

# Bullying in the organization sby

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



When we speak of work-placebullying, we are actually referring to the verbal, physical, social or psychological assault that one's employer or manager, another individual or group of people carry out on a person. In other words it is the tendency of individuals to use increasingly aggressive attitude towards a co-worker or be very unreasonable towards him. This has become an increasingly important problem that Human resource department at most organisations have to counter.

What makes workplace bullying far more difficult to counter than school-yard bullying is that it usually operates within the rules and regulations prescribed by the organisation and the society. Also, according to Ichniowski and Olson (2000), workplace bullies generally use words and actions to intimidate their victims, unlike playground bullies, who often resort to using their fists. Workplace bullying may involve verbal, non-verbal abuse tactics, humiliation, physical and psychological aggression.

Workplace bullying isn't specific to a certain type of work-environment, as it can happen in any type of work condition, ranging from offices to workshops, from highly bureaucratic work environments, like the military, to highly casual ones. Workplace bullying may take different forms such as being rude or confrontational, damaging property that belongs to the organisation, social isolation, screaming and cursing others, physically assaulting them, etc.

According to Ichniowski and Olson (2000), psychological and social bullying usually involves verbal abuse, aimed at making fun of one's work or the individual himself. This may include making fun of one's ethnicity, family, sexuality, race, education, etc. Isolation is another means of inflicting

psychological aggression upon an individual. Workplace bullies will also try various methods of harassment and intimidation to upset your mind and make sure you aren't able to focus on what you are supposed to, i. e. work.

According to Lewis (2003), incase the bully is your boss or employer or supervisor, he or she might try to assign you pointless tasks that have nothing to do with your area of speciality or your job description. The other extreme end would be assigning you jobs that may be extremely boring, difficult or impossible to perform due to lack of time, or deliberately holding back information you need for getting your work done properly. Similarly, one might be a victim of physical bullying, where one may be attacked or threatened.

According to Thomas (2005), acts of physical bullying include spitting, pushing, punching, shoving, kicking, tripping, scratching, grabbing, biting, attacking or threatening with equipment such as knives, club, gun, etc or any other type of direct physical contact. Physical bullying also includes sexual harassment, such as flashing or touching, or when you are made to do humiliating things in order to be accepted as part of a team, as stated by Ichniowski and Olson (2000).

Incase of physical bullying, especially, one should immediately report the matter to the police and the employer or someone in the human resource department. One can also revert to the following steps in order to deal with a workplace bully, as explained by Ichniowski and Olson (2000): • Seek advice from a trusted individual or may be a mentor, who might be available in the same organisation or even outside, who may have been through a similar

situation • One can also try to confront the bully in a professional manner, but keeping in mind one's own safety and giving it top priority.

One should stay as calm as possible, and no sink to his or her level, and yell or threaten, as more often than not this is what bullies are looking for in the first place. And neither should one show weakness and cry, cause that might again motivate the bully to come back for more • One shouldn't allow the bully to make one feel low self-esteem, because only the individual would know his or her true worth or capacity • One should focus on the task in hand and try to do it well, because the bully's goal is most often to try and fail you in your job • One shouldn't let the bully isolate oneself from friends and colleagues

To date, the phenomenon of workplace bullying is always associated with managers or colleagues who are the perpetrators, but that may not always be the case. There is something known as ' upward bullying' which may exist in organisations. In this case managers are actually the target. But since it is very rare, not much research or attention has been given to it. A recent research conducted on upward bullying by students of Griffith University, shows that work environment, change within organizations and power issues are the major contributing factors to upward bullying.

According to Kelly (2000), organisations usually do not take workplace bullying by the neck, their policies are usually flawed which enables bullies to take advantage. In most cases the Human Resource Department is aware of who the aggressor is, but they usually wait for something illegal to happen, i. e. if its not illegal harassment there is no effort made to eradicate it. According to Kelly (2000), a research conducted by the University of <https://assignbuster.com/bullying-in-the-organization-sby/>

Illinois indicates that workplace bullying occurs 4 times as frequently as compared to illegal forms of harassment or discrimination.

