Putting 'Dignity at Workplace' on the 'Corporate Governance' Agenda

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Abstract

Dignity at workplace is increasingly on the agenda of many law-making bodies. While workplace bullying and harassment is not new, many researchers are now highlighting its enormity and negative consequences. There is a clarion call for laws to prevent bullying at workplace and some countries like Sweden have taken the lead with ordinances and laws on victimization at work. In an era where employees are considered the most valuable asset of an organization, the paper looks at what is bullying, mobbing and harassment along with its consequences on the individual and the organization. It explores various options available to the victim including legal options under the present laws. It argues that a work environment free from bullying and harassment is a prerequisite for developing a competitive advantage in a knowledge society. Finally it suggests that dignity at workplace is an important item to be put on the Corporate Governance agenda and organizations should proactively act to create an environment with zero tolerance for bullying.

Introduction

Once upon a time, the word bully was usually associated with school children. It appears that many of them have grown to become bullies at workplace (Laurie, 2011). The prevalence of bullying at workplace is now being widely recognized and its spread is reaching epidemic proportion (Farmer, 2011). The negative consequence of bullying on the victim is severe and the loss to the organization is incalculable. Demand for laws to protect employees from bullying is growing (Namie, 2003) and it is time organizations did something about it. In a civil society, where human resources are considered the most valuable resource of an organization, it is surprising that many organizations have no systems or processes to deal with bullying that affect the dignity of employees at work.

In this context the time is ripe to put dignity at workplace on the Corporate Governance agenda.

The definition of Corporate Governance (CG) varies depending on the interest of the researcher. According to Shleifer and Vishny (1997) CG "Deals with the ways in which suppliers of finance to organizations assure themselves of getting a return on their investment". Others like Goldberg and Desai (1999) have defined CG as "The entire system of rewards sanctions, coordination and conflict resolution mechanisms used to order and arbitrate the economic interests of shareholders, lenders, managers and employees". Even if one were to adopt a narrow focus like that of Shleifer and Vishney, the governance systems would have to include the mechanisms mentioned by Goldberg and Desai. The only difference would be the way these systems are designed to deliver value to the shareholder /stakeholder. Given that all organizations operate in, and with the sanction of the society, if corporate governance systems are not responsive to the expectations of the society, sanctions in the form of laws and regulations would follow. There are numerous examples where, in the pursuit of the bottom line, industry failed to consider the expectations of the society and the government intervened with laws mandating standards of behavior that were earlier regulated by norms. For example,

- Due to rapid industrialization, industrial pollution became a concern and was highlighted by many for a number of years. When the industry failed to regulate itself, laws were passed to regulate them (Adler, 2002; Dunlap & Scarce, 1991).
- Sexual harassment at workplace is not new and at present it is illegal in many countries (Husbands, 1992; Srivatsava, 2010). However, prior to the Supreme Court Judgment on the *Vishaka and Ors vs State of Rajhastan and Ors* case, few organizations in India had a policy on prevention of sexual harassment at work. With the Supreme Court issuing guidelines on this issue, most organizations have constituted committees and put in place measures to deal with sexual harassment at work. These guidelines apply to the private sector also. Soon, The Protection of Women Against Sexual Harassment at Workplace bill, 2010 is expected to become a law (Times of India, 2012).

Elaborating on the stakeholder concept in corporate governance, Deakin and Hughes (1997) state "Stakeholders are those with specific investments or interests in the corporation. While this category undoubtedly includes the shareholders, it also extends to employees and to certain long-term customers and suppliers, including those who supply finance".

Employees as Stakeholders and Dignity at Workplace

As we move from an industrial economy to a knowledge economy, employees are becoming more valuable. Retaining them and helping them reach their potential is one of the most important objectives of the Human Resource function. It is well established

in management literature that committed employees are the key to organizational success (McGregor, 1960; Fracaro, 2005; TNS Intersearch, 2003) and in times of crisis, high morale and commitment are not only important but also critical for the survival of the organization. If we agree with the above, then we should not see employees as a cost but as valuable resources with the potential for generating profits.

This change in mindset is difficult, but can be achieved if we consider the analogy used by Denten (1996). He compared environmental issues with quality issues, which were also seen as a cost issue until the Japanese successfully turned it into a competitive advantage and consequently a profit issue. Similarly organizations can benefit if they start seeing employees as a source of profits. Turing quality into profit required systems like the TQM. Similarly, turning employees into a competitive advantage and a source of profit would require organizational systems that promote employee involvement and reflect a concern for the well-being of employees.

