

Workplace bullying and victimisation on productivity impact



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TASK 1: BE ABLE TO UNDERSTAND HOW TO FORMULATE A RESEARCH SPECIFICATION

Evaluating how workplace bullying and victimisation can affect productivity.

Introduction

Any effective and successful business understands the importance of productivity in the workplace. Being productive can help the firm increase and utilize the capacity of the human resources it has. Most productive companies have happy and healthy employees, which are the basis of a successful organization.

- Customer Benefit

Productivity in the workplace will often translate into good customer service and interaction. This total client experience is the key to satisfying customers and clients, and almost all highly productive companies use this to gain customer loyalty. When a customer is loyal to your business, they will share their experience with others, which is a marketing advantage coming out of high levels of productivity.

- The Company

The employees themselves are an investment, and like any investment, they should yield a healthy or worthwhile return to the company. Therefore, when employees are highly productive the company achieves its goals of investing in them in the first place. Productivity also helps to motivate the workplace culture and boost morale, producing an even better company environment.

- The Work Force

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More often than not, when a firm is highly productive, it eventually becomes successful, and because of this, incentives are bound to be made available to the employees. These include pay raises, bonuses, medical insurance and so on. This will also motivate employees and gives them more job opportunities as the company grows. Productivity in the workplace is an important aspect of every company and when top management understands this concept, success is just around the corner. However, if your company doesn't give you the incentive to increase productivity, you may want to start looking for another job because the lifeblood of your company is running out.

I have chosen this research proposal because I have heard of cases of bullying at work and it also happened to me in one of my previous roles. I believe it's a topic that can be viewed from different perspectives and I have tried to tackle it as best as I could.

In order for me to understand this research I will be using different methods of evidence of primary research conducted by using the questionnaire methodology and including secondary data that will be derived from literature and other sources related to bullying and victimisation.

This research will be conducted in the Private sector specifically in the IT field.

Literature review

Various literatures support the belief that bullying falls into one of four forms of behaviour: verbal, non-verbal, physical and subtle.

Townend (2008) examined each of these to identify how they are reflected in practice. In relation to verbal behaviours, the author reported that bullying would often occur through the aggressor/bully making unpleasant, sarcastic comments, with the intention of humiliating the individual. The strongest verbal bullying behaviour refers to the deliberate and repetitive exclusion of an individual from conversation; for example, asking all members in a team meeting for a contribution, except for the targeted individual. Non-verbal bullying behaviours were reported to be initiated through factors such as the avoidance of eye contact. Technological advancements have significantly impacted upon non-verbal bullying, with the potential to use emails, text messages and social networking websites as a means of distributing abusive messages, and further excluding individuals. Physical bullying is fairly obvious, with the behaviour often involving physical violence, such as striking the victim, or damaging their property. Regarding subtle bullying behaviours, Samnani (2013) defined these behaviours as negative acts which are not immediately obvious, but undermine the individual. This is often the most popular choice of bullying behaviour, with actions being open to interpretation, making it difficult to detect from a neutral perspective. Subtle bullying behaviours include actions such as withholding important information, persistent criticism, excessive supervision, being assigned menial tasks, excessive workloads, gossiping and insults (Samnani, 2013); actions which through not being immediately obvious, may not always be perceived by victims as bullying.

In defining workplace bullying, Einarsen et al (2011: 22) put forward the definition that bullying at work revolves around “ harassing, offending,

socially excluding someone or negatively affecting someone's work.... In order for the label of bullying to be applied to a particular activity, interaction or process it has to occur repeatedly and regularly over a period of time". "Bullying is an escalated process in the course of which the person confronted ends up in an inferior position and becomes the target of systematic negative social acts". Elaborating upon this, it is important to differentiate workplace bullying from workplace violence. The former is primarily psychological and persistent, whilst the latter is primarily physical and irregular(Cooper-Thomas et al, 2013).

Your literature review has to incorporate both literature of the importance of productivity in a work setting and the effects of bullying and victimisation.

Purpose of the research

This aim of this research is to examine workplace bullying from a theoretical perspective; providing an insight into the prevalence of workplace bullying and how it might affect staff and productivity and the implications and suggest effective ways organisations could use to tackle this phenomenon.

The objectives that will be used to achieve that are as follow;

- To assesses gender differences and ethnicity in a given work place
- To identify perceptions of work bullying and victimisation
- To analyse implications of work bullying and victimisation
- To determine the response of organisations in cases of bullying.

