Archives of Business Research - Vol. 11, No. 1
Publication Date: January 25, 2023
DOI:10.14738/abr.111.13919.
Humza, N. (2023). Workplace Bullying and its Impact on Employees' Morale. Archives of Business Research - Vol. 11(1). 156-162.

Workplace Bullying and its Impact on Employees' Morale

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ABSTRACT

The problem of workplace bullying is one of the most important issues facing society and companies in particular. Many scholars have identified the problem as abuse, fear, harassment, and persecution. Bullies may also be co-workers, clients, customers, suppliers, bosses, and supervisors. Workplace bullying may be seen as a certain, somewhat frequent, unfavorable dynamic that occurs over time in companies. Bullying at work has been linked to various workplace-related problems, including poor health outcomes, decreased job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and increased intention to quit. Bullying is a serious workplace issue that harms both the environment and the workers. This research synthesizes the literature on workplace bullying and how it affects employee morale, productivity, and satisfaction in light of these negative effects of bullying at work.

Keywords: Workplace Bullying, Employee Morale, Literature Review

INTRODUCTION

Workplace bullying (WPB) continues to be a recognized issue in businesses during a challenging economic moment when numerous resource strains and a fiercely competitive business climate indicate that workers and organizations cannot afford extra hurdles while seeking to achieve their objectives (Hoel, Rayner, & Cooper, 1999). Workplace bullying (WPB) negatively impacts employee morale and productivity, which raises stress levels, employee turnover, and job dissatisfaction (Cowie et al., 2002). Bullying at work has been acknowledged as affecting workers and the workplace and costing organizations money. Government, for-profit, non-profit, and not-for-profit organizations often have a purpose, organizational structure, and operational rules and regulations to guide and support company aims and objectives (Salin, 2021). A harassment policy, process, and human resources department are typically present in these firms. Employees may report a personal violation of the harassment policy to these departments or report witnessing a violation if they work there. According to research (Quine, 2001; Hogh et al., 2021), bullying is a widespread issue that may negatively affect many facets of the company, both internally and internationally (Conway et al., 2021).

The Workplace Bullying Institute states that the research on workplace bullying study started around 1998. Bullying behaviours at work seem to be a long-standing expression, even though it has only lately been recognized as a real and serious business issue (McKay et al., 2008). These actions include making fun of other people, monitoring another person's work constantly, doubting another person's professional competence, disseminating unfavourable rumours, and making explosive threats and outbursts (Branch, Ramsay, & Barker, 2007). Bullying is still prevalent, sanctioned, and, in certain cases, seen as management qualities (McKay et al., 2008). According to Namie and Namie's 2003 study, more than 80% of harassed employees moved jobs, with 44% doing so due to a negative performance review from a threatening manager who wanted to prove their incapacity.

The frequency ratio of WPB is 4:1 when compared to unlawful harassment and discriminatory practices (Namie & Namie, 2009). Human resource managers know the significant productivity losses associated with this aggressive conduct (Gardner et al., 2016). High employee turnover may also cost business money. Depending on an employee's position within the firm, human resources experts have estimated that the cost of employee turnover will range from 25% to 200% of the individual's annual salary (McKay et al., 2008). This study sought to establish the necessity for interdisciplinary research on the connection between WPB's influence and employee outcomes. According to several research on employee retention, job satisfaction is the most significant predictor of retention and intention to quit among welfare staff (Saunders et al., 2016). "With this identification comes an understanding of the problem's ubiquity and significance" (Kitt, 2004, p.1). WPB in welfare groups has come to light adult recent media attention (Kitt, 2004).

The welfare system's identified reasons for non-profit worker turnover mostly centre on insufficient monitoring, but bullying is a major issue that has not yet been addressed (Hoel et al., 2020). An impending strike at Surrey Council in England was caused, according to a Unison report from 1997, by complaints of high workloads and managerial harassment of social employees. Due to the social workers' threats to strike in response to management's abusive practices, there needed to be more trained social workers to handle the large caseloads that resulted.

