

The Elephant in the Room: Bullying in Nursing

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Goals of Presentation

- * Describe social bullying and its manifestations in the workplace
- * Examine effects of social bullying on physiologic, psychologic, and sociologic systems
- * Analyze strategies to fight back effectively against social bullying

Topics for Discussion

- * Definitions of social or workplace bullying
- * Prevalence of social bullying
- * Effects of social bullying on human and organizational systems
- * Strategies for fighting social bullying

Ultimate Question and Irony

- * Why, in a profession founded on caring and collaboration, is bullying a problem?

Quick Data Collection

- * How many of you have been bullied in your career?
- * How many of you have been verbally abused in your career?

Definitions of Social (Workplace) Bullying

- * NO STANDARD DEFINITION!!
- * “Workplace behavior that could reasonably be considered humiliating, intimidating, threatening, or demeaning to individual (or group) and that is usually repeated over time.” (Cleary, et al 2010)

Definitions of Social (Workplace) Bullying

- * Persistent, demeaning downgrading activities incorporating vicious words and cruel acts that undermine persons' confidence and self-esteem (Adams, 1992)

Definitions of Social (Workplace) Bullying

- * Status blind harassment that is four times more prevalent than illegal discriminatory racial or sexual harassment...in 72% of cases, the perpetrator is a boss who controls every aspect of the “Reign of Terror.” (Namie & Namie, 2009, 2001; Zogby, 2007)

Definitions of Social (Workplace) Bullying

- * An impassioned, collective campaign by colleagues (usually including boss) to exclude, punish, and humiliate a targeted worker (Bultena & Whatcott, 2008)

Definitions of Social (Workplace) Bullying

- * “Offensive, abusive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behavior, persistent, systematic, ongoing, or abuse of power conducted by an individual, or group against others, which make the recipient feel upset, threatened, humiliated, or vulnerable, and undermines self-confidence and may cause stress. Repeated inappropriate behavior, direct or indirect, verbal or physical, at the place of work/course of employment, which could reasonably be regarded as undermining the individual’s right to dignity at work.” (Embree 2010, p.169)

Synonyms for Workplace or Social Bullying (Crawshaw, 2009)

- * “Incivility”
- * “Mobbing”
- * “Lateral violence”
- * “Horizontal violence”
- * “Vertical violence”
- * “Harassment”
- * “Workplace abuse”
- * “Workplace psychological violence”
- * “Relational aggression”
- * “Eating our young”
- * “The cancer of the American workplace” (Glendinning, 2001)

Precursor to Bullying

- * Incivility seen as a precursor to bullying
- * Namie and Namie describe continuum on 1-10 scale
 - * Incivility (1-3)
 - * Bullying (4-9)
 - * Homicide (10)

Nurse to Nurse Bullying Survey (Dellasega, 2009) (Adapted!)

What is your opinion about bullying (workplace relational aggression) in your workplace (current, past)? Circle those you agree with:

1. Bullying is a problem in my workplace.
2. I wish management would address bullying between nurses
3. My manager is a bullying perpetrator
4. I've stayed home from work due to bullying
5. I work with nurses who are bullied
6. I work with bystanders who witness bullying
7. One word I'd use to describe the emotional environment at work is _____

Prevalence of Social Bullying

- * International phenomenon
- * Studies done in USA, UK, Canada, Sweden, France, Italy, Australia, New Zealand, Tasmania, and the list goes on...
- * Called different names in different countries – mostly bullying in English speaking countries; mobbing used in German speaking and Mediterranean countries
- * 38% of healthcare workers reported bullying (Quine, 1999)
- * 48% of healthcare workers reported verbal abuse (Institute for Safe Medication Practices, 2004)
- * Study on student nurses showed 53% had been “put down” by a staff nurse (Longo, 2007)
- * “Workplace bullying is a pervasive and harmful phenomenon which exists in most, if not all, workplaces.” (Hutchinson et al, 2006)
- * Currently, 13.7 million adult Americans are being bullied (Namie & Namie, 2011)
- * In USA and UK, 10-38% of workforce are bullied and majority of bullies are managers (Lutgen-Sandvik et al, 2007)

Historical Development of Bullying

- * Brodsky wrote books in the USA about harassed worker in 1970s
- * Pioneer in research area was Heinz Leymann in Sweden (called it workplace mobbing) worked in 1970s & 1980s
- * Davenport, Schwartz, & Elliott (1999) also called phenomenon mobbing but in American workplace
- * Namie & Namie 1990's – today → described workplace bullying
- * Westhues (focusing on academia) calls it academic mobbing.

