REVIEWER 2

Thank you for the opportunity to review this manuscript. This study explores an important issue and is well-presented and written. However, my main concern is that the current aim and contribution of this paper are not clearly specified, therefore I am unsure how the findings currently fill a gap or extend our knowledge about the bullying of managers. Aside from this, there are some other key issues with methodology that require further elaboration and a stronger justification. These are listed below:

**Major points**

*The aim of the study “to describe factors related to the workplace bullying…” is unclear. At present, the reader is uncertain whether this is referring to causal/antecedent factors, or coping factors/mechanisms, or other general factors?*

*Revision response. The aim has been clarified, see line 208-212.*

Ideally this aim(s) would be reworded for clarity. More importantly, it is unclear whether there is an existing gap in the literature that this study is trying to address and what is the specific contribution to theory and/or practice made by the findings of this research. This theoretical gap and contribution also needs to be explicitly established in the introduction section.

*Revision response. A paragraph has been added before the aim section line 103-115, to motivate the study and its contribution.*

Likewise, in the Discussion section it is unclear how the findings are additive to our current knowledge about the workplace bullying of managers, beyond the existing literature cited. The extension of knowledge and contribution(s) also needs to be emphasised within this section.

*Revision response: we have added a section about the contribution of the study, see line 453-460.*

A stronger rationale for the chosen qualitative approach is needed in section 2. This involves not necessarily justifying the use of qualitative over quantitative methods, but more about highlighting *why a qualitative approach was best suited to address the specific study aim.*

*Revision response: we have added a paragraph to the introduction (lines 107-112) in which we have explained our choice of study and method. Hopefully this will be valuable information.*
While the COREQ guidelines are alluded to, further detail is also required in the Method section (section 2) on the following points, to provide context for the reader. Background/rationale for criteria 1 - why did they have to identify as having experienced bullying for ‘approximately 6 months’? Is this duration a conflation with the timeframe in which bullying is usually measured (i.e.; in the past six months)? Perhaps a reference to support this criteria would be beneficial How was the study information distributed to organisations (i.e.; what was the initial sampling method used? Random? Convenience?)

Revised response: additional information about the criteria for inclusion has been added. Lines 128-134. More and clarifying information was added concerning the recruitment process in lines 135-138.

More important than the average age of the excluded sub-group (n=5) would be details on why their experience did not fulfil the criteria (i.e.; was this specifically around repetition, duration, or other elements of the definition used?)

Revised response: information about age has been added on line 168 and about the excluded participants in lines 156-159.

Beyond this, addressing the following points would also add further clarity to the arguments presented in this paper.

Minor issues
Suggest avoiding use of gendered language (eg: “his managerial position”, line 42) Lines 55-56 - consider starting section on outcomes of workplace bullying in a separate paragraph (line 55) to the antecedents
Line 60-62 specify whether ‘exposure’ means experiencing and/or witnessing bullying - perhaps could also briefly delve into the impact of witnessing bullying, as there is a lot of research on this Line 63 - consider rephrasing to avoid generalisations
Lines 97-98 - check wording “The dominant view” ?

Revised response. The introduction is revised, hopefully all the comments above have been taken care of.

Lines 108-111 - would be good to elaborate on these two statements (i.e.; emotion-focused coping being ineffective as it exacerbates the stressor-strain relationship, whereas problem-
focused coping is more effective) as it is a key tenet of this study (and other workplace bullying research).

Revision response. We have deleted this part.

The ‘methodological considerations’ (lines 459-475) do not appear to be adding anything to the manuscript, and some of the details around data analysis are fairly standard procedures for analysis rather than distinctly adding to the integrity of the findings. Perhaps some of these points might be better integrated into the Method section itself, so that the reader is well-placed to judge of the rigour of the study

Revision response: We have added information in this part.

All the best with your research!

Thank you very much!