

The Effect of Workplace Bullying on Employees' Work Attitudes during Occupational Adjustment Period

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Abstract: *In recent years, workplace bullying has attracted the attention of researchers all over the world and become a hot topic in academic research. After more than 20 years of research and development, the field of workplace bullying has accumulated relatively rich theoretical and empirical results. However, in China, the research on workplace bullying started late, and relevant theories and empirical studies are relatively few. Bullying in the workplace is a problem that Chinese enterprises pay little attention to, especially for the employees who adapt to the occupation period. Because of the transition from student to employee, these employees will encounter various issues. Whether they can successfully survive the adaptation period is not only closely related to their career, but also closely related to the development and growth of the enterprise. Therefore, this paper chooses the employees in the career adaptation period as the research object to explore the influence of workplace bullying on their work attitude, which has important theoretical and practical significance.*

Keywords: Workplace bullying; Work attitude; Organizational identity.

1. INTRODUCTION

Workplace bullying, also known as workplace bullying or workplace bullying. Research on bullying dates back to the late 1970s, early 1980s. By then scholars in Norway, Sweden and other countries had begun to describe bullying with terms such as harassment, scapegoating and emotional abuse (Francis, 2014). In the following two decades, workplace bullying has attracted the attention of researchers all over the world and become a hot topic in work and health psychology.

In recent years, workplace bullying has been recognized as an occupational hazard, which not only causes serious physical and mental health problems for employees, but also affects their attitude and behavior at work, and indirectly affects organizational performance. On the one hand, workplace bullying is an area of conflict and a source of stress for employees in the workplace. For the victims of bullying, workplace bullying will lead to a decline in their physical fitness, affect their work validity, reduce their job satisfaction, organizational commitment, turnover intention, etc., and more serious results will lead to post-traumatic stress disorder and suicide. For the perpetrator, the likelihood of bullying will increase when the perpetrator's bullying behavior is not stopped. By manipulating the work group, the perpetrator secretly bullies the victims, so that other members of the group can tolerate or even join in the bullying, thus further expanding the scope and extent of bullying. At the same time, workplace bullying may also enhance the perpetrators' sense of self-efficacy, which increases the possibility that workplace bullying will be elevated to workplace violence. In addition, workplace bullying can have a ripple effect on the onlookers, with the stress of worrying that they may be the next target of bullying leading to depression, low job satisfaction, and even a tendency to quit in order to escape.

At present, the prevalence of workplace bullying and its serious consequences have attracted extensive attention and research, but most of the research is mainly carried out in Europe and the United States. Compared with European and American countries, Chinese employees are deeply influenced by Chinese Confucian culture, and their traditional cultural values such as obedience to authority and collective loyalty are bound to make Chinese employees different from their European and American counterparts (Richard et al., 2020). Therefore, the study on the impact of workplace bullying on employees in the context of Chinese culture can not only enrich the research in relevant fields in China, but also provide a theoretical basis for Chinese enterprise managers to understand, discover, prevent and reduce workplace bullying and its harm.

In conclusion, this paper aims to reveal the influence of workplace bullying on the working attitude of Chinese employees, especially knowledge workers in the career adaptation period, on the basis of domestic and foreign

research results, so as to provide a basis for the intervention strategies of workplace bullying in the context of Chinese culture, and to provide support for the establishment of a harmonious working relationship and harmonious organization.

2. THE CONCEPT OF BULLYING IN THE WORKPLACE

The word 'bullying', which originated in the 1960s, was first used among animals and later in the 1960s to describe similar behaviour among children. In 1980, Leymann (1990) pointed out that bullying existed not only in schools but also in the workplace. Since then, the problem of workplace bullying has attracted wide attention from scholars in western countries, who have conducted a series of investigations and studies. But until now, there has been no consensus on how to define the term workplace bullying.

