Health Promotion in the Context of Workplace Bullying

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Thank you

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We are grateful to the men who participated in these interviews
Workplace bullying

- Prevalent; consists of persistent and repeated offensive behaviours; humiliates or intimidates
- Psychological, physical, sexual
- An international problem
- Effects physiological, psychological, social, and economic health
Workplace Bullying

- Workplace Abuse
- Workplace Harassment
- Psychological Harassment
- Mobbing
- Horizontal Violence
- Incivility
Who Bullies?

- Most often supervisors or bosses (70%–80%)
- Also
  - Coworkers or peers
  - Groups of coworkers
  - Someone you supervise
  - Clients or customers
Who is Targeted?

- Women are targeted slightly more (58%)
  - Most bullying is same-sex
    - Woman on woman 86%; on men 14%
    - Man on man 64%; on women 36%
  - No protected status
Bullying Tactics

• Setting unreasonable expectations
• Changing rules, policies, responsibilities
• Denying accomplishments, rewards
• Criticizing, blaming, undermining
• Threatening, intimidating, insulting
• Yelling, screaming, stomping, banging
• Excluding, isolating, shunning
Purpose

- To study how men and women bullied at work (targets) care for their health and approach their work afterwards
- To understand variation in how they manage
- To learn from targets’ perspectives
Method

- Two grounded theory studies (one with men and one with women)
- Recruited community samples, semi-structured interviews with 40 women in Canada and 36 men in NB
- Developed substantive theories of how targets promote health and engage in work
Participants

- Many types of jobs (professionals, non-professionals, labourers)
- Lived in urban and rural areas
- Age of women: range 22 to 60 (mean 46)
- Age of men: range 30 to 81 (mean 52)
- Education levels varied (most had at least high school)
Findings: Central problems

- **Women**: disruption in ability to promote health
- **Men**: erosion of sense of self

**Similarities:**
- Impact on health, how to care for self
- Impacts on life and work, how to work
Central problem for women

- Workplace bullying causes disruption
  - Interferes with women’s health and health promotion practices
  - Consumes women’s focus

- Process of **Managing Disruption** stages
  - Sustaining
  - Mobilizing
  - Rebuilding
Central problem for men

- Workplace bullying erodes sense of self
  - Creates feelings of being diminished, devalued, and devastated
  - Interferes with men’s health and care of self
- Process of **Sustaining Self** stages
  - Noting discrepancies
  - Gauging damage
  - Persisting
  - Coming to terms
Comparisons: Who bullies?

- 54% of women were bullied by women
- 45% of men were bullied by men
- 72% of women were bullied by bosses
- 66% of men were bullied by bosses
- 63% of women reported prior abuse
- 58% of men reported prior abuse
Similarities

- Types of bullying tactics
- Interference with health
- Interference with work
Most bullying was psychological. Tactics:

- Micromanaging
- Severe, persistent, unwarranted criticising
- Intimidating, humiliating, disrespecting
- Excluding, isolating, shunning
- Shouting, throwing things, blocking way
- Removing tasks
Similar interferences on health

Many men and women experienced:

- Psychological effects (anxiety, stress, depression, PTSD, suicidal thoughts)
- Physical effects (headaches, weight changes, sleep pattern changes, pain)
- Social (withdrawal, isolation, relationship changes)
- Financial (job, income loss, reputation)
Similar interference with work

- Lack of concentration
- Feeling distracted, being watchful
- Making mistakes, concern for safety
- Less attentive to detail and quality
- Less confidence in self, questioning self
- Inability to invest time and energy
- Changed meaning of work in lives
## Stayed at work or left

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Left or Stayed at Work</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fired, laid off, or forced out</td>
<td>8/40 = 20%</td>
<td>14/36 = 39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transferred</td>
<td>4/40 = 10%</td>
<td>4/36 = 11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quit</td>
<td>20/40 = 50%</td>
<td>7/36 = 19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stayed</td>
<td>4/40 = 10%</td>
<td>9/36 = 25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Still on leave</td>
<td>4/40 = 10%</td>
<td>2/36 = 5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Other similarities

- Difficulty recognizing and naming experience
- Disbelieving, wondering why
- Importance of support to help manage
- Impact on how good workers work
- Many men and women seek help
- People’s careers and lives are changed
Resuming health promotion

- Sports or physical activities
- Quiet walks, reading, music
- Spiritual resources
- Support from family, friends
- Take sick time away from work
- Redefine importance of work in life
Helping restore health promotion

- Health professionals can
  - Assess and identify problems at work
  - Advise leaves of absence or time off
  - Remind of former health practices

- Support is essential to manage being bullied
  - Help connect with others
  - Help employers develop resources
Actions to help promote health

- Recognize that gendered social expectations may limit ability to manage
- Need to promote public awareness of bullying
- Need to examine and create workplace policies that foster respectful workplaces
Women: Managing disruption

- Sustaining
  - Enduring
  - Fending
- Mobilizing
  - Assessing
  - Engaging
- Rebuilding
  - Reclaiming
  - Making sense
Men: Sustaining self

- Noting discrepancies
  - Comparing
  - Responding emotionally
- Gauging Damage
  - Gathering evidence
  - Taking stock
- Preserving
  - Positioning
  - Considering Help
- Coming to terms
  - Persisting
  - Strengthening