WORKPLACE INTIMIDATION AND ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT IN DEPOSIT MONEY BANKS IN RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA

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A B S T R A C T	K E Y W O R D S
This study investigated the impact of workplace intimidation on organizational commitment among 200 randomly selected employees from ten deposit money banks in Rivers State, Nigeria. Using a cross-sectional survey design and questionnaire method, data was collected and analyzed using the Kendall Tau_b statistical technique. Results indicated a negative correlation between intimidation as an impression management strategy and organizational commitment dimensions (affective, normative, and continuance). It was concluded that such intimidation significantly undermines employees' commitment to the organization. The study recommends discouraging practices like verbal abuse, threats, sexual harassment, and other negative behaviors to promote commitment. Additionally, it suggests severe consequences for offenders to deter such behavior and presents theoretical, managerial, and practical implications for reducing intimidation and enhancing organizational commitment in deposit money banks.	Workplace Intimidation as an Impression Management Strategy, Organisational Commitment, Affective Commitment, Normative Commitment, Continuance Commitment, Deposit Money Banks, Rivers State.

Introduction

CONTEXT OF THE PROBLEM

Each organization strives to foster the engaged employee, described as "the relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organisation" (Mowday et al., 1982: 27), or attachment and the inclination to remain within the company (Meyer et Bekker, 2004). Studies indicate that heightened engagement within a company correlates positively with various outcomes such as efficiency, decreased turnover, reduced absenteeism, enhanced productivity, client satisfaction, and corporate citizenship behavior (Judge et al., 2001; Saari et Judge, 2004; Wegge et al., 2007; Meyer & Becker, 2004). Engaged employees who align with the objectives and values of the corporation play a crucial role in amplifying business performance and gaining a competitive edge.

Dinc (2017) states that in the era of globalization, businesses prioritize engaged staff to navigate the intricacies of an ever-evolving economy. All employees bear the responsibility of achieving the

company's objectives, underscoring the significance of dedication for profitability (Dinc, 2017). Consequently, human resource managers emphasize recruiting and retaining skilled and dedicated personnel to secure the company's prosperity (Said & Tanova, 2021).

The factors influencing commitment within organizations include manager conduct, working conditions, and peer influence (Lindawati & Wulani, 2021). Conversely, behaviors such as inequity, favoritism, and harassment contribute to employee disengagement (Fitriastuti et al., 2021). While some leaders resort to coercive tactics, particularly prevalent in sectors like hospitality, to shape employee conduct, questions arise regarding its efficacy in fostering commitment (Ram, 2018). Workplace coercion encompasses various forms of mistreatment, spanning from overt aggression to subtle actions undermining individuals, resulting in adverse effects on both employees and organizations (Eysenck et al., 2007; Ahmad, 2018).
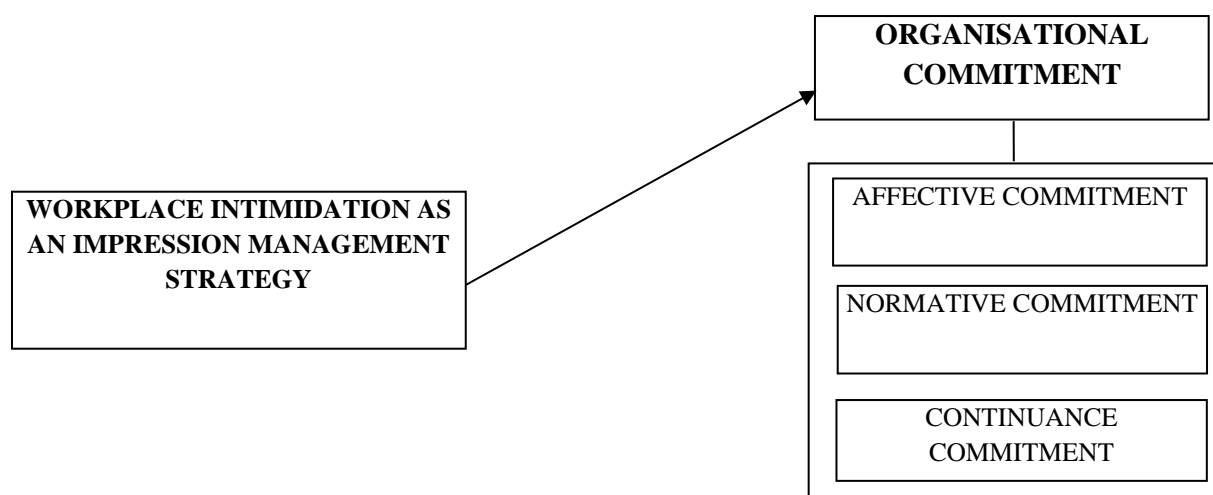
Despite its adverse consequences, workplace coercion may be perceived differently across cultures, as in China and India, where power dynamics and cultural norms influence interpretations (Guo et al., 2015; Mengyun et al., 2018). In certain contexts, coercion, even within family-owned enterprises, is viewed as a strategy to instill commitment (Mengyun et al., 2018). Research also underscores the role of organizational and managerial factors in fostering or discouraging bullying behaviors, emphasizing the necessity of a supportive supervisory climate to alleviate negative workplace dynamics (Dick, 2009). Hence, comprehending the interplay between coercion, organizational commitment, and managerial practices is pivotal for nurturing a healthy work atmosphere.