Recent national coverage of bullying, especially bullying of homosexual and teenage populations, brought attention to WPB in the mainstream media. It has gained momentum in light of sad victim suicides. Kevin Morrissey, the managing news editor, killed himself after what he said was mistreatment by his supervisor (Rai and Agarwal, 2016). The importance of WPB has been increasingly acknowledged during the last ten years (Salin & Hoel, 2011). WPB practices are becoming common in the workplace. It is now acknowledged as an expensive organizational issue that may be rather common in the human services sector; nevertheless, the subject is still not fully investigated in non-profit organizations that largely employ social workers (Rai and Agarwal, 2016).

In qualitative research of non-profit social workers, Woodrow et al. (2017) investigated the context and effects of reported WPB occurrences in the group. The workforce noted significant anguish and a temporary drop in certainty over their jobs (Rai and Agarwal, 2016). There is evidence that WPB was rather common in the non-profit services sector, but before Van Heugten's (2010) study, more research was needed on how bullying affects the field of social work. The findings of Stagg et al., (2013) research suggested that seasoned non-profit social workers may be more vulnerable to bullies during times of job change and when working conditions are restricted. Seclusion, lack of professional competitiveness, and inadequate work control are all contributory factors (Stagg et al., 2013).

HISTORICAL REVIEW ON WPB

Bullying has a long history of aggressive conduct. When British journalist Andrea Adams popularised the phrase in BBC radio broadcasts on bullying in the late 1980s and early 1990s, "workplace bullying" became widely known (Hoel et al., 1999). According to Hadikin and O'Driscoll (2000), "workplace bullying" broadly includes harassment, intimidation, and aggressive or violent acts. Researchers have referred to the same basic event under a variety of

URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.14738/abr.111.13919

labels. In the 1970s, Dr. Dan Olweus began studying the idea of bullying in Scandinavian schools. In Sweden and Norway, he is regarded as a pioneer in the research of bullying practices in schools (Violence Prevention Works Organization, 2014).

The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program inspired a model on bullying behaviors that have evolved over the years (Violence Prevention Works Organization, 2014). Dr. Olweus proposed that bullying may be significantly reduced in schools by taking preventative steps. The convergence of epidemiological, fundamental, and practical research served as the Olweus program's cornerstone (Rigby, 2002). The amount of writing on bullying at work has increased internationally. However, there are few studies on workplace bullying in the United States, and what research there are s as needed is more cohesive and newer (Bonde et al., 2016). Since bullying is an international problem, the working environment closely mirrors the causes of hostility in the nation, according to the research (Stagg et al., 2013).

Numerous publications and articles highlight the negative effects of workplace bullying, including emotional distress, physical sickness, and restricted career growth. However, scholarly research on the issue has just lately started (Einarsen et al., 2003; Namie & Namie, 2003; Needham, 2003, Rigby, 2002). Through government-funded studies and awareness campaigns, European nations, including Sweden, Finland, Norway, and Great Britain, have implemented preventative measures, such as establishing laws outlawing bullying (Salin et al., 2018). Researchers have examined workplace bullying and job performance using quantitative and qualitative study techniques and studies with participants from various sectors and particular professions or organizations. Although bullying in the workplace is not new, bullying in non-profit companies is distinct from bullying at other workplaces. Social dynamics may encourage a certain kind of workplace bullying specific to the social services industry and distinct from bullying in other employment settings (Brohl, 2013, p.4).

Bullying may occur when someone tries to exert control over another person. It is possible to connect the numerous definitions of workplace bullying to Bachrach and Baratz's (1962) exploration of the concept of power and how it manifests control of one person over another. Similar to the master-servant connection, the relationship between the employer and the employee may be traced back to the development of American labor and employment laws (Xu et al., 2019). The global civil rights movement of the 1960s was sparked by the increased consciousness of minority groups brought on by the conduct of those in positions of power. It improved classes' civil and legal rights Murphy, 2013). Civil rights legislation was formed in the United States in the 1960s, largely to address issues of race and gender. The same connected problems that were noted at the time and had an adverse impact have also been noted as influencing the working environment.

