



Abuse, Bullying and Violence in the Workplace

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The Pecking Order

- Stable social systems have an accepted system of rank and privilege that avoids the “War of all against all”
- The pecking order is built upon real or assumed power, (i.e. intimidation)
- Systems where order and control are paramount are extremely hierarchical (e.g. military, police)
 - Wear your rank on your sleeve; disobedience is a crime
- Since all workplaces are hierarchical to some degree, however, the potential for misused power is ever-present
- Moreover, hierarchy is not limited to a Table of Organization
 - Individuals, cliques, and the system itself intimidate through inclusion and exclusion, sabotage, gossip and innuendo, even physical force
 - “Cyberbullying” can be anonymous – levels the playing field for those who might themselves be victims
- Misused power destabilizes the workplace and drains its efficiency: a savvy workplace combats it



**“I am His Highness’ dog at Kew,
Pray tell me, sir, whose dog are
you?”**

Alexander Pope

Bullying, Abuse and Workplace Violence

- **Bullying** is a *pattern* of *aggressive* behaviors by an individual or group intended to cause physical or emotional *pain* generally to achieve *control*
 - The goal may seem obvious (“secondary gain”), but gratification by the act of dominance itself (“primary gain”) is also involved
 - Hence bullying may seem irrational and even self-defeating
- **Abuse** is *persistent* intimidation aimed more at a *specific*, perceived benefit (sex, promotion, etc.) although symbolic gratification may still be the driver
- **Violence** is actual or threatened *physical harm* to person or property
 - Less a “top-down” phenomenon as a response to perceived helplessness in the face of bullying or abuse



US Employee Statistics (2007)

- 49% report having been affected by workplace bullying
 - 13% report being bullied currently
 - 24% report having been bullied in the past
 - 12% report having witnessed workplace bullying
- 57% of those who reported being targeted for abuse were women
- 60% of aggressive bullies are men
- 71% of female bullies target another woman
- Race (currently or ever bullied)
 - Hispanics (52.1%)
 - Blacks (46%)
 - Whites (33.5%)
 - Asian (30.6%)
- 20% of workplace bullying becomes abuse/ harassment

Types of workplace bullying/abuse behaviors

- **Threat to professional status** – belittling, public professional humiliation, accusations regarding lack of effort, intimidating use of discipline
- **Threat to personal standing** –undermining personal integrity, innuendo and sarcasm, inappropriate jokes, teasing, name calling, insults
- **Isolation** – blocking access to opportunities, physical or social isolation, withholding necessary information, exclusion
- **Overwork** –undue pressure, impossible deadlines, unnecessary disruptions
- **Destabilization** –failure to acknowledge good work, allocation of meaningless tasks, removal of responsibility, repeated reminders of blunders, setting up to fail, shifting goals without notice

25 most common tactics of the workplace bully

- False accusation (71 percent).
- Nonverbal intimidation (68 percent).
- Public discounting in meetings (64 percent).
- Silent treatment to isolate (64 percent).
- Mood swings in front of the group (61 percent).
- Made-up rules on the fly (61 percent).
- Discredited good work (58 percent).
- Harsh and arbitrary criticism (57 percent).
- Started, or failed to stop, rumors or gossip (56 percent).
- Encouraged people to turn against someone (55 percent).
- Singled out and isolated from coworkers (54 percent).
- Public gross, undignified, but not illegal, behavior (53 percent).
- Yelled, screamed, threw tantrums to humiliate (53 percent).
- Stole credit (47 percent).
- Evaluation abuse (46 percent).
- Branded as insubordinate (46 percent).
- Used confidential information to humiliate (45 percent).
- Retaliation after a complaint (45 percent).
- Insults based on gender, race, accent, age or language, disability (44 percent).
- Punishes with undesirable work (44 percent).
- Unrealistic workload, deadlines, duties (44 percent).
- Launched a campaign to oust the person (43 percent).
- Encouraged to quit to avoid mistreatment (43 percent).
- Sabotaged contributions or rewards (41 percent).
- Ensured failure of person's project by not performing required tasks (40 percent)

Panel Discussion

