

Emotional Workplace Abuse

A new research approach
to create more sustainable organisations

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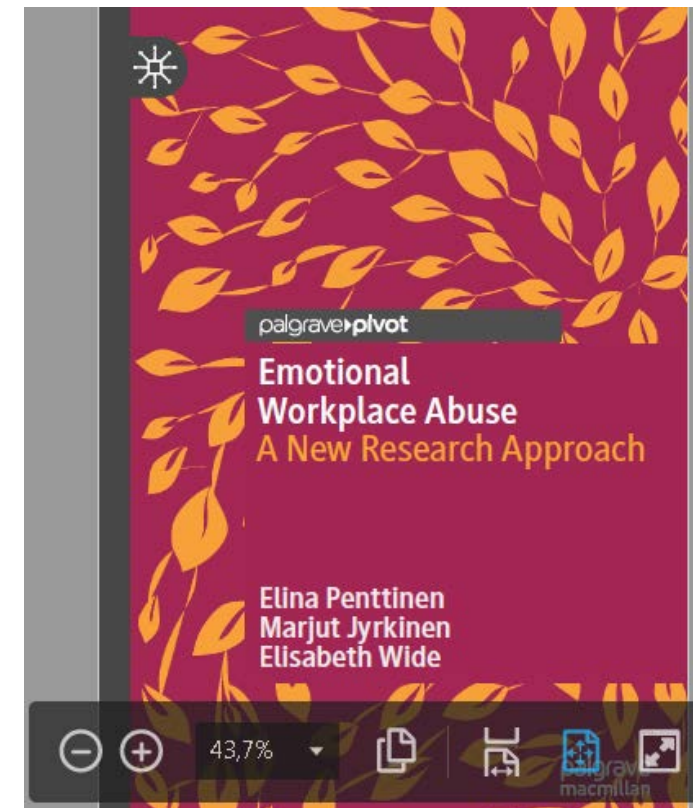
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To set the scene

- Large research on bullying and mobbing as the basis of our work.
- Our data: FEAR data narratives and interviews.
- Rethinking the concepts.

Emotional Workplace Abuse (EWA)

- Penttinen, Elina, Jyrkinen Marjut & Wide, Elisabeth (2019) *Emotional Workplace Abuse: A New Research Agenda*. Palgrave Macmillan
- Draws from research on violence in intimate relations (Penttinen) and non-violence and violations for sustainable working life (Jyrkinen).
- www.weallfinland.fi, FB
- Development of the definition:
 - As violence
 - As discrimination



Violence and violations at work

- Groundbreaking research by Hearn & Parkin (2001).
- Bullying and mobbing large literature (e.g. Einarsen & Raknes 1994; Salin 2001; Einarsen et al. 2003).
 - Aggression (Björkvist et al. 1994)
 - Emotional abuse (Keashley 1997); employee emotional abuse (Lutgen-Sandvik 2003)
 - Workplace incivility (Andersson & Pearson 1999; Cortina et al. 2001)
 - Workplace ostracism (Sanderson 2017)
- Gendering violence and violations

Emotional Workplace Abuse (1)

1) In the contexts of organisations, the definition of “kiusaaaminen” [teasing] and the understanding of that should be changed to violence or abuse, as well as a part of discrimination. Redefinition.

- To show the seriousness of the acts and toxic activities and organisation cultures.
- Subtle, indirect and mundanemhyy forms of violence/violations.
- ‘Mobbing’, ‘harassment’, ‘bullying’ – similarities, borders, differences.

Emotional Workplace Abuse (2)

2) The borders between the private and the work are disappearing.

- In cases of EWA, the person is stressed and hardly can make a difference of feelings about work and the private life.
- Difficult to find help; rumination (Sanderson 2017).
- "Spill over" to private life.

Emotional Workplace Abuse (3)

3. Continuum

- The negative happenings at work continue.
- As in gendered violence, the target does not have the strength to report the violations, even though they continue.
- It is not about one incident, but a continuum of acts, and therefore often the whole organisation is a part of the non-actions.

To redefine violence and violations at work

- To start from the micro-level can reveal different kinds of processes.
- Experience to be heard.
- Individual – organisational level.
- As violence and as discrimination.
 - Focus on organisations.
 - Leadership ethics.
 - Caring organisations.

Emotional Workplace Abuse Matters

- Argument: combination of feminist research on violence, organizations and management enables to:
 - Tackle practices and behaviours which enable abuse
 - Recognize early warning signs
 - Recognize long term effects on the target
- "God knows who would be next, anybody could be next so you walk on your tip toes"
- "I went to the meeting prepared that I will resign... ..It was later on that I realized that this destroyed my career".
- "Our managers switched our job descriptions so that me and my colleague were both doing tasks that were not familiar to us."

The Relevance of Identifying and Naming EWA

- Argument: Naming EWA is important because even though it is 'known' it is hard to identify
 - To recognize subtle forms of violence/violations
 - Reflective analysis of organisational behaviours
 - To identify gendered processes in/of EWA
- "The withholding of information was the worst"
- "It takes a long time to admit it to yourself that it is happening"
- "It was only later on that I realized that you cannot inform about hiring another intern at the recreational day"
- "I was thinking that perhaps I was just being jealous"

Experiences of EWA

- "I kept saying to myself that I am only imagining things. It was only when other co-workers approached me and asked 'how are you holding up', that I had to start realizing something was wrong."
- "I felt stupid for accepting abuse at work"
- "Sometimes you are not directly involved, but your colleagues are and then so are you"
- "They accused us of being the trouble makers"
- "The person who hired me told me not to befriend my co-workers and not to talk to them. I became friends with them against the managers advice. S/he would approach me and tell that these co-workers were talking bad about me behind my back"

A New Research Agenda

- Develop ways to prevent EWA and to respond to EWA in appropriate ways
- Tools for thinking about ethical leadership which recognizes the complexity of abusive relationships
- Emphasis on responsibility for the well-being in the organization in positive ways
- "We should do something about it but we do not have the time."
- "I got only emotional support from work safety representative in terms of whether we will take this case forward, but we were both insecure whether it is worth the fight."

- Got interested? Please get in touch with us:

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- THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENDANCE!