# The Ability of ISO 9001 Certified Quality Management System to Detect Cases of Workplace Harassment

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## Abstract

*The present work deals with problems that harassment could cause on the quality of firm's products. For this study, we were inspired by a physical harassment case in a Belgian company which obtained during that period an ISO 9001 certification. Given the potential impact of such incidents on product quality or on the entire company's function, we questioned the company's quality indicators' relevance. The indicators that were used failed to detect an abnormal situation that may have an impact on the QMS. After the analysis, we propose an important preventive method to avoid or constrain workplace harassment in order to improve the implemented QMS under ISO 9001 certification.*

**Keywords:** Workplace harassment, Quality management system, Quality indicators, ISO 9001 Certification

## *Introduction*

At the end of 2010 case of workplace harassment hits the headlines in Belgium. Occasions of physical harassment took place in a manufacturing company located in the Walloon region in 2002 and continued at least for five years. More of these events are not an exception, for example, in 2000 a study by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions found that *"2% (3 million workers in the EU) were exposed to physical violence, 9% (13 million) to moral harassment, 2% (3 million) to sexual harassment."* [1]

Despite the fact that the worker had to suffer physical harassment, during the same period the company initiated a process to first, develop a management system (QMS) according to the ISO 9001 standard and second, obtained this certification.

A number of studies have highlighted that the consequences of workplace harassment may be psychological, social, family etc., but also professional. Some of the studies mention that a reduction in the victim's productivity, damages the production unit due to lower attention, reduced product quality etc. should have a negative impact on the company, at least on the quality of the products and services and therefore they may affect the entire company's QMS in a very significant way.

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[1] The Survey focuses on the15 EU Member States and was released by Pascal Paoli (21,000 face to face interviews, questionnaires of 80 questions in every work condition).
See : http://www.eurofound.eu.int/publications/files/EF02109FR.pdf

The aim of this study is to identify the reasons why quality indicators fail to show malfunctions of QMS as a result of harassment acts during the period of adopting and obtaining the certification. Quality indicators are defined by the company and the observance of the standard's requirements, particularly by internal and external audits of the QMS, in order to fulfill the requirements of the personnel motivation. A question can therefore arise on the role of quality audit and its suitability for detecting harassment problems and problems that begin from harassment, which have significant effects on the QMS of an ISO 9001 certified company.

The purposes of this study is also to analyze the ability of QMS measurements, based on ISO 9001, to detect acts of workplace harassment and to propose a procedure that could identify such acts.

In order to achieve these goals, a literature survey is carried out first, in order to understand the concept of workplace harassment, the range of the phenomenon, the identified consequences on the victims and to point out the respective consequences on company's overall performance. The study continues with the presentation of several legislative measures taken by European, French and Belgian states in order to counteract this phenomenon. Furthermore it is emphasized on the ISO 9001 requirements, which might indicate malfunctions of QMS related to social aspects of the company's activity. In the final part a methodology is proposed in order to identify the facts of workplace bullying in an ISO 9001 certified company under the control and monitoring of its QMS.

The various findings and observations allow us to draw number of significant conclusions about the limits in the liability of companies and auditors in the context of ISO 9001 certification.

## 2. *Workplace Harassment*

### 2.1. Definition

Workplace harassment, moral harassment, social harassment, mobbing, bullying, etc. are some of the terms and meanings appeared in the literature the last two decades in order to describe the repeatedly abusive behavior at the workplace, directed against **one or** more employees with probably negative effects on his/ their health and safety. It was Heinz Leymann (1993) who first used this term to define mobbing. Five years later Hirigoyen introduced this phenomenon to the francophone world in her book *Le harcèlement moral*.

According to Leymann, definitions vary, are rather specific and the concerned causes, facts and conditions can be quite different. The author explains mobbing as a *«sequence -over a period of six months- of purposes and/ or hostile actions, generally expressed or manifested at least once a week, by one or more individuals to any other person»*[2]. He also proposes a list of aggressive behaviors that suit this definition including certain behaviors which are less frequent or repeated in a shorter period and equally destructive. Hirigoyen (1998) defines moral harassment in a more general way: *« any abusive conduct manifesting itself through behaviors, words, acts, gestures and documents that attack someone's personality, that affect an employee's dignity or psychological or physical integrity and that results in a harmful work environment for the employee»*. The two authors have also different views in the relation between harassment and conflict. While the first thinks of mobbing as a result of the escalating conflict, the second believes that moral harassment derives from a person's inability to go for an open conflict.

