Incidence of workplace bully may be more rampant than other forms of harassment at work such as sexual harassment (Saunders, et al 2007)

You may be bullied or indulged in workplace bully

Workplace bullying is increasingly being recognized as a serious problem in society today and it is a problem that is difficult to define and evaluated (Cowie, et al. 2002)

“workplace bullying” is a category of harassing behaviour that employees may be subjected to at any stage of their career, regardless of their membership in a protected class based on gender, ethnicity, age, etc. (Saunders, et al 2007).
What is workplace bully

- Bullying is usually defined as a subset of aggressive behavior, in which the aggression is repeated, and in which there is an imbalance of power such that it is difficult for the victim to defend him/herself (Olweus, 1999 cited in Cowie, et al. 2002).
- Important components in formulating work bullying definition:
  1. targets experience negative behaviour;
  2. behaviours are experienced persistently;
  3. targets experience some harm, either psychological or physical;
  4. targets perceive they have less power than the bully and, thus have difficulty defending themselves; and

Types of workplace bullying

Cowie, et al., (2002) – suggest various types of workplace bullying behaviors:
- threat to professional status (e.g., belittling opinion, public professional humiliation, and accusation regarding lack of effort);
- threat to personal standing (e.g., name-calling, insults, intimidation, and devaluing with reference to age);
- isolation (e.g., preventing access to opportunities, physical or social isolation, and withholding of information);
- overwork (e.g., undue pressure, impossible deadlines, and unnecessary disruptions)
- destabilization (e.g., failure to give credit when due, meaningless tasks, removal of responsibility, repeated reminders of blunders, and setting up to fail).
- ‘relational bullying’ (Crick & Grotpet, 1995), in which the bully damages the victim’s friendship networks,
- ‘indirect bullying’ perpetrated by a third party, such as rumor spreading.
Examples of workplace bullying

- **Physical bullying or harassment**
  Hitting, slapping, any unwelcome physical contact. Assault or attempted assault;

- **Verbal bullying or harassment**
  Yelling, screaming, abuse, offensive language, insults, name calling and making threats;

- **Non-verbal bullying or harassment**
  Mimicking or making fun of the attributes or personality of another person; Displaying written or pictorial material which degrades or offends a worker or group of workers; Sending offensive or threatening texts messages or emails, leaving offensive notes where the person is sure to see them.

- **Professional bullying or harassment**
  - Isolating workers from normal work interaction, training and development or career opportunities;
  - Continually ignoring or dismissing a colleague or employee's contribution in meetings or discussions, belittling a colleague or employee's opinions, persistent, unreasonable criticism of work performance;
  - Undermining or sabotaging work performance, deliberately withholding work-related information or resources, or intentionally supplying the wrong information;
  - Unexplained job changes, meaningless tasks or tasks beyond a person's skills, failure to give credit where due;
  - Denying opportunities for training, promotion or interesting work;
  - Overwork – unnecessary pressure or impossible deadlines and under work – creating a feeling of uselessness;
  - Unreasonable “administrative sanctions” such as undue delay in processing applications for training, refusal of leave or payment of wages;
  - The threat or use of inappropriate performance review;
  - The threat of dismissal or other severe punishment for no reason;

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What is NOT bullying

- **Workplace** harassment and bullying *does not* include:
  - Constructive feedback
  - Counselling on work performance or work-related behaviour that may include critical comments indicating performance deficiencies
  - Occasional differences of opinion
  - Non aggressive conflicts
  - Reasonable management action

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Effects of workplace bully

- Targets/victim may suffer:
  - stress and anxiety about work, nervousness, fearfullness, depression, loss of confidence, lowered job satisfaction and decreased organizational commitment

- Target/victims may:
  - Quit
  - Engage in deviant behavior (Bennett, et al 2009)
Protection accorded on workplace bully

- Duty of care of employer under the common law
- May amount of misconduct and lead to dismissal.
  - Employee may also claim for constructive dismissal
- OSHA Act 1994 – duty to provide safe and healthy environment

- Bennett J. Tepper, Jon C. Carr, Denise M. Breaux, Sharon Geider, Changya Hu, Wei Hua, (2009) Abusive supervision, intentions to quit, and employees' workplace deviance: A power/dependence analysis, Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, 109(2), 156-167
- Saunders