Rationale of the research:

In determining the extent to which workplace bullying can detrimentally impact an organisation, appropriate response is required. It is reported in the United Kingdom, that approximately only 80% of organisations have anti-bullying policies in place (Harrington et al, 2013); thus, suggesting there is still a sizeable population allowing the issue to go uncompromised.

This is not the case for all organisations, with data suggesting workplace bullying costs upwards of £2 million a year, and 18 million in lost working days, organisations understand the need for action (CIPD, 2006). Bullying is typically a problem faced by Human Resource departments (HRM), and thus it is their role to be at the forefront, introducing eradicated methods. Khan and Khan (2012) proposed four key strategies that HR departments can implement in attempting to manage workplace bullying; education and training, corporate responsibility, possession of the right machinery and support. The collaboration of these four items, form an organisations anti-bullying policy.

Scope and limitations

I believe my research project is suitable for all employees and employers out there who deal with such situations where work bullying and victimization may occur. By reviewing some of the literature available online and the questionnaire I have put together to see some real views from individuals who have experienced bullying a work, I hope to raise more awareness of this phenomenon prevalence.

I expect this research to take up to 1 month in order to get the best of the resources that need to be analyzed and acknowledged for optimal results.
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As a disadvantage, I would mention that if I would have more time to look into more cases of bullying I may get more results that would add help in enhancing my research.

Ethical implications

The implications and ethical issues involved in my research affect safety, engagement, productivity, trust, and the workplace culture. It poses the question to leaders, just how important is a healthy work culture to business and long-term success.

Research methodology

The method of primary research utilised a questionnaire methodology. However, emphasis was placed on asking open-ended questions, so to attain qualitative data. This focus was assigned, as I sought to obtain in-depth responses, outlining individual exposure to bullying.

The sources used for this research project include: questionnaires, books and internet pages.

ADD QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE INFO. (DATA USED)

ADD WEBSITE USED

Evidence research proposal

Word count: 800/1000 words

TASK 1 part 2 : Provide an appropriate plan and procedures for the agreed research specification (AC1. 5);

1. Provide an appropriate plan and procedures for the agreed research specification

- Here, you need to set an action plan using the key objectives (see above) and your research methodology (e. g design questionnaire, do a survey, gather secondary information, arrange interview etc) of your research question of hypothesis.

| Research objective | By when | Resources to be used (2. 1) | Milestones (when do you know this objective is achieved) | Review dates (which is after the “by when” to ensure that you have actually achieved the | How will you monitor this objective is being achieved? – method of monitoring |
|--------------------|---------|-----------------------------|--|--|---|
| | | | | | |

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TASK 2: BE ABLE TO IMPLEMENT THE RESEARCH PROJECT WITHIN AGREED

PROCEDURES AND TO SPECIFICATION

2. 2 Undertake the proposed research investigation in accordance with the agreed specification and procedures.

Primary data collection

The primary research revolved around the adoption of a questionnaire methodology. The purpose behind this research was to provide and source

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first-hand accounts from individuals that have been exposed to incidents of workplace bullying. Questions were formed with consideration being allocated to the items highlighted in the literature review. These included questions referencing how the respondent was bullied, by whom, whether it impacted upon their intention to leave the organisation, the short-term and long-term implications, and how the individual structured their response. Qualitative data was selected and in turn open ended questions posed, providing “ contexts, like one-to-one interviewing, that allow a participant to “ express their beliefs, assumptions, desires and understandings”(Horn, 2012, p103).

The questionnaire was created using the Likert scale. This method was used instead of alternative methods, such as face-to-face interviews, as according to Dayan et al (2009) when responding to sensitive questions, methodologies that “ reduce the level of question administration by human interviewers”, such as online questionnaires, “ increase responses to sensitive personal questions and yield more honest, candid answers”. This belief is formalised as researchers suggest that without the presence of an interviewer, online questionnaires are able to attain higher levels of personal disclosure and reductions in responses being affected by social desirability. Online questionnaires also allow respondents to remain anonymous. This is critical in two ways; firstly people are more willing to theoretically open up and disclose information if they feel free from further repercussions, and secondly, anonymity has been proven to reduce social anxiety and social durability when divulging information. For this methodology, the author elected to adopt a self-selective sample. This was selected as the author

wanted to obtain responses from individuals that met the specific criteria of having experienced exposure to bullying first-hand, but in doing so placed no pressure on individuals to participate and divulge information.

Although this is not high, emphasis was placed on quality rather than quantity.

Please be more specific as to what you intend to prove

Advantages and disadvantages of the methodology used

Although this research question addresses an important topic of discussion in literature, there are a number of limitations and benefits that can be associated towards the chosen methodology. As mentioned the method used is questionnaires, with open ended questions. In evaluating these, the methodologies will be discussed separately.

