



final report

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Evaluation of a Workplace Bullying Intervention Program

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Abstract

This project aimed to identify the prevalence and characteristics of bullying and harassment in a meat processing plant, evaluate the effectiveness of a multi-level intervention strategy to reduce bullying behaviour, and to make recommendations for specific intervention strategies that can be utilised in the meat processing sector in Australia.

An intervention was conducted that entailed individual interviews with plant workers, supervisors and management. This was followed by individual intervention sessions with supervisors and management recommending strategies for them to use.

Following the intervention involving the general workforce, supervisors and senior management, there was evidence of a reduction in all of the problem behaviours.

A set of recommendations was developed to target the main workplace issues that emerged in interviews and additional recommendations addressed supervision and management issues.

A practical way of applying these results in other plants is a small group format where individuals have the opportunity to express their concerns in a confidential environment and where the strategies for dealing with bullying could be discussed. The success of this would depend on the groups not containing members who were seen as a threat by other members and by providing the option for an individual consultation.

Executive summary

Workplace bullying is defined as a situation in which one or several individuals persistently, and over a period of time, perceive themselves as being on the receiving end of negative actions from superiors or co-workers, and where the target of the bullying finds it difficult to defend him or herself against these actions.

There is an increasing public awareness of the adverse impacts of workplace bullying and legislation to protect victims on the one hand and to require a duty of care by employers. Workplace bullying may amount to a breach of the Occupational Health and Safety Act (Victoria, Australia) where:

- it has created a risk to an employee's (or another person's) health and safety, and the employer has failed to take all reasonably practicable steps to prevent and address it
- an employee has acted in a way that fails to take reasonable care for the health and safety of others at a workplace.

The strategy for reducing bullying is to establish an anti-bullying culture by changing values and attitudes within the organisation arising from an organisational commitment to culture change, effective education and policies, and attentiveness to people and behaviour. Critically, senior managers and/or business owners need to act as role models and exhibit a norm of open, honest and mutually respectful communication.

The aims of this project were:

1. to identify the prevalence and characteristics of bullying and harassment in a meat processing plant,
2. to evaluate the effectiveness of a multi-level intervention strategy to reduce bullying behaviour, and
3. to make recommendations for specific intervention strategies that can be utilised in the meat processing sector in Australia.

The first step was to establish a steering committee comprising senior management, union representatives; the second step was to use five focus groups of six people from all parts of the organisation to provide information on the issues that should be addressed in the intervention and to provide content for a questionnaire that could be used to monitor changes in the organisation over the course of the study. One group comprised women only, another was employees with English as a second language, another with supervisors only and two other groups from the general workforce. The third step was to establish an intervention strategy that targeted individuals in the workforce, supervisors and management. This entailed randomly splitting the workforce into two groups so that one group could be used as a control while the intervention was conducted on the other group. The questionnaire was then used to monitor changes in behaviour. Once this had been completed, the control group received the intervention and the questionnaire was administered again.

It was clear that this organisation did not have a culture characterised by aggressive interactions in the workforce. There were only isolated instances of intimidatory behaviour

but there was evidence of fairly widespread harassment that took the form of practical jokes, shouting, personal banter and some forms of discrimination both in the general workforce and by supervisors.

An intervention was conducted that entailed individual interviews with plant workers, supervisors and management. This was later followed by individual sessions with supervisors and management recommending strategies to address the issues

Following the intervention involving the general workforce, supervisors and senior management, there was evidence of a reduction in all of the problem behaviours. This evidence was reflected in the responses to the questionnaire asking people to indicate whether there had been recent improvements or deterioration in the problem areas. In fact, there was also some anecdotal evidence of improvement in that management reported that there were fewer serious incidents.

A set of recommendations was developed that targeted the main issues that emerged in interviews. It should be noted that, while some recommendations addressed supervision and management issues and are HR matters, a number of individuals blamed them as a contributor to the harassment that occurred. These recommendations proposed strategies for:

- Supervisors and management to log incidents where it is difficult to establish the facts when claim and counter claims are made
- Supervisors to give positive feedback for efficient, incident-free work
- Supervisors to use strategies to act impartially, seek advice from management if necessary, explain reasons for actions and treat complaints as confidential
- Plant workers to treat complaining as a first step in problem solving rather than “dobbing”
- Plant workers adopt a helping culture rather than being critical or engaging in ridicule when things go wrong
- Plant workers to respect others and to be tolerant of ethnic or language differences
- Plant workers and supervisors to recognise that banter is risky behaviour and ways of recognising the nature of the risk, and
- Management to adopt a policy of no tolerance for overt racism.

Finally, if it is the case that there is some generality in the results obtained at this plant, it may be desirable to modify the strategy used here to reduce the labour costs associated with its implementation. Individual interviews with each person in the workforce is time consuming and expensive.

An alternative strategy would be to use a focus group format where small groups have the opportunity to express their concerns in a confidential environment and where the strategies for dealing with bullying could be discussed. The success of this would depend on the groups being homogeneous and not containing members who were seen as a threat by other members. This could be managed by permitting the workforce to self-select the group in which they would participate and by providing the option for an individual consultation.

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Background

The meat processing industry is beset by labour shortages and high turnover. In South Australia, for example, there is a shortage of both skilled and unskilled labour, which is exacerbated by the fact that most processing facilities are located in regional areas¹. One of the factors that is associated with intention to leave an organisation is bullying. Bullying is a considerable issue both because it is a significant HR issue in its own right and because the industry faces substantial challenges in relation to attracting, retaining and training employees. The demographic of red meat processing workers is vast, which can lead to issues between people from a variety of different cultures, backgrounds and religions. These issues include bullying, harassment and discrimination, which in addition to being unlawful, result in poor worker well-being and reduced worker and plant performance. The ability of the red meat industry to manage these challenges and ensure that workers are supported is paramount to retaining staff and reducing turnover and additionally, attracting staff by maintaining better reputational standards in the industry.

Workplace bullying is essentially psychological in nature although it can entail physical violence. Birkeland, Nielsen and Einarsen² define bullying as follows: "Workplace bullying is defined as a situation in which one or several individuals persistently, and over a period of time, perceive themselves as being on the receiving end of negative actions from superiors or co-workers, and where the target of the bullying finds it difficult to defend him or herself against these actions". Bullying comprises behaviours including social isolation, rumour mongering, humiliation, assignment of excessive workloads or other entrapments to failure, and even physical assault³ and may also include sexual harassment and racial discrimination. While some of these behaviours are quite overt, often they are subtle and not easily detected by the casual observer. This may make them difficult to substantiate when an individual seeks redress.

The outcomes of bullying are diverse. Bullying may interfere with job performance, lead to workplace disputes, increased absenteeism or sick leave and increased job turnover and have considerable personal impact including insomnia and depression⁴.

Further, there is an increasing public awareness of the adverse impacts of workplace bullying and legislation to protect victims on the one hand and to require a duty of care by employers. Workplace bullying may amount to a breach of the Occupational Health and Safety Act (Victoria, Australia) where:

- it has created a risk to an employee's (or another person's) health and safety, and the employer has failed to take all reasonably practicable steps to prevent and address it
- an employee has acted in a way that fails to take reasonable care for the health and safety of others at a workplace⁵.

¹ Cassebohm, J. and Smith, K. (2007). Weighing in to the meat of the matter: an industry specific approach to workforce development. Food Tourism & Hospitality Industry Skills Advisory Council SA Inc.

² Birkeland, M., Nielsen, M and Einarsen, S. (2012) Outcomes of exposure to workplace bullying: A meta-analytic review. *Work & Stress*, 26, 309-332, p 309

³ Abe, K and Henly, S. (2010). Bullying (Ijime) Among Japanese Hospital Nurses. *Nursing Research* 59, 110–118.

