



OSH QUIZ NIGHT | ANONYMOUS WALL FINDINGS

THE WORKPLACE REALITY

What 55 anonymous response papers reveal about how work is really experienced.

Conducted during OSH Quiz Night | 26 June 2026

Organised by EHS Unplugged Podcast, founded by Vivianne Boaz
Psychosocial Risk & Resilience Partner: Conscious Works Consult

55

RESPONSE PAPERS

528

RECORDED MENTIONS

5

WORKPLACE PROMPTS

The hidden hazard is not always the work itself.
Sometimes, it is the way the workplace works.

THE SIGNAL IN ONE PAGE

Five prompts. One system of work problem.

This was not primarily a wall of complaints about individual resilience. The strongest signals sat in leadership, work design, fairness, communication and security.

55

anonymous response papers

528

mentions across five prompts

49

of 100 immediate-improvement mentions targeted reporting, micromanagement or meetings

EXECUTIVE CONCLUSION

- People are not only being drained by the work.
- They are being drained by how work is led, organized and controlled.
- Burnout and mental health strain are visible outcomes; the stronger prevention opportunity sits upstream in the system of work.

THE PATTERN EMERGING FROM THE SIGNALS:

REPEATED WORK CONDITIONS

Long hours
Poor leadership
Role ambiguity
Job insecurity



LIVED EXPERIENCE

Pressure
Low control
Unfairness
Silence



HARM SIGNALS

Fatigue
Burnout
Mental health strain
Disengagement

- Leadership and organizational justice appeared across every question.
- Long hours, boundary erosion and avoidable work friction were treated as normal practice.
- Job insecurity emerged as the single largest hidden-hazard category.
- The response should begin with risk controls - not another standalone wellbeing activity.

QUESTION 1

What have we normalised at work?

The loudest signal was boundary erosion: long hours, working through lunch, inadequate time off and the cultural glorification of overwork.



Top recorded categories | 100 mentions in this question | Counts are mentions, not respondent percentages

52

of 100
mentions
linked directly
to overwork or
boundary
erosion

EXPERT READING

At least 52 of the 100 mentions related directly to overwork or weakened recovery boundaries. The leading response - long working hours - received three times as many mentions as the next category.

Expert reading: Long hours are a work-design signal, not a badge of commitment. | Recovery cannot be left to individual discipline when the system rewards constant availability.

QUESTION 2

What is one thing that drains people more than work itself?

What drains people most is often not the technical task. It is the politics, ambiguity, communication failures and leadership behaviour surrounding it.



Top recorded categories | 112 mentions in this question | Counts are mentions, not respondent percentages

24

mentions of
favouritism and
office politics -
the leading
workplace
drain

EXPERT READING

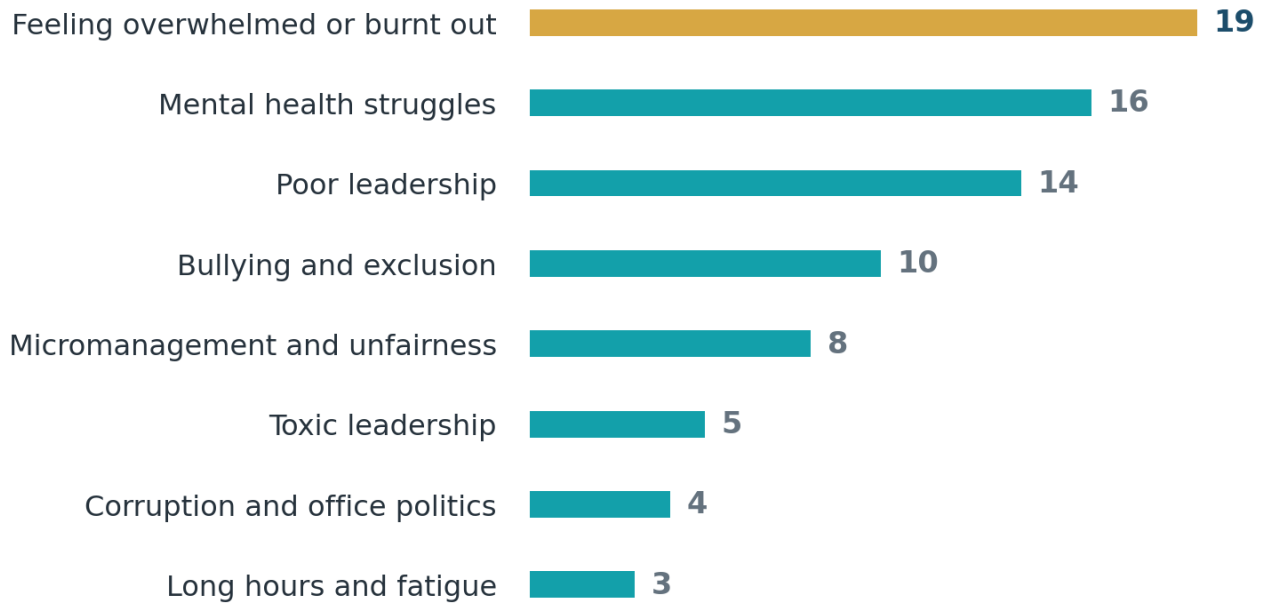
Favouritism and office politics led this question, followed by poor communication and unclear expectations. Together, these conditions point to organisational justice and role clarity - not employee coping - as primary control opportunities.

Expert reading: Social friction consumes attention and trust. | Ambiguity turns ordinary work into avoidable cognitive load.

QUESTION 3

A workplace reality nobody talks about...

