

Managing bullying and harassment in the workplace

[Sociology](#), [Bullying](#)



Workplace Bullying (the persistent exposure to interpersonal aggression and mistreatment from colleagues, superiors or subordinates) is a prevalent problem in contemporary working life, with devastating effects on both targets and organizations (Nearest, Hole, Zap, & Cooper 2003; Earner & Seashell, 2005). There are different forms of bullying in this 21st century as it need not be physical with such advancement in technology. Bullying can be direct, indirect passive and through social media as well. Therefore we must outline the scope on what is bullying and what is not before we are able to draw up a way to manage such incidents.

There is no specific legislation to combat workplace bullying in Singapore (Jay Parka's, *Inciting Injury: An Expos of workplace bullying in Singapore*). There are many a time where workplace bullying is so minute in nature and often left undulate with that it is left unnoticed, however this acts of bullying builds up in time creating a hostile and fragile working environment. What is bullying and harassment? Physical and verbal abuse can be factored in as bullying but other forms of bullying may be too subtle. Harassment can be a highly sensitive topic as each individual person can take it to be in different ways.

What one individual considers being an act of playful gesture the involved party may think otherwise. The Workplace Bullying Institute defines workplace bullying as "abusive conduct that is; threatening, humiliating, intimidating, or work interference and verbal abuse". The consequences to the employers may include; reduced efficiency, productivity and profitability. Increase in absenteeism, sick leaves and staff turnover. Increase in indirect

costs such as management time, engaging mediators and counselors. This list is not exhaustive as there are many other uniqueness an employer might face due to workplace bullying.

On the other hand when we are to look at the consequences for the employees workplace bullying and harassment can cause extensive health problems including physical and psychological illnesses and injuries causing detrimental effects for them. Therefore for the organization to work towards sustainability it is important to first identify and try to eradicate if not hundred percent at least 90 percent of this problem, reason being it is not only the victim who suffers and feels the effects of bullying it is felt across all bevels of the organizations as we have seen from the non-exhaustive list given above.

While it may seem that the above analysis may provide an insight into bullying in organizations, it is becoming evident that management has to start taking proactive steps and measures in identifying and putting forth solutions and implementations to address these pressing needs whereas if not losses can be incurred for the organization. 00006718 The first step to this is that the organization spells out clearly their stance and their outline on bullying and harassment before a person is being pointed to any post in the organization, also the management of the organization should clearly state and constitute which activities are considered to be bullying or harassment therefore making it difficult for employees to find any loopholes in the system therefore escaping the penalties.

Once this is done, a directive should be spelled out and sent out to all employees in the organization regardless of their position or role in the organization, therefore bringing everyone in the organization to a common single understanding. Clear penalties and actions should also be included in the directive so as to deter any potential bullies from committing such acts. All staff across the board should be made to sign this directive enabling the management to take actions and hold guilty employees liable .

These directives should be clearly formalized and well communicated to the frontline managers so that they can take actions if any one of the staff were to breach the directive. Secondly the organization should have a clear communication channel across the board from bottom up. Staff and personal across all level should have access to this communication channel and made aware of such communication channel. The magnitude of effective internal communication is evident in past researches (Muhammad Raff et al. 2009; Mark Chon, 2007) For example, Barrett (2002) accentuates, the best way to reach an employee is via face to face communication than relying on indirect channels such as electronic media. Falkland and Hide (2008) emphasizes on bottom-up communication. Furthermore, Welch and Jackson (2007) claims that, rather than treating employees as a single public, they should be segmented based on say structural levels of demographics. This can help in insuring that the relevant information targeted to reach the relevant person can reach them in a meaningful and smooth manner.

Therefore with such communication channels put in place the management team are well aware of complaints against bullying in any levels of the

organization and necessary steps and actions can be taken swiftly. Special helpline or trained HER staff in the area of counseling can be put in place to tackle sensitive issues which some employees may find it difficult in putting forth to their direct supervisors. Information from all cases must be upheld with the highest infallibility so as to protect the interests of the employee who is suffering or facing bullying or harassment in the organization.

Lastly is to create a strong bond among the employees working in the organization. Inculcating a strong sense of bond between them and creating a strong sense of ownership towards the company and its common goal would enable the employees to work hand in hand to achieve the goal thus enabling the organization to realize its true benefits and bring out the fullest from an employee. If strong bonds are created at the start employees would be able to identify the differences which they have and sort them out accordingly without the help of the management or the interference of their superiors thus creating a better working environment.

To achieve this, the organization can hold yearly bonding activities for their employees, invite professionals to give their opinions and facts on employee relationships, hold monthly meetings to iron out any issues arising and to let the employees swiftly handle the matter within themselves, Muhammad Shaffer s/o Mohamed Kids In conclusion, a well working and robust organization largely depends on the sustainability of their employees. Toxic and unfriendly working environment may lead the organization to lack in certain areas, therefore immobility's the organization in their growth.

Organizations should therefore from the Start deter such bullying and harassment issues, even if these issues were to crop up in the later part of the organizations growth the management must be swift in handling and weeding out such problematic activities before it impacts the whole organization. As said above, bullying or harassment does not only affect the person who is the victim it's effects can be felt across the hole organization as a whole.