⁴ Op. cit., Birkeland, Nielsen, and Einarsen, (2012)

Birkeland, Nielsen and Einarsen,⁶ in their meta-analysis of studies on workplace bullying, propose the model depicted in figure 1 to identify the psychological and workplace outcomes caused by bullying. What is clear from this model is that there is a substantial number of psychological and physical consequences of bullying that are associated with the important job-related variables of job satisfaction, job commitment and intention to leave. Because individual coping strategies and the personal attributes of the individual have a moderating effect, it follows that the same level of bullying or discriminatory behaviour by a perpetrator may have different outcomes for different

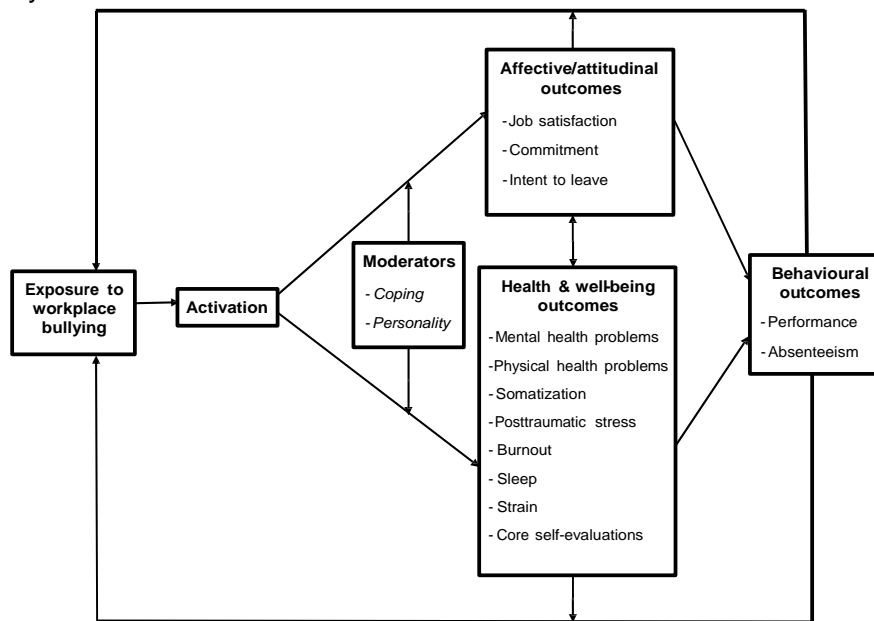


Figure 1. Theoretical model showing the possible relationships between the outcomes of workplace bullying that were included in the meta-analysed studies. From Birkeland, Nielsen and Einarsen (2012), p313

individuals in much the same way as physical trauma may affect individuals differently. Thus the focus in identifying the consequences of bullying must be primarily on the victim.

Evidence of bullying

Bullying is an escalating process and the target person ends up in an inferior position and becomes the target of systematic negative social acts⁷. While an observer can often recognise that bullying is occurring, sometimes the behaviour of the perpetrator may be sufficiently covert or may occur when no observers are present. Further, some behaviours may be relatively benign in some contexts, but may be problematic in others.

⁵ Worksafe Victoria. Workplace bullying – prevention and response. Retrieved from <http://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/forms-and-publications/forms-and-publications/preventing-and-responding-to-bullying-at-work> July 2013

⁶ Birkeland, M., Nielsen, M and Einarsen, S. (2012). Outcomes of exposure to workplace bullying: A meta-analytic review. *Work & Stress*, 26, 309-332.

⁷ Saam, N. (2010). Interventions in workplace bullying: A multilevel approach. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 19, 51–75.

Johnstone et al.⁸ argued that psychosocial hazards are difficult to assess because they are 'invisible' and it is difficult – though not impossible – to define a standard for compliance purposes. Also, assessment of psychosocial hazards entail additional training/mentoring and resourcing demands on the HR part or the organisation. Further, there is clear overlap between psychosocial hazards and industrial relations issues (staffing levels, hours of work, management/worker relations. Psychosocial hazards are likely to entail a direct questioning of the personal behaviour of managers (as in a case of bullying or harassment), common areas of managerial responsibility (such as staffing levels and workloads), or because of the reliance on individual complaints and verbal evidence there is a likelihood of victimisation or fear of lodging/pursuing a complaint.

Clearly physical violence, threats or overtly aggressive acts towards an individual, if persistent, are examples of bullying behaviour. However, even these may occur in the absence of an observer and the only available evidence may therefore depend on complaints by the victim. Supervisors or managers need to have a process to record reported incidents and to have clear criteria for establishing a *prima facie* case that can be used as a basis for taking remedial action.

Some behaviours are even more problematic in establishing that bullying is occurring. Discrimination, racial or otherwise, can be subtle and involve exclusion, initiation of rumours or even overt unfriendliness. Establishing that this occurs once depends on corroborated reports from the group that is being discriminated against. Joking and banter also is a problematic behaviour. Often banter at a particular individual's expense acts as a mechanism for group cohesion where the perpetrators find such behaviours as a bonding activity.⁹ Nevertheless, for the target individual, such banter is destructive and is a form of bullying. Even when banter is just joking between mates, it can escalate into something more serious when it becomes personal and when one individual is no longer able to sustain the repartee that is required and reacts adversely. Behaviours like this can be regarded as risky when they become personal and target an individual's personal attributes, sexual or social activity or family.

Intervention strategies.

Sperry¹⁰ proposed a three-level model to describe how individual, work group, and organisational dynamics influence bullying behaviour. In support of this, Heames¹¹ argues that "there can be spillover from bullying at the dyadic level to other levels in the organisation. While bullying is frequently discussed as an individual-to-individual phenomenon, the conflict can reverberate up to the group and organisational level. The

⁸ Johnstone, R., Quinlan, M and McNamara, M. (2011). OHS inspectors and psychosocial risk factors: Evidence from Australia, *Safety Science*, 49, 547–557

⁹ Alexander, M., MacLaren, A., O'Gorman, K. and Taheri, B. (2012). "He just didn't seem to understand the banter": Bullying or simply establishing social cohesion? *Tourism Management*, 33, 1245-1255.

¹⁰ Sperry, L. (2009). Mobbing and bullying: the influence of individual, work group, and organizational dynamics on abusive workplace behaviour. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, 61, 190–201

¹¹ Heames, J. and Harvey, M. (2006). Workplace bullying: a cross-level assessment. *Management Decision*, 44, 1214-1230 p1214.

interaction between the three levels needs to be taken into consideration when developing effective managerial plans to address the negative consequences of bullying”

Broadly, the strategy for reducing bullying is to establish an anti-bullying culture by changing values and attitudes within the organisation¹². To effect such a culture change, there must be “a genuine organisational commitment to culture change, effective education and policies, and attentiveness to people and behaviour. Critically, senior managers and/or business owners need to act as role models and exhibit a norm of open, honest and mutually respectful communication¹³.”

Somewhat counter-intuitively, mediation does not appear to an effective strategy. Saam¹⁴ argues that mediation may even be harmful because it treats bullying as a conflict (which implies some equality between the participants) when in fact there is a power differential between perpetrator and victim. Saam¹⁵ reports research that found mediation to be unsuccessful because of the power differential between the bully and the target and a failure to recognise that a conflict is more in the nature of a dispute whereas bullying is one-sided.