Common Settings Where Social Bullying Occurs

- * Athletics
- * Police
- * Businesses
- * Education
- * Healthcare (especially residents and nurses)
- * Nursing education (academia)
- * In all settings, good people are driven out of the organization

Contributing Factors

- * Intensifying productivity in face of increasing complexity and diminishing resources
- * Strictly hierarchical, traditional organization
- * Female profession
- * Manager with broader range of responsibilities
- * Bullying increasing in society – look at primary and secondary schools
- * US News and World Report 89% of Americans identified incivility as major social problem (Feblinger, 2008)
- * Workplace bullying may be acculturated from academia → clinical setting (Beitz, 2011)

Why the Focus?

- * Recognition by many professional organizations that bullying is not and is never acceptable
 - * American Association of Critical Care Nurses
 - * American Association of Colleges of Nursing
 - * Center for American Nursing
 - * The Joint Commission (had requirement for January 1, 2009 for process for workplace disruption)
 - * National League for Nursing
 - * Recognition that workplace bullying is now made illegal in most western countries (not the United States)
 - * Recognition that workplace bullying may start in academia
 - * Recognition that workplace bullying is costly (in so many ways)

Why the Focus?

- * Recognition that bullying, blaming environment is unsafe for patients
- * Research showing that nurse attrition is clearly linked to poor workplace climate (MacKusical et al, 2010)
- * Recognition that nurses who work in a culture of bullying experience job dissatisfaction, increased sick leave, nurse attrition, decreased workplace productivity, satisfaction, and morale (Cleary et al, 2010)
- * Recognition by public that one can be bullied to death
 - * Tyler Clementi at Rutgers University
 - * Phoebe Prince in Massachusetts bullied online – hung herself

Domains of Workplace Social Bullying

- * Threatening or intimidating behavior
- * Demeaning behavior
- * Isolation
- * Work sabotage
- * Harm to reputation
- * Abusive supervision
- * (Fox & Stallworth, 2009; Namie & Namie, 2011)

Bullying Behaviors

- * Nonverbal innuendo
- * Gossiping
- * Blaming
- * Scapegoating
- * Threatening
- * Sabotaging
- * Cyberbullying (threats or gossip)
- * Broken confidences
- * Harassing
- * Backstabbing
- * Intimidating
- * Teasing
- * Mandating
- * Undermining
- * Withholding information

Bullying Behaviors

- * Being accused of errors made by someone else
- * Being belittled
- * Being excluded from activities/conversations
- * Being physically threatened
- * Having resources withheld
- * Being given “silent treatment”
- * Spreading rumors

Bullying Behaviors by Managers

- * Threats of insubordination
- * Lying and manipulation
- * Harsh (often public) criticism
- * Humiliation of the worker
- * Using body language to convey negativity
- * Excessive scrutiny
- * Silencing
- * Abuse of power
- * Issuing unrealistic deadlines
- * Undermining worker's efforts
- * Unfair allegations
- * Say something unfavorable, then pretend you're joking
- * May result in worker getting a stress-related disease or leaving the job!

Commonalities of Social (Workplace) Bullying Phenomenon

- * Intent to harm
- * Power inequity
- * Persistent
- * Can be direct or covert
- * Not illegal in USA – U.S. workers have no protection against workplace bullying (Duffy et al, 2009) (No law forbidding workplace bullying)
- * A single event is not bullying and if two equally strong parties are in conflict, it is not bullying (Felblinger, 2008)

Targets of Bullying: Who/What Are They?