Some scholars define workplace bullying from the perspective of the main body of workplace bullying. The main body of workplace bullying includes the perpetrator, the bullied and the bystander. They believe that workplace bullying is related to the perception and knowledge of the perpetrator or the victim of bullying. Besides, some scholars regard workplace bullying as a kind of behavior with negative consequences, which can bring great harm to employees' individual physical and mental health and organizational development. Leymann (1990) notes that these behaviors, which often go on over a period of time, are "a destructive process of hostile words or actions," which is what distinguishes workplace bullying from workplace violence.

Other scholars define workplace bullying in static terms as a situation, work environment or atmosphere. They see workplace bullying as a situation in which constant criticism, public shaming and other negative behaviors often occur. This situation is often a long-term accumulation of organizational inertia, once formed, it is often difficult to change. Although various scholars have different definitions of workplace bullying, they all have the following commonalities: First, workplace bullying includes a series of negative behaviors, such as criticism, personal attacks, and belittling the value of others' work. Second, workplace bullying is persistent and repetitive. Workplace bullying tends to have a duration and frequency. Although there is no academic consensus, there is general agreement that bullying must be satisfied at least once a week for at least six months. Third, workplace bullying has negative consequences for both parties, bystanders and organizations. Fourth, the power imbalance between the parties involved in workplace bullying. Some scholars believe that power imbalance is a core feature of workplace bullying. Victims of bullying often feel powerless in knowledge, experience, social connections or position, and this feeling of helplessness makes them easy targets for bullying.

3. CAUSES OF WORKPLACE BULLYING

Earlier research linked workplace bullying to dysfunctional relationships. When a conflict occurs, both parties initially focus on the content of the conflict such as "what is the problem?" and seek a rational solution. Later, both parties gradually realize the difference in their positions and start to focus on issues such as "who is the creator of the problem". Then, in order to protect their self-esteem and avoid being eliminated by the society, the powerful party in the conflict began to use bullying to resolve the negative impact of the conflict. The weaker party becomes the victim of bullying, the victim of bullying is unable to resist the bullying effectively due to the lack of conflict management ability, and gradually believes that such behavior is reasonable. This negative reaction and attitude can encourage bullying behavior to repeat itself.

Us academics have described workplace bullying as a "psychosocial hazard" and one of the most destructive stresses in the workplace. When employees feel work pressure or frustration, if there is no appropriate adjustment or solution, they will often transfer the pressure or frustration to others to reduce their own pressure or frustration, and these people often become the perpetrators of bullying. For bullies, when they feel stressed, they may resort to ways such as avoiding work to get away from the stressor (Robert, 2018). This kind of negative treatment will often cause dissatisfaction and negative treatment from other members of the organization.

In addition, some scholars have suggested that workplace bullying is closely related to organizational climate and working environment. Improper management of the organization and the lack of restriction on rights by the management system and organizational culture will lead to the potential risk of abuse of power by the powerful party and the lack of social support for the weak party. Being in the organizational atmosphere of workplace bullying for a long time will make employees think that this kind of bullying is expected and approved by the organization, and the perpetrators of bullying will think that this is a kind of interpersonal communication mode commonly known as the agreement. The victims of bullying will feel learned helplessness and think that this is

inevitable.

4. THE ATTITUDE OF WORK

Robbins believes that attitudes are evaluative statements about objective things, people and events. Attitude reflects people's inner feelings, and its external manifestation is behavior. Although not all attitudes can be expressed through behavior, scholars agree that attitude can effectively predict behaviour. Attitude is people's long-term accumulated views on something, which is relatively stable, but not invariable. It will be adjusted with the deepening of people's cognition and the accumulation of acquired experience (Khan et al., 2016). Therefore, people can predict the behavior of individuals by understanding their attitudes, and can also consciously guide the attitude to change the behaviour of individuals.

4.1 The concept of job satisfaction

Job satisfaction has always been the focus of organizational behavior research, but the academic community has not reached a consensus on its definition. According to different research purposes, scholars have described it from various perspectives, which can be divided into three categories:

A comprehensive definition. Supporters of the comprehensive definition believe that job satisfaction is the overall feeling and satisfaction level of work factors such as the job itself, working environment and interpersonal communication (Habib et al., 2014). They believe that job satisfaction is single dimensional and indivisible.