Workplace bullying generally refers to aggressive or unreasonable behavior, including behavioral attacks, threatening gestures, psychological behaviors, and abusive attitudes against individuals. At the time of this study, there was no single accepted definition for workplace bullying. It is abuse, whether it is overt or covert. Other sources describe workplace bullying as a practice of long-term psychological and relational assault meant to humiliate, denigrate, and isolate the victim of the bully (Pheko et al., 2017). According to the Workplace Bullying Institute (WBI), nearly half of the American workforce is either a target of or a witness to workplace harassment (2011). The phrase "repeated malicious maltreatment, verbal abuse, or action that

is threatening, humiliating, intimidating, or that interferes with work" is used by the Workplace Bullying Institute to define workplace bullying (2011).

Workplace bullying, in some form, has always occurred and is widely accepted as a fact of life, a necessary component of doing the job, and even a milestone for new employees (D'Cruz et al., 2016). In 1998, the Campaign Against Workplace Bullying conducted research with 200 participants. Although the subjects were not randomly chosen, the research posited some knowledge of a polluted workplace (Nica et al., 2016). The findings of Namie (2003) demonstrated that both sexes could engage in bullying behaviors and become targeted. Bullying may lead to physical, mental, and financial stress as well as have an impact on a victim's ability to execute their work (Fisher-Blando, 2008).

Bullying at work is a significant and detrimental issue for companies. What was once a productive employee looks to have broken down due to inappropriate bullying committed by those in leadership positions. Managers and supervisors are often bullying in occurrences. Research conducted by the Employment Law Alliance revealed that 45% of respondents had experienced an offensive supervisor (WBI, 2010). In the United States, according to the Workplace Bullying Institute's 2010 poll, 50% of workers had either personally experienced or seen workplace bullying (WBI, 2010). Despite the issue's prevalence and complexity, nothing is often done inside businesses to address it. The research said that nothing is done inside companies, partly because there is no requirement under the law to address the problem (Nica et al., 2016).

While WPB may be unethical and unprofessional, it is not always prohibited in the US for managers to threaten, insult, reprimand, neglect, or humiliate staff members. Additionally, it is lawful to circulate false information, withhold contact, and misrepresent another person's creative work as one's own. Unfortunately, these kinds of bullies are becoming more and more widespread in the workplace. Managers must recognize, address, and eradicate bullying at work. Bullies who harass others at work have a long history. The maltreatment of the victims by bullies is a major tenet of the study that has been done (An & Kang, 2016). While extensive research has been done on the effects of adult bullying, much of it was done in European nations where workplace bullying is recognized as a serious issue and where legislation has been put in place to address it (Mueller, 2006; Needham, 2003).

Bullying at work may happen at any company level and in any sector. The 1992 book Bullying at Work by British journalist and broadcaster Andrea Adams answers the negative impacts of bullying that many men and women have experienced (Berry et al., 2016). In the United States, workplace bullying victims have few legal remedies since a hostile work environment is only specifically defined as sexual harassment (Fisher-Blando, 2008). The issue of workplace bullying is acknowledged as harming workers and organizations in the United Kingdom (Institute for Management Excellence, 2005). Yao et al. (2020) founded the Bully Busters website to fight workplace bullying.

