HOW TO MITIGATE RISKS OF BULLYING INVASION WHILE CREATING ORGANIZATION’S FUTURE UNDER HIGH UNCERTAINTY?

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Organizations are constantly reinventing themselves and going through continuous organizational changes what, if mismanaged, can result in bullying. If bullying is mismanaged it can result in disfunctioning organizational processes. The main aim of this research is to develop theoretical framework on how to mitigate the risks of bullying invasion while creating organization’s future under high uncertainty. The theoretical analysis of organization’s future creation and that of bullying in a context of high uncertainty is undertaken. It is revealed that to cope with the potential “side effects” of continuous strategic changes, organizations need to institutionalize bullying, ensure effective information sharing and communication.

Key words: strategic management, strategy creation, bullying, uncertainty.
JEL Codes: M12, M14, M19.

1. Introduction

Uncertainty is a defining factor in systemic organizational and strategic management failures that create disfunctioning in interpersonal relationships among stakeholders, i.e. employees, partners, customers. These failures can result in bullying. Uncertainty, being itself a very complex phenomena, is usually linked and analysed from the perspectives of investments, decision making or these of psychological, communication and organizational behaviour. Thus, the long term investment and strategic decision making, as decisions on the future of organizations are the source of upcoming changes in organization that creates certain level uncertainty.

Heading towards uncertainty demands for more human effort and resources to cope with it. The mismanagement of the transition between different levels of uncertainty can become reasons of disruption in vertical and horizontal organizational interpersonal relationships. There is a double problem faced by organizations. While uncertainty is driving organizations for continuous mobilization of their efforts for its future creation and development, the effort is needed to mitigate the risks of organizational climate deterioration that can result in bullying. Changes in organizations, planned or unplanned, generating real or foreseen threats, are sources of psychosocial stress. The underestimation of potential stress can lead to bullying.
The main aim of this research is to develop theoretical framework on how to mitigate the risks of bullying invasion while creating organization’s future. The scientific literature review is undertaken in order to come to the theoretical explanation of the research problem.

2. Strategic management and uncertainty

The increasing uncertainty in strategic management can be explained by the theory of cosmic evolution. According the theory (Halevy, 2005) where the world is becoming more and more complex due to the forces of individualization and integration. While the appearance of objects is the result of individualization forces, the increasing complexity of interrelationship among these objects is the result of integration forces. In stable environment, to achieve its strategic goals, the organization needs just to launch its functioning. In dynamic environment the organization’s behaviour becomes contingent to its environment. Management of learning and knowledge becomes indispensable in high uncertainty environment, where the organization is constantly interacting and even co-creating with the environment. Organizations need to find out ways to deal with uncertainty (Collis, 1992) and even to measure it (Bucuko, 1994). To be successful in a complex environment the organization must respond to it by embracing the complexity. The organization must reinvent itself, experiment and be agile (Sull, 2015; Reeves, 2015; Govindarajan, 2016), must invent and be flexible (Brown, 2015; Collis, 2016) and to cope with it while being a part of the global network.

3. Strategy creation

The creation of organization’s future starts with the vision and is followed by the development of strategic plan in a way depending upon the level of environmental uncertainty (White, 1998). In high uncertainty the strategy creation is a process of conceptualization, while the strategy is emerging one or of symbolic pattern, where decentralization, disseminating autonomy and independence are predominant. In the first case, strategy creation is done by taking individual responsibility and risks, while, in the second case, managers are drawing the main guidelines of the strategy and leaving the rest to be decided by individuals or groups. Strategy creation in low uncertainty environment is undertaken in rational and trans-active ways, where managers are formulating the strategy and, in the first case, need to direct human behaviour, or, in the second case, need to empower human learning and development. It could be stated that in high uncertainty strategy formulation is becoming the real group work and its results depend on the depth of discussion on the strategy and its success factors (decisions). Future creation becomes a continuous organizational projects, the source of which is continuous discussion (Hamel, 1994) and action.
4. Bullying as a factor and outcome of organizational climate

Scholars point out free factors being reasons of bullying: victims, bullying individuals and the organization itself are factors that creates conditions for bullying to develop inside an organization. D. Zapf (2000) has identified several reasons of bullying: the organization, group, terrorist, search of victim. If individual feel itself as a part of the group, the risk of bullying is lower (Escartin, 2013). Positive organizational climate, encouragement of job involvement, managers’ decision that protects individual dignity and interpersonal relationships are factors that creates bullying preventing environment.