The responsibility of a manager including the CEO is to create a safe and healthy work environment where employees work without stress towards the achievement of organizational goals. To quote Fuller (2010) "A culture of dignity in the workplace provides a competitive advantage because it means happier, healthier, more creative and productive employees. What does it matter if they work together in lockstep-so long as they get the job done? People who feel recognized as individuals and respected as human beings are more likely to give their best. Much as eliminating malnutrition makes for healthier workers, eliminating malrecognition makes for more reliable ones". Unacceptable behavior like bullying does not promote a culture of dignity. It makes employees less productive and certainly not happier. In this context, governance systems, which do not deal with issues like bullying have a negative affect on the morale and commitment of employees can only be termed bad and can only lead to organizational failure in the long term.

Bullying, Mobbing and Harassment

Bullying at workplace like sexual harassment at work is not new. Many of us have either been bullied at work or have witnessed our colleagues being bullied. What is alarming is that it is widespread and growing (Farmer, 2011; Lewis, 2006). According to Lewis, the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Services (Acas) received more than 45000 calls about bullying and harassment in 2004-05. This number may only be the tip of an iceberg as many instances of bullying go unreported. This is not surprising because the victims feel uncomfortable reporting such instances and in most cases there are no specific organizational mechanisms to deal with it (McKay and Fratzl, 2011). Reporting bullying is difficult because the perpetrator is either your supervisor or your colleague(s). In 1998 ILO's, 'World of Work' magazine featured a cover story titled "When working becomes

hazardous''. This article claims that bullying is a global phenomenon and one of the fastest growing forms of violence. This view is also supported by a number of surveys.

The Workplace Bullying Institute survey (WBI, 2010) reports that one third of the American workers are bullied at workplace. According to a global poll by Monster (cited by Cobb, 2011), two-thirds of the workers surveyed were victims of bullying and nearly half of others have witnessed bullying. Bullying is no longer a simple case of poor interpersonal relationship but an organizational problem that has widespread effect on individuals, organizations and society at large. The need to tackle bullying is now widely accepted by unions, management, academicians and policy makers. Increasing public interest on workplace harassment and bullying has led to a demand for laws that provide legal remedies to victims (Kieseker and Marchant, 1999; Namie, 2003)) and a number of countries now have laws and ordinances to prevent and deal with workplace bullying and harassment.

Understanding Bullying, Harassment and Mobbing

Depending on the region, the user and the context, the words bullying, mobbing and harassment have been used to mean the same thing. For example, the word mobbing is more common in some parts of Europe like Sweden, whereas the word bullying is more common in U.K. and Australia (Leymann, 1996; Namie and Namie, 2009). These words are also used interchangeably (Yildirim A and Yildirim D, 2007, Escartin and Rodriguez, 2010). However the similarities and subtle differences become clear when we look at some of the definitions given in appendix 1.

Mobbing, bullying and harassment all involve undesirable behavior, which is unwelcome by the victim. When an individual or a group of individuals indulge in undesirable behavior knowing fully well that the same has a negative effect on the victim, then it is bullying, mobbing or harassment. Bullying can take many forms, of which mobbing is one and the word mobbing can be easily understood to mean that the perpetrators are many. While the victim of bullying or mobbing feels harassed, the word harassment in some countries is used to denote undesirable behavior that is directed against a protected class. Bullying therefore has also been called as status blind harassment (Sclafane, 2011). According to Unite the union (n.d.), "As with harassment, bullying is defined largely by the impact of the behaviour on the recipient, not its intention".

The key to deciding whether the behavior is bullying is to ask the question 'Would a reasonable person observing such behavior see this as bullying or harassment?' (Lewis 2006). If the answer is yes, then it is bullying. Some behaviors that bullies might indulge in are given in appendix 2.

