

Workplace Bullying: An Emergent Issue

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Abstract

All companies, including dentists, rely on their staff to represent their firms in the most positive and effective manner. Today's managers face a multitude of issues, and as such, they must walk a fine line of fostering a productive, harmonious and safe working environment for their employees. Over the last several decades it is apparent that on-the-job sexual harassment is no longer the leading issue of employee complaints.

Rather, the organization issue which was investigated is workplace bullying, also commonly referred to as employee harassment. Risk management is no longer limited to avoiding malpractice issues but also preventing litigation created by poor organizational behavior.

The primary purpose of this paper is to explore the background of workplace bullying and how it affects today's managers and their employees, customers and suppliers. In other words, the scope of this paper will feature research on past studies, results and conclusions. Since workplace bullying affects all levels of a corporation, it must be stated that the concern and focus of this paper is for today's manager to understand the background and history of workplace bullying, and what they can do to foster a safe working environment and prevent the bully from creating mental and physical harm to their employees. This paper details the history of workplace bullying and how management, employees and suppliers deal with and address the issue. Lastly, this treatise looks at risk management from a manager/dentist's perspective, the assessment/conclusion summarizes the implications for managers regarding how they must handle the issue or risk harm to the employee and/or serious legal ramifications.

Key Words: Dentist, Bully, Legal, Safety, Harassment, Leadership, Management

Introduction

All companies, including dentists, rely on their staff to represent their firms in the most positive and effective manner. Today's dentist/managers face a multitude of issues, and as such, they must walk a fine line of fostering a productive, harmonious and safe working environment for their employees. Over the last several decades it is apparent that on-the-job sexual harassment is no longer the leading issue of employee complaints. Rather, the organization issue which was investigated is workplace bullying, also commonly referred to as employee harassment. Risk management is no longer limited to avoid dental and medical malpractice issues but also preventing litigation created by poor organizational behavior.

The school yard bully has grown up, has a job and has changed their location from the school yard to the business arena. The bully's main focus is to make their colleagues feel uncomfortable mentally or physically, sometimes both. There has been much research showing that bullying is becoming more common at work and rising at an alarming rate. Worker victim complaints have been reported indicating that one in six people in the last six months and one in four over the last five years were victims of bullying" [1]. The U.S. Workplace Bullying Survey noted bullying was present in all three categories: 53% advised of verbal bullying, 53% have experienced behavioral bullying and 45% had work interference [2].

The primary purpose of this paper is to explore the background of workplace bullying and how it affects today's dental practices, dentists, managers and their employees, customers and suppliers. In other words, the scope of this paper will feature research on past studies, results and conclusions. Since workplace bullying affects all levels of a firm, it must be stated that the concern and focus of this paper

is for today's practice manager to understand the background and history of workplace bullying, and what they can do to foster a safe working environment and prevent the bully from creating mental and physical harm to their employees. This paper details the history of workplace bullying and how management, employees and suppliers deal with and address the issue. Lastly, this treatise looks at risk management from a dentist and manager's perspective, the assessment/conclusion summarizes the implications for managers regarding how they must handle the issue or risk harm to the employee and/or serious legal ramifications.

Workplace Bullying

Background

Research findings have shown strong documentation that both racial and sexual harassment can be detrimental to an employee's mental and physical self and morale. It is also affects work productivity and efficiency of the entire organization. Further findings have also discovered that co-worker bullying has similar effects [3].

In a survey conducted by the Andrea Adams Trust, it was noted that only 26% of harassment victims knew of their employers work policies designed to assist and protect them [1].

The Oxford Dictionary defines workplace bullying as "person who uses strength or power to coerce others by fear" [3]. The business industry defines it as any type of unwanted mental or physical harassment done to a person. Any behavior or conduct initiated by another person which makes the victim feel uncomfortable or harassed, whether intended or not, by the harasser. This behavior is both offensive and persistent and often used to scare and frighten the victim. This harmful pattern works to belittle and lower the confidence and self-esteem of the victim [1].

According to Dr. Gary Namie, Director and Social

Psychologist at the Washington based Workplace Bullying Institute, states that the company bully advises that they must utilize fear to motivate people. Namie advises that this direct harassment has nothing to do with job issues. “It is about maintaining control and power over someone else. “It is also about self-aggrandizement and the abuser’s insecurities.” Companies often keep the harassers around as they are good at sucking up and top executives tend to like them as they get work done [4].

