

Chapter 9

Workplace Intimation and Employee Self-Estrangement

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Abstract

The chapter examined the relationship between workplace intimation and employee self-estrangement. The study was premised on the assumptions of two baseline theories: Karl marx's theory of alienation and Symbolic Interactionism Theory (Blumer 1964). The chapter reviewed workplace intimidation as a strong predictor of employee self estrangement.. Hence, the chapter concluded that there should be policy development to enforce comprehensive sexual harassment policies that outline what constitutes harassment, reporting procedures, and consequences for violators; Ministries should create and implement a zero-tolerance approach to rudeness, bullying, or harassment; Ministries should create opportunities for interdepartmental collaboration to build trust and reduce isolation.

Key Words: Workers Intimidation, Policy Development, Employee Self Estrangement,

Introduction

As people spend maximum time in their workplace, therefore it is important to make the workplace environment more cordial so as to achieve organizational effectiveness. Apart from this, there is another set of behaviours which is basically undesirable and dysfunctional and bullying is one of these behaviours. These behaviours have negative impact not only on the individuals, but also on the organizations. The research paper has stated various impacts of harassment at workplace such as emotional harm, physical illness and career damage for the victims of bullying. These impacts on the other hand adversely affect the productivity, profit, high absenteeism etc. According to Anjum et al. (2021) workplace intimidation results in high costs not only to the victims but as well as to the organizations. Workplace bullying is basically verbal in nature and its impact can be devastating. It adversely affects the job of the victims.

Self-estrangement in workers manifests in feelings of working just for a salary, doing one's job just to get it out of the way, or doing work to please others. Although self-estrangement is a small factor, it still contributes to alienation, which contributes strongly to burnout at work. Self-estrangement may provoke different forms of psychic distress that potentially evoke symptoms of burnout, or manifestations of stress that ruin work life. Self-estrangement and lack of meaning in one's work provokes a different form of psychic distress that evokes symptoms of burnout. According to Marx's theory of alienation, a worker can feel self-estranged from their work, their production, and other workers. This means that the person loses interest in why they are working, which can decrease their production and cause them to alienate themselves from other workers as well. The worker doesn't feel like he is a part of the workplace, therefore isolating himself from his work and others. This is when the individual feels as if s/he was a stranger (San, 2013). The individual views his/her behaviours as those of outside and not his/her behaviours, and s/he isolates themselves. There is no internal motivation and the individual becomes a robot (Başaran, 2008; San, 2003). Estrangement was defined as the perception of the self as an alien instrument of another, and "the loss of intrinsic meaning or pride in work...One way to state such a meaning is to see alienation as the degree of dependence of the given behaviour upon anticipated future rewards, that is, upon rewards that lie outside the activity itself" (Seeman, 1959). In addition, estrangement was the lack

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of an "intrinsically rewarding activity". While Seeman (1971) admitted the term was vague, the operational continued to be used in alienational

Workers Intimidation

Workplace intimidation and unethical behaviour that warrant attention is increasingly being recognized as a serious problem (Aleassa & Megdadi, 2014). Workplace intimidation is a phenomenon that appears widely in research literature in a variety of disciplines. Workplace intimidation is defined as the perceived situation in which an employee systematically and repeatedly tramples on the ego of others. Intimidation is categorized as work related, personal, and physical/threatening. Intimidation has become an issue in many organisations.

People intimidate because they are driven by a need for power and control. They basically choose such people who can be easily dominated. A zero-tolerance policy is to be created for providing education and training to the workforce. All organizations depend on their staff to represent their firms in the most positive and effective manner (Essen et al., 2014). Workplace bullying affects all levels of an organization. According to Fajana et al. (2021) it is likely that certain employees are more likely to become the bullies or the victims of bullying. Generally, men are more likely to bully than women. Gender is indeed an antecedent of workplace bullying and women are more prone to workplace intimidation.

