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To Whom It May Concern

The following texts about 'workplace bullying' have been printed from Wikipedia online.

All 'underlined' text highlights my personal experience/s of workplace bullying during my 4<sup>th</sup> year Social Work student placement

My tertiary studies institution, provided me with no support during this placement experience and so I left the placement prematurely i.e. after 5 weeks instead of the 13 weeks required of students.

staff also failed to contact me, or to provide me with any emotional support, following this event.

10 months after I walked away from this untenable student placement, staff chose to 'blame the victim' by refusing to allow me to complete my studies for 'an unstated period of time' i.e. until such time as I could identify how I was responsible for the workplace bullying I had experienced during that placement at

My 'student' experience of workplace bullying caused: an immediate increase in emotional distress, an immediate decrease in my personal and professional confidence, and long-term negative outcomes for my career options and earning capacity (due to being unable to complete my degree).

You are welcome to contact me for more information about his experience if further discussion can help prevent other people from experiencing similar negativity in the workplace.

Sincerely

## Workplace bullying

- Workplace bullying, like childhood bullying, is the tendency of individuals or groups to use persistent aggressive or unreasonable behaviour against a co-worker or subordinate.
- Workplace bullying can include such tactics as verbal, nonverbal, psychological, physical abuse and humiliation.
- This type of aggression is particularly difficult because, unlike the typical forms of school bullying, workplace bullies often operate within the established rules and policies of their organization and their society.
- Bullying can be covert or overt.

- Some workplace bullying is defined as involving an employee's immediate supervisor, manager or boss in conjunction with other employees as complicit. (Supervisor did nothing to stop the overt bullying that she would have been aware of).
- According to Tracy, Lutgen-Sandvik, and Alberts,<sup>[1]</sup> researchers associated with the Project for Wellness and Work-Life, workplace bullying is most often "a combination of tactics in which numerous types of hostile communication and behaviour are used" (p. 152).
- Gary and Ruth Namie<sup>[2]</sup> define workplace bullying as "repeated, health-harming mistreatment, verbal abuse, or conduct which is threatening, humiliating, intimidating, or sabotage that interferes with work, or some combination of the three."
- Pamela Lutgen-Sandvik<sup>[3]</sup> expands this definition, stating that workplace bullying is "persistent verbal and nonverbal aggression at work, that includes personal attacks, social ostracism, and a multitude of other painful messages and hostile interactions."
- In an effort to provide a more all-encompassing definition, and catch the attention of employers, Catherine Mattice and Karen Garman define workplace bullying as "systematic aggressive communication, manipulation of work, and acts aimed at humiliating or degrading one or more individual that create an unhealthy and unprofessional power imbalance between bully and target(s), result in psychological consequences for targets and co-workers, and cost enormous monetary damage to an organization's bottom line"<sup>[4]</sup>
- Because it can occur in a variety of contexts and forms, it is also useful to define workplace bullying by the key features that these behaviours possess. Bullying is characterized by (Einarsen, 1999; Keashly & Harvey 2004; Lutgen-Sandvik, 2006):
  - Repetition (occurs regularly)
  - Duration (is enduring)
  - Escalation (increasing aggression)
  - Power disparity (the target lacks the power to successfully defend themselves)
  - Attributed intent (to humiliate)
- With some variations, the following **typology of workplace bullying** behaviours has been adopted by a number of academic researchers. The typology uses five different categories.<sup>[10] [11]</sup>
  1. Threat to professional status - including belittling opinions, public professional humiliation, accusations regarding lack of effort, intimidating use of discipline or competence procedures
  2. Threat to personal standing - including undermining personal integrity, destructive innuendo and sarcasm, making inappropriate jokes about target, persistent teasing, name calling, insults, intimidation
  3. Isolation - including preventing access to opportunities, physical or social isolation, withholding necessary information, keeping the target out of the loop, ignoring or excluding
  4. Overwork - including undue pressure, impossible deadlines, and unnecessary disruptions.
  5. Destabilisation - including failure to acknowledge good work, allocation of meaningless tasks, removal of responsibility, repeated reminders of blunders, setting target up to fail, shifting goal posts without telling the target.

Research by the Workplace Bullying Institute, suggests that the following are the most common 25 **tactics used by workplace bullies**:<sup>[12]</sup>

1. Falsely accused someone of "errors" not actually made (71 percent).
2. Stared, glared, was nonverbally intimidating and was clearly showing hostility (68 percent).
3. Discounted the person's thoughts or feelings ("oh, that's silly") in meetings (64 percent).
4. Used the "silent treatment" to "ice out" and separate from others (64 percent).
5. Exhibited presumably uncontrollable mood swings in front of the group (61 percent).