Company bullies are typically under a lot of stress and/or have lack of control over their job. As a result they take this frustration out on another co-worker. The most typical bully is the victim’s immediate level manager who is under stress from their direct manager. In many instances the dentist, office manager or chief dental assistant may be the primary offender. It is has been noted that some bullies are under so much stress that they tend to not realize what damages their actions cause others or their own professional role.

Dr. Gary Namie is working to raise awareness about workplace bullying. He states that the Unites States is the last commercial nation that must address this issue, and he feels that most of the companies either ignore workplace bullying or refuse to address the issue. He notes four common bully types:

(1) Constant Critic: This type of bully utilizes frequent harassment or badgering in private and the target begins to believe they are incompetent;

(2) Gatekeeper: This manager is very insecure and deliberately withholds resources or needed funds so that the involved person will be unsuccessful at their job;

(3) Screaming Mimis: Known as “Yellers in the Bobby Knight mold.” They abuse people and often get away with it as others are afraid to get involved; and

(4) Two-headed Snake: Known as the manager that acts like a friend to your face and works behind your back to get rid of you [4].

Psychiatrist Carroll Brodsky advises on the three levels of workplace bullying:

(1) Victim is able to remove him from early bullying by resisting and is often able to return back to original job or find a new job.

(2) Victim has suffered mentally or physically and finds it difficult to return to work.

(3) At this point the harassment to victim has become so severe they are unable to return back their job [2].

Workplace bullies typically fall into one of five categories:

(1) Picking on a victim in public by name calling and derogatory comments;

(2) Using the victim as a scapegoat by advertising and placing blame on them and/or their involved work group;

(3) Increasing and adding pressure to the victim’s existing workload beyond normal work expectations;

(4) Initiating sexual advances and harassment typically by a bully with power differential; and

(5) Physically harming or abusing victim and/or their workgroup.

Lastly, refer to *Table 1* Comparison of peer and bullying conflict in Appendix I. The table shows the difference between normal co-worker peer conflict and bullying conflict.

Challenges and effects of workplace bullying

Managerial challenges in the dental office created by

workplace bullying require eliminating hostile work environments which hurt employee productivity and morale. Constant bullying results in high sickness rates and costly health issues, resulting in high turnover and lower company profits. The constant challenge for today’s dentist/manager is to be actively involved and supportive of their employees by not permitting the bully to run the workplace. Having an open door policy with employees is a deterrent to bullying. Being aware of what is happening and handling the problem at the beginning stages further prevents the issue from getting out of hand. Lastly, making sure all employees understand that they are free to report any harassment issues so that they can feel safe on both a mental and physical level at their job is imperative for managers.

Workplace bullying effects

How it affects management

Laws and implications

Workplace Bullying was first defined in the court case of Raess v. Doescher (No. 49 S02-0710-CV-424, Indiana Supreme Court [April 8, 2008]). The most frequent term used in this case to describe damaging aggressive behavior transferred by one person to another was workplace bullying. If dentists have not heard the term “status blind harassment” they should familiarize themselves with the issue. Status blind harassment is more commonly known as workplace bullying, said Joan Rennekamp, human resources consultant with the law firm Rothgerber Johnson & Lyons in Colorado Springs [5]. Workplace bullying is often involved with many legal issues. In many countries there is no law that allows a person to bring a case of bullying to an employment Court. Instead, the burden of proof is on employees to show they have been discriminated against either in terms of gender or race, or, more commonly, because of disability.

Bullying leads to stress (a component of mental health), and disability discrimination legislation recognizes mental health problems as a disability. Alternatively, an individual can take out a grievance, and if the issue is not resolved, leave their employment and claim constructive dismissal. In the U.K and often in the U.S., bullying has become more prevalent in the workplace because current laws on harassment do not provide proper protection for the employee. An employee can only take action unless there is an obvious race, gender

Table 1. Comparison of peer and bullying conflict [23].

Peer Conflict	Bullying Conflict
Equal power	Imbalance of power (positional and or personal)
Past relationship	Repeat and negative interactions
Conflict- accidental	Conflict- intentional and poses serious threat or emotional harm
Equal emotional reaction	Strong emotional reaction from victim and minimum emotion from bully
Not seeking power or emotion	Seeking power and control
Not attempting to escalate conflict	Attempting to gain control through conflict
Remorse	Remorse – varying degrees
Takes responsibility for actions	Blames victim
Concerted effort to resolve problem/conflict	No effort to solve problem / conflict

or disability issue involved. This gaping loophole in the legal position for victims of bullying and harassment evidently needs to be tightened. British lobbying group Amicus is continuing its relentless House of Commons campaign to try to make a Dignity at Work Bill Law [6].

