Work Place Bullying Cost and Consequences

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Abstract: **Research into workplace bullying is taking various turns with most of the studies broadening understanding of the concept. Although much progress has been reported in research on the understanding of what are workplace bullying, its effects and how to deal with it? The study revealed that workplace bullying is as a result of organizational change, organizational division into uniformed and non-uniformed staff, power relations, management style and witnessing bullying. The study also revealed that workplace bullying has a detrimental effect on the physical and mental health of the victim. While all the accounts discussed above were given by those who have experienced workplace bullying.** Bullying in the workplace **has become a topic of open discussion over the past several years. This paper is a collection of research findings, personal learning's from a bullying experience, and the opinions and insights of business Presidents/COO's on the topic. It should provide adequate ammunition to place this serious issue firmly on any organizational agenda.**

Keywords: Workplace Bullying, Negative Effect, power; upwards bullying; workplace abuse.

I. INTRODUCTION

The term workplace bullying has been described as a global concept that corporate harassment, intimidation, and aggressive or violent behaviors (Hadik In & O'Driscoll 2000). As a result, workplace bullying is related to a plethora of concepts focused on behaviors that treat colleagues, managers, supervisors, clients or suppliers in an inappropriate manner. Thus, the definition of workplace bullying needs careful consideration in order to separate it conceptually from various other counterproductive workplace behaviors. Workplace bullying encompasses a particular set of circumstances, behaviors and outcomes as set out in the following widely accepted definition. Workplace bullying occurs when an employee experiences a persistent pattern of mistreatment from others in the workplace that causes harm.[1] This form of bullying can include such tactics as verbal, nonverbal, psychological, physical abuse and humiliation. This type of workplace aggression is particularly difficult because, unlike the typical forms of school bullying, workplace bullies often operate within the established rules and policies of their organization and their society. Bullying in the workplace is in the majority of cases reported as having been perpetrated by someone in authority over the target. However, bullies can also be peers, and occasionally can be subordinates.[2] Research has also investigated the impact of the larger organizational context on bullying as well as the group-level processes that impact on the incidence, and maintenance of bullying behaviour. Bullying can be covert or overt. It may be missed by superiors or known by many throughout the organization. Negative effects are not limited to the targeted individuals, and may lead to a decline in employee morale and a change in organizational culture.

Purpose and Limitation

- The aims of this thesis are to describe the prevalence and forms of bullying experienced by business professionals and to further increase the understanding of bullying by analyzing factors and processes in the work environment that may contribute to bullying in knowledge-intensive and career-oriented jobs. More precisely my aims are:
- To measure the prevalence and to describe the forms of bullying among business Professionals. This thesis thus aim is to describe how bullying is expressed among Professionals, i.e. what kind of negative acts professionals report and what kind of acts they perceive as bullying. In addition, differences between different groups of employees are analyzed. Due to the large gender differences in prevalence found in the study conducted, the links between gender and victimisation in the male-dominated business environment are explored in more detail.
- To analyze the role of the work environment in bullying among business professionals. In particular, this paper aims to analyze how the fact that the Respondents work in career-oriented jobs, which often are characterized by high Internal competition, may affect the presence of bullying. In connection with This, the paper introduces a political perspective on bullying, i.e. it argues that Acts of bullying can in some instances used as a micro-political strategy.

What are examples of bullying?

While bullying is a form of aggression, the actions can be both obvious and subtle. It is important to note that the following is not a checklist, nor does it mention all forms of bullying. This list is included as a way of showing some of the ways bullying may happen in a workplace. Also remember that bullying is usually considered to be a pattern of behaviour where one or more incidents will help show that bullying is taking place.

Examples include:

- Spreading malicious rumours, gossip, or innuendo that is not true.
- Excluding or isolating someone socially.
- Intimidating a person.

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- Undermining or deliberately impeding a person's work.
- Physically abusing or threatening abuse.
- Removing areas of responsibilities without cause.
- Constantly changing work guidelines.
- Establishing impossible deadlines that will set up the individual to fail.
- Withholding necessary information or purposefully giving the wrong information.
- Making jokes that are 'obviously offensive' by spoken word or e-mail.
- Intruding on a person's privacy by pestering, spying or stalking.
- Assigning unreasonable duties or workload which are unfavourable to one person (in a way that creates unnecessary pressure).
- Underwork - creating a feeling of uselessness.
- Yelling or using profanity.
- Criticising a person persistently or constantly.
- Belittling a person's opinions.
- Unwarranted (or undeserved) punishment.
- Blocking applications for training, leave or promotion.
- Tampering with a person's personal belongings or work equipment.

