

**Bullying and violence
important issues for
organisations
management essay**



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This paper seeks to understand why workplace bullying and violence are important issues for an organisation and to what extent they are problematic for organisations to manage, and ways organisations can help curb such issues from happening through preventive measures as well and management throughout the organisation. This paper will define how workplace bullying is a growing problem which is costly for many organisations, which has created negative impact in forms of lost of productivity to an increase in premiums for insurance. It too argues that, while there is much research done on bullying and violence, new perception may help reduce the incidence and impact of bullying.

Workplace bullying or violence is a problem that can be difficult to detect and challenge for the main reason that bullies spread an environment of fear and intimidation that discourages employees from making any assertions. Bullying removes self-worth, esteem, and confidence. As a result, employees lose their power and isolate them from co-workers making it impossible for them to join forces against the bullying employee (Amble, 2004).

Workplace violence includes but is not limited to intimidation, yelling or using of profane language, consistent criticism, and belittling the views of an individual. When violence resides in the management, it has an impact on the corporate life of an employee as they develop a fear of retribution, marginalization, or being terminated (Amble, 2004). It was argued that bullying is very specific type of conflict, pushing the concerned individual into a helpless and defenceless position, thus involving a victim-perpetrator structure (Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996)

Bullying and violence are major potential hazards in all workplaces occurring at any time in any condition. Organizations find it harmful and distracting to business operations because it promotes high levels of absenteeism and staff turnover (ACT 2004, p. 4) while increasing costs in counselling, mediation and compensation claims including recruitment and training of new staff. It reflects poor public image as a difficult and unhealthy work environment which even has the capacity to break teams and work relationships. Bullies continually define and redefine situations in order to grab control on the target which often is not aware being bullied resulting to a break of self confidence. The target normally thinks of being constantly getting it wrong.

There has been little substantive research about the extent and severity of internal ' violence in Australian workplaces, apart from McCarthy who have conducted a series of research studies (McCarthy, 2001). The Job Watch organisation in Victoria has also collated a significant number of complaints of bullying from workers. One national poll reported that 35% of Australians had been verbally abused by a co-worker, and 31% by a manager at some time (Roy Morgan Research Centre, 1998: 1). A more recent community survey of 600 people in Victoria, which was designed to identify the potential role of Vic Health in reducing bullying, implied that bullying was endemic in Australian culture when they reported:

'... bullying is part of Australian culture, but few agree it should be ...'

(Chappell and Di Martino, 2000: 53).

Corporate violence discourages employees from informing management regarding potentially violent actions which could be early manifestations of individual breakdown and increasing stress in the workplace (Freiberg, 1998).

Individuals with predisposition to bully innovate and evolve methodologies to achieve their objectives. Roots usually came from domestic violence spilled into the workplace. Its emergence is usually a complex and detailed process where standing up against the empowerment of a bully involves some calculated risk to the victim or each member of the group. The self righteous bullies are the common type of bullies in organizations who are totally devoid of self-awareness and neither knows nor cares about the impact of their behaviour on other workers. They are willingly attached to the idea that they are always right and others are always wrong.

Inappropriate coercive behaviour and evident violence can occur between people at different levels in a hierarchy, and incidents are not always a simple abuse of power from supervisors to subordinates. Thus while supervisors are reported to bully subordinates frequently, it is also true that employees can harass their supervisors, older workers can intimidate apprentices, males can terrorise young females, or members of one ethnic group can victimise a racial minority (Hoel et al, 2001). Further, it has been reported that many perpetrators adopt subtle and covert tactics (Keashly, 2001; Chappell and Di Martino, 2000). However, it still appears to be more common for managers or supervisors to behave inappropriately towards their subordinates (Michelson, 2001). In a British survey of 1, 100 National Health Service workers, the most common the person responsible for, was a <https://assignbuster.com/bullying-and-violence-important-issues-for-organisations-management-essay/>

senior manager or line manager (54%), in 34% of cases the bully was at the same level, and in only 12% of cases was the perpetrator at a lower level (Quine, 1999).

A core problem remains that it is often difficult to distinguish clearly between poor management that contributes to a violent culture and inappropriate coercive behaviour. Thus, it is important to distinguish between legitimate supervisory activities, for example, comments on the work performance of subordinates and inappropriate behaviours that are motivated by non-professional factors. This may be difficult at times. For example, some workers may be very sensitive to any negative appraisal and resist recognising where competencies need to be improved. Moreover, at higher hierarchical levels, bullying may mirror 'expected' behaviour where senior staff overtly stand up for their opinions to obtain results (Stephens and Marsden, 1998). Such assertive verbal behaviours - which can be encouraged by hierarchical structures - have been titled 'robust' by the (New South Wales Workplace Bullying Taskforce, 2001). When faced with very aggressive behaviours of this type, other staff may just back down to avoid contention. Unfortunately, inappropriate coercive behaviours may sometimes evolve unintentionally over time and the perpetrators may not be aware of the impact on the recipients. For example, some managers may be under the illusion that intimidation is the 'best way' to enhance the productivity of subordinate victims (Brennan, 2001)

Eliminating would mean developing a zero tolerance anti-bully policy while the work environment is being structured to incorporate a sense of

autonomy and individual challenge. The best way is to define specific duties
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and responsibilities of every employee working in the organization. This shall give one a good reference of what and what not to do as covered by the job description. People management practices of managers and work systems must be determined like staff shortages, poorly defined jobs, and lack of policies and procedures including leadership styles.