WORKPLACE BULLYING AND THE HUMAN RESOURCE DEPARTMENT However, ideally speaking, an organisation would be better off taking strict action and notice against workplace bullies themselves rather than allowing individuals to do so. The first and foremost step for them would be to come up with an anti-harassment policy, or try to expand an existing anti-harassment policy if it hasn't proven to be effective enough. Such a policy would also encourage witnesses to come forward and either second the target's claim or dismiss them.

Also, the human resource department should try to structure a dispute resolution process. This would encourage the targets to step forward sooner. According to Zapf and Einarsen (2001), the human resource department should also monitor the turnover rates and stress-related compensation claims taken by the workers within every department and every manager, so that even if a manager who is guilty of workplace bullying goes unreported, such an analysis can bring him into the limelight.

Another approach to tackling workplace bullying would be to offer courses and training to the supervisors and teach them to criticise employees without offending them. Also, in the present scenario, where, companies, especially the bigger ones have a well-diversified work force, the Human Resource should take claims of workplace bullying very seriously, because if they fail to treat such claims seriously, it would result in further isolation and mistrust on part of the employee.

The leadership along with the Human resource Department should realise the grave consequences workplace bullying may have on the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the organisation. According to Kelly (2000), in approximately 80% of the cases, the employees productivity is adversely affected. This unreasonable behaviour also affects the mental and physical health of the employees, resulting in a decrease in the job satisfaction and job involvement. According to Vartia (1996), it causes a decrease in the employees' morale, resulting in higher turnover rates.

This also causes long term losses to the organisation as they employees that are bullied may sooner or later quit their jobs, this increases the company's overall advertising expenditure, as they have to advertise frequent job vacancies, and also train the new employee and explain him the job description and the kind of work he would have to perform. Now, the human resource department may respond to issues related to workplace bullying in 5 different ways. The first one is called the Mafioso, which is perhaps the worst stance HR can take with regards to such a situation.

In this case even though the HR is aware of the problem and the aggressors, they are not inclined to take any action. In other words they actively participate in bullying employees and support such activities from every possible angle. The second approach is called the Ostrich, where the HR department come up with muffled and sandy responses to reports of workplace bullying, such as saying that, we do not have such problem at the workplace nor are we going to have one, etc. The third stance is termed as fire-fighter, where the Human Resource Department is overloaded with work, and they do not have time to focus or concentrate on such matters.

**WORKPLACE BULLYING AND THE LEADERSHIP** Apart from the Human resource department itself, leadership of that particular organisation has a very important role to play in managing and curtailing employee behaviour and preventing workplace bullying. If the leader can take a stand against any such activity, the chances of occurrence may drastically drop automatically. Leaders need to see all employees equally and avoid any biases when treating employees, as stated by Rayner and Cooper (2003). They should prohibit from doing acts that portray favourism towards a particular employee or a group of employees.

**EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AMONGST INDIVIDUALS** Also what might be of significant help when managing workplace bullying in organisations is if the individual has a higher degree of emotional intelligence. It helps employees manage their own mood along with the mood of the organization. It instils in them a greater degree of self-awareness and empathy allowing them to read and regulate their emotions while being able to intuitively grasp how others feel and gauge the emotional state of the organisation. According to Goleman (2000), there are five components to emotional intelligence.

Self-awareness is the trait where emotional intelligence actually begins, such individuals are never hesitant to talk about and discuss their weaknesses and it is this attitude that later brings upon a positive change in them as they are able to improve upon their weaknesses with the passage of time. According to Sheehan (1999), this helps them bring about a positive change as one becomes aware of his or her limitations and one knows when and where he or she can actually stand-up and deliver regardless of the obstacles that may come his way.

