Organisational bullying

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Previous research in workplace bullying has usually focused on the role of the employee as being the victim or initiator. Bullying is a term which can be used in several different ways and the implication bullying has towards the organisation is an important factor. Workplace bullying can be defined as something that occurs between two individuals, or groups or between an individual and a group" (Leifooghe, Mackenzie, Andreas, 2001). Bullying can occur in any environment such as a school, work, and any social setting and can be a cause of stress in social situation also. Employees might perceive workplace bullying as a system for monitoring them, or controlling an employees behaviour.

Organisations and environmental factors (work conditions) can contribute to bullying. For example, organisational restructuring can facilitate workplace bullying because any sort of change in an organisation can raise insecurities within employees if it is not done appropriately. Employees might feel insecure about the change and their job role, this might also relate to redundancies, and the increased demands it puts on employees can be a form of bullying from the organisations. In the United Kingdom, bullying behaviours occur in organisations where there is a hierarchical relationship, whereby people in higher positions are seen to bully subordinates (Rayner, 1997), and so individuals use their power to control people below them.

However, the behaviour and action for bullying and harassing an employee is done by individuals and some might argue that organisational problems can not cause bullying, because individuals react to issues. It can also be argued that bullying can be attributed to an organization and its practices. The term 'organisational bullying' can facilitate interpersonal bullying. For example, if an organisational change occurs, usually managers are to blame for this and might be seen as bullying some people into telling them what to do etc, and managers usually take on the responsibility for organisational changes, which might be out of their own personal control. Another example would be employees having to account for every minute of their time, and employees might see this as a form of controlling them by managers. However, mangers have to also do this as much as employees. Therefore employees have to acknowledge that managers might not be the originators of these practices, and understanding this, might reduce personality conflicts.

It is important to analyse organisational practices and to go beyond the view of interpersonal bullying and look at how organisations, or organisational practices can facilitate bullying behaviour.

References

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