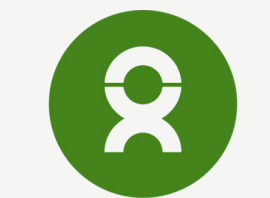


***Power dynamics and
workplace
harassments***

Presented by
Martina Brunelli

Intersectionality of violence



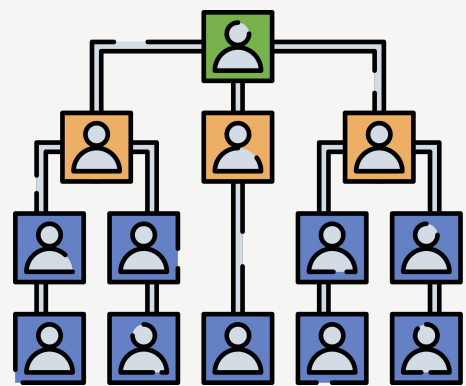
OXFAM
Italia

While we acknowledge that harassment can affect anyone, in reality certain groups are disproportionately impacted

Do we recognize that power and power dynamics are at the heart of each of these?

Understanding and acknowledging the power we have as individuals and collectively is the first step to understanding safeguarding risks and understanding why harassment, discrimination, exclusion and abuse can occur in our work and allows us to develop strategies that address the root causes.

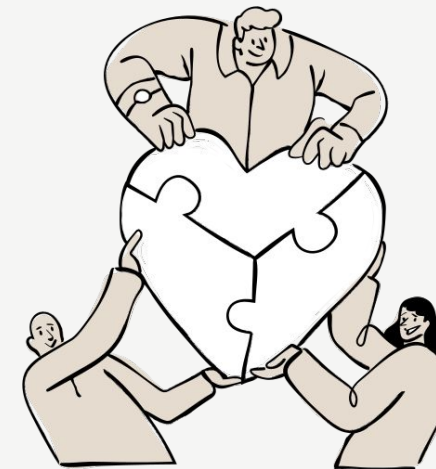
Understanding power in the workplace



Formal power



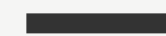
Structural power



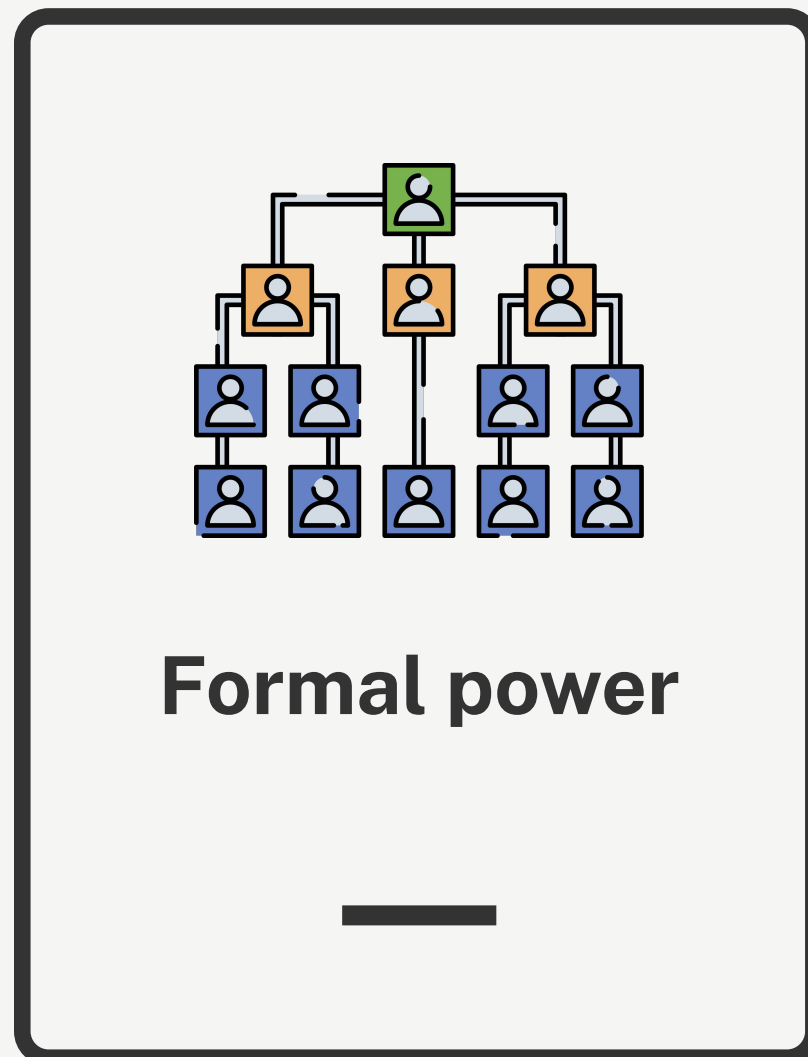
Normative power



Informal power



Understanding power in the workplace



This type of power is derived from one's position within the organizational hierarchy, such as executives, managers, and supervisors.