In their study, Xia and colleagues (2023) explored the role of organizational involvement in mediating the connection between professional envy and the inclination to switch jobs among Chinese clinical nurses. They found that professional responsibility was closely linked to organizational engagement. Asawo and George (2018), after analyzing a sample of 306 employees from Nigeria's six major telecom firms, investigated the correlation between leaders' coercion and impression management (IM) abilities and the emotional engagement of subordinates in the Nigerian telecom sector. They found that threats, admonitions, fears, and feelings of discontent all had a significant albeit minor association with subordinates' emotional involvement.

Existing literature highlights the adverse effects of workplace coercion on both individuals and organizations (Ahmad & Sheehan, 2017; Einarsen & Nielsen, 2015; Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2007; Nielsen & Einarsen, 2012; Samnani & Singh, 2012; Appelbaum et al., 2012). Conversely, research suggests that employee commitment positively influences performance, corporate social responsibility, job satisfaction, and diminishes turnover intentions (Stackhouse et al., 2022; Gul, 2019; Collier & Esteban, 2017; Lovely et al., 2019; Fu & Deshpande, 2014; Shahid & Azher, 2021; Newman et al., 2011). However, the relationship between workplace coercion and organizational commitment remains underexplored, particularly concerning impression management strategies.

To address this void, the current study seeks to examine the connection between workplace coercion as an impression management tactic and organizational commitment within deposit banks in Rivers State.

Conceptual Framework

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                                        │     ORGANISATIONAL       │
                                        │       COMMITMENT         │
                                        └──────────────────────────┘
                                             │
  ┌──────────────────────────┐    ┌──────────────────────────────────┐
  │ WORKPLACE INTIMIDATION AS │    │ ┌──────────────────────────────┐ │
  │ AN IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT  │    │ │   AFFECTIVE COMMITMENT        │ │
  │         STRATEGY          │    │ └──────────────────────────────┘ │
  └──────────────────────────┘    │ ┌──────────────────────────────┐ │
                                   │ │  NORMATIVE COMMITMENT         │ │
                                   │ └──────────────────────────────┘ │
                                   │ ┌──────────────────────────────┐ │
                                   │ │   CONTINUANCE                 │ │
                                   │ │   COMMITMENT                  │ │
                                   │ └──────────────────────────────┘ │
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The conceptual framework for this study is presented in the figure below.

Source: Conceptualized by the Researcher

Figure 1: A conceptual framework that illustrates the hypothesised relationship between workplace intimidation and organisational involvement.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Based on the previously mentioned conceptual framework, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the relationship between workplace intimidation as a strategy for managing impressions and employee devouement in Rivers State banks?

2. How does workplace intimidation work as a strategy for managing perceptions related to normal employee involvement in Rivers State banks?

3. What is the relationship between workplace intimidation as a strategy for managing perceptions and employee engagement in Rivers State banks?

The following hypotheses have been developed based on the conceptual framework and the research questions mentioned above. The goal of this study is to examine the relationship between participation in the organisation and intimidation as a technique for impression control.

Ho1: In Rivers State, there is no significant correlation between employees' active participation in deposit money banks and the use of intimidation as a management technique.

