Poor management the biggest risk factor for workplace bullying
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They analyzed 342 real-life bullying complaints lodged with SafeWork SA, 60% of them from female employees. The highest number of complaints were from health and community services, property and business, and the retail sector. The complaints revealed the risk areas for bullying in organizations.

"Workplace bullying predominantly shows up in how people are managed," Prof. Tuckey says.

"Managing work performance, coordinating working hours and entitlements, and shaping workplace relationships are key areas that organizations need to focus on.

"It can be tempting to see bullying as a behavioral problem between individuals, but the evidence suggests that bullying actually reflects structural risks in the organizations themselves."

The major organizational risks have now been identified and built into a screening tool that has been validated in a hospital setting.

"The tool predicts both individual-level and team-level workplace bullying risks that jeopardize the psychological health of employees," Prof. Tuckey says.

The researchers say that existing strategies, such as anti-bullying policies, bullying awareness training, incident reporting and investigating complaints, focus on behavior between individuals and overlook workplace structures.

"Workplace bullying undermines the functioning of employees and organizations alike. It leads to mental health problems, post-traumatic stress symptoms, emotional exhaustion, poor job satisfaction, high staff turnover, low productivity, sleep problems and even suicide risks.

"To prevent bullying, organizations must proactively
assess and mitigate the underlying risk factors, like other systematic risk management processes. Only then will an organization thrive," Prof. Tuckey says.


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