Saam¹⁶ suggests a multilevel approach of interventions in workplace bullying that considers interventions at the dyadic, group and organisational level. In other words, while it is necessary to address the specifics of a particular instance of bullying, to change the culture of the organisation, it is also necessary to ensure that supervisors and management have an approach that facilitates mutual respect amongst employees and that the organisation has explicit expectations in regard to workplace behaviour. This is echoed by Lopez¹⁷ who has argued for a multi-level approach:

- Legislation
- Workplace Culture
- Workplace Policy
- Management and Leadership
- Work team / group
- Individual

Measuring workplace behaviour

One of the most frequently used measures of bullying behaviour is the Negative Acts Questionnaire¹⁸. In its revised form, this questionnaire comprises 22 items divided into three sections – work-related bullying (seven items), person-related bullying (12 items) and physically intimidating bullying (three items). The scores for the three sections are highly

¹² Bentley, T., Catley, B., Cooper-Thomas, H., Gardner, D., O’Driscoll, M., Dale, A. and Trenberth, L. (2012). Perceptions of workplace bullying in the New Zealand travel industry: Prevalence and management strategies. *Tourism Management*, 33, 351-360.

¹³ Ibid., p354

¹⁴ Op. Cit., Saam (2010)

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Lopez, K. A multi-tiered approach to prevent bullying in the workplace, Retrieved from: <http://www.docstoc.com/docs/33381627/A-multi-tiered-approach-to-prevent-bullying-in-the-workplace-by-Dr,-July-2013>.

¹⁸ Einarsen, S., Hoelb, H. and Notelaers, G. (2009). Measuring exposure to bullying and harassment at work: Validity, factor structure and psychometric properties of the Negative Acts Questionnaire-Revised. *Work & Stress*, 23, 24-44.

intercorrelated, with correlations exceeding .8. Einarsen, Hoel and Notelaers¹⁹ have demonstrated that this is a valid and reliable measure that can be used either as a single scale or as three subscales.

Nevertheless, in evaluating an intervention in a specific workplace, it may be useful to also assess some site specific factors, particularly if it is not clear how generic the workplace behaviour issues may be. Meat processing plants are characterised by heavy physical labour demands, some pressure to keep up with the chain and a workforce that may come from relatively disadvantaged backgrounds²⁰. At present there are no data on the nature or prevalence of bullying and harassment at meat processing plants.

The current study evaluates a multi-level intervention at a meat processing plant. As with most companies, this organisation conducts a biannual refresher course on appropriate workplace behaviour for all its employees. Traditionally this has been done by adhering to appropriate legislation relevant to this area which this organisation considers to be the “stick approach”; that is, if an employee is found to have breached company policy they are then dealt with via the Company’s disciplinary process. It is now considered that this serves to perpetuate this type of behaviour, as it becomes very difficult to extricate the abusers because of a code of silence brought about by attitudes of plant personnel.

Project objectives

The aims of this project are:

1. to identify the prevalence and characteristics of bullying and harassment in a meat processing plant,
2. to evaluate the effectiveness of multi-level intervention strategy to reduce bullying behaviour, and
3. to make recommendations for specific intervention strategies that can be utilised in the meat processing sector in Australia.

¹⁹ Op. Cit., Einarsen, Hoel and Notelaers (2009)

²⁰ Norton, K. and Rafferty, M. (2010). Work, skills and training in the Australian red meat processing sector. NCVET. <http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2301.html>. Level 11, 33 King William Street, Adelaide SA 5000

Methodology

1. The first step was to establish a steering committee comprising senior management, union representatives.
2. The second step was to use five focus groups of six people from all parts of the organisation to provide information on the issues that should be addressed in the intervention and to provide content for a questionnaire that could be used to monitor changes in the organisation over the course of the study. One group comprised women only, another was employees with English as a second language, another with supervisors only and two other groups from the general workforce.
3. The third step was to establish an intervention strategy that targeted individuals in the workforce, supervisors and management. This entailed randomly splitting the workforce into two groups so that one group could be used as a control while the intervention was conducted on the other group. The questionnaire was then used to monitor changes in behaviour. Once this had been completed, the control group received the intervention and the questionnaire was administered again. This procedure is depicted in table 1.

Table 1. Design of the intervention study

	Pre-intervention questionnaire	Intervention Group 1	Post – intervention questionnaire	Intervention Group 2	Follow-up questionnaire
Group 1					
Group 2					

Finally, interviews were conducted with supervisors and management to communicate the recommended changes in supervisory and/or management practices.

Questionnaire data were analysed by analysis of variance using SPSS (V20).

Results

Focus groups

Participants were provided with an explanatory statement and signed a consent form. The discussions were guided by the protocol given in Appendix 1. The issues that were identified in these focus group discussions were:

- Level of support from immediate supervisor
- Level of protection by the organisation from other workers who hassle me continually
- Seeing other workers being bullied
- People with poor English slowing down work
- Lazy workers making job harder
- People who don't speak good English getting special treatment
- Some ethnic groups getting hassled more than the others

- Workers (women, different ethnic groups) sitting in their own groups at lunch

- Shouting in the workplace is a serious problem
- Conflict between people from non-English speaking backgrounds and other workers.
- Many safety problems are the product of poor English
- Banter seen as a harmless way to pass the time

These topics were incorporated into a questionnaire (see Appendix 2) that was used, in conjunction with the Negative Acts Questionnaire (NAQ) to monitor employee perceptions of workplace bullying. Further meetings with the organisation's management and union representatives were convened to obtain approval for the questionnaire and to reach agreement on the logistics of data collection.

Pre intervention questionnaire

Questionnaire data were received from 171 employees. The NAQ was scored by summing items within three subscales defined by Einarsen, Hoel and Notelaers²¹. These subscales were, Work-related bullying, Person-related bullying and Physical intimidation. These were scored on a five-point scale from Never (1) to Daily (5). The data from the questionnaire developed as part of this study were analysed using Principal Component Analysis (PCA), followed by oblique rotation using Oblimin. PCA identifies questionnaire items that measure similar underlying constructs and groups them into components. The Oblimin rotation is used to simplify the obtained component structures to aid interpretability while allowing the components to be correlated with each other.

The obtained subscales for the questionnaire developed in this study are given in table 2. Items in the subscales Organisational support, Problem with others and Observe bullying were scored on a five-point scale from Strongly disagree (1) to Strongly agree (5). Items in the subscales Experienced bullying, Others criticise you and You criticise others were scored on a five-point scale from Never (1) to Daily (5). Several questions did not fit into any subscales but were retained for analysis because of their face validity. They were:

1. Many safety problems are the product of poor English - 1 means strongly disagree, 5 means strongly agree
2. There has been a reduction in the amount of shouting and harassment in the last four months - 1 means strongly disagree, 5 means strongly agree
3. Women have no place working on the chain - 1 means strongly disagree, 5 means strongly agree
4. The need to keep up with the chain puts me under a lot of pressure - 1 means strongly disagree, 5 means strongly agree
5. Women workers, different ethnic groups should not sit in their own groups at lunch - 1 means strongly disagree, 5 means strongly agree
6. Have you been praised for your work - 1 means never, 2 means less than weekly, 3 or more means at least weekly

The organisation-wide summary of responses, analysed by gender (Table 3,4), and by English as a first or second language (Table 4,5).

²¹ Op. Cit., Einarsen, Hoel and Notelaers (2009)

Table 2. Subscales form the questionnaire developed in this study.

