What is workplace bullying?;

it's usually behavior that is targeted on a group or individual groups by individuals or a group by a person in the workplace, often a person withauthority but sometimes it's not even someone with authority and it's usually behavior that it can be verbal ornon-verbal harassment, abusive language and often results inemotional stress and mental anxiety for the people who are receiving it or the individuals receiving it expande specially when it's over an extended period of time.

**Workplace bullying** refers to *repeated,* unreasonable actions of individuals (or a group) directed towards an employee (or a group of employees), which are intended to intimidate, degrade, humiliate, or undermine; or which create a risk to the health or safety of the employee(s).

**Workplace bullying** often involves an abuse or misuse of power. Bullying behavior creates feelings of defenselessness and injustice in the target and undermines an individual’s right to dignity at work.

What qualifies as abuse in the workplace?;

Types of workplace bullying;

Effects of workplace bullying;

Workplace bullying has clear significant and adverse consequences not only for employees but also for organizations and society more broadly. Below, we discuss three broad categories of consequences: human, organizational, and spillover/crossover.

***Human Costs***

Targets of workplace bullying experience significant detriments to their health and wellbeing. These individuals report increased psychological distress including anxiety, depression (e.g., Hauge, Skogstad, & Einarsen, 2010; Hansen et al., 2006), negative emotions (Bowling & Beehr, 2006; Vie, Glasø, & Einarsen, 2012), and overt anger (Aquino, Douglas, & Martinko, 2004). Targets also report higher levels of burnout and emotional exhaustion (e.g., Wu & Hu, 2009).

Recent research has also linked the experience of bullying to physiological outcomes, including sleep problems (Niedhammer et al., 2009), musculoskeletal complaints (Vie et al., 2012), and lower salivary cortisol (Hansen et al., 2006). In fact, several researchers have suggested that targets of workplace bullying experience symptoms similar to those associated with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD; Matthiesen & Einarsen, 2004). Matthiesen and Einarsen found that victims of bullying exhibited higher levels of PTSD than a series of non-bullied high trauma control groups (e.g., recently divorced persons, war zone personnel). Thus, there is no question that there are serious adverse health consequences for victims of bullying.

Interestingly, targets are not the only ones who suffer from and react to workplace mistreatment. Studies have found that witnesses also experience negative reactions to workplace aggression, such as lower general and mental stress (Vartia, 2001), and emotional drain (Totterdell, Hershcovis, Niven, Reich, & Stride, 2012). More recently, Reich and Hershcovis (in press) found that employees who witness mistreatment become angry toward and punish perpetrators. Therefore, it appears that incidents of mistreatment extend beyond the target to affect others in the work environment and that, consistent with Andersson and Pearson’s (1999) concept of an incivility spiral, mistreatment may move beyond the original perpetrator –target dyad to involve others at work.

***Organizational Costs***

The human costs of workplace bullying discussed above have obvious implications for organizations, as targets experiencing emotional and physiological impairments are more likely to be absent due to sickness (e.g., Kivimäki, Elovainio, & Vahtera, 2000; Sprigg, Martin, Niven, & Armitage, 2010). Further, those targets who continue to attend work demonstrate lower task performance (Harris, Kacmar, & Zivnuska, 2007; Schat & Frone, 2011), lower creativity (Mathisen, Einarsen, & Mykletun, 2008), lower organizational citizenship behaviors (e.g., Harris, Harvey, & Kacmar, 2011; Zellars, Tepper, & Duffy, 2002), and higher counterproductive work behavior (e.g., Hershcovis et al., 2012).

Organizations incur indirect costs as well, as meta-analytic results suggest that targets of workplace bullying report lower job satisfaction, life satisfaction, and organizational commitment, and higher intentions to quit (Bowling & Beehr, 2006; Hershcovis & Barling, 2010). These negative job attitudes further relate to performance outcomes (e.g., Schat & Frone, 2011). As such, it should be unsurprising that workplace bullying in the United States costs organizations as much as $14,000 USD per employee in lost performance (Pearson & Porath, 2009).

***Spillover/Crossover Costs***

In the last 10 years, an interesting body of research has started to examine spillover and crossover effects arising from workplace bullying and aggression. Crossover refers to how one individual’s experiences can influence a different individual’s experiences (Westman, 2006), and thus is an interindividual phenomenon. For instance, experiences of abusive supervision for a target (person A) may influence the attitudes of the target’s coworker (person B) toward the work environment. In contrast, spillover refers to the extent to which an individual’s participation in one domain influences his or her participation and attitudes in another domain (Carlson, Ferguson, Perrewé, & Whitten, 2011), and thus is an intraindividual phenomenon. That is, an individual’s experience in the workplace (context A) influences the individual’s experience in another context such as the home environment (context B). For example, experiences of abusive supervision may influence an individual’s engagement with family activities.

