

Backstabbing bosses and callous co-workers: An examination of the experience of working with a psychopath.

Very little research has been conducted on the phenomenon of corporate psychopathy or victims of psychopaths. This study was one of the first to take a victimcentric approach to study how psychopaths behave in a workplace.

The purpose of the study was to better understand the effects (mental, physical, financial, social) of working with an individual who possesses psychopathic traits. We also wanted to determine how psychopaths interact with their peers in a work environment.

Several research questions were created prior to data collection to help understand the experience of working with a psychopathic colleague. Based on these questions, we found:

- 1) Emotional harm was the most common type of harm reported by participants, followed by physical consequences as a result of working with the psychopath, and financial harm.
- 2) The psychopath most often used relational manipulation to harm their colleagues. This refers to any social means used to undermine or control the victim and included behaviours such as: lying, manipulation, deceit, spreading rumours, public humiliation and turning colleagues against one another.
- 3) Most participants had a good first impression of the psychopath and described him or her as charismatic, outgoing, sociable, engaging, good looking, and articulate.
- 4) Most participants suspected they worked with a psychopath after witnessing the psychopath interact with others in the workplace. Others knew their colleague was a psychopath after being victimized or researching the behaviours they observed.
- 5) Most participants reported receiving support from their friends and family. Receiving support from work colleagues was the second most common source of support.
- 6) Emotional support was the most common type of support received and other types of support included: tangible support, informational support, spiritual support, and financial support.
- 7) Participants with psychopathic superiors have lower job satisfaction than participants with a psychopathic peer or subordinate.
- 8) High rates of workplace bullying, perpetrated by the psychopath, were reported by study participants.

The findings revealed that the experience of working with a psychopath is negative and has the potential to be very emotionally harmful to victims. These findings have important implications for human resource personnel as they emphasize the consequences of employing an individual with psychopathic traits. Almost all survivors reported some level of harm due to their relationship with the psychopath, however, coping and support helped to alleviate some of the effects. The results highlight the heterogeneity present in the experiences of victims of corporate psychopaths.

If you would like more information regarding psychopathy, please visit one of the following websites:

www.lovefraud.com

www.aftermath-surviving-psychopathy.org

www.hare.org

I would like to thank you again for your participation and for bravely sharing your story.