6. Made up own rules on the fly that even she/he did not follow (61 percent).
7. Disregarded satisfactory or exemplary quality of completed work despite evidence (discrediting) (58 percent).
8. Harshly and constantly criticized having a different standard for the target (57 percent).
9. Started, or failed to stop, destructive rumors or gossip about the person (56 percent).
10. Encouraged people to turn against the person being tormented (55 percent).
11. Singled out and isolated one person from other coworkers, either socially or physically (54 percent).
12. Publicly displayed gross, undignified, but not illegal, behavior (53 percent).
13. Yelled, screamed, threw tantrums in front of others to humiliate a person (53 percent).
14. Stole credit for work done by others (plagiarism) (47 percent).
15. Abused the evaluation process by lying about the person's performance (46 percent).
16. Declared target "insubordinate" for failing to follow arbitrary commands (46 percent).
17. Used confidential information about a person to humiliate privately or publicly (45 percent).
18. Retaliated against the person after a complaint was filed (45 percent).
19. Made verbal put-downs/insults based on gender, race, accent, age or language, disability (44 percent).
20. Assigned undesirable work as punishment (44 percent).
21. Created unrealistic demands (workload, deadlines, duties) for person singled out (44 percent).
22. Launched a baseless campaign to oust the person; effort not stopped by the employer (43 percent).
23. Encouraged the person to quit or transfer rather than to face more mistreatment (43 percent).
24. Sabotaged the person's contribution to a team goal and reward (41 percent).
25. Ensured failure of person's project by not performing required tasks, such as sign-offs, taking calls, working with collaborators (40 percent)

According to Bassman, common **abusive workplace behaviours** are:<sup>[13]</sup>

1. Disrespecting and devaluing the individual, often through disrespectful and devaluing language or verbal abuse
2. Overwork and devaluation of personal life (particularly salaried workers who are not compensated)
3. Harassment through micromanagement of tasks and time
4. Overevaluation and manipulating information (for example concentration on negative characteristics and failures, setting up subordinate for failure).
5. Managing by threat and intimidation
6. Stealing credit and taking unfair advantage
7. Preventing access to opportunities
8. Downgrading an employee's capabilities to justify downsizing
9. Impulsive destructive behaviour

According to Hoel and Cooper, common abusive workplace behaviours are:<sup>[14]</sup>

1. Having your opinions and views ignored
2. Withholding information which affects your performance
3. Being exposed to an unmanageable workload
4. Being given tasks with unreasonable or impossible targets or deadlines
5. Being ordered to do work below competence
6. Being ignored or facing hostility when you approach
7. Being humiliated or ridiculed in connection with your work
8. Excessive monitoring of a person's work (see micromanagement)
9. Spreading gossip
10. Having insulting or offensive remarks made about your person (i.e. habits and background), your attitudes or your private life
11. Having key areas of responsibility removed or replaced with more trivial or unpleasant tasks

Tim Field suggested that **workplace bullying takes these forms:**<sup>[23]</sup>

- Serial bullying — the source of all dysfunction can be traced to one individual, who picks on one employee after another and destroys them, then moves on. Probably the most common type of bullying.
- Secondary bullying — the pressure of having to deal with a serial bully causes the general behaviour to decline and sink to the lowest level.
- Pair bullying — this takes place with two people, one active and verbal, the other often watching and listening.
- Gang bullying or group bullying — is a serial bully with colleagues. Gangs can occur anywhere, but flourish in corporate bullying climates. It is often called mobbing and usually involves scapegoating and victimisation.
- Vicarious bullying — two parties are encouraged to fight. This is the typical "triangulation" where the aggression gets passed around.
- Regulation bullying — where a serial bully forces their target to comply with rules, regulations, procedures or laws regardless of their appropriateness, applicability or necessity.
- Residual bullying — after the serial bully has left or been fired, the behaviour continues. It can go on for years.
- Legal bullying — the bringing of a vexatious legal action to control and punish a person. It is one of the nastiest forms of bullying.
- Pressure bullying or unwitting bullying — having to work to unrealistic time scales and/or inadequate resources.
- Corporate bullying — where an employer abuses an employee with impunity, knowing the law is weak and the job market is soft.
- Organizational bullying — a combination of pressure bullying and corporate bullying. Occurs when an organization struggles to adapt to changing markets, reduced income, cuts in budgets, imposed expectations and other extreme pressures.
- Institutional bullying — entrenched and is accepted as part of the culture.
- Client bullying — an employee is bullied by those they serve, for instance subway attendants or public servants.
- Cyber bullying — the use of information and communication technologies to support deliberate, repeated, and hostile behaviour by an individual or group, that is intended to harm others.