Expectation gap definition. Expectation gap supporters say employee satisfaction levels are defined by than more. When they think the difference between the actual income and the expected income is smaller, the more satisfied they are. Therefore, this method of judging satisfaction level by comparing the difference between actual reward and expected reward is susceptible to subjective judgment of employees.

Reference definition. Supporters of reference definition believe that employees' evaluation of work factors such as work itself, work environment and interpersonal communication is affected by employees' subjective perception and interpretation, while employees' perception and interpretation of work factors are affected by employees' self-reference framework. In short, for each employee, when evaluating and explaining work factors, different evaluation standards will be formed due to different contents and weights of work factors. Different standards will affect the process and results of their evaluation of work, working environment and interpersonal communication.

4.2 Organizational commitment

4.2.1 Organizational commitment concept

Organizational commitment reflects employees' attitude toward the organization. In 1960, American sociologist Becker put forward the concept of organizational commitment for the first time when explaining the reasons for employees' turnover intention or retention intention (Aldhuwaihi, 2013). He believes that employees put the right amount of time and effort into their work. At the same time, in return, employees expect the organization to provide them with a good working environment, remuneration, etc. With the passage of time, when the employee's unilateral investment in the organization continues to increase, the employee's job change will suffer greater losses. Therefore, in order to avoid losses, employees have to stay in the organization. This psychological phenomenon is the commitment of employees to the organization.

4.2.2 Organizational commitment and organizational identity

First of all, organizational identity refers to or is defined by self, which is the state in which employees define their own identity, while organizational commitment is not. Secondly, according to social identity theory and self-classification theory, it can be seen that individual identity depends on the significance of the group and its interaction with other groups, which is a highly flexible concept (Bano & Malik, 2013). Commitment is more of an attitude, with relative stability and durability. Thirdly, the development basis of the two is different. Organizational identity is a process of classification, identification and comparison. Employees will first classify the organization, and then perceive the group membership identity and members' similarity. When employees think that they are similar to group members, they will have the idea that they share the destiny with the organization. This strong idea will urge the members of the organization to act according to the norms of the organization and think in accordance

with the values of the organization. The development of commitment is based on the exchange process and results between employees and the organization. When giving employees a good working environment and salary, enterprises expect employees to bring higher work performance. Therefore, employees' commitment to the organization is mostly reflected in their work. Finally, the birth and development of organizational commitment must exist in the actual exchange, no exchanges, no commitment, so to speak. This kind of exchange is not limited to the exchange with the organization, but also includes the exchange with colleagues, superiors and subordinates. The generation and development of organizational identity does not need these, identity is a spontaneous psychological activity of employees. Furthermore, relevant empirical studies have also confirmed that these two concepts are different. Riketta (2005) compared the two and found that organizational commitment has a greater impact on job satisfaction, absenteeism rate and turnover intention than organizational identification, while organizational identification has a greater impact on job involvement, organizational citizenship behavior and other extra-role behaviours than organizational commitment.

4.3 Turnover intention

Turnover can be divided into active turnover and passive turnover. Passive turnover refers to the involuntary departure of employees due to injury, age and other reasons. Voluntary turnover means that employees choose to leave their jobs automatically because of their own reasons. Turnover tendency refers to an employee's intention to leave his or her current job due to various reasons over a period of time. Turnover intention reflects the inner state of employees, and turnover is the performance of this inner state in behavior, which belongs to the category of active turnover (Yahaya, et al., 2012). Scholars describe turnover intention from three perspectives: first, they emphasize process. Scholars of this view pay more attention to the definition of turnover intention from the perspective of process. This view believes that there are many steps before an employee turnover, and turnover intention is the last step before turnover. The second is to emphasize the probability of employee turnover. Third, it is defined from the perspective of the employee's heart.