- * No clearly identified personality profile (Lind et al, 2009)
- * Competent people or “above average” performers
- * Usually enthusiastic, intelligent, creative, have integrity, demonstrate accomplishment and dedication
- * Lower on “agreeableness” (more outspoken)
- * More conscientious (Lind et al, 2009)
- * Daniel Goleman would call them “emotionally intelligent”
- * Most vulnerable is personally invested high achiever who threatens his/her colleagues (Bultena & Whatcott, 2008; Namie & Namie, 2011)
- * Different ethnicity or racial background
- * The inexperienced, student or new staff nurse

Targets of Bullying

- * Prime targets
 - * Whistle blowers
 - * Human/employee rights advocates
 - * Women with family responsibilities
 - * Religious/cultural beliefs not mainstream
 - * Not in the “In-group”

Symptoms of Job-Related Bullying Effects

- * Insomnia
- * Anxiety
- * Anger
- * Frustration
- * GI distress
- * Depression
- * Hypertension
- * Exacerbation of or new onset medical diagnoses
- * PTSD
- * Fear
- * Sadness
- * Mistrust
- * Poor morale

Bullies – Who Are They? (Namie & Namie)

- * Overwhelmingly men
- * Except in female dominated professions → women bully women (above 80%) (Goldberg, 2006)
- * Some psychological perspectives
 - * Abusive family of origin
 - * Personality disorder
 - * Seek power and control
 - * Feelings of inadequacy are projected onto others
 - * Oppressed group theory
- * Bullies are rewarded by the workplace climate in some way.
- * Bullies display narcissistic pride and are domineering and vindictive and do not believe their actions are harmful (Johnson, 2011)
- * Schoolyard bullies may become adult workplace bullies

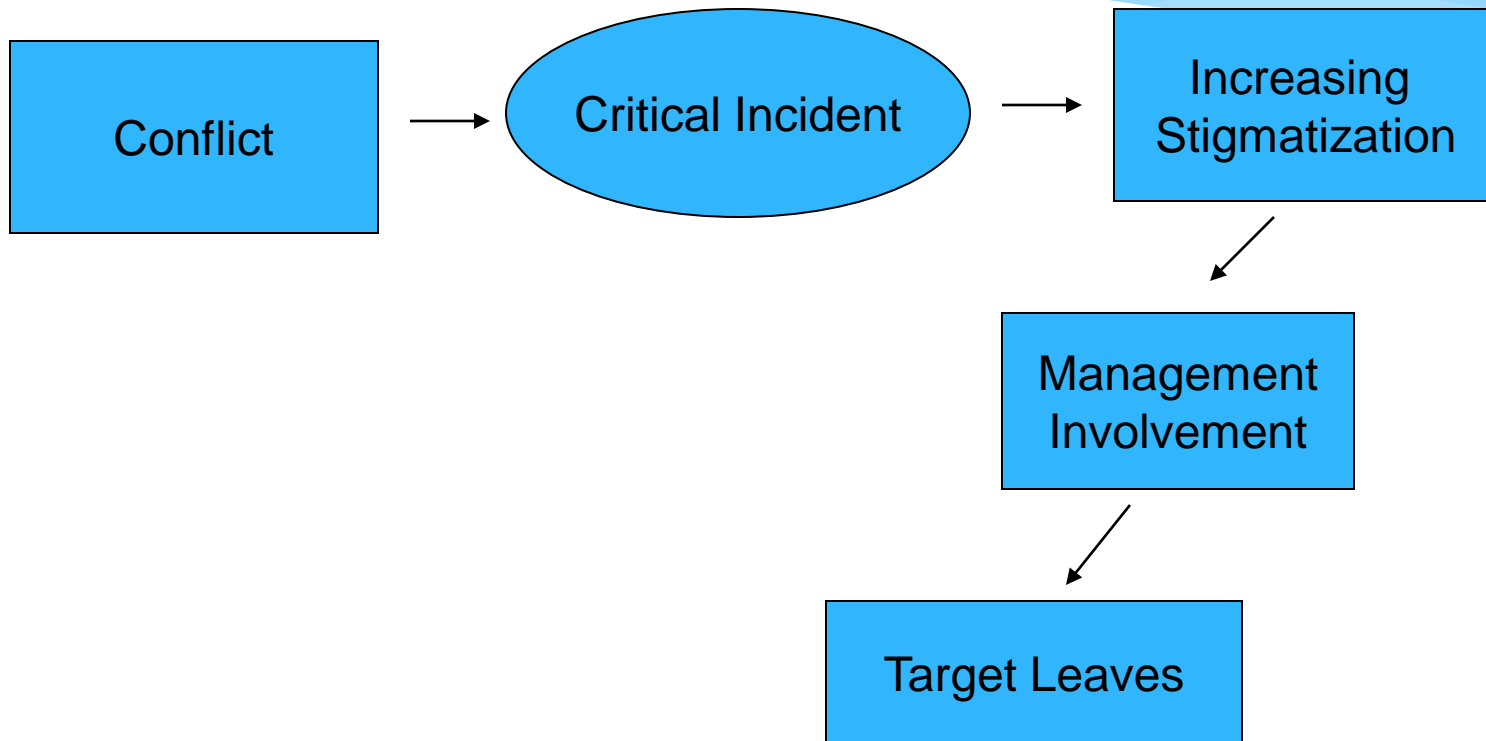
Effects of Workplace Social Bullying on Organization

