BULLYING AND HARASSMENT:
How abusive behavior becomes a safety issue in the workplace

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The Issue: Abusive Behavior in the Workplace
Culture...

• Is the characteristics and knowledge of a particular group of people, encompassing such things as how they speak, faith traditions, and social habits.

• **Shared patterns** of thinking, **behaving** and interacting that are **learned by socialization** (Zimmerman, 2017).
What is Incivility?

• “…One or more rude, discourteous, or disrespectful actions that may or may not have a negative intent behind them” (AMA, 2017)

• “…a low intensity deviant behavior with ambiguous intent to harm the target, in violation of workplace norms for mutual respect and courtesy” (Anderson & Pearson, 1999)
Incivility Manifests in 3 Major Ways…

• **Interpersonal**, where one person is directly uncivil toward another person

• **Cyber** incivility is exhibited in computer-mediated interactions, (i.e. emails, texts, and social media)

• “**Victimless**”, incivility does not immediately impact another person, but it violates norms for courtesy, nonetheless (Sliter, 2013)
What is Hazing?

• Any action taken or any situation created *intentionally* that causes embarrassment, shame or humiliation and risks emotional and/or physical harm to members of a group or team, regardless of the person’s willingness to participate. (Hazingprevention.org)
What is Workplace Bullying?

Research indicates while there are multiple definitions of the term “workplace bullying”, there are three essential characteristics associated with effective definitions (Branch, Ramsay & Barker, 2013):

1. The occurrence and perception of significant, inappropriate, negative, or unreasonable behaviors as opposed to trivial behaviors
2. An imbalance of power between the perpetrator and the target
3. A pattern of behavior
What is Workplace Bullying?

- “Repeated, health-harming mistreatment by one or more people of an employee, which includes abusive conduct in the form of verbal abuse, threats, intimidation, humiliation, work interference, sabotage, or a combination of any or all.” (Workplace Bullying Institute, 2019).
What is Workplace Bullying?

- “Malicious intentional verbal and nonverbal behaviors through which the perpetrator does the victim serious harm over an extended period of time” (Tye-Williams & Krone, 2015, p. 79)
What is Workplace Bullying?

- “The unwanted, unwelcome, abuse of any source of power that has the effect of or intent to intimidate, control or otherwise strip a target of their right to esteem, growth, dignity, voice or other human rights in the workplace.” (Carbo & Hughes, 2010)
What is Workplace Bullying?

- “a situation in which one or more persons systematically and over a long period of time perceive themselves to be on the receiving end of negative treatment on the part of one or more persons, in a situation in which the person(s) exposed to the treatment has difficulty in defending themselves against this treatment. (Matthiesen and Einarsen 2007, p. 735)
What is Mobbing?

Mobbing is “bullying on steroids,” whereby a bully enlists co-workers to collude in a relentless campaign of psychological terror against a target. (Henshaw)
Bullying - Health Risks for the Target

- Being a target of bullying can cause psychological and physical health problems, including (Gordon, 2018):
  - Stress
  - Anxiety
  - Trouble sleeping
  - Panic attacks
  - Higher blood pressure
  - Ulcers
Harassment Is ...

• According to the U. S. EEOC, Harassment is unwelcome conduct that is based on race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy), national origin, age (40 or older), disability or genetic information and is illegal when:
  – Putting up with the harassment becomes a condition of continued employment, or
  – The behavior is severe and pervasive enough to create a work environment that any reasonable individual would find intimidating, hostile, or abusive.
Discrimination

• In 2020 the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) processed **67,448** charges of workplace discrimination in federal fiscal year (FY) 2020.

• The agency secured **$439.2 million** for victims of discrimination in private sector, state, and local government workplaces through voluntary resolutions and litigation.
Harassment and Discrimination - Health Effects

- Individual and structural discrimination can cause either intentional or unintentional harm, whether it is perceived by the individual.
- Discrimination is a social stressor that has a physiological effect on individuals (e.g., irregular heartbeat, anxiety, heartburn) that can be compounded over time and can lead to long-term negative health outcomes (HealthyPeople.gov)
What is Workplace Violence?

– Any act or threat of physical violence, harassment, intimidation, or other threatening disruptive behavior that occurs at the work site (OSHA, 2014).
Incivility

Hazing

Bullying

ILLEGAL

Harassment

Violence
The Connection: Psychosocial Safety in the Workplace
Psychosocial ...

