



## WEED OUT - Effects of exposure to workplace violence

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Course Module 2



## Table of Contents

1. The Module contains 3 units:	3
2. Learning Outcomes	3
3. Unit 1 - Potential consequences for affected persons	4
i. Psychological Consequences of WPV:	5
ii. Physical Consequences of WPV	5
Unit 2 - Potential consequences for the company	6
Unit 3 - The power of the bystander approach	7
Recommended Strategies to successfully implement the Bystander Approach	8
References and Further links to study	10



## 1. The Module contains 3 units:

- i. Potential consequences for affected persons**
- ii. Potential consequences for the company**
- iii. Power of the bystander approach**

## 2. Learning Outcomes

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The ability to:

- i. Understand the effects of occupational violence at different levels (individual, interpersonal, institutional, etc.).**

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- ii. Develop effective measures to constructively counteract these effects.**

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- iii. Cope with a possible bystander approach on a professional level.**

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- ☐ The units will present in further detail the effects of WPV on both individuals and organisations whilst explaining with guides and practices how to prevent any form of violence using the Bystander approach.



### 3. Unit 1 - Potential consequences for affected persons

Workplace Violence may cause physical injuries and have a significant impact on one's psychology.

Individuals that experienced workplace violence show a much higher risk of post-traumatic stress disorder, also known as PTSD, which is commonly seen among combat veterans and victims of terrorism, crimes, rape and other violent incidents. Aside from physical injuries, violent, abusive or threatening incidents in the workplace often result in serious and disabling psychological damage.

Any form of violence at work can trigger a range of physical as well as psychological outcomes in victims.

#### **Such consequences may lead to:**

- Physical injuries, post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety, fear, and even lead to suicide.
- A drastic change in the individual's job motivation and satisfaction: When individuals experience any form of violence in the workplace, the motivation to work is reduced, or sometimes even completely gone and so is job satisfaction.
- Workplace violence could also cause serious injuries that may lead to serious disabilities that require ongoing care or are life-threatening and even death. Most people affected by WPV, report that such cases, have affected them emotionally on a high scale.



### i. Psychological Consequences of WPV:

<input type="checkbox"/> Fear	<input type="checkbox"/> Guilt
<input type="checkbox"/> Anxiety	<input type="checkbox"/> Self-blame
<input type="checkbox"/> Anger	<input type="checkbox"/> Shame
<input type="checkbox"/> Insecurity	<input type="checkbox"/> Burnout
<input type="checkbox"/> Depression	<input type="checkbox"/> Post-traumatic stress
<input type="checkbox"/> Emotional exhaustion	<input type="checkbox"/> Suicidal thoughts

### ii. Physical Consequences of WPV

<input type="checkbox"/> Physical Injuries	<input type="checkbox"/> Panic Attacks
<input type="checkbox"/> Numbness	<input type="checkbox"/> Sleep Disruption/Insomnia
<input type="checkbox"/> Homicides	<input type="checkbox"/> Loss of concentration/memory
<input type="checkbox"/> Headaches/Migraines	<input type="checkbox"/> Uncontrollable mood swings
<input type="checkbox"/> Muscle Tension	<input type="checkbox"/> Fibromyalgia (musculoskeletal pain accompanied by fatigue, sleep, memory and mood issues)
<input type="checkbox"/> Changes in appetite	<input type="checkbox"/> Uncontrollable crying



<input type="checkbox"/> Nausea	<input type="checkbox"/> Chest Pain
<input type="checkbox"/> High blood pressure	

## Unit 2 - Potential consequences for the company

The effect that workplace violence can have on an organisation can be incredibly damaging to the company in a **direct** and **indirect** way.

- The **direct** effect on the organisation would be the financial payment to the affected person (victim) who might have been physically injured for compensation or any medical expenditure needed.
- The **indirect** effect on the organisation would be the external factors that can have an influence on the organisation such as shareholders, reputation and image, investors and more.

### Direct Cost on organisation

- Direct costs to organizations include property damage, security costs, reduced trust of management, low worker morale, sick leave, absenteeism, high turnover, decreased performance and productivity, early retirement, increased accidents, grievances and litigation, worker's compensation, loss of public prestige.
- Financial costs from the employer to cover the costs for injuries or illnesses that may occur by the incident, possible crisis intervention and counselling for groups or individuals that either witnessed, experienced or were affected in any way by the incident.

### Direct Cost Summarised



<input type="checkbox"/> Low worker morale	<input type="checkbox"/> Increased accidents
<input type="checkbox"/> Absenteeism	<input type="checkbox"/> Decreased performance and productivity
<input type="checkbox"/> Sick leave, property damage	<input type="checkbox"/> Security costs
<input type="checkbox"/> Early retirement	<input type="checkbox"/> Worker's compensation
<input type="checkbox"/> High turnover	<input type="checkbox"/> Reduced trust of management
<input type="checkbox"/> Grievances and litigation	<input type="checkbox"/> Loss of public prestige

### Indirect Cost of Organisation

- Indirect costs could be reactions from shareholders and the surrounding community. Depending on the size of the organization, an incident of workplace violence may draw the attention of directors and shareholders.
- The attention drawn by directors and shareholders depending on the size of the company (the bigger the company the more the attention and effect).
- Concern in the community, especially if an injury or loss of life to its members occurs. There is the risk of the organisation losing public trust, huge damage to its reputation and image, dilution of value and most importantly, loss of business relationships which will have a tremendous impact on the company's profit and progress.
- Legal Actions against the company (very high cost)