- * Creates hostile, distrustful work environment
- * Damages target if not stopped
- * Affects witnesses of workplace bullying
- * Affects patient safety-disruptive behavior associated with mortality (Felblinger, 2008)
- * Intimidation affects medication safety (Felblinger, 2008; Institute for Safe Medication Practices)
- * Lose bright, talented, motivated personnel
- * Legal liability and potential adjudication
- * In short term, most common outcome of workplace bullying is **absenteeism** (Moayed, et al, 2006)

Bottom Line Truths

- * Bullying is never the victim's fault
- * It is not part of life
- * It is not normal
- * It is not to be “expected”
- * The victims are not weak nor cowards
- * The victims are not stupid
- * Victim's are not unattractive (to the contrary)
- * Bullies are *weak*, not courageous

Stereotypical Course of Bullying/Mobbing



Bully Tactics

- * “There is no character, howsoever good and fine, but it can be destroyed by ridicule, howsoever poor and witless” Mark Twain

Strategies to Prevent/Minimize Social (Workplace) Bullying

- * Document everything (keep e-mail trail)
- * Confront (politely) the bully
- * Follow the chain of command (but don't stop addressing the issue)
- * Be a good employee
- * Seek help from human resources but recognize
 - * You will likely not be helped
 - * Bullying may intensify
- * Colleagues have to speak up if witnessing “shared responsibility” (Hutchinson et al, 2006)
- * Leaders have to identify bullies (silence acts as cooperation)
- * Seek assistance and support from outside – others can help (resilience?)
- * Unionization may or may not protect you

The Most Important Strategy

- * Leave: Only if you must after trying all remedies
- * Leave on good terms but be honest about why
- * Managers must do an exit review and prevent other exits due to workplace bullying
- * If manager is the problem, may want to go above for exit interview

Employer Strategies

- * Admit the problem exists!
- * Have a clear explicit policy on workplace bullying
- * Educate all staff and at all levels through sessions, leaflets, posters, notice boards (company or organization wide)
- * Watch for signs of stress
- * Take complaints seriously and act swiftly
- * Train managers in stress and anger management

Employer Strategies

- * Adoption of zero tolerance policies for bullying (even for the CEO and the CNO)
- * Seek feedback from staff and administrators through formal and informal means at least yearly
- * Require 360 evaluation – staff evaluate administrators as well as converse
- * Do not enforce bully – target mediation; Namie & Namie liken it to domestic abuse – does not work!!
- * If bully is the manager and the manager is removed, then must investigate organizational responsibility and collusion (has been tacit knowledge ongoing for sometime)
- * Removing a “Bad Apple” does change conditions or culture that created workplace bullying (Duffy, 2009; Fox & Stallworth, 2009; Namie & Namie, 2011)

Summary

- * Describe social bullying in the workplace
- * Examine its effects on targets, co-workers, bullies
- * Suggest strategies to fight workplace bullying