

INTERNATIONAL EDUCATIONAL CORPORATION



DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

**ADVISORY PERIOD
ON THE TOPIC:**

Harassment in Business Relations: Ways and Methods of Counteraction

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Harassment

Harassment (English: Harassment) – behavior by a person that causes discomfort or even harm to another person, violating their personal privacy.

Harassment is an umbrella term for a whole range of actions that hurt or humiliate a person. Usually, these actions are repeated regularly, but this is not a strict requirement.

Some mistakenly consider harassment to only include sexual actions, since cases related to them often receive more public attention. In fact, the concept includes at least seven manifestations: discrimination based on any characteristic, open personal hostility, physical violence, abuse of power, psychological pressure, stalking, and sextortion.



Types of Harassment

Harassment – any unwanted, intrusive, or offensive actions towards a person that violate their boundaries and create a hostile, humiliating, or intimidating environment. There are several main types of harassment:

1. Sexual Harassment

Related to unwanted sexual attention.

Examples:

- ☐ Unsolicited touches or hugs
- ☐ Lewd comments about appearance
- ☐ Displaying intimate materials
- ☐ Demanding sexual relations (including in exchange for work “favours”)
- ☐ Obscene jokes
- ☐ Gaslighting

2. Psychological (Emotional) Harassment

Pressure on the psyche, undermining self-esteem.

Examples:

- ☐ Insults, humiliation, sarcasm
- ☐ Shouting, threats
- ☐ Manipulation (“If you leave, no one will hire you”)
- ☐ Gaslighting

3. Mobbing (group)

Persecution of an individual by a group.

Examples:

- ☐ Systematic exclusion from communication;
- ☐ Spreading rumors;
- ☐ Deliberate creation of harmful working conditions.

Types of Harassment

4. Bullying (individual)

Constant harassment and humiliation by a single person.

Examples:

- ☐ Mockery;
- ☐ Vandalism or damage to property;
- ☐ Cyberbullying on social media.

5. Economic

Obstruction of economic independence or financial pressure.

Examples:

- ☐ Withholding salary;
- ☐ Denial of resources;
- ☐ Control over expenses (in the family or at work).

6. Racial or ethnic

Insulting a person because of their origin, culture, language, or skin color.

Examples:

- ☐ Racist jokes;
- ☐ Discrimination based on nationality.

Types of Harassment

7. Gender

Insulting or pressuring someone because of their sex or gender identity.

Examples:

- ☐ "You're a woman—you can't handle it";
- ☐ Transphobic comments.

8. Age-related

Discrimination or humiliation based on young or old age.

Examples:

- ☐ "You are too old for this."
- ☐ "You are too young - you don't understand anything."

9. Cyberharassment

Online harassment.

Examples:

- ☐ Threats on social media
- ☐ Sending insulting messages
- ☐ Doxxing (leaking personal information)
- ☐ Trolling, stalking

What is the danger of harassment at work

- Modern employers spend a great deal of effort creating an attractive company image. They build an atmosphere of mutual respect within the team, implement employee motivation systems, and develop a corporate code of ethics. Yet, a single accusation of harassment can seriously damage the organization's reputation.
- If an employee faces psychological or physical abuse, they can make the matter public and file formal complaints.
- The causes of harassment depend on the individual and the situation but include discrimination, low self-confidence, a desire for power, and the presence of bias.



How can it be recognized ?

- Harassment can manifest in various forms, such as being denied opportunities at work because of nationality, age, or gender, sarcastic comments from a supervisor, sexual harassment, physical abuse, and discrimination. It can include abuse of power, psychological persecution, cyberbullying, and verbal harassment.
- “Drawing a clear line between a harmless joke and an insult, or between a fiery display of affection and sexual harassment, is almost impossible! It’s all subjective!” say ardent skeptics. Yet in the business environment, the boundaries of professional relationships are clearly defined.
- Systematic harassment is most often found in companies where there is no real “business,” but there is active involvement of government agencies that control internal processes. Often, these companies have no need for change. As a result, employees have no motivation to grow or develop; instead, they merely go through the motions.
- At work, an employee is obliged to obey their boss. In 80% of cases, victims of harassment are women, but in 20% of cases, men find themselves in that position, working under a domineering female manager.



