aiders course | St John Ambulance | Workplace first aider – 2-day course | £447.60 |
| | Mental Health First Aid Wales | Adult eMHFA Wales (Online/Remote) – 2-day course | £165.00 |
| | British Safety Council | Mental Health First Aid – 1 day course | £295.00 |
| | Mind | Mental Health First Aid (Adult) – 2-day course | £275.00 |

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Pestle Analysis of Current Factors Affecting Violence at Work

Factors	External Factors	Effect that may impact on WPV	Priority
Political	Brexit	Brexit created several problems for its trade agreement and political policies. This continues to cause disruption to the UK as this created new rules for trade, investment, immigration, jobs and inflation. (David, 2023; Labiak and Islam, 2024)	High
	Political Power	The labour party has recently been voted as the political leader of the UK. Through their manifesto, they have plagues that they will be making beneficial economic changes to the UK and in turn will be undoing things that the conservative party put in place. This may impact the WPV, although we don't know entirely how this will impact the public.	
	Labours Autumn Budget	Following Labours announcement of the autumn budget, increasing national Insurance rates for employers, capital gains tax and inheritance tax (Beck, 2024), this has caused concern with the British public and has resulted in	

		employer expressing reduction of recruitment, and farmers protests (Shields, 2024) that have call resulted in calls for another election (Seddon, 2024)	
Economic	Cost of Living Crisis	Due to the cost-of-living crisis, the British public have been experiencing financial hardship caused by higher mortgage rates, increased costs of energy and fuel and food impacting inflation rates. This was mainly due to COVID-19 lockdowns, supply chain disruptions (Francis-Devine et al., 2024)	High
	War in Ukraine/ Israel-Gaza war	The war in Ukraine and Gaza has impacted the cost of high commodity goods such as fuel, energy and wheat. As a result, this has increase prices and trade, contributing to inflation (Bejarano Carbo and Millard, 2023; Patel, 2022).	
	New Visa/Immigratio n rules	New immigration laws have impacted the UK. NHS Employers (2024) state that care and hospital workers have been mostly impacted as the NHS have been limited to bring migrate over for these roles with their dependants (McKinney and Gower, 2024). Additionally, these	

		effects students bringing over their family, which may deter international studying in the UK. This may affect resources and staffing within care and future talent from international students.	
Social	Social and Cultural Norms following Covid	The British Academy (2021) suggested that COVID-19 had a social impact towards the public and effected cultural and workplace norms. This included expectations of working from home, social isolation, withdrawal from society and increased social anxiety.	High
	NHS in Crisis	The NHS has been experiencing severe pressure. The NHS was facing resourcing pressures and long waiting lists; however, this was extremely exacerbated by COVID-19 (British Medical Association, 2023). After COVID-19 this has created longer wait times for tests and treatment, additionally the NHS are still under resources (British Medical Association, 2024; The King's Fund, 2024)	

	UK Housing Crisis	There is a shortage of affordable social and private housing, due to rising rental costs and selling of social housing (Doyle, 2024; Shelter England, 2022). There is therefore a increased rise of homelessness and causing frustration in communities (Leng, 2017).	
	Community safety and Crime Rates	External environmental factors, such as community safety and local crime rates, can indirectly influence workplace violence. ONS has reported in the last year there has been a 10% rise in crime (Davies, 2024).	
Technological	Artificial Intelligence	With the advancement of AI such as ChatGPT, although this will be beneficial in fields such as medical for productivity (PwC, 2017). There are worried that AI will replace basic roles, potentially creating higher unemployment rates (Reals, 2024).	Low
Legal	Legal advancements	The new Labour government have submitted a new employment law bill, consisting of Day one right not to be unfairly dismissed, stronger rights to flexible working and protection for	Low

			maternity returners (Powell et al., 2024). However, this has been met with criticism with Unions and employers as some new laws feel unjust and could potentially impact recruitment needs (McCulloch, 2024).	
		Climate Change	New frequency of natural disasters means that it is having on effect on the global climate with the increase of greenhouse gas emissions. This is making sea levels and change in temperature. This is being seen in the UK with more floods and a difficulty producing crops (Met Office, 2024; Lee, 2022; Simmons, 2024).	Medium