Regarding the questionnaire, it can be recognised that this methodology is faced with the limitation of only having obtained a very small sample size in the form of $n = 4$. The problem this inflicts in respect to the relevance of the data is that through the attainment of such a small sample, it raises questions regarding the generalisability of the results. Although the author hoped that this would not be the case, through the research conducted having very specific and sensitive criteria, in the form of having been bullied and willing to disclose their account, the author acknowledged that the potentiality of an undergraduate finding and sourcing willing respondents would be slim. As such, in an attempt to counter this and make the most of the sample size obtained, the author sought to compensate the limitation

through ensuring the responses were in-depth. The intention was to ask a magnitude of questions, which would result in the attainment of individual detailed accounts, addressing the various elements highlighted and discussed in the literature review.

However, the rich data yielded by this small sample group offered important insights into the effects of bullying in the immediate and longer term, that now warrant further investigation through wider sampling.

The benefits attached to this methodology, refer to the provision of sensitive and personal data. Dayan et al (2009) stated that online questionnaires have the strength of obtaining honest answers, as through the removal of question administration by human interviewers, participants are made to feel more comfortable in the relative anonymous environment of the internet. This in turn yields greater detailed and candid answers as participants feel comfortable and free from judgement; although the danger associated with online participation runs the risk of whether the information disclosed is indeed factual, or ultimately a positive contribution towards the discussion.

Secondary data used- sources from online website

Advantage and disadvantages of the methodology used

2. 3 Record and collate relevant data where appropriate.

DEFINE ANOVA AND EXPLAIN THE IMPORTANCE OF USING IT.

ANOVA

One-way completely randomized

Workplace bullying

| | Male | Male | Female | Female | |
|----|-------|-------|--------|--------|--|
| 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | |
| 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | |
| 3 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | |
| 4 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | |
| 5 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | |
| 6 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | |
| 7 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | |
| 8 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | |
| 9 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | |
| 10 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | |
| n | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | |
| X | 2.300 | 2.300 | 2.200 | 2.300 | |
| s | 1.252 | 1.252 | 1.317 | 1.337 | |

$X_{ave} = 2.275$

| source | df | SS | MS | F | P-value |
|------------|----|--------|-------|--------|---------|
| treatments | 3 | 0.075 | 0.025 | 0.0150 | 0.9974 |
| error | 36 | 59.900 | 1.664 | | |
| total | 39 | 59.975 | | | |

INTERPRET THE DATA AND WHAT YOU THINK OF THE DATA ANALYSIS

METHOD USED-ANOVA!

2. Advantages and disadvantages you found for the data analysis methods?

Points to be considered for Data analysis and interpretation (you can use at least 2 for advantage and 2 for disadvantage); qualitative and quantitative data analysis – interpreting transcripts; coding techniques; specialist software; statistical tables; comparison of variable; trends; forecasting.

Evidence: record and completed evidence of data collected

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D3 Justify the choice of data collection methods used for 2. 3.

Why did you use the collection methods that you chose?

Evidence: report.

TASK 3: Be able to evaluate the research outcomes

3. 1 Use appropriate research evaluation techniques.

1. How was the project planning?
2. Explain how you met your aims and objectives from the proposal by stating each objective and explain on how you met this (please link to useful research).
3. What were your research methods effective? How valid and reliable were your findings? e. g. successes and failure
4. What are the benefits of your research results? – linked to the usefulness of the research.
5. What were the difficulties you encountered? – e. g. people not willing to talk, time consuming, working on excel, not enough literature review, not experienced with regards to research.

Discuss about methods of data analysis used and why?

Please add conclusion.

Evidence: a report on how you used the research evaluation techniques.

Please demonstrate the use of the techniques with the aid of statistical or any other relevant tools. Please make sure that you are linking the above to your research.

The purpose of this research has been to examine the prevalence of workplace bullying, whilst addressing the experiences of how people responded to their personal experiences of workplace bullying.

1. Prevalence

Considering the data obtained in evidence the questionnaire, it can be identified that of the population surveyed were classified as exhibiting bullying behaviour; owing to their responses, whilst some were classified as exhibiting victim behaviour. Referring back to literature findings regarding prevalence rates, similarities can be recognised with the study conducted by Einarsen et al (2011), where empirical evidence suggested that around 5-10% of the European population had at some point been a victim of workplace bullying. Although, the actual rates differ to an extent, they do not drastically juxtapose; supporting the overwhelming theme that workplace bullying remains a continuous and prominent issue in organisational culture. This is further supported through the basic comprehension of the questionnaire, with the four participants each accounting for how the bullying they had experienced had taken place, and the factors that facilitated its continuation. In seeking to generalise these findings however, difficulties would be faced as no unilaterally agreed prevalence rates could

be established. The only conclusion that could be formalised was that the issue remained a threat to both individuals and organisations.

