

Why are workplace  
bullying and violence  
important issues for  
organizations?



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Workplace bullying or violence is a problem that can be difficult to detect and challenge for the main reason that bullies sow 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 isolates 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).

According to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), an average of twenty American employees are killed and about 18,000 assaulted weekly at the workplace. Excluded from the figures are bullying, threats, and other kinds of verbal, physical, or sexual abuse (Freiberg, 1998). In a nationwide survey conducted in Ireland, it was revealed that 1/3 of the participants had experienced workplace bullying from their co-employees. For a period of one year, the Victorian Workcover Authority got 542 claims of injury caused by harassment or workplace bullying. In that same year, an additional 557 claims of injury as a result of assault were received by the company.

The potential cost of workplace violence to both company and economy can be huge (Flavell, 2002). Psychologist Mark Braverman said that bullying in the workplace happens because the environment permits it. Corporate violence discourages employees from informing management regarding

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potentially violent actions which could be early manifestations of individual breakdown and increasing stress in the workplace (Freiberg, 1998). What is Workplace Bullying? Bullying is one of the fastest developing of violence in the workplace. It involves offensive behavior in the form of vengeful, cruel, malicious, or humiliating attempts to embarrass a person or group of workers through actions such as making their lives miserable, shouting at an employee, criticism, or taking away responsibilities because of competency (DiMartino, 2000). Studies undertaken in the United Kingdom revealed that more than fifty percent of workers had experienced workplace bullying while 78 percent had seen such behavior.

In a Finnish research on the impact of bullying on municipal employees revealed that 40 percent of bullying victims underwent severe stress, 49 percent felt unusual burnout on their jobs, and 30 percent felt extremely nervous (DiMartino, 2000). In addition, a survey done by the European Union in 1996 indicated that workplace violence has become a global problem as 15 of its member nations reflected that 4 percent of employees were victims of physical abuse during the past year, 2 percent experienced sexual harassment, and 8 percent from intimidation and bullying (DiMartino, 2000). Workplace bullying and violence is not only a problem that exists in the United States but also in other countries. In Japan, for example, a severe economic downfall resulted to massive downsizing. White-collar workers were subjected to bullying. The Philippines has been known for sending migrant workers abroad for employment purposes.

According to statistics gathered from the Philippines, over half of Filipino migrant workers are women who work as domestic helpers and entertainers. <https://assignbuster.com/why-are-workplace-bullying-and-violence-important-issues-for-organizations/>

Unfortunately, most of them become victims of bullying and violence in their place of work. Workers who are on duty alone in mini-shops, gasoline stations, and kiosks are prone to workplace violence. In the US, for example, gasoline station service crews is the fourth most at risk for homicide. Taxi drivers who work at night are prone to attacks by intoxicated individuals which may cause violence. Workplace bullying is often connected with the conditions and organization of the company.

Among the factors identified in researches include workload, corporate culture, management style, marginalization, and isolation. Other factors include reduction in the budget, unskilled employees promoted to managerial positions, and restructuring. The Effects of Workplace Bullying in A Company Workplace does not only bring about immediate and permanent disruption of interpersonal relationships, work organization, and the overall working condition. Employers would feel the direct impact of lost work and enhanced security measures. Some of the indirect results of workplace bullying includes decrease in efficiency and productivity, loss in the quality of the products, loss of corporate image, and a drop in the number of customers (DiMartino, 2000). In a 1992 survey conducted by the National Safe Workplace Institute, the total losses of firms in the United States due to workplace violence amounted to \$4 billion.

In Canada, the British Columbia Workers Compensation Board reported an 88% increase in wage-loss claims due to violence. Finally, in Germany, direct costs due to psychological violence amounted to \$112, 000 (DiMartino, 2000). In addition, the huge cost of workplace bullying is reflected in high absenteeism as the employees would be forced to absent themselves for <https://assignbuster.com/why-are-workplace-bullying-and-violence-important-issues-for-organizations/>

fear of being harassed anew (Farrell, 2002). Aside from those mentioned above, another impact of workplace bullying in the company is economic drain. Based on Dr.

Gary Namie's studies, 82 percent of workers targeted by a bully resign from their workplace. Out of this number, 38% leave their offices because of health while 44 percent were due to being victims of performance evaluation system showing their incompetence (Farrell, 2002). Furthermore, the increasing cost of health care is another effect of workplace violence.