The Impact of Bullying on the Employee and the Organization

The effect of bullying on the victim can be devastating. The victims in many cases quit their job. In other cases they end up with health problems. Bullying or harassment can lead to

Anxiety, High level of stress, Sleeplessness, Panic attacks, Concentration difficulties, Mistakes at work, Accidents at work, Smoking, Excessive Drinking, Overeating, Raised blood pressure, Heart disease, Reduced resistance to infection, Skin problems, Stomach & bowel problems, Fear or anxiety or depression, Severe loss of confidence and self-esteem etc. (Salin, 2003; Mistry and Latoo, 2009; INTO, 2000; Bully OnLine, n.d.[b])

According to Cobb (2011), separate incidents of bullying seen in isolation may not appear serious but their cumulative effect on the victim can be damaging. Interestingly, it is not just the victims, even their colleagues who witness bullying are prone to the health and emotional effects of bullying (Hoel, Faragher and Cooper, 2004; Houshmand, O'Reilly, Robinson and Wolff, 2012). It is also reported (Lewis 2006) that the effect of bullying can persist for long time, even to the extent of 5 years after the bullying stops and many victims are subject to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Experts on occupational stress now attribute a large portion of work related stress to bullying (Porteous, 2002; Mistry and Latoo, 2009; Cheema etal 2005).

If left unchecked, bullying tends to escalate and spread with serious consequences for the organization (Heames and Harvey, 2006). Harris, Kacmar and Zivnuska (2007) found a negative relationship between abusive supervision and job performance. Bullying can result in reduced output, impaired decision making, reduced quality, increased wastage, absenteeism, increased employee turnover, increased health care costs, reduced morale etc (Salin, 2003; Estes and Wang, 2008). Further, the cost of litigation and the costs awarded in case of a successful litigation can be very high. Porteous (2002) cites a London Chamber of Commerce report, which estimates the cost to the UK industry as 2 billion pounds a year and around 19 million days a year. She argues that with compensation awards in excess of 300,000 pounds, employers can no longer ignore bulling at workplace.

Dealing with Bullying

Many websites (bullyonline.org, n.d; stopbullyingsa.com.au, n.d.; and tuc.org.uk, n.d.) offer suggestions on what to do if you are bullied. From an employee's standpoint, there are few options to consider. If he or she believes that this is a stray incident and not likely to be repeated, it might make sense to ignore the aberrant behavior. The employee can also distance himself /herself from the bully and avoid any unnecessary contact. If none of these work, the next best thing to do is to inform the bully that his behavior is undesirable

and unwelcome. This is important because this would inform the bully that such behavior if continued would get reported to the authorities. One could take the help of co-workers particularly the union at this stage. If all the above fail, the matter should be reported to the supervisor or his superior if the perpetrator is the supervisor. It might also be a good idea to report the same to the Human Resources or the Personnel Department. It is also recommended that the employee maintain a record of the incidents of bullying with date and details, which becomes useful when bullying is reported. If the organization has a policy on bullying the bully would be warned and advised to desist. Continued bullying would be viewed seriously and could also lead to disciplinary action including termination.

Bullying is not often reported (Judy and Philip, 2010) because the bully is often a supervisor or a senior employee and the victim fears retaliation. Given the seniority or supervisory position, the bully can camouflage bullying behavior and claim it was legitimate executive action. Further as most of the victims are in a subordinate position, or new employees or belong to a minority their voice is not readily heard. Lack of formal organizational mechanisms to handle complaints of bullying results in inaction and this further discourages complaints. As a consequence, if the bully is a supervisor and the organization does not respond to complaints, many employees decide to quit the job. It is at this point that the possibility of legal redress is considered.

Though almost everyone agrees that bullying is undesirable, it is difficult to get relief from the judicial system (Namie, 2003; Yamada, 2010). This is because in many countries there are no laws that protect employees from bullying at workplace. If an employee decides to go to court, he or she will have to establish that bullying violated some existing law (including common law). Bullying is often difficult to prove. It is rare for a co-worker to agree to depose against the supervisor or another co-worker. One option is to check if the bullying or harassment is because the employee belongs to a protected class, in which case the employee can seek redressal under the anti-discriminatory laws.

For example in the US and many other countries, it is against the law to discriminate based on age, sex, religion, ethnic origin, disability or color among other factors. If this can be established, then the courts will provide relief. Often the cause of action for approaching the court is termination of employment either by the employer or by the employee. If the employee terminates the employment by resigning, relief can be sought if it was a constructive termination due to bullying. In this context, it is also important to note that organizations are subject to vicarious liability for the acts of their employees and the victim can make the organization also a party to the suit.