Appendix 2: Participant Genders

2. What gender do you most identify with?

56 Responses

● Female	52
● Male	4
● Non-binary	0
● Prefer not to say	0

7%

93%

Appendix 3: Participant Ethnicity

3. Which ethnicity do you most identify with?

56 Responses

● Black/African/Caribbean/Black British	0
● White	53
● Asian/Asian British	1
● Chinese	0
● Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups	2
● Arab	0
● Other	0
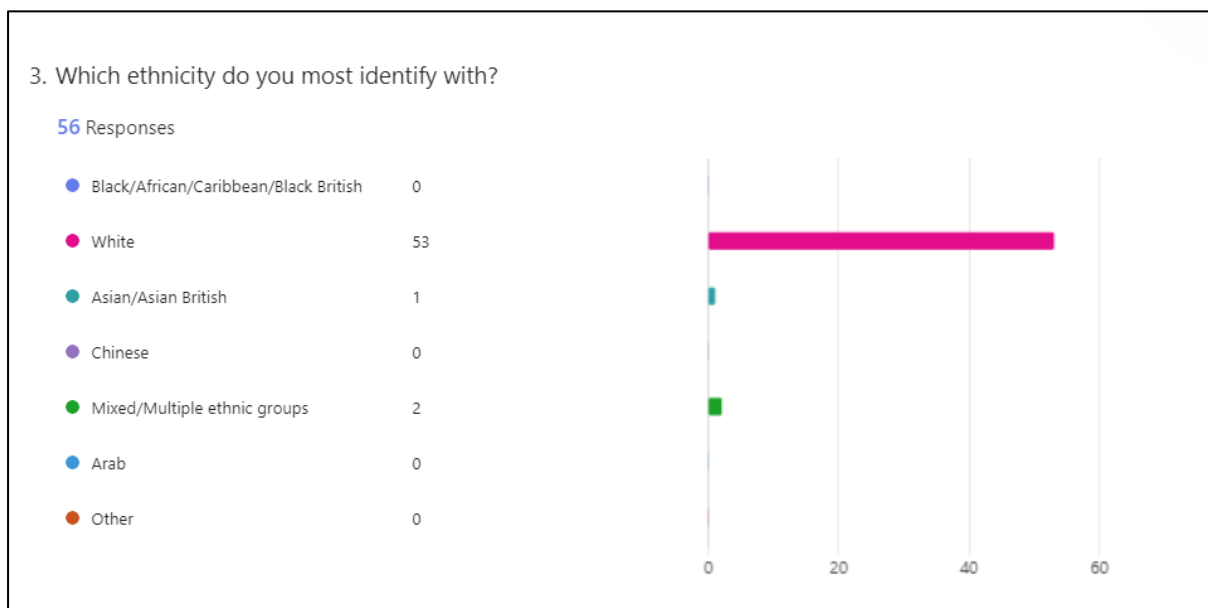
Appendix 4: Participant Age Groups

4. What is your age group?

56 Responses

18-24	2	
25-34	12	
35-44	26	
45-54	11	
55-64	4	
65+	1	
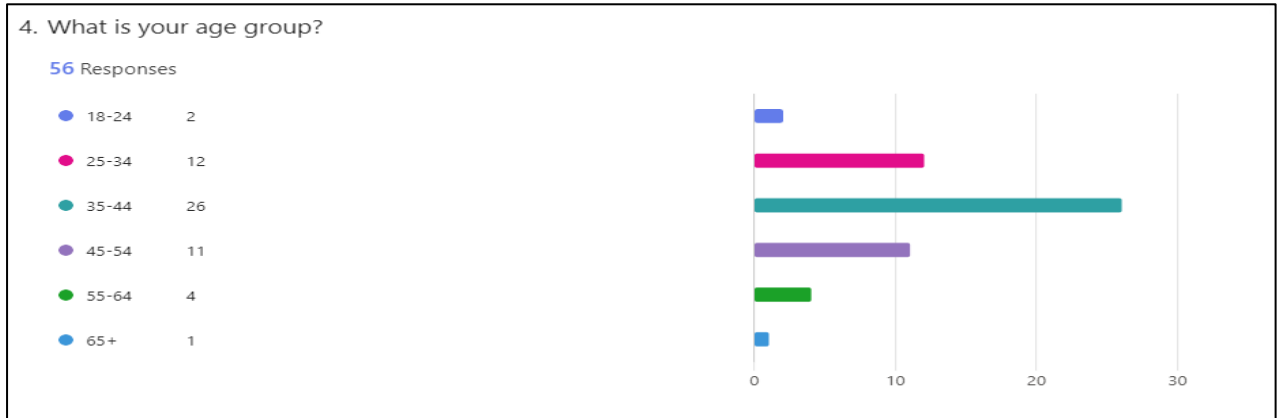
Appendix 5: Sociodemographic Information (Main Survey)