Subscale	
Organisational support	I get good support from my immediate supervisor The organisation protects me from other workers who hassle me continually <i>The organisation is a generally friendly place</i> The company protects me from other workers who hassle me continually When things go wrong, I can sort it out by talking to the other workers
Problem with others	People who don't speak good English slow down my work It is not fair that people who don't speak good English get special treatment People with a non-English speaking background should make an effort to learn good English There is no harm in a bit of banter when things go wrong The main reason work is slowed down is because some people are lazy We need more training for some workers Lazy workers make my job harder I feel I should comment when other workers slow me down
Observe bullying	People are regularly bullied There is a lot of conflict between people from non-English speaking backgrounds and other workers. I often see other workers being bullied Some ethnic groups get hassled more than the others Shouting in the workplace is a serious problem Women have no place working on the chain Women get hassled much more that the men
Experienced bullying	Experienced shouting in the workplace that you find intimidating or do people talk about it being intimidating? Have you or other close workmates been offended or hurt by jokes in the workplace? Experienced behaviour that made me feel harassed or uneasy? Have other workers publicly criticised your work? Other workers have told me they've been harassed or made to feel uneasy?
Others criticise you	Have other workers publicly criticised your work? Have other workers privately criticised your work? Have people spread gossip and rumours about you?
You criticise others	Have you felt the need to criticise other workers for their work. Have you made suggestions to management or workmates about how to improve the workplace? Seen the pressure to meet tallies or deadlines create aggressive behaviour in the work area?

Table 3. Pre intervention mean response on questionnaire scales by gender.

	NAQ work	NAQ person	NAQ physical	Org support	Problems with others	Observe bullying	Experienced bullying	Others criticise you	You criticise others
female	1.25	1.19	1.10	4.30	3.55	2.08	1.23	1.54	1.59
male	1.54	1.32	1.14	3.90	3.53	2.29	1.30	1.33	1.67

Because the mean score on negative acts is greater than 1, workers do report experiencing negative acts in all domains, with men reporting a slightly higher level than women. The range for women is a minimum of 1.0 (no negative events) to 1.83 (less than weekly). For men, the range is much greater, from 1.0 to 4.0 (at least weekly). Only 13 women responded to this question, while 147 men responded.

Generally, women report higher organisational support, with both groups agreeing on average that they receive support. Both groups on average show a slight tendency to agree that other workers make their job more difficult. Both groups, on average say that they don't see bullying.

Experience of bullying is similar to the negative acts result with men reporting a slightly higher level than women. Women report being criticised a little more than do men but criticise others a little less on average.

Table 4. Pre intervention mean response on additional questionnaire items by gender.

	Safety problems	Reduction in bullying	Women Have No Place	Need To Keep Up	Women other ethnic groups etc.	Been Praised?
female	2.58	3.15	1.54	1.58	2.23	2.62
male	2.90	3.11	1.66	2.97	2.26	2.22

While on average both groups slightly disagree that many safety problems are the product of poor English, men tend to agree more. Neither men nor women report a recent reduction in bullying on average. Both groups disagreed with the statement that women have no place on the chain. Men report on average feeling pressure from keeping up with the chain. Both groups slightly disagree that women and ethnic groups should not sit in their own groups at lunch. Women report being praised more than do men.

Table 5. Pre intervention mean response on questionnaire scales by English as a second language

English	NAQ work	NAQ person	NAQ physical	Org support	Problems with others	Observe bullying	Experienced bullying	Others criticise you	You criticise others
n	1.49	1.24	1.13	4.21	3.33	2.44	1.14	1.11	1.21
y	1.51	1.31	1.14	3.89	3.58	2.24	1.33	1.39	1.75

There were 26 respondents from non-English speaking backgrounds and 134 English speakers. There is little difference between English and non-English speakers on bullying issues, although non-English speakers on average, report more organisational support, less concern about others making their job difficult and less experience of bullying.

Table 6. Pre intervention mean response on questionnaire scales by English as a second language.

	Safety problems	Reduction in bullying	Women Have No Place	Need To Keep Up	Women other ethnic groups etc.	Been Praised?
n	1.83	3.57	1.86	3.48	2.86	2.72
y	3.02	3.01	1.58	2.74	2.12	2.17

On average English speakers attribute safety problems to poor English, are less likely to report a recent reduction in bullying, less likely to feel pressure from the chain, less likely to agree that people should not sit in their own groups at lunch and less likely to report having been praised compared with people from a non-English speaking background.

Relationships between variables.

Correlation coefficients between the NAQ and the other variables were calculated (Table 7). People who reported experience of bullying reported organisational support. Further, not only did those who reported high scores on the NAQ also report others criticising them and having experienced bullying, but also as having criticised others.

Table 7. Correlations between NAQ and questionnaire subscales

	NAQwork	NAQperson	NAQBully
Org support	-.26**	-.26**	-.12
Problems with others	.07	-.01	.14
Observe bullying	.01	.08	.14
Others criticise you	.30**	.57**	.31**
You criticise others	.26**	.25**	.25**
Experienced bullying	.26**	.34**	.47**

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The frequency distributions show that, while on average people across the organisation tend to believe that the organisation is supportive (only 8% believe that it is not), only 22.6% report no negative events and 45% report seeing shouting and bullying. About 25% agree that other workers slow them down but few report being criticised by others or being critical themselves. About 20% believe that many safety problems arise because of poor English. Similarly, about 20% believe that there has been a recent reduction in bullying. About 30% feel under pressure from keeping up with the chain.

The fact that there does not seem to be a clear difference between the various groups in their reported experience of bullying is somewhat surprising. It may be that potentially vulnerable groups were reluctant to report adverse events because of confidentiality

concerns. Alternatively, no particular group may be at risk. This should be explored as part of the individual intervention sessions.

The correlations indicate that there may be a group of individuals who feel harassed and are sensitised to negative aspects in the workplace.

The key finding is that a majority of the workforce report negative acts, and this indicates that there is an issue to be addressed. The fact that a substantial minority of workers see other workers as slowing them down and see poor English as a problem suggests that interventions need to target these beliefs. Further, those individuals who feel victimised have become highly sensitised to adverse aspects of the workplace and this may need to be addressed in an intervention.

Intervention

Interviews with 74 employees were conducted between 19/9/2012 and 24/10/2012. The protocol used is given in Appendix 3. Repeat questionnaires were administered between 24/10/2012 and 21/11/2012. Subsequently interviews with the control group were carried out between 28/11/2012 and 9/1/2013. The final questionnaire was administered between 17/5/2013 and 24/5/2013. For those with insufficient English to be interviewed in English or to complete the questionnaires, an interpreter was used.

Analysis of variance was carried out to analyse the changes across the phases of the intervention. Because of attrition caused by employees leaving the organisation or failing to complete a questionnaire, data from 26 employees who were interviewed at the first phase and 32 employees who were interviewed at the second phase were analysed. Actual sample sizes for the analyses varied because of missing data caused by individuals failing to answer some questions.

There were no consistent changes in any of the questionnaire subscales between the intervention group and the control group across the three occasions (pre, during and after the interviews). To explore this further, test-retest correlations were carried out on each of the questionnaire subscales over the three occasions on which the questionnaire was administered.

Test-retest correlations between the NAQ work subscales were .59 ($p < .01$), for the pre-intervention measure with the during measure, .50 ($p < .05$) for the pre-intervention measure with the post measure and .66 ($P < .01$) for the during-intervention measure with the post measure. Test-retest correlations between the NAQ person subscales were .72 ($p < .01$), for the pre-intervention measure with the during measure, .55 ($p < .05$) for the pre-intervention measure with the post measure and .71 ($P < .01$) for the during-intervention measure with the post measure. Test-retest correlations between the NAQbully subscales were .06 ($p > .05$), for the pre-intervention measure with the during measure, .26 ($p < .05$) for the pre-intervention measure with the post measure and .16 ($P > .05$) for the during-intervention measure with the post measure.

A similar pattern was found for pre-during, pre-post and during post correlations for Organisational Support (.41, .29 and .42 respectively), Experienced shouting (.47, .46 and

.30 respectively), Others Criticise You (.46, .46 and .34 respectively) and You Criticise Others (.55, .39 and .60 respectively). All of these correlations were significant. The exception was See Bullying where the correlations were .18, .26 and .26. The first is not significant and the other two are significant at the .05 level, but are numerically small.