Laws to Prevent Bullying at Workplace

Conscious of the need for a safe and healthy work environment governments have enacted laws that require employers to provide such a work environment. While many

labor and industrial laws have addressed physical health and safety issues, mental health and psychological well-being are still a gray area. One of the topics that is now generating a lot of interest is 'Dignity at Workplace'. This concept became popular with the MSF Union putting together the Dignity at Work bill in 1996. It was steered by Lord Monkswell in the House of Lords in 1996 and 1997, but was blocked by the conservative government in 1997 (Bully Online, n.d$_a$). In 2001, Baroness Gibson introduced it in parliament, but it is still not an act.

According to a speech given by John Robertson, M.P. (2008), this issue has been raised again and again in some form or the other and he would continue to raise the issue in parliament. The focus of the proposed bill is on helping organizations ensure the dignity of employee at work and prevent unacceptable behavior like bullying and harassment. The topic is gaining momentum because of a widespread belief that workplace related stress is a major health hazard and bullying is one of the major causes of workplace related stress (Tehrani, 2004; Namie and Namie, 2009). Further if one considers the link between psychological well-being and physical health, dignity at work becomes even more important. According to Farmer (2011), bullying is one of the main problems of the workplace and has reached epidemic proportions. If organizations do not take steps to contain this contagion, it could soon lead to a situation where the government is forced to step in and make laws.

Porteous (2002) claims that while there is no specific law in the United Kingdom against bullying at workplace, the existing laws can be used to seek relief. According to her, employers have an obligation under the statutory and common law to make sure their employees are reasonably safe at work. Quoting the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, she says that the obligation of the employer extends to health hazards arising from occupational stress. She cites the case of Walker v Northeunberland County Council (1995) in which the court held the employer responsible and granted relief to the employee, confirming that employers have a duty for their employee's psychiatric well-being.

While legal remedies are not easily available to the victims of bullying at this point in time, things are changing. Just a few decades ago, there was no legal remedy in many countries for sexual harassment at work. While everyone knew it happened, not much could be done other than complain to the higher ups or quit. Now the situation is completely different. In many countries, laws explicitly prohibit sexual harassment at work and the courts provide relief to the victims in the form of compensation (Husband, 1992).

According to the Australian Human Rights Commission (n.d.) the perpetrator can be subject to the provisions of criminal law, which means that he or she could be sent to prison. Organizations, which do not have policies and practices to prevent sexual harassment at work can be fined and censured by the courts (Weissmann, 2007). Similarly, the laws

in some countries have been modified to facilitate dignity at the workplace. Sweden is considered to the first to pass a law recognizing bullying (mobbing) at workplace and requiring employers to put in place mechanisms to deal with it (Guerrero, 2004).

The Swedish ordinance on Victimization at Work (1993) clearly recognizes bullying or mobbing as victimization and an undesirable act. It requires the employer to:

- Make it clear that victimization cannot be accepted in the activities.
- Plan and organize work so as to prevent victimization as far as possible.
- Put in place routines that detect and rectify unsatisfactory working conditions.
- Deal with victimization when it becomes apparent, take counter measures without delay and follow it up.
- Give help and support to employees subject to victimization.

Canada, France and Turkey are other countries where laws /regulations recognize bullying at workplace and recommend a proactive stance and action by the management to prevent it. In the United States of America, there is no specific law to prevent bullying (status blind discrimination or harassment). However according to Yamada (2004) legislation to prevent bullying in the form of the Healthy Work Place Bill has been introduced and is active in many states of U.S.A.

The thrust of these laws has been towards increasing awareness of the negative aspects of bullying. They require employers to put in place systems, which make it clear that bullying, mobbing or other forms of victimization will not be tolerated. The systems are required to facilitate employees reporting such incidences and enable managers to act on these complaints. For example, the Swedish ordinance on Victimization at Work (1993) requires employers to put in place routines that lead to early reporting of such incidents. It explicitly states that nobody should help conceal victimization, even if risks of conflicting loyalties are likely to occur.

Organizations' Role

Organizations can start by recognizing and acknowledging bullying as undesirable behavior. Taking a lead from some of the laws in various countries, the organization could take the following steps:

- Have a policy that not only declares bullying as undesirable behavior but also as unacceptable behavior. Announce this policy and display this in prominent places so that all the employees are aware of it. Include it in employee manuals and other documents so that all employees are aware of the organization's stand on this. A clear policy not only discourages bullying, but can also serve as a defense in a lawsuit.
- Put in place procedures and mechanisms that enable victims to lodge a complaint and witnesses to report such incidences.