ALTERNATIVE FORMS OF WPB

At work, bullies persistently engage in behaviors that appear to be very harmful. These behaviors for power, abuse, threats, intimidation, embarrassment, and shame, as well as a failure to communicate, manipulation, engaging in a pattern of obstructive behavior over time,

URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.14738/abr.111.13919

excluding and overlooking employees, and talking about or spreading rumors about their victims (Ng et al., 2020). While workplace disrespect and bullying are somewhat related, bullying tends to include more severe, regular, and offensive acts of contempt. Bullying causes anger, demoralization, demotivation, disaffection, and alienation, which is undoubtedly a counterproductive way to operate. Bullying at work often occurs among those who are jealous of or feel intimidated by others (Nica et al., 2016). While professional rudeness and bullying have certain similarities, bullying tends to include more severe and often repeated displays of disrespect and unpleasant behavior.

Workers carry out most workplace bullying occurrences against one another. Workplace bullying lowers employee morale and may be expensive in various ways, including increased turnover, decreased productivity, an increase in sick days, and an increase in workers' compensation claims, to name a few (Rockett et al. 2016). Bullying at work is widely seen as harmful behavior aimed at workers. The worst error a business can make is to ignore bullying until it becomes a catastrophe. Liability-related expenses might be high. The expenses brought on by a drop in productivity are likewise substantial. Victims are often seen as extremely competent workers. Health insurance rates may rise due to higher claim expenses for medical conditions brought on by workplace bullying.

Many victims report the harassment to their company's personnel office, giving the employer knowledge of the problem. Witnesses often see bullying at work. "Poor morale and fear-driven workplaces reduce employee commitment and productivity" (Namie, 2003, p. 5). Violence and the threat of violence may create an atmosphere of hostility and dread, according to Anjum et al. (2019), which can impact organizational organizations. According to Rigby (2002), managers may use certain actions that may be seen as bullying in order more productive workplace. Therefore, the distinction between proactive and reactive hostility must be understood.

According to academics, assertiveness and goal-setting are examples of positive aggressiveness, whereas deliberate, disruptive behavior of negative aggression (Hoel et al., 2020). Bullies who repeatedly get their way create an environment that is dangerous and detrimental to both victims and workers. Organizational executives and human resources staff often avoid difficult situations, creating the impression that they support bullying and assaulting victims (Nica et al., 2016). In contrast, supervisors and HR staff are often unprepared to handle bullying allegations made by victims (Nica et al., 2016). According to research, other symptoms, including work discontent, anxiety, and a decline in cognitive abilities, might affect, productivity (Namie & Namie, 2003). When an organization is in crisis or disruption, it will do so by putting prepared measures in place to deal with the issue, which will performance goes on. A crisis or disturbance of employee tension may grow and result in violence when businesses are unable to perform (Nica et al., 2016).

IMPLICATIONS & CONCLUSION

An organization's objective is to prevent a recurrence of the issue by detecting bullies during the employment process. Finding a remedy is always preferable to prevent it. Supervisors who act inappropriately, such as shouting in public, contribute to health-related problems (Salin et al., 2020). When confronted with bullying, victims often turn to other employees and people inside the said organizations but seldom get recognition of the problem or a resolution (Namie

et al., 2011). According to Namie et al., 2011, victims of workplace bullying may feel stress and worry disturbed sleep, difficulties focusing, headaches, a quick pulse, tiredness, and signs of post-traumatic stress disorder. Sitzman (2004) agreed that there is a problem with workplace bullying and that the problem won't be remedied until businesses do something about it. Bullying may be considerably reduced in frequency and severity at work and even prevented before it begins in an environment that values respect.

According to Hoel et al. (2020), bullying is a group of dysfunctional workplace behaviors that may range from detrimental effects on a person's emotional stability and welfare to physical aggression that causes pain and injury. The term "organizational violence" was used by Hoel et al. (1999) to characterize a kind of bullying that is connected with dysfunctional companies, "corrosive" management or leadership philosophies, and organizational cultures that support violent conduct. In companies, bullying behavior's characteristics are often elusive and not always recognized (Namie et al., 2011). It's also critical to understand that bullying is often seen as a pattern of conduct, with one or more specific instances as evidence (Namie et al., 2011).

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