If you are not sure an action or statement could be considered bullying, you can use the "reasonable person" test. Would most people consider the action unacceptable?

II. COSTS OF BULLYING:

Large Financial Impact on Business: Bullying in the workplace has a large financial impact on business; Harrison Psychological Associates reports the business costs of bullying to employers where people are being harassed, within a two-year period, is more than $180 million in lost time and productivity.. The business pays in loses of productivity, turn over, operating cost, and the quality of product/service deliverables. While the bullying incidents are allowed to strengthen in their frequency, the loyalties of your employees weaken. Resulting in businesses losing their valuable human resource investments; the loyal, trained and seasoned employees the employer nurtured over many years.

III. HIGH STAFF TURN-OVER AND RETRAINING COSTS

Gary Namie's study at The Workplace Bullying & Trauma Institute (WBTI), (2003 n=1,000) shows 70% of people bullied (targets) leave their current position of employment after working with the employer for an average of 6.7 years. According to Namie's study, a target endures the bullying for an average of 23-months before they leave the aggressive environment. Namie suggests these targets cannot be referred to as "thin-skinned", as they stay with the company for a long time under conditions most individuals would view as intolerable. Over the past decade, more people have become aware of the important role physical and mental well-being play in our capacity to process and engage in our social environments. The health impacts from being subjected to bullying are often visible to employers but overlooked as indicators of stress. A key observation I made during my experience is the bullying behavior emotionally corrodes employees. It strips them of their capacity to interact and deal with the stresses in the workplace. Reviewing the health symptoms from exposure to bulling will help to understanding the behaviors an employer might observe and interpret as stress symptoms, and the psychological distress the person is experiencing.

IV. DAMAGE TO EMPLOYEE(S) PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH

Below is a chart with the Mental GHQ scores and Physical OSI scores for those directly bullied and co-workers witnessing the events from Hoel & Cooper's 2000 report. The scores clearly show the effects of bullying extend beyond those directly targeted to include the witnesses. The findings show "currently" bullied are well above the need for psychiatric treatment at 5.6%.

Bullying and Health Outcomes						
	Not At All	Currently Bullied	Previously	Witness Bullying	Occasionally Bullied (Rarely/monthly)	Regularly Bullied (Weekly/Daily)
Mental GHQ Score	2.62	5.6	3.7	2.8	5.45	6.68
Physical OSI Score	33.46	43.7	38.6	33.9	43.26	46.34

Note: GHQ score of 4 and above is the level, which may imply a need for screening of psychiatric treatment.

Gary Namie suggests that an important defining characteristic of workplace bullying which distinguishes the behavior from other routine office politics is the health endangerment to the individual. In his study he discusses 33-health symptoms targets experience during the bullying experience. Below are the seven most mentioned health symptoms in the study (n% is percentage of respondents):

- Anxiety, stress, excessive worry (76%)
- Loss of concentration (71%)
- Disrupted sleep (71%)
- Feeling edgy, irritable, easily startled and constantly on guard (hypervigilance) (60%)
- Stress headaches (55%)
- Obsession over details at work (52%)
- Recurrent memories, nightmares and flashbacks (49%)

After reviewing and understanding the GHQ scores and health symptoms list above we can start to have a clearer

understanding what targets might be experiencing. We can also understand how a person being bullied for many months would be in a constant state of emotional distress and have their 'spiritual being' battered.

Dehumanized and Stressed Workers Unable to Focus

Taking insight from my incident, the best description to explain the bullying experience is someone is ripping you apart and de-segemnetizing your "person" little by little. By the end of what you can handle, you find yourself to be the shell of who you where and the world seems surreal.

- Company's Ability to Achieve Business Goals Impacted

  Namie's study, reports that 77% of the time bullies recruit other co-workers, by instilling fear in others. The UNISON 1997 report points out that 73.4% of respondent's remark that management knew about the behaviour but did not intervene. In addition, Hoel and Cooper report 54.9% of the time groups of workers (3+) are being bullied by one person, however management never reprimands 87% of the bullies. As the bullying events increase and engulf groupings of human resources it will have a direct impact on the company's ability to achieve business goals and their worker's productivity levels.

  If only 13% of bullies are reprimanded and management knows about the activity then it is clear the bully is not held accountable for the behavior disturbing the team. Then to learn 54.9% of the time 3+ people are being bullied aid in our understanding of why production declines in these environments. In Hoel and Coopers study, they found that when a repressive work culture exists it lowers employee's self-esteem and productivity is paralyzed (Helge Hoel & Cary L Cooper, 2000).

