

Human Resource Management

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Article Review: “The Office Bully”

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Declaration

We declare that this assignment which we submit in partial fulfilment of the assessment requirements on MN220 is our own work, attributes relevant quotes and/or ideas to the respective authors/owners of such quotes/ideas, adheres to the Harvard style of referencing, and has not been submitted as an assignment elsewhere.

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Introduction

Our group came to the joint decision that we would carry out a detailed review followed by a critical analysis on the article “The Office Bully” by June Shannon. We chose this article as it deals with both a key feature and a problem associated with Human Resource Management. The article is based on bullying in the workplace which is described as “an extreme, negative, and persistent form of workplace emotional abuse achieved primarily through verbal and nonverbal communication”. (Cowan, 2012). Many of the consequences that occur as a result of bullying, the trends of bullying in the ever changing economic climate and outlining the best procedures and solutions to eliminate bullying in the workplace are discussed and analysed in the following report.

Article Summary

Freelance journalist **June Shannon wrote an article in the Irish Times on the subject of bullying in the workplace.**

 She says “Today’s economic climate seems to be contributing to a rise in workplace bullying.”

The current economic environment seems to have led to an increase in such issues. The stress that workers are under to perform is immense and can cause great tension in the workplace.

Throughout the article Shannon examines the damaging effects that this childlike behaviour can cause on worker’s mental and emotional health. Although we are all well informed on the destructive nature of bullying it is still a hidden problem. Many workers are unaware that bullying in the workplace is still a regular occurrence.

The Health and Safety Authority examined the types of bullying in the workplace. They came to the conclusion that behaviours such as: singling someone out for special negative treatment, social exclusion, patronising or undermining someone, unprofessional language used (language of an obscene or aggressive nature) and requests for unrealistic deadlines or tasks, are the most common forms of bullying.

Shannon investigates into this issue further and interviews people on their own experiences with workplace bullying. The article reveals a shocking reality that workplace bullying is not an infrequent occurrence but rather a day-to-day happening for many workers around the world.

A report that the ESRI carried out provided results to back up these claims. 7.9% of 3,500 people had experienced a form of bullying in the workplace in the previous 6 months while a staggering 15% of the people questioned had been left with no option but to leave their place of employment as a direct result of bullying.

The Irish Times - Tuesday, October 9, 2012

Human Resource Objective

This article is concerned with bullying in the office. Forms of office bullying include negative treatment, social exclusion, isolation, intimidation, use of aggressive and obscene language, and even simple yet repetitive requests of completion of tasks which have impossible deadlines (Shannon, 2012). Due to all the negative problems surrounding office bullying, it now becomes a problem for the HR department of a company.

This article is concerned with the performance objective of Human Resource Management. One of the primary objectives of a HR department is to maintain a high level of performance throughout the workforce, which ensures that the employees are performing at a level in which the company benefits from. The HR department wants its employees to be performing in a way that the company has trained and outlined them to do so. Also, the objective of the HR department is to make sure that their employees are working at a level that is not only healthy for the company, but for the employees as well. In order to fulfill these performance objectives, the HR department should be able to implement strategies that will create conditions wherein the employees will and can perform the way they are supposed to. For example, it is established that employees will perform better if they have good working conditions, good lighting, good temperature conditions, and a safe working environment, etc. Therefore the HR department should strive to provide employees with these conditions so that they will perform to their maximum capacity. Then again, the HR department should also employ strategies that will prevent performance from diminishing in the first place, which office bullying is capable of doing. As mentioned above, office bullying can have adverse effects on a person. It can decrease the motivation of an individual, and severely affect their performance level of an employee. If an employee does not want to go to work, then it will decrease the productivity of the entire company, meaning the company will be a step slower at reaching its goals. If an employee decides to leave their job, then the company will lose a resource and the company will have to designate time and other resources in order to replace them. To prevent these events from happening, the HR department should address the issue of office bullying and put proactive measures in place which will enable them to meet their performance objectives.

Critical Assessment and Implications

***Laws and Regulations***

Office bullying is still an underlying problem for Human Resource Management systems around the country. Currently there is legislation in place to deter the act of bullying in the workplace in Ireland. Regulations such as the “Employment Equality Acts” (1998-2011) have been passed to try to alleviate the problem, as it puts the responsibility on the employer to restrict harassment in the workplace. Other laws such as the “Safety, Health, and Welfare Act” (2005) also states that the employer should have their employee’s health and safety among their best interests. (citizensinformation.ie)

***Implications***

Bullying in the workplace has massive implications for human resource managers, as well as the organisation as a whole. Bulling in organisation’s can cause higher staff turnover, absenteeism, low productivity, a lack of employee engagement and participation, employee sickness and health disorders; such as depression, panic attacks and high levels of stress. Bullying in the workplace can have other adverse effects such as a lack of loyalty and belongingness felt by the staff to the organisation. This leads to human resource managers having to search for, recruit, and train new staff members. It also means that the organisation is potentially losing the best qualified and most suitable people for the job. As well as this, if bullying is known about in an organisation, it will develop a reputation as an undesirable place to work, which would be very detrimental for the organisation as it would find it even more difficult to acquire and retain qualified staff.

***Isolation***

Employees are now under increased pressure to perform at and above the desired levels within an organisation. This is coupled with increased job insecurity, longer working hours, higher performance demands, which can lead to employees feeling, stressed and overworked. This plays a major contribution in the occurrence of workplace bullying. Bullying causes the victims to often dread going to work, and to live in fear and isolation. However victims do not want to admit to being bullied as they fear losing their position in the organisation or believe the situation will be inflamed.

***Prevention***

This article clearly highlights that organisations do not know how to handle workplace bullying. The reason for this could be that organisations believe that bullying is just competiveness among employees. However this attitude must not be tolerated, and to effectively eliminate the issue the organisation must adopt a “Zero tolerance for bullying” regime. (Khan and Khan, 2012). Any complaints the organisation encounters should be dealt with immediately by the human resource managers, in conjunction with the line managers, on an informal basis using “Flexible, easy and team-friendly communication styles” (Khan and Khan, 2012) .

The consequences of bullying can have a negative impact on future objectives and strategies of the organisation. Human resource managers can be faced with the constant pressure of finding the right personnel for each project undertaken by the business, instead of concentrating on other important issues such as staff appraisal, employer/employee relations, performance rewards systems and so forth.

Every business should have a system in place where employees meet with the human resource manager of the company to make sure that moral is high and that employees are content within the workforce. This is a proactive measure which can be put in place for the prevention of bullying. Rhona Murphy of Ibec speaks of how being proactive can benefit both the employees and the organisation. The measures build a level of trust between the employees whilst also standing to the reputation of the organisation in the event that industrial action is being taken against them.

Conclusion

The issue of workplace bullying dealt with in the article is one that has very serious implications for both the organisation and the human resource department, as shown above. It is clear that workplace bullying worsens when the economy is doing poorly due to the increased stress felt by many during these times. Therefore, it is essential that organisations give support to their employees and help minimise stress, as well as investing in training for all employees to raise awareness of the issue and how to proceed if they find themselves a victim of bullying. This issue is ever present throughout society, and can be traumatising for victims, thus it should not be tolerated in any setting. It is the duty of the human resource manager to ensure that this is the case within the organisation.

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