In the U.S. if bullying is prompted by an employee's age, race or other characteristics specified under State or Federal discrimination laws, an employee may be able to win economic damages in Court. State Divisions of Civil Rights may levy a variety of measures against an employer, including paying a complainant back wages, or damages for the pain and humiliation the complainant suffered. The Civil Rights Division could also award attorneys' fees to the employee and assess penalties against the employer of up to \$10,000 for a first offense, \$25,000 for a second offense and \$50,000 for a third offense [7]. For managers of a dental practice, the legal dilemma is when to recognize human aggression; a subjective area according to many experts. As stated by Justice Potter Stewart in his famous definition of pornography, "I know it when I see it." Workplace aggression involves active discrimination, and in legal studies it was discovered that nearly one third (28.9%) were gender based discrimination and equally weighted with race discrimination with another third (35.6%) [8].

Legally this can present problems for large companies since there are federal laws that protect people based on race and gender. Federal litigation should be avoided at all costs since it can damage a company's corporate image with negative publicity and drain its financial resources. Dentists must be aware of evolving legislation since new laws are now affecting small business. Managers must have the tacit skills and knowledge to recognize workplace bullying and know when to intervene and take appropriate action. Frank G. De Luca, a partner at Cambridge Financial Services, an Edison, New Jersey consulting firm, says that when he is called in to help a troubled company and finds that a bully is in charge, he works hard to win the person's confidence. "If you tell a bully he's the problem, he's not likely to work with you," says De Luca. "Instead, we use psychology and try to get them to make the connections themselves. We did that with someone who micromanaged his employees and then blamed them if something didn't work out. He made the inference himself and was able to recognize what was wrong" [7]. Proving that a person is a bully and getting them to change is not an easy task.

Financial considerations

The issue of workplace bullying is widespread, according to a national study commissioned in 2007 by the Bellingham, Washington based Workplace Bullying Institute. The study found 54 million people, or 37 percent of American workers, have been bullied at work. In 62 percent of the cases, when made aware of the bullying, employers make the problem worse or simply do nothing, according to a report on the Institute's study. By ignoring the problem, a dentist may incur stress-related payments for workers' compensation awards and disability benefits to its employees as a result of workplace bullying which ultimately costs employers more. An increasing number of companies are paying \$5,000 to \$100,000 per year for "employment practices liability"

insurance to protect against bullying-type claims filed by employees. In addition to paying to attorneys' fees and costs to defend themselves against employee lawsuits that result from bullying, practices can also incur hidden costs. Types of hidden costs incurred include impaired efficiency that may result from a depressed, harassed employee, or the cost of finding replacements for employees who leave the company because of bullying.

British Health insurance provider BUPA states that bullying costs the economy £13.75 bn annually. This cost is calculated by taking into account the fact that bullying causes time lost because of an employee's stress and ill health, a lowering of morale among employees that leads to reduced work output, lost resources because trained people leave the industry, and the cost of taking cases to tribunal [9]. Job stress, which in some cases is related to bullying, costs U.S. companies \$300 billion per year in lost time and health claims, according to the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health. Considering the economy of scale, the damage to a small business such as private dental practice can carry an even larger impact. The figure is sometimes disputed, but local attorneys and human resource managers say there is no denying that bullying leads to stress which leads to low productivity [5]. In fact, one researcher noted that, "Today's strong job market and the diminishing loyalties of workers can increase the fallout costs of incivility when targets or others who are offended by the encounter pursue abundant opportunities to move on to a more civil setting, rather than tolerate the abuse" [10]. Astute leaders understand that workplace bullying is expensive and the related costs impact directly on the company's bottom line. Good managers prevent the spread of workplace bullying.

Practice/Company performance

Effects of bullying for the employee include increased depression, anxiety, and absenteeism, as well as decreased motivation, quality of work, job satisfaction, and ability to meet goals. The organization suffers when communication ceases, problems cannot be solved, people cannot learn, gossip abounds, and stress prevents effective decision making. Employees who witness the negative behaviors - even if they don't feel victimized by bullying themselves - lose faith in management, and their work suffers, too. Collectively, these consequences ultimately hurt the company's bottom line.