  A study by Proudfoot Consulting in 2006 reveals that the second greatest cause of unproductive time is 'inadequate supervision'. They report that the top three barriers to efficiency in a company are inadequate supervision, insufficient planning and control, and poor working morale (Proudfoot Productivity Report, 2006)

- Management's Credibility Eroded and Worker Morale Destroyed as Victims are Punished Instead of the Bullies Responsible

  From the perspective of employees, part of the role of management is to evaluate and understand what is occurring in the work 'social' environment and assertively address inappropriate behaviors effecting production, processes and employee morale. An important strength in a leader is the capacity to observe social elements and accurately identify the key motivators of destructive behavior. Maybe the executives did not understand the impact the bullying had on the employee's performance. Perhaps also they did not have the propensity to realize that the performance outcome they were demanding would not occur until the aggressive boorish behaviors were removed so the staff could focus on their work.

- Some suggestions to handle the situation:

(1) Make sure you keep a log of everything;

A. what has happened and what you have done and where it occurred,

B. include dates, time and people around

(2) Keep all communication professional, factual, non-confrontational and problem resolution oriented. This will help you maintain your professionalism and creditability;

A. keeps all communication in writing so you have a paper trail in case you or the company needs to take legal action.

B. steers away from any emotionally charged conversations and do not respond to threats or degrading communication, verbal or e-mail. If the bully approaches you to harass you walk away immediately saying nothing.

i. always remember you are in a professional setting and must maintain your creditability at all times.

ii. You will look more adult to the senior executives if you walked away and did not engage in the behavior.

C. keeps everything on file; arm you with facts and documents.

D. gets enough hard evidence that backs up your position of concern, but make sure you do not strengthen the Bully's position.

(3) report to your supervisor/manager the incidents and request a copy of the companies anti-harassment policy, you have the legal right to it.

A. if they will not give it to you then go to Human Resources or to the next level of management. If the Bully is the next level then go to their supervisor, after you have gone to your immediate supervisor/manager and Human Resources. Do not request it from the Bully.

B. makes sure you keep a log of who you spoke to, when and what you requested, and their actions.

C. make a follow up requested by e-mail, stating the time and date of your meeting and the outcome.

(4) try NOT to hold any one-to-one conversations with the Bully in private;

A. have someone else present for meetings, or

B. has them where others can over hear if you can, i.e. keep doors open

C. asks manager/senior to help resolve issue by making a work agreement that the two of you must have a third party present at meetings until the issues are resolved.

(5) If the person you go to does nothing, keep going up the company's seniority levels until you reach the president or owner.

(6) If no one in the company will resolve the harassing behavior, seek legal advice with your notes and communication file in hand.

- How can workplace bullying be prevented?

1. Have clear policies against bullying. In order to prevent or stop workplace bullying, organizations must have clear policies against it. Policies should apply as much to management as to employees, clients, independent contractors or anyone who has a relationship with the company. To prevent or stop workplace bullying, organizations must have clear policies against it.

2. Management should be committed to creating a healthy and safe work environment. This commitment

includes providing comprehensive training to help all employees identify and address bullying. When anyone witnesses bullying, it should be reported, documented and addressed. The bullying employee needs to be clearly told that their behavior will not be tolerated in the organization.

3. Provide support and resources. Organizations should also provide resources, like counselors through the company's Employee Assistance Program, that victims AND bullies can turn to for help.

4. Prevent bullying before it starts. Companies should carefully screen job candidates, using behavioral-based interviewing techniques, to identify behaviors or attitudes that underlie bullying and go against corporate values and culture. And they should perform background checks and screening to uncover any previous history of bullying or violence.

5. Preventing workplace bullying is everyone's responsibility

6. Almost everyone seems to agree on the fact that you can't change the bully. You can only change your response to them or manage your encounters with them. Understanding that the problem is with them, not you is paramount to gaining perspective on the situation. You need strong self-esteem in these circumstances. And you need to pull heavily on your support network to help you stay positive.

7. Speak up against workplace bullying

8. Though victims of bullying may feel their options are limited, they need to realize that staying silent is detrimental. Bullies thrive on silence and a victim's inaction fortifies the idea that the bully has won, has the power, and can continue behaving antagonistically because no one will stop them.

9. Your health and well-being must come first and if quitting is the only option, make your exit loud and known, so the bully has nowhere to hide.

V. CONCLUSION

Workplace bullying has become a serious and growing problem that affects a significant proportion of healthcare professionals. As a result of its negative consequences on the mental health and well-being of employees, and hence on the performance of the organizations, the importance of understanding the factors that contribute to the emergence and development of bullying is vital. In this regard, the present study aims to contribute to the development and implementation of measures to prevent bullying in the organisations.

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