The link between bullying and organizational climate is ambiguous. If organizational climate is a factors that can cause bullying (Vartia-Vaanann, 1996; 2003; Zapf, 1996; Resch, 1997; Rayner, 2002; Meschkat, 2002; Premer, 2002, Litzcke, 2005; Heames, 2006), bullying can damage organizational climate. While organizational climate is improving, bullying is decreasing and while bullying is increasing, organizational climate is degrading (Vveinhardt, 2012). That reveals that bullying is linked to social and psychological environment and while improving it the interpersonal relationships among employees can improve.

5. Uncertainty as bullying defining factor

Analysis of bullying reveals that uncertainty increases bullying and the perception of uncertainty level by the victim. R. Adams et al. (2009) identified procedural uncertainty that generate distrust in work organization and activities. Ambiguous rules and uncertainty incite environment that is favourable for open conflicts among employees (Katrinli, 2010). Trust decreases the complexity of social interrelationships and life’s uncertainty (Olsen, 2008) and organizational changes, especially in case they are not properly managed, increase distrust and risk of conflicts.

Several scholars (for example, Zapf, 1999; Einarsen, 2000; Duffy, 2007; and others) researching on bullying, point out specific organizational uncertainties that escalates bullying. E. Baillien and H. De Witte (2009) have linked bullying with organizational changes and perceived insecurity by employees. They think that role conflicts, insecurity, work load, ambiguity of roles, frequency of conflicts, social support of co-workers and social leaderships are linked to bullying. K. Van Heugten (2010) has noticed that stressful, high expectation driving environment together with the lack of employees and role conflicts can generate bullying. P. Bordia et al. (2006) have stated that rumours can be defined as symbols of employees concerns about organizational changes and can be used as psychological terrorism instrument (Leymann, 1990; 1993).

According D. Zapf et al. (1996) organizational factors are the main reasons of bullying. It is found (for example, Knor, 1995; Zapf, 2010; Baele, 2011) that bullying in an organization is dependent on managers’ position and behaviour, work organ-
ization system and management failures. However, it should be noticed that there are no systemic studies on interrelationships between uncertainty and bullying.

Organizational factors do not eliminate individual deviated behaviour and social context; however, it can generate favourable conditions for that kind behaviour and for its expansion. Mismanaged crises and changes in organizations increase uncertainty. In order to regain stability some individuals can undertake unfair actions against their colleagues. The mismanagement in terms of management culture, role definition, role conflicts, ineffective communication, and insecurity, undefined rules of competition, control system, rotation and work load can increase perception of uncertainty and create favourable conditions for unfair and abusive behaviour. In these cases it is better to institutionalize the bullying drawing the clear line between that is acceptable and non-acceptable in an organizations. The institutionalization lowers the potential for interpretations, abuses, draws the guidelines to recognize bullying behaviour and proposes preventive and ex-post measures to cope with it.

6. Conclusions

1. The increasing interdependence across supply chain increases uncertainty and the risk of bullying.
2. To cope with uncertainty there is the need to integrate successfully supply chain.
3. To cope with high uncertainty organizations need to implement effective information management, especially information sharing, and communication.
4. In high uncertainty organization enter the process of continuous changes followed by continuous changes in its state toward their preferred future. The transition from one state to another itself creates uncertainty. Employees of organizations start feeling continuous uncertainty, insecurity that can result in bullying.
5. To cope with the potential “side effects” of continuous strategic changes, organizations need to institutionalize bullying, ensure effective information sharing and communication.
6. The research results should be considered with caution as they are generated through theoretical analysis and would need to be supported by empirical studies of organizations coping with acceleration of bullying in the process of their strategic changes.

References


KAIP VALDYTI MOBINGO RIZIKĄ, KURIANT ORGANIZACIJOS ATEITĮ DIDELIO NEAPIBRĖŽTUMO APLINKOJE?

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Santrauka


Raktiniai žodžiai: strateginiai pokyčiai, strategijos kūrimas, mobingas, neapibrėžtumas. JEL kodai: M12, M14, M19.