Ho2: There is no significant correlation between the normative workload of employees at Rivers State deposit money institutions and intimidation in impression management.

Ho3: There is no significant correlation between the use of intimidation in the workplace as a strategy for managing impressions and the persistence of employees in Rivers State deposit money banks.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE
WORKPLACE INTIMIDATION

Workplace harassment embodies a intricate range of behaviors conducted by individuals in authoritative roles, such as employers, supervisors, or even colleagues, with the intention of undermining an individual's professional capability or self-assurance. This covert phenomenon, as expounded by Wu et al. (2020), encompasses a spectrum of strategies, including verbal maltreatment, withholding recognition, and deliberately setting individuals up for failure. Such behaviors not only induce acute tension but also erode the victim's self-esteem and effectiveness, ultimately resulting in

significant psychological distress and reduced productivity, as observed by Attell et al. (2017) and Raymond (2023).

Moreover, the adverse impacts of workplace harassment extend beyond the individual level to permeate the broader organizational milieu. Oghojafor et al. (2012) and Owoyemi & Oyelere (2010) shed light on how such conduct contributes to the cultivation of a harmful work atmosphere, hindering healthy social interaction and corroding organizational culture. Distinguishing among the various types of workplace aggressors, ranging from overtly hostile individuals to those who inflict harm through more indirect means, as delineated by sources like indeed.com, is crucial for crafting targeted interventions. By identifying these perpetrators, organizations can implement measures to address their conduct and protect employees from its detrimental consequences.

Furthermore, the repercussions of workplace harassment extend beyond mere psychological distress, manifesting in a variety of physical symptoms, as documented by Eriksen et al. (2001, 2004) and Salin & Hoel (2013). These include migraines, muscular discomfort, and even more severe cardiovascular issues, highlighting the significant toll such hostile environments take on individuals' physical well-being. Additionally, the emotional toll of workplace harassment can escalate to extreme levels, potentially resulting in tragic outcomes such as suicide attempts, as suggested by Aquino & Byzkat (2005) and Einarsen et al. (2009). Such incidents not only devastate the lives of those directly affected but also reverberate throughout the organizational ecosystem, tarnishing its reputation and instilling fear and distrust.

Consequently, the prevalent culture of intimidation within organizations exacts a substantial toll on morale, productivity, and ultimately, the financial bottom line. HOH et al. (2010) and Lutgen-Sandvik et al. (2006) elucidate how it fosters a climate of fear and hostility, leading to absenteeism, high turnover rates, and substandard performance outcomes that incur significant costs for employers.

In particular industries such as hospitality, as highlighted by Chourasia (2023), workplace harassment assumes particularly pernicious dimensions, posing a serious threat to employee well-being and engagement. Consequently, urgent interventions are warranted to foster a safe and supportive work environment conducive to both individual flourishing and organizational success. Understanding the multifaceted impact of workplace harassment is essential for devising comprehensive strategies that not only address its immediate manifestations but also cultivate a culture of respect, dignity, and inclusivity within the workplace.

Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment or dedication, as conceptualized by Mowday, Steers, and Porter (1979), delves into an individual's connection with their workplace, encapsulating emotional investment, commitment to exert effort, and the inclination to maintain their association with the organization. This multidimensional construct encompasses three distinct dimensions: emotional dedication, normative dedication, and continuance dedication, as outlined by Khan et al. (2010) and Akintayo (2010). Emotional commitment entails an affective connection wherein individuals resonate with the organization's values and mission, fostering a sense of belongingness and allegiance. Normative commitment, conversely, is driven by a perceived responsibility to reciprocate the benefits received from the organization, often leading individuals to feel morally obligated to remain part of it. Continuance commitment, as expounded by the same researchers, stems from a pragmatic assessment of the costs associated with leaving the organization, thereby prompting individuals to stay due to the

perceived negative repercussions of departure.

Furthermore, organizational dedication extends beyond mere sentimentality and encompasses tangible manifestations in terms of behavioral displays and attitudes congruent with organizational objectives, as emphasized by Zheng, Sharan, and Wei (2010). Committed individuals demonstrate proactive involvement and alignment with organizational goals, setting them apart from those who may engage in counterproductive behaviors. Ultimately, loyalty and attachment emerge as pivotal facets of organizational dedication, contingent upon the degree of alignment with organizational objectives, as noted by Shastric, Shashi, and Sinha (2010). This alignment reinforces the sense of belonging and fosters a deep-rooted dedication among individuals toward their organization, motivating them to invest their efforts and resources to contribute to its success.