Often the negative impacts to those targeted by intimidating behaviour are unmistakably clear; however there are many indirect impacts on others and on an organization. Robinson and Bennett (2015) provide a typology for deviant workplace behaviours directed toward the organization and individuals based on the level of severity.

Spreading Rumours: Rumors and gossip in the workplace are a serious problem. They can hurt the organization's reputation, decrease morale and damage productivity. There are many reasons employees may spread rumors, such as fear of reprisal, burnout, resentment or personal issues among them to name a few. Regardless of the cause, it is the management's duty to provide a safe, healthy and productive work environment.

While some employees simply thrive on gossip and rumor, this could also be an indication of serious underlying problem. Supervisors who do not allow for open communication between themselves and their subordinates essentially prevent them from airing their grievances in a private, professional manner. Workers should also be comfortable with approaching their supervisors to complain about co-workers who may be slandering them. Without this simple -- yet essential -- component of communication, employees are likely to be absent, chronically late or even resign due to the toxic nature of the workplace (Wasilwa, 2022).

There are several reasons why people spread rumours and such include lack of real information. It's well known that when organizations withhold information from staff, rumors will fill in the void. Any tidbits of truth will be expanded and embellished to appear like the complete truth. When employees don't have enough work to do, they will look for ways to spend time. One of those ways is to talk to others about others. Wishful thinking Did you hear that the union got everyone a raise this year? Did you hear management will be offering early retirement packages to all employees? Fear surrounding bad news, this is the type of rumor that is likely to spread fast, especially when the organizational climate is bad. People wonder about layoffs, about policy changes, about organizational reassignments and so forth, and will tend to seek out any information about such bad news. People's speculations about impending changes When a major change takes place, employees are likely to anticipate and speculate about the details of the change, and its effects (Fisher, 2014).

Envy Sometimes people use gossip to bring someone down. The target of gossip is someone who's perceived to be doing well, someone that has something others want, be it power, beauty, reputation, or money. With a few exceptions, people that are down and out are not generally targets of gossip. To bring oneself up, this is the other side of the coin of bringing others down. Sometimes there is not a specific target to bring down, but rather, our own sense of being ok is the one that

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needs to be bolstered. As an example, when you hear about someone in the office getting a divorce, you may not feel as bad about your own marital problems. Viciousness, there are people that are just plain vicious and will start a gossip attack or malicious rumor without any particular reason and do it just for the pleasure of it. Lack of Awareness Some people are simply unaware that rumors are not the truth, and they will tend to repeat them. Don't be trapped by this lack of awareness. Remember to check if a rumor is true before passing it on. This applies to email rumors as well. To position themselves as someone in the know Those who are in the rumor production business are perceived as more knowledgeable about what is going on. A person who's given confidential information feels included. Conversely, however, those being talked about feel excluded. As you review the list of reasons why people spread rumors, you will notice that some cause more damage than others. Someone who spreads rumors just to make conversation during a coffee break is bound to cause less damage than someone who's doing it to bring another person down.

Profanity: Some people use profanity and dirty words freely. Some people use foul language when their emotions run high. Other people think they are being funny. In a workplace setting, however, there is no excuse for obscene or sexual language. You should not be forced to endure dirty words or sexual talk that makes you uncomfortable.