• The influence of social factors on an individual’s mind or behavior, and the interrelation of behavioral and social factors (Vizzotto, et. al., 2013)

• In essence it is how individuals interact with others in social settings as a result of how they think and feel.
Risk Assessment

• **Hazard** - Anything that has the potential to cause harm.

• **Risk** - the chance that someone will be harmed by hazard.

• **Harm** is loss, injury, physical or mental damage sustained as a result of exposure to a hazard (Rick & Briner, 2000).
Classifications of hazards

• There are six classifications of hazards (Mahesh, 2021, and Martinelli, 2019):
  – Physical
  – Biological
  – Chemical
  – Ergonomic
  – Safety
  – Psychosocial
Psychosocial Factors at Work

Interactions:
- Work Environment
- Job Content
- Organizational Conditions
- Worker’s capacities, needs and expectations
- Customs and Culture
- Personal extra-job conditions

That may influence reflection on:
- Work Performance
- Job Satisfaction
- Health

Source: International Labour Organization
Psychosocial Risks

• Macleod and Smith make the case that harmful exposure to psychosocial factors is associated with physical disease (2003).

• Circumstances, facts, or influences that contribute to the way that people respond mentally or emotionally to what they do and the conditions where they do it (UK Health and Safety Executive).
Psychosocial Safety Climate

• (PSC) is defined as shared perceptions of organizational policies, practices and procedures for the protection of worker psychological health and safety, that stem largely from management practices (Law, Dollard, Tuckey & Dormann, 2011)
One Solution:
Respect in the Workplace

Based on the Canadian National Standard of for
Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace
A Respectful Workplace

- One where all employees are treated fairly, difference is acknowledged and valued, communication is open and civil, conflict is addressed early and there is a culture of empowerment and cooperation.
The Standard

• The National Standard of Canada for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace, (the first of its kind in the world) is a set of voluntary guidelines, tools and resources intended to guide organizations in promoting mental health and preventing psychological harm at work.

• Launched in January 2013 and re-affirmed in 2018; it includes 13 factors that can positively impact worker mental health, psychological safety, and participation (Mental Health Commission of Canada).
Workplace Factors

- **Organizational culture** characterized by trust, honesty, respect, civility, and fairness or when it values, for example, psychological and social support, recognition, and reward
Workplace Factors

• Psychological demands of any given job are documented and assessed in conjunction with the physical demands of the job, allowing organizations to determine whether any given activity of the job might be a hazard to the worker’s health and well being.
Workplace Factors

• **Psychological and social support** comprises all supportive social interactions available at work, either with co-workers or supervisors.

• It refers to the degree of social and emotional integration and trust among co-workers and supervisors.
Workplace Factors

- **Psychological protection** is present in a work environment where worker’s psychological safety is ensured.

- Workplace psychological safety is demonstrated when workers feel able to put themselves on the line, ask questions, seek feedback, report mistakes and problems, or propose a new idea without fearing negative consequences to themselves, their job, or their career.
Workplace Factors

• **Clear leadership and expectations** is present in an environment in which leadership:
  – Is effective and provides sufficient support that helps workers know what they need to do,
  – Explains how their work contributes to the organization, and
  – Discusses the nature and expected outcomes of impending changes
Workplace Factors

• **Involvement and influence** is present in a work environment where workers are included in discussions about how their work is done and how important decisions are made.
Workplace Factors

• **Engagement** is present in a work environment where workers enjoy and feel connected to their work and where they feel motivated to do their job well.
Workplace Factors

• **Growth and development** is present in a work environment where workers receive encouragement and support in the development of their interpersonal, emotional, and job skills.
Workplace Factors

• **Recognition and reward** is present in a work environment where there is appropriate acknowledgement and appreciation of workers’ efforts in a fair and timely manner.
Workplace Factors

• **Workload management** is present in a work environment where assigned tasks and responsibilities can be accomplished successfully within the time available.
Workplace Factors

- **Balance** is present in a work environment where there is acceptance of the need for a sense of harmony between the demands of personal life, family, and work.
Workplace Factors

• **Protection of physical safety** is present when a worker’s psychological, as well as physical safety, is protected from hazards and risks related to the worker’s physical environment.
Workplace Factors

• **Civility and respect** is present in a work environment where workers are respectful and considerate in their interactions with one another, as well as with customers, clients, and the public.

• Based on showing esteem, care, and consideration for others, and acknowledging their dignity.
QUESTIONS
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