- On receipt of a complaint, act quickly to gather facts and look for other instances of similar behavior or unreported cases.

- If the complaint is true or you have reasons to believe that the complainant is reporting what he believes to be true, counsel the alleged bully on the negative impact of his behavior and the organization's policy on bullying. This is an important stage in dealing with bullying and needs to be handled with tact. It is quite possible that the alleged bully does know that his behavior is causing stress or has undesirable effect on the victim. It is possible that by bringing this to the notice of the alleged bully the issue can be resolved.

- If the complaint is not true or not enough evidence is found to support the complaint, it is important to counsel the alleged victim. It is possible that the complaint has its root in some other issue and this needs to be dealt with. Often lack of awareness of rules and regulations, organizational objectives or norms may influence the perception of the alleged victim. Counseling, particularly in a way that is not seen threatening, may help.

- As the issue is sensitive and needs to be handled with tact, nominate senior officials, at least one level above the supervisor of the alleged bully to deal with the complaint. Ensure that the person so identified is aware of the legal implications and the importance of curbing bullying behavior.

- It is also important that employees believe in the organization's policy on bullying. Therefore if it is established that an employee behaved in a bullying manner and did so knowing fully well the negative impact on the individual, then he should be warned. If the employee repeats this behavior or indulges in bullying behavior that is unacceptable to the organization, then disciplinary action must be taken against the employee.

- Some organizations provide for a one/ half day training program to all managers and supervisory staff to increase awareness and educate them on the importance of dignity at workplace.

One of the concerns related to implementing a policy on bullying is that managers might be accused of bullying when they discipline employees for poor performance. A good practice guide for higher education institutions on dealing with bullying and harassment in the workplace is published by Equality Challenge Unit (2007). This provides a number of case studies on the initiatives taken by various institutions and also addresses the concern that managers have on being wrongly accused of bullying. A government of South Australia publication titled - Preventing workplace bullying: A practical guide for employers - provides useful information including checklists on how to deal with bullying.

Conclusion

It is clear from the foregoing that workplace bullying, whether it is called mobbing or harassment or by any other name is a serious problem affecting dignity at workplace. The damage to the victim is very high resulting in increased stress, illness, reduction in self-esteem and possible loss of a job. Yildirim and Yildirim (2007) have reported that some of

the victims considered committing suicide. The cost to the organization is also high with increased employee turnover, reduction in output and low employee morale.

Researchers (Ferris et al, 2007) have found that the long-term impact of bullying is negative. Some (Kohut, 2007; Smith, 2012; Georgakopoulos, Wilkin and Kent, 2011) claim that workplace bullying can lead to workplace violence. The legal costs associated with bullying are also high because organizations are subject to vicarious liability for acts of its employees and the employer may end up paying the compensation and penalty. Peterson (2012) citing Reuters says that the top ten most expensive settlements in 2008 (for employment discrimination, wage discrepancy and ERISA class action law suits) cost U.S. corporations over $ 18 billion. So bullying can be expensive and an unnecessary expense.

Bullying is also related to the agency problem, which gets magnified in the absence of good governance systems. When the manager or the CEO resorts to bullying, it could be because of a character flaw, incompetence or some personal agenda. Often the manager or supervisor under pressure to deliver tries to blame others and uses bullying tactics to overwork his subordinates. Some incompetent managers tend to target achievers because of their own sense of insecurity. Managers can also display bullying behavior when they pursue their own personal agenda and face resistance from other employees. Bullying is used to create fear and prevent others from interfering in their wrongful acts. In all such cases, the organization and shareholders ultimately suffer. Any corporate governance system that gives unbridled and absolute power to the CEO should pay heed to the phrase "power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely" (phrases.org, n.d.).

In this context, Sir Cadbury's view on Corporate Governance quoted in the Heritage institute (n.d.) website assumes significance.

"Corporate Governance is concerned with holding the balance between economic and social goals and between individual and communal goals. The corporate governance framework is there to encourage the efficient use of resources and equally to require accountability for the stewardship of those resources. The aim is to align as nearly as possible the interests of individuals, corporations and society."

Seen from this perspective, the importance of holding the balance between economic and social goals cannot be overemphasized. Deakin and Hughes (1997) reinforce this view by saying "At a fundamental level, *corporate governance* is concerned with the relationship between the internal governance of corporations, and society's conception of the scope of corporate accountability". Therefore, unless checks and balances are built into the governance system to prevent bullying, good governance will only be a mirage.