For workplace learning and performance professionals who are being asked to demonstrate Return-on Investment (ROI) and Return-on- Expectation (ROE), bullying is a significant problem. An employee cannot learn or perform well in a negative environment where the individual suffers fear and anxiety. Employees must feel safe to disagree with one another, ask questions, make mistakes, share ideas, and take risks. The benefits of a healthy, safe, positive, and supportive working environment are endless. This type of workplace facilitates a desire to learn, motivates quality performance, inspires progressive ideas, decreases turnover, minimizes workplace politics, improves internal communication and relationships with customers, reduces stress, advances the

health of the organization and its employees, and stimulates excitement to achieve greatness [11].

Impact on bottom line

Assuming an organization has 1,000 employees, if 25 % are bullied and 15 % of those employees quit as a result, the organization's average "desk/replacement cost" is \$20,000, which results in an annual cost of \$750,000. Add to those figures two witnesses per bullied employee, with 20 percent of affected employees quitting, that analysis Employment Relations Today quickly subtracts \$1.2 million from the bottom line. Thus, a single workplace bully can easily cost an organization approximately \$2 million per year. Employers who are concerned about maintaining a safe work environment for their employees, improving productivity, and preserving their bottom lines knows that they must rid the workplace of bullying and bullies [12]. Now let's look at the dental practice. Assume the office has six employees and 25% are bullied. The operation grosses \$1,000,000 and it costs on average \$10,000 to recruit and train a new hire. The dentist nets on average 12% or 120,000 before taxes. In this scenario 1.5 employees are bullied and as a result if two quit or litigate the potential costs exceed \$20,000 per incident which impacts management's profits and productivity potentially reducing net income to \$100,000 or much less if various claims and litigation arise.. Bullying is a serious matter for small and large firms and should be given priority.

How it affects employees

Bullying

Research studies indicate that the most prevalent affect that victims display after being bullied are high stress levels and/or a stress related illness such as post-traumatic stress syndrome. This illness often has a debilitating impact on the victim, and they are often unable to go back to work. They often miss work or are afraid to report to work. Often times they have to relocate to another job to resolve the problem. Professor Gary Cooper, a leader expert on occupational stress at the University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology (UMIST) advises that victims who are constantly badgered lose their self-esteem and self-confidence and have risk of stress related illnesses [3]. In the dental office this type of disability can result in expenses that greatly impact morale, net profits and retained earnings. Worker compensation claims, unemployment claims and civil suits can all effect vital business metrics.

2. Sexual harassment

From the book "Know Your Rights 2012," the author states that sexual harassment is an unwelcome verbal, visual or physical conduct of a sexual nature that is severe or pervasive and affects working conditions or creates a hostile work environment" [13]. There is a thin line between getting unwanted advances that are sexual and inappropriate comments. It is advised that sexual harassment can happen for a variety of reasons. Research has noted that it can sometimes be prompted by a person wearing sexy clothes or a victim's behavior, but there is no specific cause for it to happen.

Sexual harassment is similar to bullying in the sense that the victim is getting constantly harassed at one or more levels with the majority of them being at a sexual related level.

Author Steven Cates notes several types of sexual harassment:

- (1) Written or verbal communication;
- (2) Physical advances or touching;
- (3) Visual images or pictures, etc;
- (4) Non-verbal communication, i.e. eye contact, stalking and or staring;
- (5) Non sexual-badgering or pestering of a victim which can include gender discrimination; and
- (6) Pervasive or severe, i.e. attempted rape [13].

External issues

Involved customers/patients

The most immediately noticeable effect on the organization is its bottom line. Employees who are being bullied are less productive, and employees who witness the bullying may become less productive if they start to believe the organization does not care about them. And if patients and clients witness such behavior it can result in serious financial loss and affect brand image. Employees who are worried about defending themselves cannot focus on their jobs and eventually cannot focus on serving the customer. Not only can this affect productivity but it can create liabilities vis-à-vis malpractice litigation caused by errors and omissions or direct patient harm

A 1990 study by the American Bureau of National Affairs found that between \$5 billion and \$6 billion was lost each year as a result of decreased productivity caused by actual or perceived employee abuse. Organizations with workplace bullies may also experience high turnover rates and talent flight by their employees. One study concluded that bully bosses might play a significant part of the job-hopping phenomenon. Another study found that 82% of people targeted by a bully leave their workplace; 38% for health reasons and 44% because of performance reviews manipulated to show them as incompetent [12].

