

Poster 89

Moral harassment in the security forces: is it worrying?

Sandra Cerdeira Campos Costa^{1,2,*}, **Rui MS Azevedo**^{1,2}, **Bruno Peixoto**^{1,3,4} and **Áurea Madureira-Carvalho**^{1,2}

¹ Associate Laboratory i4HB - Institute for Health and Bioeconomy, University Institute of Health Sciences - CESPU, 4585-116 Gandra, Portugal

² UCIBIO - Applied Molecular Biosciences Unit, Forensics and Biomedical Sciences Research Laboratory, University Institute of Health Sciences (1H-TOXRUN, IUCS-CESPU), 4585-116 Gandra, Portugal

³ UCIBIO - Applied Molecular Biosciences Unit, Translational Toxicology Research Laboratory, University Institute of Health Sciences (1H-TOXRUN, IUCS-CESPU), 4585-116 Gandra, Portugal

⁴ Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences of the University Institute of Health Sciences – CESPU, 4585-116 Gandra, Portugal

* Correspondence: smccecp@hotmail.com

Abstract

Background: Moral Harassment is a set of continuous violent acts that cause psychological and/or physical harm to victims [1]. In Portugal, it was only in the 1990s that was considered, and it currently has a major impact on society, in public and private institutions [2, 3], which led to legislation, protecting victims and penalizing aggressors [4]. **Objective:** Obtain knowledge to identify, prevent, and reduce moral harassment within security forces. **Methods:** A questionnaire survey was created, having 3 parts: i) sociodemographic data of the sample; ii) Leymann Inventory of Psychological Terrorization (LIPT-60) scale; iii) questions about moral harassment. The questionnaire was implemented in LimeSurvey and distributed by email to all members of the Associação dos Profissionais da Guarda and the Associação Sindical dos Profissionais da Polícia. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and IBM SPSS Statistics 29.0. **Results:** We obtained 302 complete answers (62 females; 240 males). The negative behaviors with the highest percentage (77.82%) are related to preventing self-expression, and the dimensional indicators with the highest average are the Job Demeaning Index (0.95) and the Express Intimidation Index (1.04). This instrument presents a very good reliability (Cronbach's alpha=0.9817). The characterization of the sample revealed that 96% had heard of moral harassment, 30.8% had been/were victims of the phenomenon, of which the majority were male (74.2%). 19.2% of the total participants considered that the violence they had suffered disrupted their work and performance. The main symptoms were difficulty falling asleep and insomnia, anxiety, anguish and sadness, and nervousness, and 17.2% of victims even mentioned ideas of homicide and/or suicide. **Conclusions:** A significant level of moral harassment is lived within the security forces, with laboral discredit and intimidation being the most prevalent forms. This is a worrying and emerging situation, and preventive measures need to be taken to avoid more severe consequences such as suicide.

Keywords: moral harassment; physical and psychological damage; work environment

Acknowledgments

This research received no external funding.

References

1. Múrias, C.; Ferreira, V.; Monteiro, R.; Saleiro, S.; Lopes, M. Violência no Trabalho-Guia para a Integração a Nível Local da Perspetiva de Género. LGE-Local Gend. Equal. (2016).
2. Hirigoyen, M.F. O Assédio no Trabalho. Como distinguir a verdade, 1st ed.; Pergaminho: Cascais, Portugal, (2002).

3. Alves, M.A.F. O assédio moral na comunicação social: o que mudou (ou não) nas organizações após o reforço do quadro legislativo? Instituto Superior de Economia e Gestão, 2019. Accessed: Mar, 17th (2024). Available: <https://www.repository.utl.pt/handle/10400.5/19174>.
4. Vaz, A.R.C. Dano existencial decorrente de assédio moral e sexual no ambiente de trabalho. Universidade de Lisboa, 2020. Accessed: Mar, 17th (2024). Available: <https://repositorio.ul.pt/handle/10451/47942>.



In *Scientific Letters*, works are published under a CC-BY license (Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), the most open license available. The users can share (copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format) and adapt (remix, transform, and build upon the material for any purpose, even commercially), as long as they give appropriate credit, provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made (read the full text of the license terms and conditions of use at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode>).