### Indirect Cost Summarised:

<input type="checkbox"/> Negative reaction and attention by external parties	<input type="checkbox"/> Loss of business relationships
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<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Loss of public trust and others	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Decrease of profit
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Negative reputation	<input type="checkbox"/> Legal actions against the company
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Negative image	<input type="checkbox"/> Lack of personnel / Low interest in the company

Case Study of reputational damage:

- **The case of Uber**

In 2018, Uber faced a 1.9 million settlements over 56 claims of sexual harassment which was initially started by a female engineer leading others to speak out. After the claims, an investigation took place uncovering other relevant issues to workplace violence such as minority discrimination and an unethical workplace. As a result, Uber’s reputation has been significantly damaged, the organisation has paid over 20 million in settlements in total, and there has been a huge loss of customers who uninstalled the app and replaced it with a competitor’s, Lyft, had mass company leadership firings and resignations and removed the CEO. Ever since this incident occurred, Uber has hired new leadership, implemented new structures, and adapted diversity and inclusion practices which were also taught to all employees globally.

**Unit 3 - The power of the bystander approach**

“The bystander approach is an approach towards sexual violence prevention as it encourages the community to take ownership of sexual violence as a problem and speak up when they witness potentially dangerous situations or sexist language. Other benefits of this approach include reducing victim blaming, includes everyone (gets men involved in a



community issue, not a women's issue), and gives the community an opportunity to foster social change" (WCSAP, 2012).

The Bystander approach is the act of stepping in when witnessing violent incidents, recognising and reporting such acts.

The Bystander Approach may have a big impact on violence prevention and limitation as it spreads awareness on violent acts, how one can act in such cases and most importantly to actually act when it occurs. Its purpose is to guide individuals to find the courage to step in when recognising violent acts rather than ignoring them or feeling unsure on what to do next.

### How to be an Active Bystander:

Being an active bystander means being aware of when someone's behaviour is inappropriate or threatening and choosing to act on it. If it is uncomfortable for you to do it directly, then it is recommended to get help from either an authority or a trusted person such as a friend.

Research shows that bystander intervention can be an effective way of stopping sexual assault before it happens, as bystanders play a key role in preventing, discouraging, and/or intervening when an act of violence has the potential to occur.

## Recommended Strategies to successfully implement the Bystander Approach

### **The ABC Approach**

The ABC approach should be practised before taking the decision to step in an incident that is occurring.

- **Assess for safety:** If you see someone in trouble, ask yourself if you can help safely in any way. It is important to remember that your personal safety is a priority - never put yourself at risk.



- Be in a group: It's safer to call out behaviour or intervene while in a group. If this is not an option, report it to others who can act.
- Care for the victim. Talk to the person whom you think may need help and ask them if they are OK.

### **How to Intervene Safely with the 4Ds strategy:**

- **Direct action**

Call out negative behaviour once detected, tell the person to stop and/or ask the victim if they are OK. Do this as a group if you can and be polite. Don't aggravate the situation - remain calm and state why something has offended you. Stick to exactly what has happened and don't exaggerate.

- **Distract**

Interrupt, start a conversation with the perpetrator to allow their potential target to move away or have friends intervene. You can come up with an idea to get the victim out of the situation such as telling them they need to take a call, or you need to speak to them; any excuse to get them away to safety. Alternatively, try distracting, or redirecting the situation.

- **Delegate**

If you are too embarrassed or shy to speak out, or you don't feel safe to do so, get someone else to step in. Any decent venue has a zero-tolerance policy on harassment, so the staff there most likely will act.

- **Delay**

If the situation is too dangerous to intervene (such as there is the threat of violence or you are outnumbered) then just walk away and wait for the situation to pass. Ask the victim later if they are OK or report it when it's safe to do so – it's never too late to act.



## References and Further links to study

- A Bystander Intervention Training -  
<https://righttobe.org/guides/bystander-intervention-training/>
- A guide to the Bystander Approach and further reading -  
[https://drexel.edu/~media/Files/oed/PDF/soc\\_bystander\\_intervention\\_guide\\_web\\_final.ashx;\\_z=z?la=en](https://drexel.edu/~media/Files/oed/PDF/soc_bystander_intervention_guide_web_final.ashx;_z=z?la=en)
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<https://www.aaets.org/traumatic-stress-library/workplace-violence>
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- Bureau of Labour Statistics (2012). Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries Summary. Retrieved on April 3, 2014 from [http://www.bls.gov/iif/osh\\_wpvs.htm](http://www.bls.gov/iif/osh_wpvs.htm)
- Bystander Approaches -  
[https://aifs.gov.au/sites/default/files/publication-documents/acssa-issues17\\_1.pdf](https://aifs.gov.au/sites/default/files/publication-documents/acssa-issues17_1.pdf)
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- [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/313425432\\_The\\_Bystander\\_Approach\\_to\\_Sexual\\_Assault\\_Risk\\_Reduction\\_Effects\\_on\\_Risk\\_Recognition\\_Perceived\\_Self-Efficacy\\_and\\_Protective\\_Behavior](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/313425432_The_Bystander_Approach_to_Sexual_Assault_Risk_Reduction_Effects_on_Risk_Recognition_Perceived_Self-Efficacy_and_Protective_Behavior)
- Marit Vartia-Väänänen, M. (2009). Organisational and individual consequences of workplace violence and harassment. Retrieved on March 7, 2014 from <https://osha.europa.eu/en/seminars/seminar-on-violenceand-harassment-at-work/speech-venues/day-1/spspeech.2010-12-14.2867785670>