

Definitions of violence and harassment at work

Violence at work

There is violence at work when the behaviour (attitudes, actions, or words) of an individual or group of individuals intentionally or unintentionally has an adverse effect on the physical or psychological safety or well-being of another individual or group of individuals.

INVOLVES A WIDE RANGE OF INDIVIDUALS:

- managers and employees;
- clients and their loved ones;
- volunteers;
- subcontractors;
- others.

CHARACTERISTICS

- actions or behaviour that is insidious or sneaky;
- violent gestures and remarks.

HARMFUL EFFECTS ON

- personal safety;
- physical or psychological integrity.

EXAMPLES

- saying hurtful words (insults);
- grabbing someone by the throat;
- punching or kicking someone;
- shoving someone;
- throwing things at someone.

Harassment at work

The different types of harassment

- psychological harassment;
- discriminatory harassment;
- abuse of power and authority;
- sexual violence and harassment.

COMMON CHARACTERISTICS

- vexatious behaviour that is degrading, offensive, and humiliating;
- behaviour that is generally repeated*, hostile or unwanted.

HARMFUL EFFECTS ON

- dignity;
- physical or psychological integrity.

IMPACT

- leads to unpleasant working conditions.

* A single act that affects an individual's dignity, health or safety may constitute harassment.

Psychological harassment

Any vexatious behaviour in the form of repeated and hostile or unwanted conduct, verbal comments, actions or gestures, that affects an employee's dignity or psychological or physical integrity and that results in a harmful work environment for the employee. For greater certainty, psychological harassment includes such behaviour in the form of such verbal comments, actions or gestures of a sexual nature. A single serious incidence of such behaviour that has a lasting harmful effect on an employee may also constitute psychological harassment."

EXAMPLES

- continuously discrediting or criticizing a person or his or her work, isolating a person or preventing the person from expressing himself or herself;
- undermining, threatening or assaulting a person; and
- offensive words or gestures.

Mobbing

Mobbing refers to a series of hostile remarks and behaviour, expressed or engaged in over a fairly long period of time by one or more persons directed at a third person who is spacegoat.

EXAMPLES

- preventing the person from expressing himself or herself;
- isolating the person;
- disparaging the person;
- discrediting the person; and
- compromising the person's health.

Discriminatory harassment

Behaviour characterized by repeated and unsolicited words, actions or gestures of a vexatious or contemptuous nature, that could either undermine the dignity or the physical or psychological integrity of the individual or lead to unfavourable working conditions or dismissal, based on any of the grounds enumerated in [section] 10 of the Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms.”

GROUNDS

The grounds enumerated in the Charter are race, colour, sex, gender identity or expression, pregnancy, sexual orientation, civil status, age except as provided by law, religion, political convictions, language, ethnic or national origin, social condition, a handicap or the use of any means to palliate a handicap.

EXAMPLES

- racist, sexist, homophobic or intolerant comments intentionally made toward an employee;
- racist jokes;
- sexist behaviour and stereotypes; and
- intolerant gestures (for example, in relation to LGBT+).

Abuse of power or authority

Abuse of authority is a form of harassment that occurs when a person makes undue use of the authority or power inherent in his or her position with the intention of jeopardizing a person’s job, hindering a person’s job performance, endangering his or her livelihood or interfering in his or her career in any other way. It includes intimidation, threats, blackmail and coercion.

SPECIFIC CHARACTERISTICS

- behaviour that falls under this type of harassment involves abuse of trust or abuse of power or authority toward another person;
- mainly involves relationships between executives and employees; and
- may also occur between co-workers.

EXAMPLES

- constantly interrupting an employee;
- ignoring an employee’s presence and only addressing a third party;
- treating one employee differently than all the others; and
- putting an employee in a humiliating or embarrassing situation, deliberately or out of neglect.

Sexual violence and harassment

Behaviour characterized by [generally] repeated and unsolicited sexually connotative [remarks], acts or gestures that could undermine the dignity or the physical or psychological integrity of the individual or lead to unfavorable working conditions.” A single serious incidence can also constitute sexual harassment.

SPECIFIC CHARACTERISTICS

The remarks, acts or gestures have a sexual connotation.

EXAMPLES

- words, whistling, leering, gestures with sexual connotations;
- sexual advances or propositions, sexist or sexual jokes;
- sexual emails or texts, posting of pornographic material; and
- various unsolicited acts up to and including assault.