The general conclusions of all studies have led to rather accurate definitions. Thus, the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work defines workplace harassment as *«a repeated, unreasonable behavior directed towards an employee or group of employees that creates a risk to health and safety»*[3]. In The Netherlands, harassment is called *the «humiliating, hostile or intimidating attitude in the workplace, which is repeated, frequent and with long duration against the same person which is the victim and he/she can hardly defend him/herself».*[4]

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[2] http://www.psynergie.ch/TravailSante/StressMobbingBurn-out/Mobbing-subir-ou-reagir.pdf : Cited by Marie-Claude Audétat in collaboration with Carole Chevallay for a documental research, in a text appeared in the number of Novembre 1997 of  Psychoscope (FSP)

[3] http://www.cgslb.be/uploads/media/harcelement-au-travail.pdf: Le harcèlement au travail, CGSLB (syndicat libéral)

[4] http://www.cgslb.be/uploads/media/harcelement-au-travail.pdf: Le harcèlement au travail, par la CGSLB (syndicat libéral)

According to the article L 122-49 of the French Labor Code[5] and in order to determine the ideas more precisely, Sophie Cachat Bauer, a lawyer from Grenoble, identifies three elements which characterize moral harassment:

- «repeated acts (and not an isolated act, even serious)
- a degradation in working conditions
- infringement of rights, dignity, physical health, mental or professional future of the employee».[6]

It is necessary to add that a behavior is called abusive whenever it humiliates, underestimates or threatens the worker. It is always negative, even destructive, and can be verbal. Harassment is moreover characterized by a situation of power violation against the worker who cannot face it.

## 2.2. Phenomenon range and consequences on the employees

Workplace harassment is a subjective concept which should not be confused with the degradation of working conditions or stress caused by overwork, situations, which can have similar effects on workers. The estimation of the cause of harassment is therefore very sensitive and the numerical elements should be treated with the utmost attention.

However, according to a study by Securex in 2010, problems related to workplace harassment still count a number of victims in Belgium. In a sample of 1,610 workers, 60 per cent recognized that they had been victims (Table 1). This rate cannot be ignored or taken as less important. In a number of cases, moreover workers accused their superiors as their harassers.

**Table 1: Victims of harassment cases between 2006 and 2010**
**(% of the total number of workers)**

| Concerned Facts | 2010 | 2009 | 2008 | 2007 | 2006 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Moral Harassment | 13% | 14% | 13% | 13% | 13% |
| Aggression Victims | 9% | 13% | 14% | 6% | 3% |
| Sexual Harassment | 1% | 2% | 5% | 3% | 3% |
| Discrimination | 12% | 12% | 14% | 9% | 9% |

Source: Securex, 2010.

Under these circumstances, this phenomenon should not be overlooked while it is obvious that physical and moral harassment's consequences in the workplace can be very important if not extremely serious. A non-exhaustive literature review of fourteen studies detected around thirty effects and group effects of workplace harassment (Table 2). The effects can be classified into two categories according to the effects on the individual, his private sphere (Individual effects - Table 2) or as part of his professional sphere (organizational effects - Table 2).

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[5] Social modernization law n°*2002-73* dated *17 January 2002*, J.O., n° 15, 18.01.2002
[6] http://jobetharcelement.canalblog.com/archives/2009/04/23/13488305.html

**Table 2: Harassment effects to individuals and organizations**

| Authors / Individual effects | [1] | [2] | [3] | [4] | [5] | [6] | [7] | [8] | [9] | [10] | [11] | [12] | [13] | [14] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| lower mental health | √ | √ |  |  | √ |  |  | √ | √ | √ |  |  |  |  |
| lower physical health |  | √ |  |  | √ |  |  |  |  | √ |  |  |  |  |
| reduced satisfaction at work | √ |  |  | √ |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | √ |  | √ |
| anxiety | √ |  |  |  |  |  |  | √ |  | √ |  |  |  | √ |
| depression | √ |  |  |  |  | √ |  | √ |  | √ |  | √ |  | √ |
| aggression | √ |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| neuroticism |  |  | √ |  |  |  |  | √ |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| isolation and loneliness (helpless) | √ |  |  |  |  |  |  | √ |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| lower self –esteem |  |  | √ |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| low self confidence | √ |  |  |  |  |  | √ |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| general stress reaction | √ |  |  | √ |  |  |  | √ |  |  |  | √ |  | √ |
| mental stress reaction |  |  |  |  |  |  | √ |  |  |  |  | √ |  |  |
| negative affectivity |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | √ | √ |  |  |  |  |  |
| somatisation disorder |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | √ |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| adjustment disorder |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | √ |  |  |  |  |
| post-traumatic stress disorder | √ |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | √ | √ |  | √ |  |
| cardiovascular disease |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | √ |  |  |
| loss of income and additional expenditure |  |  |  |  | √ |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| other psychopathologic symptoms | √ |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | √ |  | √ |  |  |
| psychosomatic symptoms | √ |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | √ | √ |  |  |  |  |
| behavioral symptoms |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | √ |  |  |  |  |
| **Organizational effects** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| sickness absence | √ | √ |  |  | √ |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | √ |
| premature retirement | √ |  |  |  | √ |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| replacement costs in connection with labor turnover | √ |  |  |  | √ |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | √ |
| grievance and litigation/ compensation costs | √ |  |  |  | √ |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| reduced performance/productivity | √ | √ |  |  | √ |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| loss of public goodwill and reputation | √ |  |  |  | √ |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Intention to leave |  | √ |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| lower organizational satisfaction |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | √ |  |  |
| damage to equipment and production resulting from accidents and mistakes |  |  |  |  | √ |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