The relationship between turnover intention and turnover. It is generally believed that there will be a period of time from the occurrence of turnover intention to the occurrence of turnover behaviour. During this period, there are various factors affecting the final turnover decision of employees. Therefore, although turnover intention is the last stage before resignation, not all turnover intention is finally manifested as turnover behaviour. According to rational behavior theory and planned behaviour theory, turnover intention, as an inner state of employees and an intention of turnover behavior, can predict turnover behavior. The empirical results also show that turnover intention can significantly predict turnover behaviour.

5. SOCIAL IDENTITY THEORY

The theory of social identity was first put forward by Tajfel, a French social psychologist. It comes from his research on the social factors that affect perception, as well as a series of issues such as racial superiority, prejudice and discrimination. According to Tajfel (1974), social identity refers to "an individual's perception of belonging to a certain group, along with some of the emotional and valued significance of being a member of that group". This includes two connotations, one is the individual's perception of the group and their own belongingness, and the other is on the basis of perception. Individuals integrate group with self-definition and perceive social group as part of their self-concept. Social identity theory attempts to explain how group membership and group category affect individual social perception, social attitudes and social behavior. According to the theory of social identity, membership and group category of a social group are important components of a person's self-concept. The determination of group category and group membership requires group members to classify and compare existing groups. There are three basic assumptions in this process : (1) The need for self-esteem is the motivation for group members to pursue positive self-concepts. (2) Different group qualifications and group categories represent corresponding value meanings. (3) The evaluation results of group members on the group they belong to are affected by their reference frame. Therefore, in real communication, group members will evaluate and compare in-group and out-group to obtain and maintain positive social identity, so as to meet the self-esteem needs of group members. However, when their social identity is manifested as dissatisfaction, individuals will take corresponding measures to achieve the purpose of positive differentiation, such as leaving the existing group and looking for a more excellent group.

Social identity includes three core concepts: classification, identification and comparison. Classification can make complex things simple and orderly, easy to define and understand. According to Tajfel (1974), in the process of classification, people will first determine the membership criteria of the group, and then group the individuals who

meet the criteria into the same group, so that the members of the group have a high degree of similarity, but also distinct from members of other groups. The function of group classification is that individuals can understand group members and explain their attitudes and behaviors by defining the group, and group members can also refer to the group norms to determine their own appropriate behaviors.

Identification is the result of an individual's perception of the relationship between himself and the group, including the identification of group membership and the feeling of similar in-group members. When individual thinks that he meets the membership of a certain group and is similar to the members in the group, a sense of identity will be generated. A high degree of identity will prompt the members of the group to think in terms of the membership of the group and act in accordance with the group norms. The ultimate goal of comparison is to satisfy self-esteem needs. Positive self-concept is a part of normal mental function. According to social identity theory, individual self-concept includes group membership and group category. Thus, group members can gain a positive self-concept by comparing themselves to others and belonging to more prestigious groups. In the process of comparison, group members usually adopt two tendencies: the positive tendency and the negative tendency. Social identity theory suggests that people have an intrinsic motivation to exaggerate the differences between groups when comparing themselves to similar groups, to make their own group look better. At the same time, they also narrow the gap between their group and the superior group from the negative tendency, so that their group can be regarded as superior. In order to define their group as positive, individuals always take the positive side or choose the strength dimension of the group as the basis of comparison, while other dimensions will weaken their weaknesses.

Hogg & Terry (2000) pointed out that organization, team or work group can be regarded as a social category, and organization is the most important type of social category distinguished by individuals, so organizational identity can be regarded as a special form of social identity. For a newly graduated college student, he may join an organization for two reasons: first, he has a certain basis of recognition of the organization, such as recognition of the social status and reputation of the organization, but this recognition may be blind; Second, the organization can meet some expectations, such as high salary, but this exchange based contract is easy to break. Therefore, if an enterprise wants to retain employees for a long time, the best way is to make the enterprise goals consistent with the goals of employees, that is, to let employees identify with the organization, make the organization and employees closely connected, and make the organization's affairs become the employees' own affairs.