Participant Number	Agreed to Participate	Gender	Ethnicity	Age Group	HR Position	Length in HR
1	I agree	Male	White	45-54	Head of HR	10+ years
2	I agree	Female	Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups	35-44	Other	Less than a year
3	I agree	Female	White	55-64	HR Officer	7-8 years
4	I agree	Female	White	35-44	HR Officer	1-2 years

127

5	I agree	Female	White	25-34	HR Business Partner	3-4 years
6	I agree	Male	White	35-44	Head of HR	3-4 years
7	I agree	Female	White	55-64	Other	10+ years
8	I agree	Female	White	35-44	HR Business Partner	10+ years
9	I agree	Female	White	55-64	Other	10+ years
10	I agree	Female	White	25-34	Head of HR	10+ years
12	I agree	Female	White	35-44	HR Manager	10+ years
13	I agree	Female	White	45-54	Other	8-10 years
13	I agree	Female	White	35-44	Other	7-8 years
14	I agree	Female	White	25-34	HR Advisor	10+ years
15	I agree	Female	Asian/Asian British	35-44	HR Assistant	5-6 years
16	I agree	Female	White	35-44	HR Director	3-4 years

17	I agree	Female	White	35-44	Other	5-6 years
18	I agree	Female	White	25-34	HR Advisor	Less than a year
19	I agree	Female	Asian/Asian British	35-44	HR Assistant	10+ years
20	I agree	Female	White	35-44	HR Director	10+ years
21	I agree	Female	White	45-54	HR Director	10+ years
22	I agree	Female	White	45-54	HR Business Partner	10+ years
23	I agree	Female	White	25-34	HR Assistant	1-2 years
24	I agree	Female	White	25-34	Other	1-2 years
25	I agree	Female	White	35-44	HR Advisor	Less than a year
26	I agree	Female	White	35-44	HR Advisor	10+ years
27	I agree	Female	White	35-44	Head of HR	1-2 years

28	I agree	Female	White	35-44	HR Advisor	1-2 years
29	I agree	Female	White	18-24	HR Administrator	Less than a year
30	I agree	Female	White	18-24	HR Administrator	5-6 years
31	I agree	Female	White	35-44	HR Officer	5-6 years
32	I agree	Female	White	25-34	HR Advisor	5-6 years
33	I agree	Female	White	35-44	HR Director	8-10 years
34	I agree	Female	White	25-34	HR Manager	10+ years
35	I agree	Female	White	25-34	HR Officer	1-2 years
36	I agree	Male	White	35-44	Head of HR	10+ years
37	I agree	Female	White	45-54	HR Manager	10+ years
38	I agree	Female	White	25-34	HR Manager	8-10 years
39	I agree	Female	White	35-44	HR Business Partner	10+ years

40	I agree	Female	Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups	45-54	HR Business Partner	10+ years
41	I agree	Female	White	25-34	HR Officer	1-2 years
42	I agree	Female	White	35-44	Head of HR	10+ years
43	I agree	Female	White	65+	HR Manager	1-2 years
44	I agree	Female	White	25-34	HR Business Partner	8-10 years
45	I agree	Female	White	35-44	Head of HR	10+ years
46	I disagree					
47	I agree	Male	White	35-44	HR Manager	10+ years
48	I agree	Female	White	35-44	HR Manager	10+ years
49	I agree	Female	White	45-54	HR Business Partner	10+ years
50	I agree	Female	White	35-44	HR Business Partner	3-4 years
51	I agree	Female	White	35-44	HR Manager	7-8 years
52	I agree	Female	White	55-64	Head of HR	10+ years