In general, while the NAQ test-retest correlations, with the exception of NAQ bully, are acceptable, the correlations for the other questionnaire subscales are somewhat low. This indicates poor reliability of these measures and makes it difficult to interpret the finding that the intervention did not produce any changes in these measures of workplace behaviour.

There are several possible explanations for the poor reliabilities. First, the intervention may have had an uneven impact across the organisation so that questionnaire scores may have changed for some individuals and not others. This would have the effect of reducing the test-retest correlations. However, when the test-retest correlations are carried out on just those who were not interviewed, and therefore would not be expected to change, the correlations remain low.

A second possibility may have been that people were affected by the intervention differently. For example, those who found the process threatening, may have reacted by reporting workplace behaviour to have deteriorated, while those who found the process helpful may have reported the opposite. It is also possible that literacy issues and the participation of non-English speakers may have meant that the questionnaires were not well understood by some employees.

Because it was evident after the first intervention that the questionnaire subscales were not detecting any changes, it was decided to add some further questions that addressed the issues raised by the workforce and ask specifically what, if any, recent changes had occurred. The questions are given in table 8. They were scored on a five-point scale from Much Worse (1) to Much Better (5)

Table 8. Additional questions used at the end of the intervention period.

Indicate to what extent you have noticed changes recently in the following: _____

1. Amount of shouting in the workplace
2. Playing of practical jokes
3. Negative comments about yourself
4. Personal banter that you find uncomfortable
5. Positive feedback from your supervisor
6. Awareness of workplace behaviour issues
7. Aggressive behaviour from other workers
8. Understanding reasons for supervisor and management decisions
9. Discrimination by other workers or supervisors/management

These data were analysed using t tests by comparing the means against 3.0 (no change). The results are given in table 9.

On all measures, the workforce reported an improvement in the workplace. An inspection of the distributions of these measures indicated that of the approximately 100 respondents, between 6 and 11 reported a deterioration in the workplace while between 35 and 49

reported an improvement while the others reported no change. Only 13 individuals reported that, on average things had got worse. Most of these indicated that things had got only a little worse, but three reported that at least five of the indicators had deteriorated. An inspection of the interview notes for these individuals indicated that they had ongoing pervasive unresolved issues. The person with the most negative views on recent changes reported in the interview that there were multiple problems. This person complained of “sore arms”, that the women “bitched”, complained of some ethnic groups being treated differently and complained of feeling like a “number”. The person with the

Table 9. Reported changes in workplace behaviour following the intervention.

	t	df	Sig.	Mean Difference
Shouting_change	5.16	102.00	.00	.47
Jokes_change	6.90	104.00	.00	.63
Comments__change	5.27	98.00	.00	.47
Banter_change	6.01	99.00	.00	.53
Feedback_change	6.89	99.00	.00	.69
Awareness_change	7.85	99.00	.00	.67
Aggression_change	5.07	99.00	.00	.56
Understanding_reasons_change	4.90	100.00	.00	.50
Discrimination_change	5.94	101.00	.00	.56

next most negative view of recent changes complained that some ethnic groups were arrogant towards women, that other workers deliberately go slow, that supervisors are “too soft”, that other workers joke around too much and gossip too much and that working on the chain is boring. The third person complained that others made the job harder by deliberately interfering, that the foreman “played favourites” and won’t provide opportunities to learn new jobs and that you are punished if you complain. This suggests that the negative reports from these employees had more to do with a general unhappiness in the organisation than an actual assessment of recent changes in the workplace.

Once all interviews had been completed, individual discussions with supervisors and management were conducted. To assist in identifying the key issues, a qualitative analysis of the interview notes was carried out and the issues identified are listed below:

- There is at least one area where genuine bullying occurs and pockets where harassment is an issue.
- Some workers deliberately play minor practical jokes on others when the supervisor is absent.
- Some workers persist with personal banter after it is clear that the recipient has had enough
- There are pockets of clear racism towards non-English speaking workers.
- Boredom is seen as the main justification for banter and practical jokes (i.e. relieving the boredom)
- Supervisors were seen as being inconsistent in their management of reports of harassment

- Management is seen as not communicating well the reasons for decisions

The discussions were designed to brief supervisors and management on the key issues in the workplace that had been identified and to recommend strategies to address them. A Powerpoint presentation was used to assist in these discussions (Appendix 4).

Discussion

It is clear that this organisation did not have a culture characterised by aggressive interactions in the workforce. There were only isolated instances of intimidatory behaviour but there was evidence of fairly widespread harassment that took the form of practical jokes, shouting, personal banter and some forms of discrimination both in the general workforce and by supervisors.

Following the intervention involving the general workforce, supervisors and senior management, there was evidence of a reduction in all of the problem behaviours. This evidence was reflected in the responses to the questionnaire asking people to indicate whether there had been recent improvements or deterioration in the problem areas. In fact, there was also some anecdotal evidence of improvement in that management reported that there were fewer serious incidents. Caution needs to be exercised in interpreting these results because retrospective reports can be influenced by response bias where the respondent tries to respond in a way that the experimenter wishes. Given the fact that those who responded most negatively on this questionnaire also reported a general dissatisfaction with the workplace in interview, this does not appear likely. It appears reasonable to conclude that the intervention was successful.

One unexpected result was that the NAQ and the questionnaire designed as part of this study did not detect any changes as a result of the intervention. As indicated earlier, the poor reliability of these questionnaires in the context of this industry may have contributed to this. The workforce may have had difficulty comprehending pencil and paper questionnaires either in terms of the item content or in terms of using the response categories. There does not appear to be any previous research in which the NAQ has been used to evaluate the effects of an intervention. Therefore, it would be useful to conduct an intervention in a white collar workforce to determine whether literacy or comprehension issues were responsible for the results obtained here.

Recommendations

The following is a set of recommendations that arose from the main issues that emerged in interviews. It should be noted that, while some recommendations address supervision and management issues and are HR matters, a number of individuals blamed them as a contributor to the harassment that occurred.

The following is a summary of the main issues raised and suggestions about ways that they may be dealt with.

1. *Repeated minor irritations such as practical jokes.*

There is evidence that some individuals play practical jokes by doing such things as “accidentally” spraying another worker or “accidentally” missing a bin and throwing material on the floor. It is difficult to substantiate this because it is usually done out of sight of the supervisor, or it is claimed to be a genuine accident.

Recommendation

There needs to be a way of logging these incidents so that, even if individual events cannot be substantiated, repeated reports would indicate a genuine issue to be addressed. If there was agreement by management that such incidents would be reported and noted, with multiple reports taken as *prima facie* evidence that there is a real issue, then this could be the basis for a formal warning. This may serve to discourage the behaviour.

2. *Very little positive feedback for good work*

At present there seems to be willingness for workers to engage in banter, or shout or in other ways to judge perceived poor performance. Few people report positive feedback when things are done well. This may be a key role for supervisors and may also be an opportunity for senior management to put in place a system of rewards for good performance. Indicators for good performance would need to be established and may include recognition for being cooperative and helpful in the workplace.

Recommendation

Supervisors should be encouraged to give positive feedback for efficient, incident-free work. It would be interesting to investigate whether an organisation-wide policy to recognise good performance could be developed, although the indicators of such performance that is applicable across the organisation may be difficult.

3. *Supervisor selection and training*

While a number of people reported that individual supervisors were inconsistent in their decision making, sometimes failed to deal with reported problems and showed favouritism, some supervisors received very good reports. This favouritism is seen in allocating jobs, allocating “step ups” approving special leave, etc. Another problem that was reported was that there was poor privacy/confidentiality when issues were reported to supervisors. Supervisors were reported to be the source of gossip on some occasions. Where there are problems, they may arise because supervisors have difficulty in transitioning from being mates with some workers before becoming supervisors. In other cases it may be due to having insufficient skills or confidence to deal with difficult issues.