Nobody wants to be labeled as a prude or a snitch. Instead, many employees suffer silently when co-workers or supervisors use explicit or sexually degrading language. Whether used during an angry rant or as a casual form of expression, profanity at work can have a negative effect. It can disrupt team cohesiveness, reduce productivity, and decrease morale. It can also influence how customers view employees and the company as a whole. Profanity is defined as a form of insult using words. Even though a few labels used by employees might be well-intentioned, HR must instead treat all words and phrases that are meant to label or send a message as derogatory. Profanity can be used to show that the employees are not welcome (e.g. "go back home") because of their national origin or race. Harassing language can also occur in the form of personal nicknames. It can be hurtful to stereotypically label someone as being from a country (e.g. "the Mexican"), a religion (e.g. "the Moslem") or a race (e.g. "the Asian guy"). Derogatory language can also be used when referring to individuals in other protected groups including gender, age, sexual preference, body type and disability. The secret is to avoid words and phrases that have a reasonable chance of offending an employee. The law gives protection to workers (and others such as job applicants) from discrimination on the basis of protected characteristics, and from harassing behaviour. Swear words which are aimed towards other people and are said in anger are most likely to cause offence, especially if derogatory terms are used, which are, or could be viewed as discriminatory (Fisher, 2014).. If an employer does not deal effectively with complaints, or address an offensive environment, then it leaves itself open to legal claims being brought for failing to protect health and safety of their workers (mental health is included where distress is caused), and also for discrimination, as employers can be vicariously liable for acts of discrimination that take place in the course of employment (see our previous article on vicarious liability here). This is possible even where bad language is commonly used in that particular workplace or if the users of it claim that it is just banter.

Social Isolation: Social isolation (physical, social or emotional) is often used to facilitate power and control over someone for an abusive purpose. This applies in many contexts such as workplace bullying (2011) Isolation reduces the opportunity of the abused to be rescued or escape from the abuse. It also helps disorient the abused and makes the abused more dependent on the abuser. The degree of power and control over the abused is contingent upon the degree of their physical or emotional isolation (Ryan, 2011)

Isolation of the victim from the outside world is an important element of psychological control (Bailey 2016). [Isolation includes controlling a person's social activity: whom they see, whom they talk to, where they go and any other method to limit their access to others. It may also include limiting

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what material is read (Hall, 2017). It can include insisting on knowing where they are and requiring permission for medical care. The abuser exhibits hypersensitive and reactive jealousy.

Social isolation increases the risk of mental health issues like depression, anxiety and substance abuse, as well as chronic conditions like high blood pressure, heart disease and diabetes. It also raises the risk of dementia in older adults. According to Miranda, people make less "discretionary effort" when they feel isolated. They're less motivated to do more than the minimum. And as productivity suffers, so too can your bottom line. Many employers and managers may think isolation isn't one of their workplace issues. But take a careful look at your workplace. Would you notice anything to suggest an employee feels this way?

Promote interactions between different teams so nobody feels on the fringes. Mix teams up. Use digital tools that enable people to understand their role in the organization. Tools to help find and collaborate with others in quick and effective ways. Chat, video calls and live broadcasts help video engagement to bring people together when the physical environment can't. An imbalance of age and experience can lead to workplace isolation. In organizations where there are concentrations of age groups, people can feel isolated and unwelcome in professional or social situations. They may feel like they have no one to talk to and unable to relate to others. How can you give a helping hand to make people feel part of one united team? Can new technologies or working practices help bridge the gap.

Employee Self-Estrangement

Self-estrangement is the idea conceived by Karl Marx self-estrangement is "the alienation of man's essence, man's loss of objectivity and his loss of realness as self-discovery, manifestation of his nature, objectification and realization". Self-estrangement is when a person feels alienated from others and society as a whole. A person may feel alienated by his work by not feeling like he has meaning to his work, therefore losing their sense of self at the work place. Self-estrangement contributes to burnout at work and a lot of psychological stress. Self-estrangement in workers manifests in feelings of working just for a salary, doing one's job just to get it out of the way, or doing work to please others. Although self-estrangement is a small factor, it still contributes to alienation, which contributes strongly to burnout at work. Self-estrangement may provoke different forms of psychic distress that potentially evoke symptoms of burnout , or manifestations of stress that ruin work life. Self-estrangement and lack of meaning in one's work provokes a different form of psychic distress that evokes symptoms of burnout. According to Marx's theory of alienation, a worker can feel self-estranged from their work, their production, and other workers. This means that the person loses interest in why they are working, which can decrease their production and cause them to alienate themselves from other workers as well. The worker doesn't feel like he is a part of the workplace, therefore isolating himself from his work and others.