### **Workplace bullying vs. workplace incivility**

Workplace bullying overlaps to some degree with workplace incivility but tends to encompass more intense and typically repeated acts of disregard and rudeness. Negative spirals of increasing incivility between organizational members can result in bullying,<sup>[24]</sup> but isolated acts of incivility are not conceptually bullying despite the apparent similarity in their form and content. In case of bullying, the intent of harm is less ambiguous, an unequal balance of power (both formal and informal) is more salient, and the target of bullying feels threatened, vulnerable and unable to defend himself or herself against negative recurring actions.<sup>[10][11]</sup>

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[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Workplace\\_aggression](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Workplace_aggression)

In order to delineate the range of behaviors that can be considered aggressive workplace behaviors, researchers have developed schemes of **classification for workplace aggression**. Neuman and Baron (1998) offer these three dimensions that encompass the range of workplace aggression:

1. Expressions of hostility – behaviors that are primarily verbal or symbolic in nature.

2. Obstructionism – behaviors intended to hinder an employee from performing their job or the organization from accomplishing its objectives.
3. Overt aggression – violent acts.

Aggressive acts can take any possible combination of these three dichotomies. For example, failing to deny false rumours about a co-worker would be classified as verbal–passive–indirect. Purposely avoiding the presence of a co-worker you know is searching for your assistance could be considered physical–passive–direct.

## Outcomes

Like the array of behaviours considered to be workplace aggression, the consequences of workplace aggression are also extensive. For example, Ng and Feldman suggest that "acts of workplace aggression can cause bodily harm to employees, pose physical danger for customers, create public relations crises, and harm the business reputation of the firm as a whole."<sup>[14]</sup> The outcomes of workplace aggression addressed here include the health and well-being of targeted employees and job performance. Gender differences in outcomes are also addressed.

## Health and well-being

Workplace aggression can have devastating effects on an organization's employees.<sup>[5]</sup> For example, it has been found that targets of workplace aggression report lower levels of well-being.<sup>[5]</sup> Other studies have shown that aggression in the workplace can cause the victims of such behaviors to suffer from health problems.<sup>[16]</sup> Bjorkqvist, Osterman, and Hjelt-Back even found that targets exhibited symptoms similar to those of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), such as anxiety and depression.<sup>[6]</sup>

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<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Destabilisation>

The word **destabilisation** can be applied to a wide variety of contexts such as attempts to undermine political, military or economic power. In a psychological context it is used as a technique in brainwashing and abuse to disorient and disarm the victim. For example, in the context of workplace bullying, destabilisation applied to the victim may involve:<sup>[1] [2]</sup>

- failure to acknowledge good work and value the victim's efforts
- allocation of meaningless tasks
- removal of areas of responsibility without consultation
- repeated reminders of blunders
- setting up to fail
- shifting of goal posts without telling the victim
- persistent attempts to demoralise the victim.

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## Psychological manipulation

- Selective inattention or selective attention: Manipulator refuses to pay attention to anything that may distract from his or her agenda, saying things like "I don't want to hear it".
- Diversion: Manipulator not giving a straight answer to a straight question and instead being diversionary, steering the conversation onto another topic.

- Evasion: Similar to diversion but giving irrelevant, rambling, vague responses, weasel words.
- Guilt tripping: A special kind of intimidation tactic. A manipulator suggests to the conscientious victim that he or she does not care enough, is too selfish or has it easy. This usually results in the victim feeling bad, keeping them in a self-doubting, anxious and submissive position.
- Shaming: Manipulator uses sarcasm and put-downs to increase fear and self-doubt in the victim. Manipulators use this tactic to make others feel unworthy and therefore defer to them. Shaming tactics can be very subtle such as a fierce look or glance, unpleasant tone of voice, rhetorical comments, subtle sarcasm. Manipulators can make one feel ashamed for even daring to challenge them. It is an effective way to foster a sense of inadequacy in the victim.
- Feigning innocence: Manipulator tries to suggest that any harm done was unintentional or did not do something that they were accused of. Manipulator may put on a look of surprise or indignation. This tactic makes the victim question his or her own judgment and possibly his own sanity.
- Feigning confusion: Manipulator tries to play dumb by pretending he or she does not know what you are talking about or is confused about an important issue brought to his attention.

References:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Workplace\\_bullying](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Workplace_bullying)

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psychological\\_manipulation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psychological_manipulation)