INTRODUCTION

Bullying is three times more likely to occur in “education, social service, and healthcare professions” (as cited in Freedman & Vreven, 2016, p. 727). 40% of librarians are bullied and 49% have witnessed others being bullied (Henry, Eshleman, Croxton, & Moniz, 2018).

Librarians experience incivility on a regular basis (Henry et al., 2018).

Bullying occurs more often to academic and special librarians than librarians in other disciplines (Hak Joon, Geary, & Bielefield, 2018).

Health issues as a result of bullying are common with the highest reported health issues being “stress, anxiety, and depression” (Hak Joon et al., 2018, p.9).

It is not uncommon for librarians who experience harassment to leave for another job (Hak Joon et al., 2018).

Librarians between the ages of 35 to 54 reported more instances of bullying. (Hak Joon et al., 2018, p.9).

SUGGESTIONS AND STRATEGIES

How Can Librarians Improve their Workplace?

• Build a network of support
  • Building a network of people in your workplace, both in the library and outside of it
  • Build a network of people who don’t work in your library/facility
  • Work with your personal support network
  • Don’t remain silent

• Take care of yourself, find what works for you and take the time you need to take care of yourself

How Can Librarians Improve the Profession?

• Expand your networks to include people in other libraries
• Self reflect and hold yourself accountable
• Support other librarians, including those who are just starting or want to change
• Respect other librarians and library staff, acknowledge that everyone has skills and experiences that can contribute to the profession
• Career paths
• Participate in advancing the profession – consider mentoring, consider donating to scholarships, especially for underrepresented librarians
• Before you speak, consider letting those with less power and privilege speak instead

SOLUTIONS

Indifferent leadership passively promotes a toxic environment. Managerial training and support in conflict resolution as well as professional development in ethics, leadership, and mentoring are possible solutions (Henry et al., 2018; Kendrick, 2017).

Fewer than 10% of public and academic libraries surveyed have anti-bullying policies (Hak Joon et al., 2018). A solution is to create an anti-bullying and incivility policies (Freedman & Vreven, 2016; Hak Joon et al., 2018).

The University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee Campus, Central Florida University, Loyola University, Penn State

Look to these for guidance of new policies at your institution.

LESSONS FROM ALLIED HEALTH

• Take action by calling out the behavior. If you feel intimidated, try practicing a script first (Danza, 2018).
• Keep records by documenting each incident. Include: time, date, facts, and witnesses (Danza, 2018).
• Have mandatory education sessions to set expectations of workplace incivility and bullying (Cohen, 2014; Danza, 2018). Professional development education sessions on “assertiveness, conflict management, EI skills, relationship building, and open dialogue” are helpful as well (Crawford et al., 2019, p.154). Incorporate assessment with pre and post education session surveys (Cohen, 2014).

MOVING FORWARD

The allied health literature, especially nursing literature, can offer many insights for librarians to consider as they consider ways to study power and privilege in libraries.

The allied health literature also offers examples of how to address bullying and mobbing in a female dominated professional field.

Librarians need to examine their personal practices to better understand how they can build the profession into one that is more open, more supportive, and more diverse.

Library leadership has a major role to play in creating equitable and welcoming working environments and needs to do the necessary work to improve the workplace, and hold themselves accountable.

It is not enough for librarians, and library leadership, to discuss and write about the negative affects of power and privilege there needs to be bold movement within the profession from all levels to not just address these issues, but also to ensure that the profession becomes a profession that is open to everyone and can sustain the diversity and openness the profession needs.

REFERENCES