Introduction to “Workplace Bullying Model: A Qualitative Study on Bullying in Hospitals”

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Bullying, defined as behavior seeking to harm, intimidate, or coerce an individual or individuals perceived as vulnerable, has reached epidemic proportions in society. Bullying can take various forms including physical bullying (aggressive physical intimidation), verbal bullying (putting others down through using mean, humiliating words), social bullying (excluding people from groups and spreading rumors about others) and cyberbullying (bullying occurring through the Internet or through the use of other electronic media). For example, in US schools, 90% of 4th through 8th grade students have experienced either bullying or harassment.

Unsurprisingly, workplace bullying is endemic to many work sites with research indicating that approximately 75% of employees have been negatively impacted by workplace bullying either as a target or a witness. Workplace bullying is defined as one or more offenders engaging in recurring, health-harming abuse of one or more individuals (i.e. the targets) which prevents work from being accomplished in the factory, plant or office, for example. The major difference between workplace bullying and bullying occurring at school is that the former is more likely to be expressed in verbal and psychological terms as opposed to the latter type of bullying which might be more physically harmful to individuals.

In this timely, well-written and interesting “Perspectives” Section article, Dr. Barbara Wech, Associate Professor of Management in the Collat School of Business at the University of Alabama - Birmingham, Dr. Jack Howard, Professor of Management in the Collat School of Business at the University of Alabama – Birmingham and Dr. Pamela Autrey, the Chief Nursing Officer at Medical West Hospital, an affiliate of the University of Alabama - Birmingham Health System, utilize qualitative research (i.e. conducting interviews among 47 staff registered nurses) to examine workplace bullying at one hospital. Utilizing a grounded theory model of workplace bullying, these researchers evaluated and identified individual, hierarchical, and organizational issues that resulted in workplace bullying. Moreover, they also investigated the effect that workplace bullying had on employees and the organization as well as the reactions that employees experienced due to bullying. Finally, these researchers discuss and analyze the tactics that employees used in response to the bullying.

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If any of the journal's readers are interested in responding to any essays published in the "Perspectives" Section or would like to write articles on any topics in the field of employee relations, please do not hesitate to contact me with your proposal. I welcome both practitioner-based and scholarly-based articles written from any one of a variety of theoretical perspectives. I hope that you enjoy this article and find it most illuminating.