Employees who have just joined the organization establish their sense of identity with the organization by perceiving the standards of membership and the similarities among members in the organization. In this process, organizational atmosphere, organizational culture, interpersonal relationship and other factors will affect employees' perception and belonging process. According to the social identity theory, group members' satisfaction with group identity will affect their social perception, social attitude and social behavior. Similarly, organization members' identification with the organization will affect their work attitude.

6. THE CONCEPT OF ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTITY

At present, there are many researches on the concept of organizational identity in the academic circle, but there is no unified definition. The representative one is Patchen's definition of organizational identity in 1970, which has laid a broad foundation for subsequent studies. Patchen (1970) believes that the formation of employee organizational identity is a complex process, including a variety of influencing factors and mechanisms. He believes that organizational identity includes three aspects :(1) individuals' perception of the similarity between organizational membership and members in the organization. (2) The sense of solidarity between organization members and the organization, that is, the sense of belonging to the organization. (3) Members' emotional and behavioral support for the organization, namely members' loyalty to the organization. It is further proposed that organizational identity mainly includes three dimensions :(1) similarity, (2) membership relationship and (3) loyalty.

In 1992, Ashforth and Mad first applied social identity theory and self-classification theory to define and explain organizational identity (Ashforth, & Mael, 1989). Social identity theory holds that individuals determine their relationship to a certain group through classification and comparison. When individuals perceive that they are highly similar to the characteristics of the group and the members within the group, they will automatically belong to the group, connect the group category and group membership with the self-concept, and generate the idea of sharing a destiny with the organization. This idea will prompt the group members to think in accordance with the interests of the organization and take the norms of the organization as the principles of action. Hogg&Terry (2000)

believes that organization is the most important group category in society, so organizational identity can be regarded as a special form of social identity. Therefore, organizational identity refers to the employee's perceived consistency with the organization.

Ricketta (2005) summarized different definitions of organizational identity from cognitive, emotional and sociological perspectives :(1) cognitive perspective. Organizational identity is the cognition of organizational belonging formed on the basis of the consistency of organizational values. (2) Emotional perspective. Organizational identity refers to the organization members' emotional self-definition and recognition based on their expectations or emotional attraction to the organization. (3) Sociological perspective. Organizational identity refers to the organization members' adjustment and formation of values consistent with the organization based on their membership in the organization, so as to feel belonging or attachment to the organization in terms of emotion and cognition. In 2007, Han Xuesong, a Chinese scholar, defined organizational identity as a process and result in which an individual employee defines himself with his perceived organizational identity characteristics when studying the organizational identification characteristics that affect organizational identity, thus generating the perception of being consistent with or belonging to the organization (韩雪松, 2007). This concept indicates that organizational identity is not only a result of employees' self-definition, but also includes the process of self-definition.

As can be seen from the above summary of the definition of organizational identity, although the description of each concept is different, it can be seen that there are two common understandings :(1) Organizational identity reflects a relationship between employees' self-concept and the organization; (2) Organizational identity is employee-centered, self-recognition and self-seeking according to employees' self-standards, and employee self-reflected from the organization. Combined with the above analysis, this paper believes that for knowledge workers, the career adaptation period is the process of establishing organizational identity. Identity is not only a result, but also a more important process. Therefore, this paper selects Han Xuesong's definition of organizational identity.

7. CONCLUSION

Workplace bullying is pervasive in organizations, and its serious consequences have been extensively studied by scholars. But in our country, the related research just started, fewer results. Therefore, the paper of workplace bullying in the context of our country is of great significance. For employees, the career adaptation period is an inevitable stage for their career development, during which various issues will occur. For enterprises, whether the employees in the adaptation period can adapt to the enterprise and work is an important issue related to the normal operation, development and growth of enterprises. Therefore, this paper attempts to study the influence of workplace bullying on employees in the occupational adjustment period, so as to lay a foundation for future research in the field of workplace bullying.

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