53	I agree	Female	White	35-44	HR Manager	10+ years
54	I agree	Female	White	35-44	HR Manager	7-8 years
55	I agree	Female	White	25-34	HR Business Partner	10+ years
56	I agree	Female	White	35-44	HR Business Partner	3-4 years
57	I agree	Female	White	35-44	HR Director	10+ years

Appendix 6: Sociodemographic Information (Pilot Survey)

1	I disagree					
2	I agree	Woman	White	45-54	Head of HR	10+ years
3	I agree	Woman	White	35-44	Head of HR	10+ years
4	I agree	Woman	White	45-54	HR Advisor	7-8 years

Appendix 7: Pilot Survey

A copy of the pilot form can be accessed through this link:
https://forms.office.com/e/yKMH8dnF38?origin=lprLink

Title: Critical Analysis of Workplace Violence towards HR Professionals Questionnaire

Published Feb 21, 2024

Pilot Questionnaire

1. Please read the forms in the link below, and tick if you agree with the contents of these forms. (Single choice)
   https://uowtsd-my.sharepoint.com/:f:/g/personal/1651324_student_uwtsd_ac_uk/EmhKhoWXUfJIuEcewMOnBaMBU8YMUe1yB1vzCazk7lCz0A?e=LqYBFc

   I Agree
   I Disagree

2. What gender do you most identify with? (Single choice)
   Women
   Man
   Non-binary
   Prefer not to say

3. Which ethnicity do you most identify with? (Single choice).
   If unsure, please refer to:
   https://www.ons.gov.uk/methodology/classificationsandstandards/measuringequality/ethnicgroupnationalidentityandreligion

   Black/African/Caribbean/Black British
   White
   Asian/Asian British
   Chinese
   Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups
   Arab
   Other

4. What is your age group? (Single choice)
   18-24
   25-34
   35-44
   45-54
   55-64
   65+

5. Which HR position does your role most identify with? (Single choice).
   HR Administrator
   HR Assistant
   HR Officer
   HR Advisor
   HR Business Partner
   HR Manager
   Head of HR
   HR Director
   Other

6. What sector do you currently work in? (Single choice).
   Private
   Public
   Third Sector

7. How many years have you worked within HR (Single choice).
   Less than a year
   1-2 years
   3-4 years
   5-6 years
   7-8 years
   8-10 years
   10+ years

8. While working in the private sector, how many incidences of violence have you personally experienced due to your role as a HR professional? (Single choice).
   0
   1-5
   5-10
   10-15
   15-20
   20+

9. Please describe the situation/s where you personally experienced workplace violence in this sector. (Multi Line Text).

   Enter your answer

10. What safeguarding measures were in place for you at the time of the incident? (Multiple choice).
    Security guards
    Panic button
    Supporting HR staff
    None
    Other

11. Did you contact the police to report this incident? (Single choice).
    Yes
    No

12. You answered question 10 with 'No', what was the reasoning behind this decision?
    (Single line text).

    Enter your answer

13. Did you receive any support following this incident? (Single choice).
    Yes
    No

14. You selected 'Yes' to question 13, what support did you receive? (Multiple choice).
    Access to sick leave
    employee assistance program
    private counselling
    Other

15. Did you have an opportunity to self-reflect on this incident? (Single choice).
    Yes
    No

16. Did you develop any physical or mental impairment after the incident? (Multiple choice).
    None
    PTSD
    Anxiety
    Depression
    Burnout
    Other

17. What do you think employers can do to safeguard you from workplace violence in the
    future? (Multi Line Text).

    Enter your answer

18. Do you have any comments you wish to add regarding the above questionnaire. (Single
    line text).

    Enter your answer

Appendix 8: Feedback from Pilot Participants

Informed Consent Form:

I understand and confirm that;

1. I have read and understood the participant information sheet on the subject of the research topic named above.
2. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the research and my participation.
3. I understand that I have the right to withdraw at any time up to two weeks following the questionnaire and I understand that I will not be penalised for withdrawing nor questioned for doing so.
4. The procedures regarding confidentiality have been clearly explained (e.g use of names, pseudonyms, anonymisation of data etc). to me.
5. I give my permission for the researcher to take fieldnotes, which will potentially be used in the write up of the report to add emphasis to any points made.
6. I agree that any information collected will be kept in a secure environment.
7. I understand that the only individuals able to access the information are the researcher and university supervisors.
8. I understand that other researchers may have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the data and if they agree to the terms that are specified in this form.
9. I voluntary agree to participate in this research.