Empirical Review

Scholarly evidence from the earlier research of Tsuno, et al. (2018) shows that the relationship between workplace intimidation as an impression management strategy and organisational commitment from the Japanese context is negative. The researchers noted that though the cultural backgrounds of the Japanese happen to be one that promotes respect for superiors, workplace intimidation as an impression management strategy is not an experience that is palatable to the workers or the Japanese work climate. Based on the above they recommended that all forms of intimidation should be discouraged in order to promote the desired organisational commitment from the employees. Similarly, Rai and Agarwal (2017), found that intimidation in the workplace influences that organization negatively and that the level of organisational commitment will continue to drop for as long as workplace intimidation continues. Furthermore, the researchers noted that intimidation will only increase injustice and intention to leave the organisation.

On their part, Park and Min (2020) found that workplace intimidation as an impression management strategy is the major determinant of employee turnover and hence, concluded that workplace intimidation encourages turnover and discourages organisational commitment. Similarly, Owoyemi, and Oyelere (2010) found that intimidation in the workplace such as employee bullying is an inhibitor to organizational commitment and recommended that organisational commitment can be developed in employees when acts of bullying are avoided. Asawo and George (2018) also found that leaders' intimidation has a weak relationship with organisational and noted that intimidation slightly promotes commitment, but should be used only when needed.

RESEARCH METHODS

The study employed the Kendall Tau_b statistical technique for data analysis. Research design, defined by Baridam (2001) as the framework guiding data collection and analysis, encompasses experimental and quasi-experimental designs. In the quasi-experimental design, the researcher lacks control over elements, fitting for descriptive research in administrative sciences. Employing a cross-sectional survey, as outlined by Setia (2016), involves gathering data from various individuals or groups at a single point to understand a phenomenon, facilitated here by a questionnaire. The study population comprised all deposit money banks in Rivers State, sampled through purposive and random techniques. Purposive sampling ensured representation of desired characteristics, selecting ten banks based on generation, with twenty employees randomly chosen from each bank, totaling two hundred respondents.

Table 1: Sample Distribution of the Deposit Money Banks

S/N	DEPOSIT MONEY BANKS IN RIVERS STATE	NUMBER DISTRIBUTED
	Old Generation Banks	
1	Access Bank Plc	20
2	First Bank of Nigeria	20
3	Ecobank Nigeria Plc	20
4	Union Bank of Nigeria Plc	20
5	United Bank for Africa Plc	20
	New Generation Banks	
6	Globus Bank Limited	20
7	Titan Trust Bank Limited	20
8	Polaris Bank Plc	20
9	TAJ Bank	20
10	Providus Bank	20
	TOTAL	**200**

Source: Field Survey, (2024).

RESEARCH RESULTS

The formulated research hypotheses were examined in this section. Copies of the administered questionnaire were retrieved and the responses collated.

As shown in the table below, the Tau_b values ranges between -1 or +1. The sign of the Tau_b values indicates the direction of the relationship or association between the variables (independent, dependent or moderating variables) being examined. A positive Tau_b value (+1) implies a direct relationship; while a negative Tau_b (1) implies an inverse, negative or indirect relationship. The strength of each relationship depends on the value of the correlation as indicated by the Tau_b value as shown in the table below.

Table 3: Range of Correlation (Tau_b) Values and the Corresponding Level of Association

S/N	Range of tau_b with positive and negative sign values	Strength of Association
1.	$\pm 0.80 - 0.99$	Very Strong Relationship
2.	$\pm 0.60 - 0.79$	Strong Relationship
3.	$\pm 0.40 - 0.59$	Moderate Relationship
4.	$\pm 0.20 - 0.39$	Weak Relationship
5.	$\pm 0.00 - 0.19$	Very Weak Relationship

As shown in the table above, Tau_b value of $\pm 0.00 - 0.19$ implies a very weak correlation; $\pm 0.20 - 0.39$ implies a weak correlation; $\pm 0.40 - 0.59$ implies a moderate correlation; $\pm 0.60 - 0.79$ implies a strong correlation; while $\pm 0.80 - 0.99$ implies a very strong correlation.

