

Health Ramifications of Workplace Bullying: Gender, Race and Sexual Orientation as Risk Factors

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Abstract : Bullying is on the rise according to several recent studies. Workplace bullying has garnered less attention than other forms yet incidence rates range from 35-45%. The consequences of being bullied at work are broad, ranging from physiological to psychological to occupational. As the bullying progresses, employees begin to exhibit physical and psychological symptoms. Blood pressure rises, along with other cardiac related concerns. For men, covert coping with job unfairness was associated with a four-fold risk of heart attack and death. Gastrointestinal distress, headaches, muscle tension, sleep disorders and exhaustion are also common. Workplace bullying appears to contribute to the risk of subsequent psychotropic medication, as well. Emotionally, anxiety and depression increase along with lowered self-esteem and problems concentrating on the duties of the job. In an attempt to cope, individuals may succumb to unhealthy practices involving food, alcohol and other drugs. Patterns of bullying vary by gender, race, and ethnicity, as well as sexual orientation, with women, ethnic minorities and LGBTQ employees reporting higher rates of bullying in the workplace. Not only is this an issue of inequity on the job, but also a problem of health disparities as there are few mental health professionals confident and competent in dealing with workplace bullying issues, and the lack of culturally competent clinicians exacerbates this inequality in receiving adequate care. Alone, the topic of workplace bullying is not unique; however, the diverse experiences of underrepresented groups who disproportionately are affected on the job and suffer untreated, health related concerns represent a significant and emerging problem requiring attention. Conference participants who have experienced, witnessed or help those bullied on the job would benefit most from this review of the literature on the consequences of bullying experienced by diverse and underrepresented groups in the workplace.

Keywords : bullying, ethnic minorities, health disparities, workplace conflict

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