

- Work environment

Managing anger in the workplace

The Sun (Malaysia) · 28 Apr 2022 · 8 · By Dr Sheikh Ali Azzran Dr Sheikh Ali Azzran is a senior lecturer at UiTM Shah Alam. Comments: letters@thesundaily.com

THE sheer speed of the modern world has made our lives more miserable than ever before.

The workplace has been piling up with endless work.

More often than not, we tend to make complaints that seem trivial, where no one wants to admit that we could not take the heavy workplace pressure.

Work overload often ends in employees sacrificing their personal time, interests and aspirations to meet the demands of the workplace, rendering them as workaholics.

Getting things done requires pressure, effort and energy to focus while being patronised, belittled, manipulated, overloaded and abused is often the case for those on the receiving end.

The new norm, coupled with the advent of technology, has doubled the workload of what is humanly possible.

The endless juggle of work and life has caused fatigue, burnout, illness and powerlessness, leading to absenteeism and organisational inefficiency.

More often than not, employees complain about the heavy workloads.

This approach only makes things worse as it makes them appear wimpy and incompetent, demonstrating that they lack the strong will and hardiness to cope with the “normal” pressures of a modern workplace and therefore, leading them to claim they are suffering a mental issue.

The fact is, the struggle at the workplace seems to be a vicious cycle where employees are now more likely to succumb to the circumstances and obey rather than be outspoken about the situation.

This nuisance will eventually accumulate into frustration and anger that is turned inward.

Thanks to technology the workplace is literally and constantly in the wake of our everyday life, trying to live up to the constant intrusion call of duty.

The abusive working culture has become vicious, masked by the emotional labour of abusive working relationships and repressed anger.

According to several bodies of studies, an abusive workplace tends to accelerate high turnover intentions, work-family conflicts and psychological distress, thus, suppressing creativity, decreasing job performance and satisfaction, and the subordinate's trust.

Above all, the sheer amount of tension and bodily stress will eventually turn into a sudden venting of anger with words and actions that often make the situation much worse – harming work relationships, and most importantly, one's health in the long run.

An expert study shows that when a person experiences anger, a specific part of the brain releases stress hormones throughout the body and organs, consequently risking heart disease and high blood pressure.

On the other hand, holding back anger can lead to mental illness, including depression.

When anger is ignored, it will not go away but only get stronger and cause severe problems.

If left unchecked, it decreases the production of serotonin (the happy chemical) in the brain and will intensify the chances of angry and aggressive behaviour.

There are several ways to reduce anger in the workplace, including training about aggression, conflict resolution and assertiveness courses, for instance, using humour (not sarcasm) to ease the tense situation and writing down a journal (an angry journal) about what has gone wrong.

Better communication and strong positive social support helps to deal with emotional problems that could be caused by anger.

To sum up, the sheer speed of the modern workplace coupled with the advance in technology has contributed to the miserable quality of life for many employees.

The constant juggle of work and family life has consequently escalated tense situations that often lead to anger at the workplace.

Accordingly, the lack of equilibrium affects family members and friends, and intensifies workplace hostility.

A proactive initiative from the government and NGO needs measurable steps to assess the everincreasing anger issue in the modern workplace in order to promote a healthy and supportive environment, where employees can communicate openly about their impressions and feelings of their workplace.