- insert following submission of the questionnaire and remove the full stop after the bracket

Participant Information Form:

Participant Information Sheet
Title of Research Report

Critical Analysis of workplace violence towards Human Resource professionals in the UK private sector focusing on safeguarding

You are invited to participate in a research study focusing on critical analysis of workplace violence towards Human Resource professionals in the UK private sector focusing on safeguarding.

Before you agree or disagree to take part in the research study, please take some time to read the below information surrounding the background of the research being conducted. If you have any further questions or require more information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

What is the purpose of this research?

This research will form part of my overall grade in my CIPD Master's degree at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David.

The objective for the research will explore workplace violence towards HR professionals within the UK private sector by critically analysing perceptions towards HR, identifying the types of violence towards its professionals and explore why violence is experienced by professionals. It will also explore if current safeguarding measure are adequate within the private sector for its HR professionals. This will provide realistic recommendations to future safeguard HR professionals and create safer working environments.

What do I have to do?

If you choose to participate in this research, you will first need to agree with the relevant consent form. Once completed, you may start the questionnaire.

Participation is voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw at any point, up until two weeks following the questionnaire.

Will my taking part in this research be kept confidential?

Yes. The questionnaire response will be kept confidential, if a copy of the report is requested, a summary of the full report will be sent and all names and identifying information will be redacted or pseudonyms will be used to keep anonymity. If you decide not to take part in the research, you will not be penalised for this.

- Remove "Title of Research Report"
- Remove word "further" as there are no previous qus
- add an "s" to measure - measures
- change "taking part" to "Participation"

The Survey * Qu 5 - too many "role" s - maybe change one to "position". Qu 8 - should it be a P or little p on Private, not sure. Qu9. Please describe "the"..... Another suggestion would be to allow respondents to expand on private sector into maybe Retail/Education/Hospitality as this may let you break analysis down further

Debrief:

Participant Debrief Form

Critical Analysis of workplace violence towards Human Resource professionals in the UK private sector focusing on safeguarding

Thank you for your time and participating in the above research.

The objective for the research will explore workplace violence towards HR professionals within the UK private sector by critically analysing perceptions towards HR, identifying the types of violence towards its professionals and explore why violence is experienced by professionals. It will also explore if current safeguarding measure are adequate within the private sector for its HR professionals. This will provide realistic recommendations to future safeguard HR professionals and create safer working environments.

These findings will be included into a report as part of my master's degree with the University of Wales Trinity Saint David.

Any names or identifying factors will be removed from the write up of the report. If a copy of the report is requested a summary of the full report will be sent and all names and identifying information will be redacted to keep anonymity.

If you change your mind about taking part in the interview, you can withdraw from research at any point, up to two weeks after the interview without providing reason.

If at any point you have felt negatively affected by the research or by your position in general, you can contact the following services to discuss any issues:

- Instead of "objective for the research will explore" change "for" to "of" and "will" to "is to" or you could change sentence completely to "This research will explore"....
- Poss change "explore why violence is experienced by professionals" to "the reasons why it is perpetrated"
- Remove the fullstop and "This will provide realistic recommendations...." to continue the sentence "with the aim of providing realistic recommendations......" just think this might help the structure of the sentence
- instead of "included into" change to "included in" or "collated in"
- Comma after requested
- should it be survey rather than interview
- I think "for support" may read better than "to discuss any issues"

Appendix 9: Final Survey Questions

A copy of the form can be accessed through this link:
https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=-
REPTm4EBUWcuNshUjEeIUho5ypMqoJOmsnH--oaJjpUNlZLNVhXSllJQUJXUTQ4TUZIU0szVlgxNy4u

Title: Workplace Violence towards HR Professionals in the Private Sector Questionnaire