Vendors and suppliers

The cost of Bullying to any business is significant and does not matter whether it is vendor or supplier. It will impact every business in terms of high staff turnover, retraining costs, damage to employee health, absenteeism and sick leave, workplace violence, wrongful termination suits, lowered productivity and impact on bottom line. Bullying may be an unfortunate fact of life in some organizations, and the latest scientific research reveals the many ways bullying behavior can have a direct, negative impact on an organization's bottom line. In a 2008 study, researchers found workplace bullying more harmful than sexual harassment to its targets [12].

Research/Studies

Lewis and Gunn report the bullying experiences of public sector employees at work across 13 organizations in South Wales. The study explored the experiences of White and Ethnic minority respondents and found that there are significant differences in the type and frequency of bullying behaviors experienced by the two groups. Ethnic minority respondents are more likely to label themselves as suffering from bullying behaviors than their white counterparts. The evidence presented in this study demonstrates how line managers use different tactics when bullying ethnic respondents compared to white respondents. Furthermore, when colleagues bully fellow colleagues, there

are subtly different patterns of bullying behavior towards white and ethnic victims. Given the specific requirement to comply with the public duty for promotion of racial equality expected under the Race Relations Amendment Act (2000), it is important that these findings are recognized by UK public sector organizations [14]. Work is central to well-being but working is problematic when people experience workplace bullying, which includes psychological, physical, and sexual abuse or harassment. The purpose of the present grounded theory study was to extend current understanding, from the perspective of women, of how workplace bullying affects their work and how they engage in the workforce. The study was conducted in eastern Canada with 36 English speaking women who had been bullied in the workplace. They reported mainly psychological bullying [15].

A communication approach illustrates the toxic complexity of workplace bullying as it is condoned through societal discourses, sustained by receptive workplace cultures, and perpetuated through local interactions. Examining these (macro, meso, and micro) communicative elements addresses the most pressing questions about workplace bullying, including

- (a) How abuse manifests;
- (b) How employees respond;
- (c) Why it is so harmful;
- (d) Why resolution is so difficult; and
- (e) How it might be resolved. This article provides tips for addressing and transforming workplace bullying, which may be of particular interest to consultants and human resource professionals, while also offering a theoretical synthesis and launching pad for future research [16].

The study by Lewis & Gunn examined relations between the incidence of workplace bullying and the everyday experiences of members of ethnic and racial minorities in the American workplace. Particular attention was paid to expressions of bullying that overtly or specifically refer to race or ethnicity, in the form of more or less subtle acts of discrimination and hostile treatment, introducing the term 'racial/ethnic bullying.' Participants belonging to four racial/ethnic groups (Asians, African-Americans, Hispanics/Latinos, and Whites) responded to a written survey of general and racial/ethnic bullying experiences, responses, and preferred modes and methods of internal organizational redress and dispute resolution [17].

Over recent decades a broad range of studies have investigated organizational antecedents of workplace bullying. Numerous studies have demonstrated that bullying is associated with a negative and stressful working environment. Lynch's (2007) findings supported the finding of other studies that a poor social climate, lack of individual control, and high role ambiguity were associated with a high prevalence of bullying [18]. Results from a cross-sectional study conducted among business professionals revealed that there was a positive correlation between a politicized and competitive climate and bullying. Zapf, Knorz and Kulla were able to demonstrate that people who had less time for conflict resolution and fewer opportunities to socialize in their place of work, which tended to cause isolation from colleagues, reported a high incidence of being bullied [19]. Role conflict, dissatisfaction with management and poor information flow

were shown to be associated with an increased incidence of bullying. Einarsen found in his study that the occurrence of bullying and harassment is positively correlated with measures of work environment, low satisfaction with leadership and work control, and negative social climate [20]. Einarsen also showed that different work conditions are related to bullying in the sub-samples used in their study [20]. Their research showed that both the victims of bullying and the observers of bullying report a low-quality work environment.