Namie's study revealed that 41 percent of bully victims became depressed while 31 percent of men and women have post-traumatic disorder. Lastly, workplace bullying also has an impact on a company's customer service.

Harassed employees would no longer have the drive to remain loyal to their company (Farrell, 2002). Dealing with Workplace Bullying It is the job of both the manager and employee to deal with workplace bullying whenever it is identified. The employee should inform management about instances of bullying. On the part of the employer, it is their responsibility to ensure that such practices be put to an end immediately (Department of Labor, 2005).

Under Section 2a of the Health and Safety in Employment Act of 1992, it is the responsibility of the employer to see to it that positive action is undertaken when it comes to workplace bullying. In the McGowan v Nutype Accessories case, for example, the court affirms that employers have the duty of ensuring that employees would be provided with a safe workplace the moment they are informed of the existence of such act (Department of Labor, 2005). As soon as the management is informed of the existence of

bullying in the workplace, they must see to it that they conduct a thorough investigation on the allegations (Department of Labor, 2005). Management should be vigilant when it comes to workplace bullying in the workplace because it could endanger the jobs of the rank and file employees.

Workplace bullying can lead to employee turnover and it will be costly for companies to consistently recruit, hire, and train an applicant to replace a bullied employee (Rosheim, n. d). 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, and so on (Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety, 2005). One of the things that management can do in order to address workplace bullying is to implement a workplace bullying prevention program.

This requires the commitment of management. This can be reflected in a written policy which provides coverage for a wide range of incidents such as bullying to physical violence (Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety, 2005). In implementing the workplace bullying program, it should be drafted by representatives from management and employees. The provisions which will be set forth in the program must be applicable to management, personnel, customers, and any entity which has a relationship with the firm. The program must likewise have a clear cut definition of workplace bullying and should lay down the consequences of resorting to workplace violence (Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety, 2005). Finally, a workplace bullying prevention program must provide opportunities for <https://assignbuster.com/why-are-workplace-bullying-and-violence-important-issues-for-organizations/>

employees to have access to various support services as well as to an Employee Assistance Program to employees who may require assistance (Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety, 2005).

Aside from consulting with their superiors, employees can likewise resort to legal remedies in order to help them in their fight against workplace bullying. There are some statutes and laws that provide protection to employees from bullying co-workers (Department of Labor, 2005). Common law dictates that it is the duty of the employer to provide employees with a safe workplace. Employment contracts stipulates that 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 fulfill their duty makes them liable to legal proceedings under the Employment Relations Act of 2000 (Department of Labor, 2005). The duty of the employer to provide a safe workplace for their employees is set forth in the provisions of The Health and Safety in Employment (HSE) Act of 1992.

Under the HSE, employees can make a claim against their employers for 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 Labor, 2005). In Australia, for instance, unfair dismissal of an employee is protected under the Workplace Relations Act of 1996. An employee who was unjustly dismissed on the basis of bullying can lodge a complaint with the concerned government agency (Flavell, 2002). Under the law, employees can make their employers liable for unfair dismissal after making a claim about

bullying. Under the law, the dismissed employee may be entitled to receive some kind of compensation (Flavell, 2002).

There are also anti-discrimination laws in place which protects employees from any form of harassment or bullying by managers or co-employees. Discrimination because of race or sex is very prominent in the workplace. Taking the example of Australia once again, 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). Employers must likewise adhere to the Occupational Health and Safety Standards.

This legislation provides for a safe workplace free from any risks to both occupation and health of employees. Under the Occupational Health and Safety Standards, employers have several duties, such as ensuring proper supervision, guidance, and training necessary for employees to go about with their tasks safely (Flavell, 2002). Conclusion Workplace bullying or violence is a problem that can be difficult to detect and challenge for the main reason that bullies sow 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 isolates them from co-workers making it impossible for them to join forces against the bullying employee. Bullying is one of the fastest developing of violence in the workplace. It involves offensive behavior in the form of vengeful, cruel, malicious, or humiliating attempts to embarrass a person or group of workers through



actions such as making their lives miserable, shouting at an employee, criticism, or taking away responsibilities because of competency. Workplace violence does not only bring about immediate and permanent disruption of interpersonal relationships, work organization, and the overall working condition. Employers would feel the direct impact of lost work and enhanced security measures. Some of the indirect results of workplace bullying includes decrease in efficiency and productivity, loss in the quality of the products, loss of corporate image, and a drop in the number of customers. 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, and so on.