While some view that bullying is a consequence of an individual's personality flaw or maladjustment (Morgan, 2001), others (Wheeler, Halbesleben and Shanine, 2010) are of the opinion that the organizational structure and environment also contributes

to bullying behavior. The solution therefore is to understand the underlying reasons for bullying behavior and address them. This could require policy decisions on how to deal with resource constraints and organizational culture that cause and /or encourage bullying. Wheeler, Halbesleben and Shanine recommend that organizations should make it abundantly clear that bulling will not be tolerated and give examples of companies that have standard operating procedures to ensure this. Bullying therefore cannot be treated purely as an interpersonal issue or HR issue, but recognized as an organizational issue signaling structural weaknesses that need to be addressed by the board.

Dignity at Workplace is on the agenda of many policy makers and governments. It is only a matter of time before bullying, mobbing and harassment at workplace become unlawful. The trend is evident from the laws passed by Sweden, France and Canada. According to the Healthy workplace bill website (n.d.), a number of states in the United States of America have introduced bills on bullying at workplace. In the UK, Baroness Ann Gibson is guiding the Dignity at Work bill in the House of the Lords (Bully OnLine, n.d.[a]).

In India, the bill on prevention of sexual harassment at work and protection of whistleblowers is expected to soon become the law. Yamada (2011) quotes an online insurance industry newsletter saying that some employers are requesting insurance companies to include workplace bullying in their employment practice liability policies. Given the trend, it makes sense for organizations to proactively design policies and systems that discourage bullying and promote dignity at workplace. This will not only help the organization become a preferred employer but also lead to competitive advantage. At a time when human resources are considered the most valuable resource of an organization, it makes sense to take care of it.

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Appendix I - Definitions

Mobbing

- According to TheFreeDictionary (n.d.ₐ), **mobbing** means, "To crowd around and jostle or annoy, especially in anger or excessive enthusiasm".

- According to Leymann (1996), "Psychological terror or mobbing in working life involves hostile and unethical communication, which is directed in a systematic way by one or a few individuals mainly toward one individual, who, *due to mobbing*, is pushed into a helpless and defenseless position, being held there by means of continuing mobbing activities".

Bullying

- According to TheFreeDictionary (n.d.ᵦ), **bullying** is, "To treat in an overbearing or intimidating manner".

- Unite the union (n.d), Britain's largest union defines workplace bullying as "Persistent, offensive, abusive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behavior, abuse of power or unfair penal sanctions which make the recipient feel upset, threatened, humiliated, or vulnerable, which undermines their self confidence and which may cause them to suffer stress."

Harassment

- According to the legal-dictionary of The Free Dictionary (n.d.꜀) **harassment** is "The act of systematic and/or continued unwanted and annoying actions of one party or a group, including threats and demands. The purposes may vary, including racial prejudice, personal malice, an attempt to force someone to quit a job or grant sexual favors, apply illegal pressure to collect a bill, or merely gain sadistic pleasure from making someone fearful or anxious"

- According to the St Catherine's College, Oxford website (n.d.), **harassment** is "unwanted and unwarranted conduct, which has the purpose or effect of:
  - Violating that other's dignity; or
  - Creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that other.
  - Harassment may involve repeated forms of unwanted and unwarranted behavior, but a one-off incident can also amount to harassment".

Appendix II

Some behaviors that bullies might indulge in [as listed by Unite the union (n.d.)].

- "Bullies may use terror tactics, open aggression, threats, shouting, abuse, and obscenities towards their target
- Bullies may subject their target to constant humiliation or ridicule, belittling their efforts, often in front of others
- Bullies may subject their target to excessive supervision, monitoring everything they do and being excessively critical about minor things
- Bullies may take the credit for other people's work but never take the blame when things go wrong
- Bullies may constantly override the person's authority
- Bullies may remove whole areas of work responsibility from the person, reducing their job to routine tasks that are well below their skills and capabilities
- Bullies may set the person what they know to be impossible objectives, or constantly change the work remit without telling the person, and then criticize or reprimand the person for not meeting their demands
- Bullies may ostracize and marginalize their target, dealing with the person only through a third party, excluding the person from discussions, decisions etc
- Bullies may spread malicious rumors about the individual
- Bullies may refuse reasonable requests for leave, training etc, or block a person's promotion".

[Source: website of Unite the union]