

Bullying in the workplace essay sample



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Bullying in the workplace is both a current and critical issue that has only recently begun to be given the serious attention it deserves. This paper will address the issue of bullying in the workplace through various avenues. An analysis of the issue will include: a definition of workplace bullying, typical behaviours associated with bullying, profiles of both the bully and the victim, and the effects of bullying on workers and the organization.

A summary of the article “ Bullies Can Make Workplace Intolerable” will help to corroborate the seriousness of this occupational health and safety issue. Included will be my perspective on whether this article was successful in demonstrating that bullying in the workplace is a serious issue, and why I came to that conclusion. Suggestions and recommendations will be put forth that seek to abolish bullying in the workplace by making it intolerable, and to see its eventual demise.

Bullying, harassment and violence in the workplace were cast into the spotlight as amendments to the Occupational Health and Safety Act, through Bill 168, became effective June 15, 2010. Bill 168: defines violence and harassment in the workplace; seeks to strengthen the protection of workers from workplace violence and harassment; and describes the duties that employers are responsible for carrying out with regard to violence and harassment (Ontario Ministry of Labour, 2011). When we think of hazards in the workplace, injuries from machinery or dangerous materials come to mind.

What if it is the people we work with who are causing us harm? Being repeatedly subjected to humiliation, demoralization or being undermined by

another worker or superior is bullying (Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety, 2008). Bullying should not be confused with everyday conflict experienced between employees in the workplace. Bullying is persistent, continuous and repeated behaviour, most often associated with an imbalance of power between the perpetrator and the victim (Public Services Health and Safety Association, 2010).

Bullying is a form of workplace harassment and includes “engaging in a course of vexatious comment or conduct against a worker in a workplace that is known or ought reasonably to be known to be unwelcome” (Ontario Ministry of Labour, 2011). Bullying in the workplace is characterized by acts that seek to mentally injure and isolate the victim; at times it can include physical contact such as pushing or throwing items (Public Services Health and Safety Association, 2010). Workplace bullying can take many forms. It is important for employers, management, coworkers and employees to recognize bullying behaviours.

Examples of bullying behaviours include: spreading rumours, verbal aggression, trying to socially isolate someone by giving them the silent treatment, verbally attacking the personal attributes of a person, unjustified or excessive criticism, micro-managing their work, withholding information or job responsibilities, only giving them demeaning jobs, blocking applications for training/leave/or promotion, tampering with a person’s equipment or belongings, and setting deadlines and goals that are unrealistic and unattainable (Public Services Health and Safety Association, 2010 & Ontario Ministry of Labour, 2011).

Although anyone could be a bully, in the workplace 72% (the majority) of the time they are bosses (Public Service Health and Safety Association, 2010).

Bullies tend to have low self-esteem, psychological issues, believe that controlling and abusing others is their right, and often experience unresolved issues in their personal and professional lives. They can be quite charming, and will often ingratiate themselves to higher ups thus being well liked by their superiors (Public Service Health and Safety Association, 2010).

The victims of bullies tend to be the employees who are hardworking, dedicated, competent, and well- liked by coworkers. While at the same time being vulnerable in some way: experiencing personal stress due to illness or family/relationship issues; being new to the company, a minority, or being a woman (57% of victims); or needing the job perhaps due to financial or location reasons. These qualities cause the victim to be seen as a threat or easy target in the bully's eyes (Public Service Health and Safety Association, 2010). Exposure to workplace bullying has numerous negative effects on the victim.

Physical symptoms include: fatigue, back and chest pain, angina, high blood pressure, headaches and migraines, heart palpitations, IBS, ulcers, rashes, loss of appetite, sleeplessness and nightmares, and lower immunity to colds and flu. Psychosomatic and psychological symptoms include: stress, depression, anxiety, panic attacks, tearfulness, and lowered self-confidence/self-esteem/self-worth. Work-related symptoms include: lower job satisfaction, forgetfulness, withdrawal from coworkers, and poor concentration (Public Service Health and Safety Association, 2010). Bullying in the workplace is detrimental to the health of an organization.

<https://assignbuster.com/bullying-in-the-workplace-essay-sample/>

The effects of workplace bullying include increases in: absenteeism, stress, accidents/incidents, turnover, and costs for programs such as WSIB/Disability/EAP/training/ and recruitment. Decreases are seen in: productivity, motivation, morale, organizational commitment, customer service and efficiency. The image or brand of the company can be reduced, and so can customer confidence and satisfaction. Companies also run the risk of being sued by employees who pursue legal action against them for workplace bullying (Canadian Centre for Occupational Health & Safety, 2013).

In The Globe and Mail article “ Bullies Can Make Workplace Intolerable”, author Marlene Habib provides the reader with a detailed look into the problem of workplace bullying. Habib enlists the aid of Subject Matter Experts in the field of workplace bullying to help the reader understand the complexity and importance of this subject. While it is noted that Canada is a leader in the battle to stop workplace bullying, a key obstacle in this fight is the dismissive attitude of many employers when workplace bullying is brought to their attention.

The article describes how workplace bullying impacts the employee being bullied and the organization as a whole. Finally, ideas for dealing with bullies and for implementing anti-bullying policies are proposed. Habib begins her article in a very powerfully way. She has her first SME Jim Jordan asking the question “ Have you ever been demoralized? ” (Habib, 2011) This sets the tone for the entire article. Demoralized is a very strong word, and no one wants to feel that way. The reader immediately appreciates that this is

serious issue, and wants to understand what measures are being taken to prevent bullying in the workplace.

Jordan goes on to describe the effects of bullying including lost productivity, absenteeism, lack of employee motivation, and high stress levels (Habib, 2011). Ann Nair, who runs an Anti-Bully support group and is herself a victim of workplace bullying, agrees that bullying has devastating effects. Nair states, “ When you go to work and you’re bullied, it wears you out mentally and physically; it affects your mind, body and soul. It’s an inflicted mental injury” (Habib, 2011). Nair talks about how difficult it is for victims because companies often won’t admit or accept that bullying is occurring.

Victims are often told to “ suck it up”, as if the abuse is somehow their fault (Habib, 2011). Valerie Cade, author of the book *Bully Free at Work*, explains that anti-bullying policies, training, and adherence rules need to be initiated by management and be company -wide. She makes it clear that it isn’t enough for the policies to be in place, they have to be enforced with serious consequences for non-compliance (Habib, 2011). McMaster University Business Professor Aaron Schat says “ What matters most is what owners, executives and boards do when it (bullying) is brought to their attention (Habib, 2011)”.

Dr. Schat offers companies the following tips to prevent workplace bullying: be careful who you hire because trouble makers continue to be trouble makers and will poison the company; management must buy-in to the idea that bullying is unacceptable; small indignities, such as eye rolling and insults are often just the beginning of bullying behaviours; take bullying

seriously and watch for insidious behaviour; gather evidence and talk to witnesses when allegations of bullying are brought forth; use progressive discipline and zero-tolerance policies to remove bullies from your organization (Habib, 2011).

I agree with this article, and believe that bullying in the workplace is a serious and often overlooked problem. I have been a victim of workplace bullying, and I understand the physical and mental toll it can inflict on an employee. I also understand how frustrating it is to have management pretend the problem doesn't exist.

This article is clearly written and provides the reader with a well- rounded look at what bullying in the workplace is, how it effects employees and the organization, and what can be done to stop it. “ In Canada, one in six employees has been bullied, according to the Ottawa-based Canada Safety Council, and employers are beginning to take steps to make bullying as unthinkable as sexual harassment or drunkenness”(Habib, 2011).