Blauner (2014) opined that any work in which the individual was unable to fully express the "unique abilities, potentialities, or personality" could contribute to self-estrangement. Self-estrangement was not limited. The indicators of self-estrangement discussed in this work are sadness, burnt out, and disgust.

Sadness: Sadness is that low feeling you associate with grief, anxiety or stress. It's very often about loss, such as a death, the end of a relationship or even a lost opportunity. You can feel sad about not getting that promotion, for example. That's a kind of grief, too. Human beings get sad when something noxious recurs or someone behaves offensively. In the organization arena, employees' behaviour can be a core reason of being irritated and frustrated. In an organization a difficult boss, non-supporting co-workers and obligatory rules may frustrate the employees because it impedes the wish for freedom from annoyance. Continuous irritation provokes and anger is generated gradually towards such motivators. Difficult supervisors who do not want to appreciate by any means, difficult co-workers who wish to make perilous traps with their behaviour, attitude for an individual employee to survive instigates irritation, annoyances and sadness.

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Burnt Out: Occupational stress related to a severe and constant level of stress is known as burnout syndrome, which is characterized by a decrease in personal fulfillment, isolation from social relationships and emotional exhaustion (Yavas et al., 2013). Maslach et al. (2001) defined burnout as a "prolonged response to chronic emotional and interpersonal stressors on the job, and is defined by the three dimensions of exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy". Also, the authors summarized research that indicates burnout has been associated with various forms of job withdrawal (absenteeism), intention to leave the job and actual turnover.

Job burnout is a special type of work-related stress — a state of physical or emotional exhaustion that also involves a sense of reduced accomplishment and loss of personal identity. "Burnout" isn't a medical diagnosis. Some experts think that other conditions, such as depression, are behind burnout. Researchers point out that individual factors, such as personality traits and family life, influence who experiences job burnout.

Emotional symptoms of burnout in the workplace may include depressed mood states, anxiety, irritability, loss of confidence, tension or sadness. Behavioural symptoms of burnout in the workplace may include disturbed sleep patterns, reduced reaction times, reduced work capacity and less work motivation (Mosadeghrad, 2014).

Workers Intimidation and Employee Self-Estrangement

Intimidation, often characterized by behaviours such as threats, bullying, or coercive actions, can create a toxic workplace environment. Employee self estrangement, on the other hand, refers to a state where employees feel disconnected from their work, peers, and organizational goals. These two concepts are intricately linked, as intimidation often acts as a catalyst for alienation.

Intimidation undermines employees' psychological safety, leaving them feeling vulnerable and undervalued. This can foster feelings of valuelessness and normlessness, key components of alienation as identified by Karl Marx and modern workplace theorists. Intimidating behaviour erodes trust between employees and management, a critical element for engagement. Without trust, employees may distance themselves emotionally and intellectually from their work. A hostile environment created by intimidation reduces job satisfaction, often leading employees to disengage or withdraw from their roles (Ashforth, 1994).

Intimidated employees often avoid interactions with colleagues or management, resulting in social isolation. This aligns with Seeman's (1959) concept of social alienation in the workplace. Employees may also psychologically detach themselves as a coping mechanism, disengaging from organizational goals or even their own responsibilities (Schabracq & Cooper, 2000).

Conclusion

The availability of empirical evidence in this chapter shows the relationship between workers intimidation and employee self-estrangement under the moderating influence of organizational culture. This chapter posits that workers get alienated from others under capitalism, this is because the capitalistic society does not profit the working class rather only the bourgeoisie class. Indeed, this is absolutely in the same direction with this chapter as employees who constantly get harassed and intimidated, were observed as constantly exhibiting all the manifest indicators of alienation such as valuelessness, normlessness and self-estrangement.

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