The Workplace Bullying Institute (WBI) wrote the survey and commissioned Zogby International to collect data for the second representative study of all adult Americans on the topic of workplace bullying. WBI conducted the first national study in 2007. There were two 2010 surveys; one with several items and 4,210 survey respondents (MOE \pm 1.5 % points), and one single-item survey with 2,092 respondents (MOE \pm 2.2 % points). Each sample was representative of all American adults in August, 2010. In Survey 1, workplace bullying was defined as "repeated, health harming abusive conduct committed by bosses and co-workers." In the single-question survey (Survey 2), workplace bullying was defined as "repeated mistreatment: sabotage by others that prevented work from getting done, verbal abuse, threatening conduct, intimidation and humiliation" in order to make the direct comparison to the 2007 WBI-Zogby prevalence question.

Results

Within a negative social climate, low satisfaction with leadership was found to be an organizational feature strongly identified with bullying. It appears therefore that bullying has consistently been associated with a negative and stressful working environment and low satisfaction with leadership. The study by Lynch examines the impact of different styles of leadership and the nature of the working environment on the prevalence of bullying.

Research into bullying at work has tended to focus on defining, measuring, and explaining the essential nature of bullying, and has placed the individual as the main focus of bullying research with the organization acting as the place where bullying takes place. This research was done through postal national survey of the workforce in Ireland. The research found that 6% (N=1057) of respondents claimed to have been bullied frequently, with a further 17% bullied occasionally over the previous 12 months. Of those who had been bullied, 67% described the style of leadership in their organizations as autocratic, 15% as laissez-faire and 18% as democratic. Whilst 72% of non-bullied respondents reported that their working environment was friendly, only 47% of bullied respondents reported that their working environment was friendly. Furthermore, 39% of bullied respondents claimed to work in a hostile environment. There were significant differences between bullied and non-bullied respondents with regard to working conditions, with the exception of the level of challenge, and significant differences in all aspects of the perceived working climate, with the exception of a variable atmosphere [18].

35% of workers have experienced bullying firsthand (37% in 2007, given the MOE, essentially equivalent); 62% of bullies are men; and 58% of targets are women. Women

bullies target women in 80% of cases. Bullying is four times more prevalent than illegal harassment (2007). The majority (68%) of bullying is same-gender harassment. 35% of the U.S. workforce (an est. 53.5 million Americans) report being bullied at work and an additional 15% witness it. Further, half of all Americans have directly experienced it. Simultaneously, 50% report neither experiencing nor witnessing bullying; hence, a "silent epidemic." Both men and women bully, but the majority of bullying is same-gender harassment, which is mostly legal according to anti-discrimination laws and workplace policies. Women target women [21].

Conclusion

The study suggested that poor leadership/practice management and a negative working environment is associated with bullying. Poor leadership often creates legal and ethical issues. Leymann commented that a negative working environment can exist for unavoidable reasons. He says, however, that bullying need not be an inescapable consequence if fair policies and procedures are put in place and ethical behavior is emphasized. It can also be argued that effective leadership is of paramount importance to ensure that these practices are undertaken and sustained. It is evident from the finding of this study that supervisors and management have a role in the prevalence of bullying and, therefore, it is necessary that they receive training and acquire skills to help resolve conflict and eliminate bullying so that they are able to manage situations in their organizations in order to minimize negative effects on their workforce.

Organizational communication research has enriched our understanding of workplace bullying in a number of ways. Lutgen examines the effects of macro-meso and macro communicative elements and most pressing questions such as

- (1) How abuse manifests;
- (2) Employee response;
- (3) Its significant harm;
- (4) Why resolution is so difficult; and

(5) How it can be ameliorated. There is still much to do, particularly as we move from identifying and understanding workplace abuse to addressing and combining it [16]. Future research into the prevalence of bullying behaviors should consider factors that contribute to the social climate and evaluate their effects on employers, employees, and on the propensity of individual to take advantage of situations by projecting negative behaviors on-to others.

It is impossible to prevent bullying completely, but it can be actively discouraged through conflict management, organizational policies and education. Part of what encourages bullies is the reward bullying sometimes receives. Management styles described as "tough," "no nonsense," and "hard as nails" are applauded in boardrooms and are often code words for a bully boss. The bully to be recognizes and masters these techniques to become a full-fledged bully.

Assessment/Conclusions

a) What is being done to eliminate workplace bullying?

During recessionary periods employees are stuck when working as at-will employees. Given that there are six candidates for each job opening during recession, people stay in miserable work conditions often getting sicker each day

from stress-related health complications. While working in less than desirable jobs in toxic work environments, they see the few workers' rights eroded.

