

Work, Disability, Women, Youth and mature workers

Prevention of Occupational Health Burden – Is it realisable?

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Wahida Mohamed





- Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) burden or disparity is unjust practice that leads to the bearing of a disproportionate adverse OSH burden on some worker groups.
- It refers to the unequal distribution of adverse work-related safety and health outcomes across marginalised worker groups such as women, youth, mature workers and persons living with disability.
- OSH burden is related to the level of power imbalance between types of worker groups. It includes discrimination, harassment, abuse, and bullying.
- The perpetrator can be an organization, a supervisor, a co-worker, a customer/client or even emanate from within the marginalized worker groups themselves.



- Illegal discrimination based on age or ageism, disproportionately affects younger workers in their 20s and older workers above 50.
- The youth in the work place or Millennial is a buzzword that has certainly oversaturated our conversations.
- Yet a truism exists: 'the business of business is relationships; the business of life is human connection, the business of the Millennial is connection and the business of mature workers is long term relationships'.
- Are there any OSH workplace Safeguards, that can be protect the Millennial and the older less tech agile mature worker from ageism?
- Is it absolutely necessary to have statements in our job adverts such as '15 years' experience', 'enthusiastic young people', 'recent graduates' because we want to use them as an exclusivity criteria? Is it possible to keep the date of birth outside of the recruitment processes especially avoiding the temptation to equate it to experience?
- Is it possible to take affirmative action towards youthful 'inexperienced' workers and mature workers?



- Sexual harassment is a very common form of adverse OSH burden that includes sexist behaviour, sexual hostility, unwanted sexual attention, and sexual coercion.
- Were the 'Me too' and 'Time's Up' Movements a one off, women only issue? Is it ok to archive this worldwide dialogue under – 'good to know –will never happen here – will never happen to us - will never happen to me' folder?
- Do our workplaces have a policy on sexual harassment developed by all staff - that applies equally to all both on and off the work place premises?
- Is there a grievance and disciplinary procedure that describes who to turn to? Are managers trained on handling such sensitive issues? Does the procedure ensure confidentiality and impartiality? Is it fair? Does it address the complaint promptly and appropriately? If such a policy does not exist at our workplaces, do you think it is time it did? If it does exist is it time for an upgrade to incorporate lessons learnt from the 'Me Too' and 'Time's up' movements?



- Emotional abuse includes "the silent treatment", which purposefully ignores the needs or communication of another person and quietly says, "You are not important enough to acknowledge. Do our workplaces make reasonable adjustments to ensure that workers living with disability aren't subject to this 'silent treatment' so much so that they are substantially disadvantaged in doing their jobs?"
- Do these reasonable adjustments begin and end by the installation of a wheelchair ramp, a special washroom and one 'never available designated' parking spot? Or do they stretch to include accommodative recruitment processes and working environments?
- Workplace bullying is another component of adverse OSH burden that persons with disability and all of the subjects of this discussion can face. This is mutating to include cyber bullying. Do our organisations have an approach to counter cyber bullying? That describes what is unacceptable behaviour across all electronic media?



The discussion we are now about to have is aimed at eliciting thought and actions that will enable us to make the prevention of occupational health burden realisable for persons living with Disability, Women, Youth and mature workers. It revolves around the questions that appeared in the previous slides.



Discussion: Youth and Mature Workers

- What are the OSH workplace Safeguards, that can be used to protect the Millennial and mature worker from ageism?
- How can the negative connotation attached to the words millennial and mature workers be countered?
- If statements such as '10 years' experience', 'enthusiastic young people', 'recent graduates' are excluded from our job adverts will our organizations be at any disadvantage ?
- Is it possible to keep the date of birth outside of the recruitment processes and only use it to confirm that candidates are legally permitted to work?
- What type of affirmative action can be taken towards encouraging the youthful inexperienced workers and mature workers to apply for Jobs and grow in their roles as opposed to pushing them out?

Discussion: Women

- Do our sexual harassment grievance and disciplinary procedures describe who to turn to? What if the alleged perpetrator is the person we are meant to turn to? What needs to be done?
- How can managers be trained on handling such sensitive issues? Is there a need for everyone on the workforce to be trained? Are there any such training opportunities available in Kenya?
- How can our procedures ensure confidentiality and impartiality? Can they be fair to all concerned parties? How can we ensure that they address the complaint promptly and appropriately?
- Are there any lessons that we can draw from the 'Me Too' and 'Time's up' movements to incorporate into our OSH guidelines?

Discussion: Persons living with disability

- How can we reasonably adjust and make recruitment processes accommodative to persons living with disability?
- How can we improve work scheduling to allow persons living with disability and those recovering from mental illness return to work?;
- What other reasonable adjustments apart from the wheelchair ramp, special washroom and 'never available' parking spot can we incorporate at our workplaces to support persons living with disability?
- What is our approach to prevent and counter cyber bullying?

Thank You

It only takes one person to make prevention of occupational health burden for youth, mature workers, women and persons living with disability realisable.

Please let that person be you.