Checklist

- **You are dealing with harassment if:**

- ☐ Someone's words, actions, or behavior toward you seem inappropriate or offensive;
- ☐ You did not initiate this type of interaction yourself.

- **Anyone can be accused of harassment if they:**

- ☐ Oppresses others based on race, gender, age, sexual orientation, health status, or other characteristics unrelated to professional qualifications;
- ☐ Makes inappropriate comments, offensive jokes, intimidates, or excessively criticizes;
- ☐ Physically harms someone or threatens them, or destroys personal belongings to intimidate;
- ☐ Holds a higher position in the hierarchy and imposes impossible demands, or, conversely, assigns tasks far below the subordinate's qualifications;
- ☐ Exerts psychological pressure—spreads rumors, ostracizes the victim, belittles ideas, and challenges any suggestions;
- ☐ Engages in sexual behavior—makes inappropriate jokes, violates personal or physical boundaries;
- ☐ Insists on sexual contact in exchange for promotion, keeping a job, or other conditions;
- ☐ Forces interaction or spending time together outside of work;
- ☐ Ignores body language and disregards verbal objections.

If you checked both boxes in the first list and at least one box in the second, the conclusion is clear: this is harassment.

What should I do?

- ❑ Document all instances of harassment (audio recordings, video, photos, screenshots of messages, call recordings, etc.). This is difficult, but without such evidence it will be extremely hard to prove the offender's guilt.
- ❑ Try to understand the nature of the harassment. You can ask directly. Sometimes harassment is subtle, and the perpetrator does not perceive their actions as something that violates your personal boundaries.
- ❑ Surround yourself with “witnesses.” Take every opportunity to draw attention to the situation. It is important that these are people who are supportive of you and who will immediately notice unhealthy behavior from the harasser.
- ❑ Contact senior management or HR. Sooner or later, this will have to be done. A responsible manager will not force you to resign under the pretext of sabotage. They will address the conflict. Large Russian and international companies are already introducing various codes of conduct and hotlines.



How not to become a victim of violence

- Do not flirt with unfamiliar men.
- Do not wear provocative clothing.
- Do not go to an unfamiliar place with people you barely know.
- Clothing should be comfortable for movement, including quick movement. Behavior should not be provocative or overly loose.
- Excessively bright or harsh makeup signals a desire to draw attention to yourself.
- Loud, harsh laughter and loose, crude conversation attract individuals with certain inclinations.
- Keep simple self-defense tools at hand (a can of hairspray, hairpins, a whistle, a small bag of ground pepper, etc.).
- Try to avoid conversations. If you do speak, be polite.

How companies address this issue

- In recent years, companies have increasingly been introducing internal anti-discrimination policies and creating entire ethics and compliance departments. But even if such structures do not exist, the issue should be reported to HR staff. Any employer has sufficient authority and leverage to resolve the situation.
- As a rule, there is an anonymous or non-anonymous channel where an employee can describe their complaint or concern. If submitting a form is not enough, we hold a confidential, trust-based conversation with the employee. During this discussion, we work out specific steps to address the situation. For example, the affected employee may be transferred to another department in order to minimize contact with the person who caused the discomfort.
- If the case is serious and the affected employee is ready to step out of anonymity, an HR specialist will speak directly with the offender.
- I acknowledge that in small organizations this may not always be possible. However, the employer must make every possible effort to offer the employee a future career path in which contact with the offender is reduced to zero.

How harassment is addressed in Kazakhstan

In Kazakhstan, there is currently no separate article in the Criminal Code specifically dedicated to harassment (sexual harassment of adults). [Press.kz+1](#)

Here is what is currently in place:

★ 1. There is no direct criminal liability for harassment of adults.