Overwhelm, burnout and mental health struggles were already visible. The silence also sat around workplace conditions such as poor leadership, bullying, exclusion, unfairness and toxic behaviours.



Top recorded categories | 105 mentions in this question | Counts are mentions, not respondent percentages

35

mentions
directly naming
overwhelm,
burnout or
mental health
struggles

EXPERT READING

The findings separate harm signals from workplace hazards. Burnout, overwhelm and mental health strain show the impact. Leadership behaviour, bullying, exclusion and work demands indicate where prevention must begin.

Expert reading: Psychological harm may be visible to workers before it appears in formal data. | If people cannot name the cause safely, organisations will keep treating the symptom.

QUESTION 4

If we stopped doing this tomorrow, work would improve immediately...

Participants did not ask first for more benefits. They asked for less friction, less control theatre and fewer demands that add little value.



Top recorded categories | 100 mentions in this question | Counts are mentions, not respondent percentages

THE CONTROL OPPORTUNITY

Nearly half of all immediate-improvement mentions focused on excessive reporting, micromanagement or endless meetings. The answer is not a fashionable 'meeting-free Friday'. It is to redesign decision rights, information needs, reporting purpose and manager accountability so unnecessary work disappears.

Quick wins matter - but only when they remove a hazard rather than relocate it.

QUESTION 5

The biggest hidden hazard at work is?

Job insecurity emerged as the largest hidden-hazard category, followed by chronic stress, mental health struggles and poor leadership.



Top recorded categories | 111 mentions in this question | Counts are mentions, not respondent percentages

22

mentions of job
insecurity and
uncertainty -
the largest
hidden-hazard
category

EXPERT READING

Insecurity is both a stressor and a force multiplier. When people fear losing work, they may tolerate excessive demands, remain silent about harmful behaviour and avoid using formal reporting routes.

Expert reading: Uncertainty affects health, voice and perceived control. | A speaking-up system cannot outperform an environment of fear.

WHAT THE WALL IS REALLY TELLING US

Five connected psychosocial risk domains.

The responses should not be managed as isolated complaints. They form a risk architecture: conditions in the system of work that reinforce one another.

01	LEADERSHIP & JUSTICE	Toxic leadership, favouritism, politics, unfairness and micromanagement weaken trust and increase relational risk.
02	DEMANDS & RECOVERY	Long hours, overwork, working through lunch and limited time off show that recovery boundaries are being eroded.
03	CLARITY & CHANGE	Unclear roles, weak communication, constant change and poor planning create avoidable cognitive and emotional load.
04	VOICE & PROTECTION	Fear of communicating, bullying, exclusion and gaslighting suggest that speaking-up routes may not feel safe or effective.
05	SECURITY & SUPPORT	Job insecurity, low support and financial strain can amplify stress while reducing a worker's ability to challenge harmful conditions.



Burnout is a signal. The system of work is where prevention begins.

THE OSH PROFESSION

The OSH lens must widen.

Psychosocial hazards are not soft issues sitting beside safety. They are workplace hazards created through the design and management of work.

01	FROM VISIBLE HAZARDS to the full experience of work	Safety must also examine how work is organised, led and experienced.
02	FROM STRESS AWARENESS to hazard identification	Long hours, bullying, role ambiguity, insecurity and poor leadership must be named as risk conditions.
03	FROM WELLBEING ACTIVITIES to organisational controls	Support matters, but it cannot replace changes to harmful working conditions.
04	FROM INDIVIDUAL COPING to system accountability	Workers should not carry responsibility for surviving risks the organisation has authority to control.

WHY THIS MATTERS

A modern OSH system must be able to identify psychosocial hazards, consult workers, implement organizational controls and test whether those controls are reducing risk. Awareness without control is simply better vocabulary for the same exposure.

The future of OSH lies not only in managing the hazards we can see, but in recognizing and controlling the conditions that can cause harm before that harm becomes visible.

ABOUT THE WORKPLACE REALITY ANONYMOUS WALL

A strong signal - not a prevalence study.

The value of this exercise lies in what it makes visible. Its limits matter just as much as its findings.

METHOD

- 55 anonymous response papers.
- Five open-ended workplace-reality prompts.
- 528 hand-tallied mentions across the five questions.
- Participants could provide more than one response.
- Counts describe mentions, not respondent percentages.

IMPORTANT LIMITATIONS

- A rapid qualitative pulse, not a representative risk assessment.
- Examples under each question may have influenced some responses.
- Some tally categories combined distinct ideas, limiting precision.
- The signals warrant verification; they do not establish incident rates or causation.

HOW TO USE THESE FINDINGS



TECHNICAL GROUNDING

The interpretation applies a psychosocial risk-management lens: identify hazards in the design and management of work, assess their effects, implement organisational controls, involve workers and review effectiveness. This is consistent with ISO 45003 and WHO/ILO guidance.

KENYA'S EMERGING DIRECTION - These findings also align with the direction of Kenya's Draft Code of Practice on Psychosocial Hazard Management (2025), which places psychosocial hazards within workplace risk management. At the time of publication, the Code remained a draft and was not an approved or gazetted legal instrument

ISO 45003:2021 - [Psychological health and safety at work](#)

WHO - [Guidelines on mental health at work](#)

WHO/ILO - [Mental health at work policy brief](#)

CONSCIOUS WORKS CONSULT

Prepared by Alice Njambi | Psychosocial Risk & Systems Strategist

alice@consciousworks.co.ke | +254 721 589266 | www.consciousworks.co.ke

Healthier Work. Healthier People. Stronger Business.