Recommendation

The reason that this is an issue relevant to harassment is because it is a source of frustration and disquiet and leads to criticisms and behaviours that may be inappropriate. There are several issues to address here.

First, when a person is promoted to supervisor, the nature of the role, including having to be dispassionate and to separate former friendships from the new work role, need to be carefully addressed. Also, supervisors need to be given careful training in dealing with difficult employees, dealing with incidents where the versions of what happened differ and being clear about the reasons for decisions taken and the communication of these reasons. Second, the criteria for allocating tasks, including step-ups need to be clear. This should reduce the anger expressed towards supervisors and co-workers and will provide the information that a dissatisfied worker can seek clarification from supervisors or to seek advice from management.

Third, while it is important that supervisors be able to consult with other supervisors and management about difficult cases, it is essential that these consultations are treated confidentially. A number of people commented that at least some of the gossip emanates

from supervisors. This need for confidentiality should form part of the job requirements of supervisors.

4. Consistent and transparent decision making

While this issue was raised in the context of supervisors, senior management was also seen sometimes to be inconsistent in dealing with claims of injury, requests for special leave, etc.

Recommendation

The criteria for decision making in such matters should be clear and promulgated throughout the organisation. Further, the reasons for each decision should be explicit and given to the employee. Also, while other individual cases cannot be discussed with an employee, care should be taken to indicate that the decision made is consistent with those made in other similar cases.

5. Whistleblowing seen as “dobbing”

Some workers are reluctant to report problems because of being seen to be “dobbers” and to be subsequently ignored or ostracised by other workers who were not involved in the complaint. Presumably this occurs because reports often lead to official warnings with adverse consequences. Also, there is widespread belief that people should be sufficiently mentally tough to be able to deal with problems without having to get help from others.

Recommendation

One reason that dobbing is criticised by other workers is that such reports usually lead to a formal warning and therefore discouraging such reporting is seen as a way of protecting an individual from possible adverse reports to him- or herself. It is important to develop a culture where reporting is seen more as a problem solving exercise and less as a punitive one. One possible way of doing this might be to designate a few individuals as the first point of contact when an issue arises. The role of this person would be to attempt to resolve the issue outside the formal reporting framework. If this is unsuccessful, this designated person could then seek advice/action from the supervisor. Of course serious matters may need immediate action from the supervisor, but the complainant would have the choice about how to proceed. Built into this would need to be the explicit message that ostracism of complainants is a clear case of harassment. These designated individuals would not be delegates or supervisors and would be seen by most workers as a respected and sensible person.

6. Culture of helping when problems arise

In some parts of the plant, individuals are unwilling to help others when problems arise. Shouting or ridicule is often the response when someone makes a mistake or stops the chain because of slowness or mistake. In some cases there is a perceived divide between slaughtermen and labourers. This leads to slaughtermen seeming unwilling to assist when problems arise that interfere with the smooth running of the chain.

Recommendation

It is already the case that shouting is discouraged. However, the reasons why this occurs perhaps need some thought. In part, some slaughtermen see themselves as “above” helping out when problems arise. Providing assistance to others should be a routine part of all job descriptions and part of the role of supervisors to enforce. Some people have stated that the tally system is responsible for the frustration that occurs when the chain stops because of human error. It would be useful for management to consider ways in which the impact of human error on time/payment could be reduced.

7. Real and perceived problems with English

There is a widespread view that poor English is a problem. In part it is seen as a OHS risk because workers with poor English don't respond when matters needing an urgent response arise. Where this response requires the stopping of machinery or the chain, it is seen as an

OHS risk if the person does not understand a request to act quickly. Poor English is often reported as a major frustration when a person is trying to train another who has poor English. This frustration is sometimes expressed in shouting or aggression.

Recommendation

While the concern that is expressed about poor English may reflect xenophobia, or in some cases, genuine racism, nevertheless it does seem to be a source of frustration experienced by some people when attempting to communicate or train. There is a number of possible avenues to pursue.

First, when people from a non-English speaking background are employed, they could complete an IELTS test²². This provides an objective guide in English proficiency ranging from no proficiency to highly proficient. Management could decide on an acceptable level below which an employee would be required to undertake an English course. This could be done through the TAFE system. Second, essential signage in the organisation could be in English and the other major languages. Third, an explicit attempt should be made to identify any OHS risks and to devise solutions. While it is rightly argued that no accidents that could be attributed to poor English have occurred, the fact that there is a perceived risk needs to be addressed. Finally, all relevant documentation for employees should be in the main languages, perhaps including a section of the Newsletter.

8. *Banter and boredom.*

Banter amongst workers is widespread. This usually takes the form of jokes about personal attributes and work performance as well as such things as football or personal life. It is widely thought to be harmless and is justified as an antidote to boredom arising from the repetitive nature of the tasks and periods of enforced idleness.

Recommendation

Banter, when it is personal, can be seen as bullying. This is a difficult area, because bullying, in the form of banter, has been found to be a key component of workplace cohesion²³. However, even in this case, there were individuals who didn't fit in and were ostracised by the majority. The best solution may be to educate employees that banter, while often harmless, is a risky behaviour because the recipient may take offence in which case, if repeated, it becomes harassment. Explicit policy should state that if a person objects to "good natured" ridicule, it should not only stop, but should not be repeated in the future. It is important to identify the causes of boredom and to develop strategies both to reduce boredom and to deal with it when it occurs. I have no explicit recommendations about how to achieve this.

9. *Racism*

Although not widespread, there are some serious instances of racism that express themselves in the way some workers are treated and in the kinds of public remarks that are made.

Recommendation

While it may be beyond the capability of the organisation to change attitudes, there should be a clear policy that states that racism remarks on site are not tolerated and are instances of harassment. Some attempt to educate local employees on some of the facts surrounding refugees would be desirable. Some employees believe that some ethnic groups, in particular, receive special treatment in the form of special consideration when they seek

²² IELTS test. Retrieved from http://www.ielts.org/test_centre_search/search_results.aspx?TestCentreSearchSubRegion=798fa423-4e55-4244-a0ae-34bcb85b6a11 July, 2013

²³ Op. Cit., Alexander et al., 2012

leave. They also believe that the organisation only employs some ethnic groups because of special Centrelink payments. The relevant facts and their rationale should be disseminated.

Next steps

Within the organisation

To ensure that there is a process for ensuring the ongoing maintenance of the changes in workplace culture, there are several steps that need to occur:

- Establish contact officers with no formal management responsibilities for employees to seek advice from
- Conduct review/refresher interventions with supervisors on an annual basis
- Conduct annual refresher in large groups for existing workforce on an annual basis
- Conduct small group interventions for new employees on an annual basis

In the meat processing industry

The extent to which the intervention strategy used here would apply throughout the meat processing industry in Australia would depend on the extent to which the issues identified in this organisation generalise to other organisations.

If it was the case that there is some generality, it may be desirable to modify the strategy used here to reduce the labour costs associated with its implementation. Individual interviews with each person in the workforce is time consuming and expensive. It has the advantage in that it permits individual issues to be addressed but this may not be a sufficient justification for the cost entailed.

An alternative strategy would be to use a focus group format where small groups have the opportunity to express their concerns in a confidential environment and where the strategies for dealing with bullying could be discussed. The success of this would depend on the groups being homogeneous and not containing members who were seen as a threat by other members. This could be managed by permitting the workforce to self-select the group in which they would participate and by providing the option for an individual consultation.