- The Criminal Code does not contain a separate article titled “harassment” or “sexual harassment” for adults. This means that, in ordinary situations, harassment is not considered a distinct criminal offense. [Press.kz](#)
- The Ministry of Justice has officially explained that such an article has still not been included in the Criminal Code, although amendments have been proposed. [Press.kz](#)
- Attempts to introduce liability for harassment in recent amendments to the Criminal Code have so far not led to the establishment of a specific provision. [Orda](#)

How harassment is addressed in Kazakhstan

★ 2. Что есть в Уголовном кодексе

- Existing articles apply to violent sexual crimes, such as forcible sexual acts, but these relate to violence or threats, not harassment in the broader sense. [Кодексы Казахстана](#)
- In 2024–2025, amendments were made to the Criminal Code regarding stalking - a new article on persistent pursuit can be applied to situations of obsessive harassment, but this is not the same as harassment in the broader sense. [The Times Of Central Asia](#)
- A separate criminal liability has also been introduced for sexual harassment of children (under 16) within the framework of child protection legislation. [Kazakhstan Today](#)

✦ 3. Punishment for 'minor' harassment

In the absence of a criminal provision, such cases are often classified as petty hooliganism or an administrative offense, rather than a criminal crime. CABAR.asia

✦ 4. Legislation development

Work is currently underway on amendments to the Code of Administrative Offenses, the Labor Code, and other regulations that could introduce liability for harassment, especially in the workplace, but this is still in progress. ТенгриНьюс

❖ Brief conclusion:

- ❖ Harassment as a separate criminal offense for adults is not officially recognized in Kazakhstan.
- ❖ Criminal liability exists for stalking (persistent pursuit) and harassment of children.
- ❖ Ordinary harassment is still most often handled administratively or through internal workplace procedures.

What to do if you face harassment

✓ 1. Document the evidence

This is very important because, without evidence, it will be difficult to process the complaint. Suitable evidence includes:

- Screenshots of conversations (WhatsApp, Telegram, Instagram, etc.)
- Audio recordings (in Kazakhstan, it is allowed to record conversations if you are a participant)
- Photos/videos
- Witness statements
- Official documents, correspondence in work chats

✓ 2. Contact your employer (if this occurred at your workplace)

Even if there is no separate criminal law in the country, employers are obliged to provide safe working conditions.

You can file a complaint with:

- The HR department
- Your supervisor/manager
- The ethics committee (if available)
- The labor union

By law and internal policies, the employer can:

- Conduct an internal investigation
- Issue a reprimand
- Transfer or dismiss the offender
- Implement preventive measures
- It is especially important that the government is currently introducing amendments that will require employers to have anti-harassment procedures, which strengthens protection.

What to do if you face harassment

✓ 3. File a complaint with the police (if there are threats, stalking, or physical actions)

Harassment by itself does not always fall under the Criminal Code, but there are articles that may apply:

- ✦ Stalking (persistent pursuit)

This is now a criminal offense.

- ✦ Threat of harm

If someone makes a threat, the police are obliged to respond.

- ✦ Minor hooliganism (administrative offense)

Applies to insults, obscene proposals, or inappropriate behavior in public places.

You can contact the police through:

- 102 (emergency number)
- The “102” app
- eGov portal
- Your local police department
- You can also Consult a lawyer (private or free under state guarantees)
- File a civil lawsuit for moral damages
- Request an internal investigation

What to do if you face harassment

✓ 4. Reach out to organizations that provide support

In Kazakhstan, there are:

◆ Violence victim support centers

They help with:

Preparing statements

Collecting evidence

Receiving psychological support

◆ Hotlines

150 – Child and Family Service

111 – Child Protection Service

1406 – Ministry of Labor (if the case is work-related)

✓ 5. Legal assistance

You can:

Consult a lawyer (private or free under state guarantees)

File a civil lawsuit for moral damages

Request an internal investigation

Sources

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