2. Prosocial

Recognition regarding the prominence of these behaviours brought into focus the hypotheses, particularly hypothesis one; that a negative relationship existed between the variables of prosocial behaviour and bullying behaviour. In relation to the response obtained from the questionnaire and the subsequent ANOVA analysis, it could be identified that this hypothesis was proven, with the relational significance being obtained. Comprehension of this analysis, in reference to the research question, would seem to suggest that the adoption and implementation of prosocial behaviour directly correlates with a reduction in bullying behaviour.

Based upon this finding, it can be suggested that the creation of a culture that promotes prosocial behaviour would be an intellectual move, and one that would be likely to obtain success in diminishing the incidence and effects of workplace bullying. Relating these findings to the literature review, it can be met with support, with Griese (2013) speaking of it as possessing the potential to be utilised as a resilience tactic. By this, the author suggested that prosocial behaviour would reduce incidence of bullying, as the aim is to assist others and to attain social needs; something that would be severely hampered by acts of bullying. In respect to what has been identified thus far, the statistical evidence would seem to support the suggestion, as it shows firstly that bullying remains a

predominant issue, and secondly the importance prosocial behaviours can play in eliminating workplace bullying.

In applying these findings to the questionnaire, it can be acknowledged that the evidence gathered from the qualitative data supports the creation of a prosocial culture. The interviews conducted with participants via questionnaires, for example, highlighted that in many cases, failure to create prosocial behaviours and positive leadership from management was instrumental in allowing bullying to occur, and in some cases actually led to it being instigated by those in management. This in turn had an effect upon other people within the organisation, with bullying escalating from one-on-one to the creation of a climate of bullying where people felt compromised in their position. The perceived vulnerability that this inflicted upon workers, and in particular victims, reduced their ability to report their experience, as the appearance of bullying as an organisational wide issue resulted in the feeling that their claims would not be listened to; suggesting either nothing would change, or the risk that the issue would potentially even intensify.

This has important implications for both the organisation and management, with the recognisable need for training to be put into place, setting behavioural boundaries and guidelines that promote the implementation of prosocial behaviour as a form of organisational strategy. The adoption of such training would have to extend itself towards raising awareness amongst workers, regarding the mechanisms available to them to report any grievances. This would be an integral component of the training programme, as in both the literature review and qualitative questionnaire, the findings

outline a common perception held by victims, that there is either a sense of non-existent, or limited knowledge of the mechanisms available.

Referring to the implications identified, in particular the need for training programmes to promote prosocial behaviour and counter the wider spectrum of workplace bullying, Branch et al (2012) expanded upon existing literature to provide support. The author's (2012) claimed organizational training designed to educate employees about bullying behaviours, the nature of its influence and

equipping them with skills to address incidence of bullying, had been found to incur " long-term, positive benefits, with improvements in attitudes, knowledge and behaviour". In particular, emphasis would be placed on equality training amongst management. This is important as reflection of the qualitative data highlighted that participant one had been victimised whilst on pregnancy leave, with a job offer being sent by management as a subtle technique of pushing her towards the exit. Equality of opportunity would not do this, but it does depict the necessity for organisations as a whole to create a culture, whereby managers are not capable of displaying such negative acts. What the collaboration of the data shows is that whilst it does occur, it is important the organisation itself implements training for managers, to create a line to be answered by management/organisation.

The creation and implementation of the prosocial culture will help organisations raise awareness and possess knowledge regarding how workplace bullying takes place, so that it can be identified efficiently and appropriately handled if an incident were to occur.

Further support for the creation of a prosocial culture originates from the qualitative data. Participants claimed during their negative experiences, other employees had approached them and shared that they had noticed what was going on, but did nothing about it out of fear of being personally targeted. This outlines the importance for the creation of a prosocial culture, as the concept of looking out for the well-being of others and promoting positive behaviour would enable employees to acknowledge the sense of duty to report any acts which pose a threat to the elected culture.

3. Reporting and Long-term effects

Examination of the qualitative data identified that none of the four participants reported their experience, citing that neither felt comfortable doing so. The participants highlighted the cause for this as being a lack