**Cultural Considerations**

The prevalence estimate provided at the outset of this paper is based on a meta-analytic review summarizing studies conducted across a range of countries (Nielsen et al., 2010); however, these estimates vary across countries. Nielsen et al. reported that only 9.7% of Scandinavian employees experience workplace bullying, whereas prevalence rates are 15.7% in other European countries and almost 26% in Non-European countries (primarily

Managing Workplace Bullying;

Below, we discuss the three distinct ways in which organizations and employees can deal with workplace bullying: primary, secondary, and tertiary interventions.

**Primary Interventions**

Primary interventions focus on preventing occurrence of bullying in the workplace. Although there have been relatively few rigorous tests of such interventions (presumably because of the costs involved in designing and implementing programs), at least two large scale tests have been reported. Hoel and Giga (2006) tested the efficacy of policy communication, stress management training, and negative behavior awareness training, in comparison to a control group. However, no clear gains were observed across a 6-month period. In contrast, research into the Civility, Respect, Engagement in the Workforce (CREW) program has reported much more promising results. CREW began in 2005 in the US Department of Veteran Affairs and involves a series of participatory exercises (e.g., discussions, role plays), which are designed to cultivate awareness of one’s interpersonal impact in the workplace. Studies using a robust randomized control trial design have reported significant improvements in the civility of workplace behavior, sustained across 12- months (Osatuke, Moore, Ward, & Dyrenforth, & Belton, 2009), and additional gains for job satisfaction, organizational commitment, trust in management, and job burnout (Leiter, Day, Gilin-Oore, & Laschinger, 2012).

Research concerning situational characteristics that contribute to the occurrence of bullying may also provide fruitful avenues for future interventions. As discussed earlier, factors such as role ambiguity, high demands, poor leadership, and perceived injustice influence the likelihood of bullying. As such, creating systems that can: (a) ensure role clarity and reasonable workloads, (b) offer leadership training that encourage supportive leadership styles, and (c) generate policies to ensure fair and just treatment, decisions, and outcomes may all help to reduce the prevalence of workplace aggression and bullying.

**Secondary Interventions**

Secondary interventions aim to provide employees with the necessary skills and/or coping resources to deal with bullying should it occur. Although researchers have yet to test the efficacy of secondary interventions in reducing the negative effects of bullying, recent studies have suggested a number of potentially promising routes for such interventions. For example, Zapf and Gross’s (2001) work suggests that people who successfully cope with bullying differ from unsuccessful copers in how they manage conflict. In particular, successful copers are better at recognizing and avoiding escalating behavior. Similarly, Niven and colleagues’ work on emotion regulation suggests that strategies that employees use to manage their own emotions in response to being aggressed against appear to be important factors influencing the severity of consequences for employees’ health and well-being. Reappraising the aggression (e.g., by trying not to take people’s actions personally) is an adaptive response, buffering the negative effects of aggression, whereas suppressing one’s emotional response and engaging in ruminative thinking (where one continually mulls over what happened in a negative manner) are maladaptive responses, exacerbating negative consequences (Niven, Sprigg, & Armitage, 2013; Niven, Sprigg, Armitage, & Satchwell, 2013).

**Tertiary Interventions**

Tertiary interventions focus on reducing negative consequences after bullying has occurred. It is crucial for organizations to respond appropriately once bullying has been reported; reporting of victimization can lead to negative consequences for targets because of poor organizational responses, such as minimizing what has happened (Bergman, Langhout, Palmieri, Cortina, & Fitzgerald, 2002). One way the organization can respond is to use workplace mediation, in which a third party to the conflict (e.g., an external consultant or a member of HR staff) gets both the alleged perpetrator and victim together to work through the situation in a facilitated discussion, focusing on the present and future relationships. Saam’s (2010) study, in which consultants were interviewed about the strategies they preferred to deal with workplace bullying, identified that mediation can be useful to prevent escalation, primarily when a situation is viewed as a conflict rather than fullblown bullying. However, when a behavior pattern has become entrenched, mediation may be inappropriate due to the power imbalance that develops between perpetrator and victim. Organizations can also consider administering sanctions to perpetrators (e.g., moving them to a different department, demoting or even firing them); however, because bullying cases are often “he said-she said” in nature, sanctions can be difficult to justify legally.

An alternative, or complementary, approach is the provision of counselling or debriefing. Usually these services are offered for targets of bullying, in which the target talks about what happened with a professional, who then guides the target through various possible solutions. In Tehrani’s (2003) review of tertiary approaches, she concluded that there is some evidence of long-term benefits for individual victims but that there are a variety of counseling and debriefing types and for which there is no clear evidence to suggest that any particular approach is more effective than others. Moreover, there can be a danger that such interventions may not allow victims to distance themselves from the events. Counselling can also be offered to perpetrators of bullying, although this approach is much less common.

FAQs