The decision criteria for every bivariate relationship at a confidence interval of 95% or significance level of 5% is dependent on the probability value. A $p < 0.05$ implies a rejection of the null hypothesis, while a $p > 0.05$ implies an acceptance of the null hypothesis.

Table 4: Correlation Matrix showing the Relationship between Workplace Intimidation as an Impression Management Strategy and the Measures of Organisation Commitment

			Intimidation	Affective	Normative	Continuance
Kendall's tau_b	Intimidation	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.606**	-.529**	-.281**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000	.000
		N	200	200	200	200
	Affective	Correlation Coefficient	-.606**	1.000	.942**	.490**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000	.000
		N	200	200	200	200
	Normative	Correlation Coefficient	-.529**	.942**	1.000	.468**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.	.000
		N	200	200	200	200
	Continuance	Correlation Coefficient	-.281**	.490**	.468**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.
		N	200	200	200	200

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS Output, 2024

Table 2 above presents the correlation matrix showing the relationships that exist between the variables in this study.

The study examined the impact of workplace intimidation as an impression management strategy on employees' commitment in deposit money banks in Rivers State. The findings from table two above indicated significant negative relationships between workplace intimidation and affective, normative, and continuance commitment. Specifically, workplace intimidation reduced affective, normative, and continuance commitment levels among employees. These results suggest that workplace intimidation negatively affects employees' commitment to their organizations in deposit money banks in Rivers State. (Ho1: $\beta = -0.606$, $p < 0.05$; Ho2: $\beta = -0.529$, $p < 0.05$; Ho3: $\beta = -0.281$, $p < 0.05$).

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study aimed to investigate the impact of workplace intimidation as an impression management strategy on employees' commitment in deposit money banks in Rivers State. It hypothesized that there was no significant relationship between workplace intimidation and employees' affective, normative, and continuance commitment. However, the analysis revealed a strong negative relationship between workplace intimidation and affective commitment, a moderate negative relationship with normative commitment, and a weak negative relationship with continuance commitment. This aligns with previous studies by Asawo and George (2018) and Park and Ono (2017), indicating that workplace intimidation diminishes employees' commitment by creating a toxic work environment.

Managers often believe that employing intimidation tactics will yield submissive responses from employees. However, this study demonstrates that such behavior fosters toxicity in the workplace, leading to decreased commitment and other negative outcomes like job dissatisfaction, increased turnover intentions, conflicts, and reduced productivity. Workplace intimidation not only causes psychological and emotional damage but also results in physical health problems, internal unrest, and diminished performance. Moreover, it contributes to low work morale, absenteeism, turnover, decreased efficiency, poor customer service, and difficulty in talent retention, ultimately imposing significant financial costs and impeding organizational growth.

Workplace intimidation as an impression management strategy profoundly affects employees' commitment levels in deposit money banks in Rivers State. Its negative repercussions extend beyond emotional and psychological harm to tangible consequences such as decreased productivity and increased turnover rates. Recognizing the detrimental impact of such behavior is crucial for organizations to foster healthier work environments and promote employee well-being and commitment.

Based on these findings and conclusion above, it is recommended that:

i.   In order to promote employees' commitment to the organisation in the deposit money banks in Rivers State, employees' intimidation practices and other negative actions or acts of unlawful workplace discrimination that are capable of instilling fear within the work environment should be discouraged and offenders dealt with severely as this will serve as deterrent to others. The primary responsibility of enterprise managers in this regard is to address workplace intimidation as a precursor to cultivating a more supportive working environment.

ii.   At present, management's approach to addressing workplace intimidation primarily hinges upon formal procedures and policies. The implementation of such formalities serves to convey to employees that intimidation is indeed treated seriously and will not be tolerated. Nonetheless, it is unlikely that formal policies and procedures alone will effectively resolve the problem. Policies and procedures serve as reactive measures, activated only after a problem has been identified. Research has demonstrated that victims of workplace intimidation favor proactive and preventive interventions. Moreover, policies and procedures have limited applicability, as they are designed to identify problematic behaviours and subsequently address them after the fact. They fall short in targeting the root causes of workplace intimidation. Consequently, managerial strategies that are truly effective should surpass reliance on policies and procedures, and instead strive to prevent workplace intimidation from occurring in the first place.