The success of any intervention of this type depends on the degree of trust the participants have in the process. This is best served by using an independent consultant to carry it out and to make explicit that management and other workers will not have access to any matters discussed in these forums.

Meat processing is a demanding work environment both physically and psychologically and often recruits its workforce from economically and educationally disadvantaged groups. It is important to adopt an approach that is sensitive to this. On the evidence obtained here, such an approach can be successful in improving the social climate in the workplace.

Appendix 1. Focus group protocol

Explanatory Statement for Participants

Workplace relationships: focus group discussions

My name is Grahame Coleman and I am assisting *this organisation** to evaluate a program to reduce workplace stresses that result from interpersonal conflict, harassment and bullying.

We will invite several small groups of individuals to meet informally with us to discuss:

1. What their job entails;
2. Stresses in the workplace that workers feel require some relief;
3. What kinds of behaviour they engage in to obtain relief;
4. Their views on individuals of different ethnicity or culture;
5. Perceived prevalence of bullying or harassment;
6. Perceived causes and consequences of bullying and harassment.

This will assist us in identifying some of the issues that we need to address, and will help us to develop a questionnaire that can be used to find out how everybody feels about these issues and the extent to which they feel stressed.

We will invite people to meet with Phil Cleary to express their opinions, discuss their concerns and develop ways to help them reduce their stress. We will be doing this progressively over the next year, and some people will have to wait, possibly for a few months, until Phil is able to meet with them. We will ask all people to fill out a questionnaire initially and again every four or five months to monitor any changes that might have occurred.

You may also be invited to participate in a follow-up questionnaire in approximately 6-12 months time.

Please note – information gained throughout the research study is totally confidential. All recorded discussions and questionnaires will be returned directly to me. Phil Cleary I will be the only people to have access to their content (that is, management or other employees will **not** be able to see any information that you provide). **All information collected will remain confidential.**

The discussion will take approximately one hour.

Your contribution is totally voluntary and you may choose not to participate, or withdraw from participation at any time and ask that your information be deleted. All aspects of the study, including results, will be strictly confidential and only I, and Phil Cleary will have access to any information provided. No personal information will be kept with the information and only grouped results will be reported in any reports. At no time will any individual will be identified.

Focus Group Protocol

Assumptions:

1.25 hours

Different demographic focus groups will be run separately

Discussion Schedule:

1. Introduction – 5 minutes

Introduce facilitator, explain the purpose of focus group discussion:

To assist in evaluating a program to reduce workplace stresses that result from interpersonal conflict, harassment and bullying

Explain the reason for taping:

- *For noting important points post-meeting*

Read the explanatory statement and ask participants to complete consent form.

2. Round table introductions – 10 minutes

Demographics

- *Years working at this organisation*
- *What their job entails*

3. Discussion on working at This organisation (10 mins each) total 50 mins

- Stresses in the workplace that workers feel require some relief;
- What kinds of behaviour they engage in to obtain relief;
- Their views on individuals of different ethnicity or culture;
- Perceived prevalence of bullying or harassment including who does it (**no names**);
- Perceived causes and consequences of bullying and harassment.

4. Wind up and thank you – 5 min

Appendix 2. Questionnaire

Below is a questionnaire about your work experiences here at *this organisation*. Your responses will be confidential, so please answer as honestly as you can. When you have finished the questionnaire, we will remove the cover page with your details.

If you have trouble understanding any question, please ask and we will help you with it.

Name

Date

Job

Gender Male/Female

Is English your native language? Yes/No

How long have you worked at *this organisation*?YearsMonths

Indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following:

- | | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neither agree or disagree | Agree | Strongly agree |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------------------------|-------|----------------|
| 1. I get good support from my immediate supervisor | | | | | |
| 2. The organisation protects me from other workers who hassle me continually | | | | | |
| 3. I often see other workers being bullied | | | | | |
| 4. People with a non English speaking background should make an effort to learn good English | | | | | |
| 5. People who don't speak good English slow down my work | | | | | |
| 6. Lazy workers make my job harder | | | | | |
| 7. It is not fair that people who don't speak good English get special treatment | | | | | |
| 8. Some ethnic groups get hassled more than the others | | | | | |
| 9. Workers (women, different ethnic groups) should not sit in their own groups at lunch | | | | | |
| 10. I feel I should comment when other workers slow me down | | | | | |
| 11. This organisation is a generally friendly place | | | | | |
| 12. Shouting in the workplace is a serious problem | | | | | |
| 13. The company protects me from other workers who hassle me continually | | | | | |
| 14. There is a lot of conflict between people from non-English speaking backgrounds and other workers. | | | | | |
| 15. Many safety problems are the product of poor English | | | | | |
| 16. I should be able to let off steam by shouting when things go wrong. | | | | | |
| 17. We need more training for some workers | | | | | |
| 18. People are regularly bullied | | | | | |
| 19. The main reason work is slowed down is because some people are lazy | | | | | |

20. The need to keep up with the chain puts me under a lot of pressure
21. When things go wrong, I can sort it out by talking to the other workers
22. There is no harm in a bit of banter when things go wrong
23. People who don't speak good English get special treatment
24. Women have no place working on the chain
25. Women get hassled much more than the men
26. There has been a reduction in the amount of shouting and harassment in the last four months

In the past MONTH, how often have the following occurred?

	Never	Less once a week	Weekly	Several times a week	Daily
1. Being ordered to do work below your level of competence					
2. Having your opinions ignored					
3. Being given tasks with unreasonable deadlines					
4. Excessive monitoring of your work					
5. Pressure not to claim something to which by right you are entitled (e.g. sick leave, holiday entitlement)					
6. Being exposed to an unmanageable workload					
7. Being humiliated or ridiculed in connection with your work					
8. Having key areas of responsibility removed or replaced with more trivial or unpleasant tasks					
9. Spreading of gossip and rumours about you					
10. Being ignored or excluded					
11. Having insulting or offensive remarks made about your person, attitudes or your private life					
12. Hints or signals from others that you should quit your job					
13. Repeated reminders of your errors or mistakes					
14. Being ignored or facing a hostile reaction when you approach					
15. Persistent criticism of your errors or mistakes					
16. Practical jokes carried out by people you don't get along with					
17. Having allegations made against you					
18. Being shouted at or being the target of spontaneous anger					
19. Intimidating behaviours such as finger-pointing, invasion of personal space, shoving, blocking your way					
20. Threats of violence or physical abuse or actual abuse					
21. In the past month how often have you been bullied, harassed or abused?					

22. Experienced behaviour that made me feel harassed or uneasy?
23. Other workers have told me they've been harassed or made to feel uneasy?
24. Experienced shouting in the workplace?
25. Experienced shouting in the workplace that you find intimidating or do people talk about it being intimidating?
26. Seen the pressure to meet tallies or deadlines create aggressive behaviour in the work area?
27. Seen supervisors help in stopping behaviour you think is aggressive?
28. Cracked jokes on the job to ease the boredom or pass the time?
29. Have you or other close workmates been offended or hurt by jokes in the workplace?
30. Have other workers publicly criticised your work?
31. Have other workers privately criticised your work?
32. Have you felt the need to criticise other workers for their work.
33. Have you made suggestions to management or workmates about how to improve the workplace?
34. Have you been praised for your work?
35. Have people spread gossip and rumours about you?

