Same-Same but Different? Exploring the Similarities and Differences between Corruption and Workplace Bullying

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This paper discusses the discourse between corruption and workplace bullying by exploring their similarities and differences at a conceptual level. This paper aims to provide a comprehensive review, and to generate new insights, by drawing comparisons within the existing literature from the fields of corruption and workplace bullying. For the bases of this examination, we have systematically drawn our focus on the nature, definition, spread, impact, scale, control and measure, prevention and governance, and operation of these negative phenomena. While corruption is often regarded as a political, economic and social problem, with serious consequences on many different levels, corruption and workplace bullying essentially share the same predatory nature. However, variations in perception and definitions have, in unison, made these predatory behaviors difficult to prevent, measure and control, increasing the chance of their prevalence if they are not recognized or understood and addressed. Although workplace bullying is usually perceived or portrayed as merely “trivial nuisance” or “interpersonal conflicts”, it can potentially escalate into something far more damaging. Similarly, petty corruption can evolve into grand corruption, when given the space to grow. In an organisational setting, this “space” is generally determined and/or facilitated by its designated Human Resources Management department. In this paper, we suggest that the relationship between corruption and workplace bullying can be a two way street, in the sense that some aspects of corruption may be applicable in workplace bullying, and vice versa. However, rather than trying to substitute existing knowledge with new hats, our intention is to provoke an alternative perspective by suggesting that the knowledge between corruption and workplace bullying may be transferrable, and that we can re-inform, re-interpret and reapply what we already know in one context, to another context that is reasonably similar, yet remains appreciatively different.

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