Some brave, early-adopting employers realized that stopping bullies is good for business. Sioux City, Iowa is the first school district in the nation to address workplace bullying for their adult employees. They have voluntarily created policies and credible enforcement procedures to purge destructive individuals. But these pioneering employers are few and far between. American unions have also begun to learn about bullying and some have been trained to provide peer support for their bullied members. Bullying is a vexing problem for most unions when the mistreatment is member-on-member. Canadian unions have a mixed record from exemplary responses to eliminate bullying to denial.

Employers react to laws with internal policies. The real value of a law, and the true purpose of the WBI Healthy Workplace Bill, is to get employers to prevent bullying with policies and procedures that apply to all employees. The Bill, crafted by law professor David Yamada for the Healthy Workplace Campaign, gives good employers incentives to do the right thing by avoiding expensive litigation.

Implications for managers/dentists

Eliminating workplace bullies

The solution to workplace bullying requires a concerted effort by the entire organization, with senior leadership driving the initiative. However, experts say do not rely on the CEO/Dentist to initiate remediation. The following are some practical steps that a company can implement to retard poor behavior.

(1) Set an example: Dentist/Managers are the individuals responsible for spurring learning in the organization. In small companies like, dental offices, it would be advised to have a written protocol that outlines action points that can be followed to report and remediate issues. As such, it is important that employees can learn from management's communication style. Dentists will not be successful trainers if employees are afraid of them, and doctors cannot hold employees responsible for respectful workplace behavior if they are not practicing the same.

(2) Word choice, tone of voice, and body language: These are vital components to building a civil workplace. Issues must be addressed with decision makers. Workplace bullying does not exist in a vacuum.

(3) Organizational norms and culture: While it can happen anywhere, bullying tends to be more active in workplaces that have high levels of competition and bureaucracy, have frequent changes through downsizing or workgroup transformation, employ numerous tenured individuals, and have managers who demonstrate or ignore bullying behaviors [11].

Discussing bullying in pre-existing training programs is vital to organizational success. Bullying is not harassment, but can be included in harassment training programs. If it is not possible to create a comprehensive anti-bullying program, an anti-bullying curriculum should be included in management training and leadership development programs. It is important that leaders are trained how to identify bullying among employees and to handle grievances successfully, as

well as learning about eliminating bullying from their own behavior.

In an effort to foster a healthy, positive workplace environment, dental offices should develop ground rules by asking employees to create a list of desirable and undesirable workplace behaviors which should be incorporated into a healthy workplace company policy. Employees respond well to lists that tell them what they should do (as opposed to focusing on what they should not do). Identified behaviors can be converted into corporate values. Positive workplace practices and reward systems should be designed to reinforce desired behavior. Along with workplace bullying awareness training, programs should be considered that teach a variety of supporting topics, including conflict management, positive thinking, negotiation, assertiveness, empathy, self-examination, resilience, perception, positive language, gratitude, compassion, and forgiveness. As with any culture change initiative, eradicating bullying and replacing it with a civil work environment requires systematic action plans. While training programs alone cannot end this problem, it is a good place to start.

Ensuring employee safety and welfare

As employers dentists have a duty of care to ensure the health and safety of employees under the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 1989. Employers who do not have an anti-bullying policy could be shown to have failed in their duty of care to do everything possible to prevent harassment

of employees. It is critical that dentists recognize the need for these policies and recognize that as managers they can be implicated as offenders or victims.

Administrative response to mobbing and bullying incidents that resulted in an end to the destructive behavior involved quick action by various stakeholders. Individual and group bullying can be controlled or eradicated by shifting the environment away from factors that support the offending behavior and toward the creation of a culture of respect and empathy. An environment is created where negative social behaviors are no longer valued; and the resources needed to remediate the health and employment consequences of bullying and mobbing are provided [22,23]. Response starts with upper management sensitizing and training individuals in leadership roles. The skillful employer purges bullies while a poor one ignores the problem. Employers must have a policy to prevent and deal with harassment in the workplace. All employees should know about the harassment policy and management should be trained to effectively handle complaints of harassment.

Productive organizations must dedicate their culture to one of employee safety and welfare. This policy fosters a content and happy workforce. These dispositions promote higher productivity and a better bottom line. Especially in the dental industry where HR turnover can be an endemic problem employee security is paramount to corporate success.

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