Those with formal power have decision-making authority over promotions, salaries, job assignments but also remove resources or rewards.

Understanding power in the workplace



Structural power



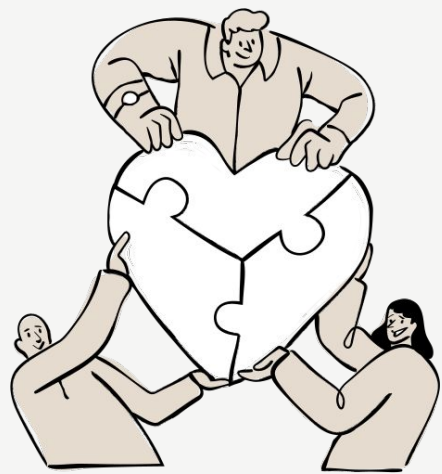
Embedded in organizational systems, policies, and workplace hierarchies, and processes that shape how an organization functions.

It is a form of power that exists within the organizational framework itself.

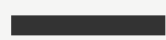
Refers to the systemic and institutionalized ways in which power is distributed, often reinforcing inequalities based on gender, race, and other social categories.



Understanding power in the workplace



Normative power



This form of power shapes what is considered “acceptable” behaviour within an organization. It is embedded in workplace culture, policies, and everyday interactions.

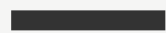
It is connected with “ideology” and it is probably the most potent and universal form of invisible power – *because ideology means the set of beliefs, ideas, and norms that frame what we believe is right and wrong, ‘normal’ and ‘abnormal’, ‘natural’ and ‘unnatural’.* It shapes our perceptions of normalcy, legitimacy and fairness, influencing whether we see harassment as an issue to be addressed; ideology is the invisible power through which we are taught to accept, participate in, support, and perpetuate specific social systems



Understanding power in the workplace



Informal power



Unlike formal power, informal power is not granted by job title but emerges from social networks, expertise, or cultural dominance within an organization.

It is connected with our social identities (age, gender, race, sexual orientation, religion, ethnicity, language, etc.) that contribute to an individual's informal power or vulnerability.



Have experienced workplace harassment

13,5%

Women aged 15-70

2,4%

Men aged 15-70

Survey conducted by ISTAT (Italian National Institute of Statistics) in 2022-2023

Gender identity

50%

have experienced at least one discrimination incident when looking for a job on grounds of gender identity

37,1%

of trans and non-binary gender identity respondents, employed or formerly employed in Italy state that they have experienced a hostile climate or aggression in their work environment for reasons related to gender identity

Survey conducted by ISTAT / UNAR

All the dimensions of diversity do not operate in isolation, but intersect, generating unique experiences of inclusion and marginalisation

Intersectionality, introduced by researcher and scholar Kimberle Crenshaw, helps us understand how different factors-such as gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation and disability-are intertwined in determining the individual's experience of violence.

This approach is essential to recognise how certain categories of people are exposed to multiple and overlapping forms of oppression.





Intersectionality and vulnerability



OXFAM

Italia

Intersectionality helps us understand that each person cannot be defined by a single social identity and that they may be oppressed or privileged for different reasons. It sees each problem as a complex whole, where categories of oppression combine and intersect simultaneously.

Recognising our privileges and oppressions allows us to better understand our position within society and in our relationship with other people.



Diversity and inclusion go beyond general policies and require an intersectional approach that recognises the unique experiences of staff with different backgrounds.

Every person has the right to feel safe, valued and represented regardless of gender, nationality or other social identities.

A truly inclusive and safe workplace is one where diversity is not only accepted, but actively embraced, and where every person has the opportunity to thrive without discrimination.

Resources

- [Appunti sul concetto di intersezionalità](#)
- [L'INDAGINE ESPLORATIVA ISTAT-UNAR SULLE DISCRIMINAZIONI LAVORATIVE](#)
- [REPORT-Molestie.pdf](#)
- Batliwala, S. (2020). *All about power: Understanding social power and power structures*. CREA. <https://creaworld.org/resource/all-about-power>
- French, J. R. P., & Raven, B. (1959). The bases of social power. In D. Cartwright (Ed.), *Studies in social power* (pp. 150–167). University of Michigan, Institute for Social Research.
- Acker, J. (1990). Hierarchies, jobs, bodies: A theory of gendered organizations. *Gender & Society*, 4(2), 139-158. <https://doi.org/10.1177/089124390004002002>



Thank you

For your attention

Martina.Brunelli@Oxfam.it

Safeguarding - Oxfam Italia