Employers are beginning to take steps to make bullying and violence unthinkable making it similar to sexual harassment or drunkenness in the workplace. It is now considered as a outright abuse of power manifested in a variety of human aggression that is context-specific. It would be easier to prevent bullying than mediate some bully established patterns. Eliminate bullying and create a positive working environment by maintaining dignity and respect at work amongst the co-workers. Both worker and the organization must have the moral commitment to improve the situation which starts on eliminating bullying culture, if any, within the organization.

There are also anti-discrimination laws in place which protects employees from any form of harassment or bullying by managers or co-employees.

Discrimination based on race or sex is very prominent in the workplace. In Australia, there is the ' Equal Opportunity Act of 1995' which protects employees from being discriminated or harassed because of their age, sex, religious or political belief, and others (Flavell, 2002).

A good and strong Human Resource (HR) is but appropriate when there is a need for control of attitude and behaviour like when the bullies are the managers. HR should have a prominent place in the organizational chart which will help make them effective in responding to employee's problems

like sexual harassment, bullies, and workplace violence. However bullying is not always intentional. Workplace diversity also plays a role, when people do not seem to realize that the effects on seemingly innocent gestures or words on others may be perceived negatively and may have a detrimental effect brought about by relative cultural differences.

The organization then is encouraged to carefully design and implement an equal opportunity or diversity policies to initiate culture change and work ethics like what is and what is not an acceptable behaviour. This will lessen counterproductive behaviours. Creating no idle time at the workplace, see to it that each one is performing and completing their job on time.

Preoccupation makes employees look and observe other people less. Idle times promotes chatting and looking at other people's personal businesses. HR will need to make use of productivity tools measurement like man-machine charts to make ensure that their employees used their time wisely but not overworked. The organization must promote team empowerment and group dynamics leadership to care for the values, interest and emotional responses of the members while taking care of the interests of the organization. Developing a code of ethics that all workers will be able to understand and follow. HR needs to establish an independent contact with employees and conduct personal attitude surveys especially on departments where there is high statistics of staff turnover.

Eliminating trouble spots by holding awareness seminar and providing a online hotline where employees may be able to share their problems to HR directly and keeping it private at all times. It could be a tedious task reading emails and complaints but there is not much option better than open <https://assignbuster.com/bullying-and-violence-important-issues-for-organisations-management-essay/>

communication. Procedure must be developed in handling complaints regarding bullying. The easiest part is to make a blog as part of the company website and encourage employees to contribute. One can know if something is happening within the organization or not by the way they write.

To manage stress, deep rooted problems even domestic ones, big organizations should be able to have a counsellor offline and online (Teani 2001, p. 209). If it is too expensive, organizations should be able to refer them to one that is not so expensive and that can closely work with HR. Stress and anxiety affects productivity and so employers must provide all the features that could eliminate such deficiency. Domestic violence is not just a private matter anymore because it could get spilled in the workplace anytime. Bullying breed bullying and violence breeds violence. Bully and violence complaints must be immediately responded, investigated and properly acknowledged. This will also paved way to improving current anti-bully policy on hand. Since this is a problem of global dimension, there is a need to evaluate the violence prevention programs and refer any difficulties to an organization that specializes in the field.

Common law dictates that it is the duty of the employer to provide employees with a safe workplace. Management should do everything in its power to safeguard the welfare of their employees and protect them from physical or mental abuse. Failure of the management to fulfil their duty makes them liable to legal proceedings under the ' Employment Relations Act of 2000' (Department of Labour, 2005). The duty of the employer is to provide a safe workplace for their employees. Under the Health and Safety Employment, employees can make a claim against their employers for <https://assignbuster.com/bullying-and-violence-important-issues-for-organisations-management-essay/>

constructive dismissal, unjustified disadvantage, or breach of contract.

Again, the management may be committing a violation of the HSE Act if they fail to comply with its requirements (Department of Labour, 2005).

Conclusion

Employers need to take workplace bullying seriously because it may result to organizational problems such as low morale of employees and poor employee relationship, loss of respect to managers and supervisors by employees, low performance, absenteeism, resignations, damage to the integrity of the company, legal ramifications. Records of the bullying should be kept to help determine the reasons for the bully to be able to find relative solutions for it. The anti-bully policy must be made available in the company's website along with the organization's contact person for quick reference. Remember that one is dealing with the behaviour and not with the person so it would be good to provide counselling and personal development programs. Until these changes are made, workplace bullying will continue to be a costly problem for employers and employees.

Implementation of an anti-harassment policy will convey the idea that workers should not treat others poorly on the basis of their gender, race religion and sex. The presence of this strategy, in contrast will convey a message to the workers that co workers should not be treated poorly at all times. Organisations have a social responsibility to take an active role in indentifying the risk of workplace bullying and assessing its likely consequences and preventing the risk from occurring.

Lastly, to gain a better understanding of bullying and violence also factors outside the organisation must be taken into close consideration. A detailed analysis of societal forces and changes that enable, motivate and trigger bullying and violence is thus a very important venue for further research in the area.