Appendix 3. Interview protocol

1. Introduce myself – Grahame Coleman independent consultant
2. Point out confidentiality – no discussion with anyone about disclosures unless authorised (get signed agreement)
3. Ask about job, likes and dislikes Review questionnaire responses
4. Ask about what they consider to be bullying or harassment. Clarify any erroneous beliefs
5. If bullying experienced, or negative acts, ask for details:
 - How often
 - Nature of the harassment
 - What did they do about it,
 - What did others do about it
 - What would they like done about it
 - Assess coping strategies
 - Suggest strategies, remind them of reporting procedures and protection against being victimised for telling
6. Have they observed any bullying or harassment?
 - a. Ask for examples
 - b. Ask what they did about it and why
7. If no bullying or negative acts, use Q3 (English), minority group behaviour (Q7) attribution of blame (Q11) to assess risk of being a bully
 - Talk about org culture, legislation
 - Discuss the bystander problem if they are probably not perpetrators or behaviour change strategies if they are likely to be perpetrators.
 - Discuss risks in banter that targets a person
 - Discuss risks in practical jokes
 - Discuss the aims of the project and individual workers obligations
 - i. reduce harassment and bullying
 - ii. encourage reporting and constructive problem solving
 - iii. improve social environment in the workplace
 - iv. change culture of punishing whistleblowers (i.e. anti-dobbing)
8. Ask if they have any questions, indicate that they may return for a further discussion if they wish.

Appendix 4. Presentations to Supervisors and Management.

Workplace behaviour: Role of the supervisor

Summary of results

There is some evidence of genuine bullying occurring and pockets where harassment is an issue.

Some workers deliberately play minor practical jokes on others when the supervisor is absent.

Some workers persist with personal banter after it is clear that the recipient has had enough

There are pockets of clear racism towards non-English speaking workers.

Boredom is seen as the main justification for banter and practical jokes (i.e. relieving the boredom)

Your experiences in the workplace

Have you seen or had to deal with these issues?

Are there **other** issues that you have to deal with?

What do you think are the most important concerns?

Give an example of a successful intervention that you have done

Why was it successful

Give an example of an unsuccessful attempt to intervene

Why was it unsuccessful; what could you have done better?

The role of the supervisor

In general supervisors received good reports, however there were perceptions that supervisors were sometimes inconsistent in their decision making, sometimes failed to deal with reported problems or showed favouritism. There were also some concerns about privacy and confidentiality.

Strategies to deal with reported incidents

Be consistent in dealing with difficult cases and dealing with incidents where the versions of what happened differ

If the versions differ, make it clear that repeated claims of poor behaviour will be taken as evidence that there is a real issue

Explain why you took a particular action and, if the person claims that someone else was treated differently, be prepared to explain why

Be prepared to seek advice from other supervisors and management

Allocating tasks and step-ups

Make sure that there is an explicit process for allocating tasks including step-ups. It is important that the process is followed and that people understand it

Make sure that poor performance (absenteeism, adverse reports) and general competence will affect whether a person gets a step up

Keep records of step-ups and allocate fairly

While it is important that supervisors be able to consult with other supervisors and management about difficult cases, it is essential that these consultations are treated confidentially

Positive feedback

Some people feel that they don't get positive feedback when things are done well.

Make an effort to look for good performance by individuals and groups and give good feedback.

Being confident in dealing with workplace behaviour

There are several barriers to supervising well:

- Dealing with “old mates”
- Adverse reactions from the person you are dealing with
- Being influenced by aspects of the person – age, gender, ethnicity, etc.
- Having confidence

It is important to seek advice or assistance if you are uncertain how to manage a problem

Don't avoid or postpone dealing with a problem

If you have an existing friendship with a person, you could ask someone else to deal with the case to avoid perceptions of favouritism

Actively discourage problem behaviours

Deal immediately with genuine bullying and harassment.

Actively discourage minor practical jokes on others.

Discourage personal banter

Discourage adverse treatment of non-English speaking workers.

Actively encourage good behaviours

Encourage people to report problems to the workplace contact person if the incident is not too serious

Encourage helping behaviour when problems arise

Provide positive feedback when a person does make a good contribution

Discourage shouting or ridicule when someone makes a mistake or stops the chain because of slowness or mistake

Take home message

You are the front line to ensure that *the organisation's* workplace policy is adopted in practice

You may need support from other supervisors and management from time to time – so seek it when necessary

Be a good role model to the workforce

Encourage reporting as a problem-solving exercise rather than as “dobbing”

When minor incidents occur, adopt a behaviour change approach rather than a punitive one as a first step

Organisation policy

Treating people with dignity

Making decisions on merit

Respecting differences

Workplace behaviour: Management issues

Summary of results

There is some evidence of genuine bullying occurring and pockets where harassment is an issue.

Some workers deliberately play minor practical jokes on others when the supervisor is absent.

Some workers persist with personal banter after it is clear that the recipient has had enough

There are pockets of clear racism towards non-English speaking workers.

Boredom is seen as the main justification for banter and practical jokes (i.e. relieving the boredom)

Your experiences in the workplace

Have you seen or had to deal with these issues?

Are there **other** issues that you have to deal with?

What do you think are the most important concerns?

Give an example of a successful intervention that you have done

Why was it successful

Give an example of an unsuccessful attempt to intervene

Why was it unsuccessful; what could you have done better?

The role of Management

In general supervisors received good reports, however there were perceptions that supervisors were sometimes inconsistent in their decision making and that decisions seemed unfair. This is relevant to workplace behaviour because employees sometimes target others because of perceived favourable treatment.

Employees also expressed concern about confidentiality but usually attributed breaches to supervisors.

Strategies to deal with reported incidents

Be consistent in dealing with difficult cases and dealing with incidents where the versions of what happened differ

If the versions differ, make it clear that repeated claims of poor behaviour will be taken as evidence that there is a real issue

Explain why you took a particular action and, if the person claims that someone else was treated differently, be prepared to explain why

Be prepared to seek advice from other senior staff

Overseeing supervisors -1

Supervisors have been advised about the following issues and encouraged to carefully observe the following recommendations:

- Make sure that there is an explicit process for allocating tasks including step-ups. It is important that the process is followed and that people understand it
- Make sure that poor performance (absenteeism, adverse reports) and general competence will affect whether a person gets a step up
- Keep records of step-ups and allocate fairly
- While it is important that supervisors be able to consult with other supervisors and management about difficult cases, it is essential that these consultations are treated confidentially

This will need constant reinforcement from management.

Overseeing supervisors -2

These issues were also addressed with supervisors:

There are several barriers to supervising well:

- Dealing with “old mates”
- Adverse reactions from the person you are dealing with
- Being influenced by aspects of the person – age, gender, ethnicity, etc.
- Having confidence

It is important to seek advice or assistance if you are uncertain how to manage a problem

Don't avoid or postpone dealing with a problem

If you have an existing friendship with a person, you could ask someone else to deal with the case to avoid perceptions of favouritism

Overseeing supervisors -3

Deal immediately with genuine bullying and harassment.

Actively discourage minor practical jokes on others.

Discourage personal banter

Discourage adverse treatment of non-English speaking workers.

Overseeing supervisors -4

Encourage people to report problems to the workplace contact person if the incident is not too serious

Encourage helping behaviour when problems arise

Provide positive feedback when a person does make a good contribution

Discourage shouting or ridicule when someone makes a mistake or stops the chain because of slowness or mistake

Positive feedback

Some people feel that they don't get positive feedback when things are done well.

Make an effort to look for good performance by individuals and groups and give good feedback.

Where appropriate, feedback should be specifically related to particular performance outcomes rather than always general encouragement to the group

Take home message

You are ultimately responsible to ensure that the workplace policy is adopted in practice

Supervisors and management should meet from time to time to reinforce policy and its implementation

Be a good role model to the workforce

Encourage reporting as a problem-solving exercise rather than as “dobbing”

When minor incidents occur, adopt a behaviour change approach rather than a punitive one as a first step

The Organisation's policy

Treating people with dignity

Making decisions on merit

Respecting differences

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