The second trait is self-regulation, and individuals with this trait can control their emotions and impulses better and channel them for good purposes. This brings about an openness to criticism in their attitude and behaviour, and increases their trustworthiness and integrity, and also helps them remain comfortable in ambiguous and unreasonable situations and scenario, as discussed by Sheehan (1999). So, an individual with higher degree of self-regulation is never intimidated or threatened from workplace bullies, and he never reacts to any of their actions, which is what the bullies ideally want.

Motivation is perhaps the most important trait and the most obvious one that an individual is judged upon in an environment where workplace bullying is rampant. The individual needs to self-motivate himself to performing his job and the tasks assigned to him without thinking too much about what activities or attitude other employee or employees have towards him. It portrays the optimism of the individual, and his dedication to the organisation, such that he is able to find positives from every negative thing that happens in his life, so it has to do more with the mind than anything else.

Understanding the emotional makeup of others is referred to as empathy. In order to tackle workplace bullying, it is important for the individual to understand why the aggressor is trying to bully him, and what is he trying to achieve from such an act. This can greatly help individual in managing himself and his emotions and react the right way and not lose focus, as explained by Sheehan (1999). The last trait that comes under emotional intelligence is the social skills of the individual.



It is the proficiency in managing relationships and building networks that can greatly help an individual to overcome the effects of workplace bullying. It is always a good feeling to have some support on your own side. This may also help in finding common grounds between individuals who are aggrieved and the bullies and it also enables one to build rapport. It also improves his persuasiveness and the ability to build and lead teams. THE CHALLENGE OF CULTURAL CHANGES As described earlier, workplace bullying is a problem that is more common than what people anticipate or realise.

It not only impacts the individual himself, but also the organisation and the society itself is affected. And apart from resulting in lost productivity, there are other risks that it bring along for the organisation, which include legal expenses and settlement payouts. Many believe that changing the organisation's culture is the way forward. The challenge for the Human resource department is to picture the prevailing problem of workplace bullying. They also need to identify how much of it is contributed due to the loop holes in the office rules, which describe an employees' conduct when at work.

They also need to identify how much of an impact has training had in shaping their attitude and behaviour. Then comes the most important step, whereby, the human resource department needs to identify practical approaches to nurturing a culture that reduces bullying. Last but not the least, the Human Resource Department needs to identify a long-term approach to tackling such issues, i. e. they need to formulate a long-term strategy to eradicate workplace bullying. References Cooper (eds. ), Bullying and emotional abuse in the workplace.

International Perspectives in research and practice (London, Taylor and Francis) Cooper, L (eds. ), *Bullying and Emotional Abuse in the Workplace*. International Perspectives in research and practice (London, Taylor and Francis) Goleman, Daniel. (1998) " What Makes a Leader? ", *Harvard Business Review*. Ichniowski, Casey and Craig Olson. (2000). *The American Workplace: Skills, Compensation, and Employee Involvement*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Kelly, David. (2000). *Workplace Bullies Dump Bull on Co-Workers*. Available: <http://workplacebullying.org/press/hrwire.html>. Last accessed 18 September 2008.

Lewis, D. (2003), 'Voices in the social construction of bullying at work', *International Journal of Management and Decision Making*, 4, 1. pp. 65-81. Rayner, C. & Cooper, C. L. (2003), 'The black hole in bullying at work research', *International Journal of Management and Decision Making*, 4, 1. Pp. 47-64. Robbins, Stephen P. 2004. *Organizational Behavior*. New York: Pearsons. Sheehan, M. (1999), 'Workplace bullying: responding with some emotional intelligence', *International Journal of Manpower*, 20, ?

, pp 57-69 Thomas M. (2005), 'Bullying among support staff in a higher education institution', *Health Education*, 105, 4, pp. 273-288. Vartia, M. (1996), 'The sources of bullying - psychological work environment and organisational climate', *European Journal of Work and Organisational Psychology*, 5, 2. pp 203-214. Zapf, D. & Einarsen, S. (2001), 'Bullying in the workplace: Recent trends in research and practice - an introduction', *European Journal of Work and Organisational Psychology*, 10 (4), pp. 369-373.