iii.   Enterprise managers must promptly address and eradicate any instances of workplace intimidation, recognizing its potential to disrupt employees' emotional connection to the organization, thereby diminishing their commitment and fostering intentions to leave (Magee et al., 2017). Particularly in deposit money banks, managers should steer clear of employing intimidation as an Impression Management tactic due to its adverse work-related ramifications (Magee et al., 2017). The repercussions of workplace bullying are multifaceted, with employees enduring prolonged exposure to negative behaviors from superiors, colleagues, or subordinates, resulting in psychological strain and emotional harm (Finstad et al., 2019). This strain not only impacts the individual's physical and mental well-being but also extends its reach to their family life, highlighting the profound personal toll inflicted by workplace intimidation (Finstad et al., 2019).

Moreover, the deleterious effects of workplace bullying extend beyond individual well-being to encompass organizational performance (Magee et al., 2017). Victims of such behavior often experience diminished work efficiency and output quality, imposing significant financial costs on the organization (Magee et al., 2017). Additionally, these negative outcomes undermine the organization's growth trajectory, as they erode morale, hinder collaboration, and contribute to an overall toxic work environment (Magee et al., 2017). By recognizing the far-reaching implications of workplace intimidation, managers can prioritize the creation of a supportive and respectful workplace culture that fosters employee well-being and organizational success.

iv.   Workplace intimidation encompasses various forms of misconduct, such as verbal abuse, physical threats, blackmail, and violence, that are perpetrated by supervisors, coworkers, or subordinates with the intention of manipulating other employees for personal gains. This type of behavior is characterized by its repetitive nature, creating a consistent pattern of mistreatment that can have profound repercussions on the victim's physical and mental well-being, as well as their overall emotional state. Moreover, intimidation can impede the victim's productivity and job performance, while also adversely affecting the morale of other individuals who witness such misconduct. (Source: Swartz Swidler, LLC; https://swartz-legal.com/what-is-workplace-intimidation/)

v.   Managers must always watch out for any evidence of workplace intimidation and tackle them immediately as it can have a negative influence on employees' morale, job satisfaction, their performance and organisational productivity. Besides, at the very extreme, workplace intimidation may even cross the line into illegality.

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APPENDIX A

S/N	Types of experience with Intimidation	Strongly disagree = 1	Agree = 2	Not sure = 3	Agree = 4	Strongly agree= 5
	Workplace Intimidation Measuring Scale					
1	Shifting work tasks without your consultation					
2	Constantly undervaluing of your work					
3	Being ordered to do work below your level of proficiency					
4	Persistent unjustified monitoring of your work					
5	Repeated attempts to undermine your personal dignity					
6	Verbal and non-verbal threats					
7	Making inappropriate or offensive jokes about you					
8	Withholding relevant work-related information affecting your professional progress					
9	Exclude you from workgroup activities					
10	Reject your application for leave, training or promotion without reason					
11	Setting of impossible deadlines to accomplish work					
12	Spread rumours about you					
13	Repeated offensive remarks about your person or private life					
14	Signals from others that you should resign your job					
15	Repeated reminders of your mistakes					
16	Neglect of your opinions or views					
17	Not give importance of your rights and opinions with reference to your gender					
18	Devaluation of your rights and opinions with reference to your age					
19	Negative responses from others because you work hard					
20	Several times forced to attend supplementary meetings and training sessions					
21	Intimidatory use of discipline/competence procedure					
22	Threats or physical violence/assault,					
23	Sexual harassment					
24	Blackmail					
25	Yelling or screaming,					
26	Ridiculing or insulting a victim in front of coworkers or clients					
27	Constantly belittling the your opinion					
28	Invading your privacy,					
29	Assigning to you duties that are outside of his or her expertise					
30	Deliberately excluding you during the distribution of organizational favours					
31	Making the you constantly feel useless					
32	Work sabotage					
33	Constantly taking credit for your work					
34	Constantly setting you up for failure					
35	Using gaslighting tactics to shift blame (for example, a manager may direct you to do something, and then later they argue that they told you something completely different)					