Published March 2024

1. Please read the forms in the link below, and tick if you agree with the contents of these forms. (Required to answer. Single choice).
   https://uowtsd-
   my.sharepoint.com/:f:/g/personal/1651324_student_uwtsd_ac_uk/EmhKhoWXUfJIuEce
   wMOnBaMBU8YMUe1yB1vzCazk7lCz0A?e=LqYBFc

   I agree
   I disagree

2. What gender do you most identify with? (Single choice).
   Female
   Male
   Non-binary
   Prefer not to say

3. Which ethnicity do you most identify with? (Single choice).
   If unsure, please refer to:
   https://www.ons.gov.uk/methodology/classificationsandstandards/measuringequality/et
   hnicgroupnationalidentityandreligion
   Black/African/Caribbean/Black British
   White
   Asian/Asian British
   Chinese
   Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups
   Arab
   Other

4. What is your age group? (Single choice).
   18-24
   25-34
   35-44
   45-54
   55-64
   65+

5. Which HR position does your role most identify with? (Single choice).
   HR Administrator
   HR Assistant
   HR Officer
   HR Advisor
   HR Business Partner
   HR Manager
   Head of HR
   HR Director
   Other

6. What sector do you currently work in? (Single choice).
   Private
   Public
   Third Sector

7. How many years have you worked within HR? (Single choice).
   Less than a year
   1-2 years
   3-4 years
   5-6 years
   7-8 years
   8-10 years
   10+ years

8. While working in the private sector, how many incidences of violence have you personally experienced due to your role as a HR professional? (Single choice).
   Types of violence: Physical, Verbal, Sexual or Emotional
   0
   1-5
   5-10
   10-15
   15-20
   20+

9. Please describe the situation/s where you personally experienced workplace violence in this sector. (Multi Line Text).
   Please describe what happened before, during and after the event. Also describe how you felt after this event.

   Enter your answer

10. What safeguarding measures were in place for you at the time of the incident? (Multiple choice).
Security guards
Panic button
Supporting HR staff
None
Other

11. Do you feel the business's safeguarding measures were adequate at the time of the incident? (Single choice).
Yes
No

12. You answered question 11 with 'No'. Why did you feel these measures were inadequate? (Multi Line Text).

Enter your answer

13. Did you contact the police to report this incident? (Single choice).
Yes
No

14. You answered question 13 with 'No', what was the reasoning behind this decision? (Single line text).

Enter your answer

15. Did you receive any support following this incident from the business? (Single choice). Support can include sick leave, counselling, employee assistance etc.

Yes
No

16. You selected 'Yes' to question 15, what support did you receive? (Multiple choice).
Access to sick leave
employee assistance program
private counselling
Other

17. Did you have an opportunity to self-reflect on this incident? (Single choice).
Yes
No

18. Why do you think this incident happened and how did you feel after the event? (Multi Line Text).

Enter your answer

19. Did you develop any physical or mental impairments after the incident? (Multiple choice).
None
PTSD
Anxiety
Depression
Burnout
Other

20. What do you think employers can do to safeguard you from workplace violence in the future? (Multi Line Text).

Enter your answer

21. Do you have any comments you wish to add regarding the above questionnaire? (Single line text).

Enter your answer

Appendix 10: Consent to Participate in Final Survey

:::
1. Please read the forms in the link below, and tick if you agree with the contents of these forms. *

https://uowtsd-
my.sharepoint.com/:f:/g/personal/1651324_student_uwtsd_ac_uk/EmhKhoWXUfJIuEcewMOnBaMBU8YMUe1y
B1vzCazk7lCz0A?e=LqYBFc

◯ I agree

◯ I disagree

Prifysgol Cymru
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
University of Wales
Trinity Saint David

Informed Consent Form

Critical Analysis of workplace violence towards Human Resource professionals in the UK private sector focusing on safeguarding

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the above analysis. In order for you to participate you will be required to read the Participant Information Sheet and tick that you have read the following form within the questionnaire.

As mentioned on the Participant Information Sheet, your participation is voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw at any point, up to two weeks after your questionnaire is completed. If you decide to withdraw your participation and consent, you will not be penalised for this.

If you require any further information, please contact me on 1651324@student.uwtsd.ac.uk.

If you agree with the following information, tick that you have read and agree to the following form within the questionnaire.

