

Bullying in the workplace



Bullying is a form of harassment. Bullying tends to have a substantial impact: about 45% of employees who are targeted by bullies suffer from stress and its related health problems. These include cardiovascular problems, weakened immune systems, anxiety, and occasionally, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

The South African Labour Guide states that harassment in the workplace is often associated with unfair discrimination. Harassment can exist between any two people and can be as subtle as overloading someone with work. In most cases, it is a misuse of power, victimisation, degradation, and unfair treatment.

The following are signs that you may be a victim of bullying at work:

- The thought of going to work makes you feel miserable, depressed, anxious, or even physically ill.
- Your mistakes are constantly being used against you.
- You are aware of gossip and rumours about you.
- You feel your work is being sabotaged.
- Someone else often takes credit for your work.

The South African Labour Guide states that everyone has the right to be treated with dignity

and respect in the workplace. Furthermore, employers are duty-bound to protect their employees from harassment and the company should have a policy to deal with harassment. It further outlines the following steps for dealing with harassment:

1. Keep a careful written record of all incidents.
2. Using this information, write a request to the person involved to cease their behaviour.
3. Write a formal email of complaint to your manager, or their manager if it is your manager at fault.
4. If you belong to a union, seek union assistance.
5. Finally, you can contact the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation, and Arbitration (CCMA) if your efforts to alert your employers to the situation yield no results.

You have a right to be well-treated at work and any form of harassment should not be tolerated by your employer. Take the necessary steps to improve your mental and physical health.