I understand and confirm that:

1. I have read and understood the participant information sheet on the subject of the research topic named above.
2. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the research and my participation.
3. I understand that I have the right to withdraw at any time up to two weeks following submission of the questionnaire and I understand that I will not be penalised for withdrawing nor questioned for doing so.
4. The procedures regarding confidentiality have been clearly explained (e.g use of names, pseudonyms, anonymisation of data etc) to me.
5. I give my permission for the researcher to take fieldnotes, which will potentially be used in the write up of the report to add emphasis to any points made.
6. I agree that any information collected will be kept in a secure environment.
7. I understand that the only individuals able to access the information are the researcher and university supervisors.
8. I understand that other researchers may have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the data and if they agree to the terms that are specified in this form.
9. I voluntary agree to participate in this research.

Participant Information Sheet

Critical Analysis of workplace violence towards Human Resource professionals in the UK private sector focusing on safeguarding

You are invited to participate in a research study focusing on critical analysis of workplace violence towards Human Resource professionals in the UK private sector focusing on safeguarding.

Before you agree or disagree to take part in the research study, please take some time to read the below information surrounding the background of the research being conducted. If you have any questions or require more information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

What is the purpose of this research?

This research will form part of my overall grade in my CIPD Master's degree at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David.

The objective for the research will explore workplace violence towards HR professionals within the UK private sector by critically analysing perceptions towards HR, identifying the types of violence towards its professionals and explore why violence is experienced by professionals. It will also explore if current safeguarding measures are adequate within the private sector for its HR professionals. This will provide realistic recommendations to future safeguard HR professionals and create safer working environments.

What do I have to do?

If you choose to participate in this research, you will first need to agree with the relevant consent form. Once completed, you may start the questionnaire.

Participation is voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw at any point, up until two weeks following the questionnaire.

Will my participation in this research be kept confidential?

Yes. The questionnaire response will be kept confidential, if a copy of the report is requested, a summary of the full report will be sent and all names and identifying information will be redacted or pseudonyms will be used to keep anonymity. If you decide not to take part in the research, you will not be penalised for this.

Safeguarding

During your questionnaire there are questions about the workplace violence you have experienced directly in your role as a HR professional. To further safeguard HR professionals that will be participating in the research, an automatic debrief information message will appear after the questionnaire is submitted. The debrief information will signpost you to support networks to alleviate any emotional distress experienced during or after the questionnaire.

Data Storage

Any data collected will be stored in the cloud and will be password protected. Any identifying factors, such as your name and email address will be deleted one year after the research project is completed.

Contact information

If you have any further questions or require more information regarding the contents of this research, please contact me on 1651324@student.uwtsd.ac.uk.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information and I hope to hear from you soon.

Yours sincerely,

Dionne Stacey

Researcher

Appendix 12: Debrief Message

Participant Debrief Form

Critical Analysis of workplace violence towards Human Resource professionals in the UK private sector focusing on safeguarding

Thank you for your time and participating in the above research.

This research will explore workplace violence towards HR professionals within the UK private sector by critically analysing perceptions towards HR, identifying the types of violence towards its professionals and the reasons why it is perpetrated. It will also explore if current safeguarding measure are adequate within the private sector for its HR professionals and with the aim of providing realistic recommendations to future safeguard HR professionals and create safer working environments.

These findings will be included a report as part of my master's degree with the University of Wales Trinity Saint David.

Any names or identifying factors will be removed from the write up of the report. If a copy of the report is requested, a summary of the full report will be sent and all names and identifying information will be redacted to keep anonymity.

If you change your mind about taking part, you can withdraw from research at any point, up to two weeks after the questionnaire without providing reason.

If at any point you have felt negatively affected by the research or by your position in general, you can contact the following services for support:

Anxiety UK

Phone: 03444 775 774

Website: www.anxietyuk.org.uk

CALM

Phone: 0800 58 58 58

Website: www.thecalmzone.net

Mind

Phone: 0300 123 3393

Website: www.mind.org.uk

CIPD

Phone: 0800 917 6470

Website: https://www.cipd.co.uk/

Please do not hesitate to get in contact with me if you have any questions on 1651324@student.uwtsd.ac.uk.

Yours sincerely,
Dionne Stacey