[1] Di Martino V. and al (2003). [2] Hoel, H. and Cooper C. L. (2000). [3] Vartia M. (1996). [4] Einarsen S. and al (1994). [5] Hoel H. and al (2001). [6] Niedhammer I. and al (2006). [7] Vartia M. (2001). [8] Hansen A. M and al (2006). [9] Mikkelsen E. G. and Einarsen S. (2002). [10] Cassitto M. G. and al (2003). [11]Leymann H. and Gustafsson A. (1996). [12]Vartia M. (2004). [13] Mikkelsen E. G., Einarsen S. (2002). [14] Hauge and al (2010).

### 2.3. Harassment and its impact on the organization

Among fourteen reviewed studies, five identified the effects workplace harassment on the organization. The consequences range from "simple" sickness absence to equipment and production damage, through situations which influence as much the workers themselves as the company's productivity and profitability. Organizational impacts that were identified in the five studies are listed in Table 2 and can actually be classified into two categories depending on the employee (sickness absence, premature retirement, intention to leave, grievance and litigation) or the company (replacement costs in connection with labor turnover, compensation costs in case of litigations, reduced performance/productivity, loss of public goodwill and reputation lower satisfaction of the organization, damage to equipment and production resulting from accidents and mistakes).

In other words, the incidents of physical harassment at the workplace have a financial cost for organizations. In addition, the analysis of previous studies (Table 2) highlights the link between acts of workplace harassment and quality of company's products and services. Even if they are not easily measurable, the incurred costs to the company could be quite important depending on the seriousness of the harassment situations. On the other hand, the media coverage of workplace harassment affects company's image. The consequences of bullying also affect the company's profitability and have indirect effects on the quality of products and services (Hoel & Cooper, 2000; Hoel, Sparks & Cooper, 2001)**;** these findings come in line with those of Di Martino and al. (2003). Finally, the literature shows that victims are not the only effected personnel members. Vartia (2001 and 2004) has highlighted the negative impact of harassment on the observers of bullying. Einarsen and al. (1994) also showed that the perpetrators have more stress at work than the victims and that harassment is often a result of a stressful workplace environment.

In conclusion, harassment incidents do not affect only the victims, but they also affect the entire personnel and the company's performance largely.

## 3. ISO 9001standard

### 3.1. Objectives and general principles[7]

Without going into a detailed description of the standard, in this part the principles that underlie the standard and its main features are mentioned, in order to highlight its social aspects and requirements**.** It is almost a quarter of a century since the creation of the first version of the 9001 standard. It was revised several times until 2008 when the last version was implemented. The 9001 standard is generic and applicable to all organizations regardless their type, legal form, size, sector of activity, products, services etc. It defines the requirements for implementation and function of QMS which must be based on the Deming Cycle (or PDCA cycle). The objective of standard is double: On one hand, the QMS must prove its ability to provide a product or a service in a consistent way, in order to satisfy the customer requirements, without omitting the regulatory requirements which are applicable for that. On the other hand, the QMS should aim both to the continuous improvement of customer satisfaction and the organization processes. In that way the conformity of the provided products and services and the customer requirements' continuous improvement must be satisfied.

The ISO 9001 certification is based on eight principles[8]: customer focus, leadership, involvement of people, process approach, system approach to management, continual improvement, factual approach to decision making and mutually beneficial supplier relationships.

The system of quality management must therefore satisfy a set of requirements taking into account the social dimensions. Specifically, the QMS cannot be designed without taking into consideration the social aspects of the activity, in which the requirements of leadership, employee involvement, process approach, continuous improving and factual approach to decision making are included. Igalens and Peretti (2008) highlighted that *«the audit work according to QMS clauses must integrate the social audit largely».*

### 3.2. Evaluation of QMS's performance

Any company which has an objective to implement an efficient QMS should develop its own quality policy and ensure that it:

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[7] Section based on the text of ISO 9001 :2008 standard
[8] According to ISO 9000:2005 (http://www.iso.org/iso/qmp)

- provides a framework for setting up and reviewing quality objectives;
- is communicated, understood and established in all structures of the organization (Boutry, 2000).

There are several tools to monitor and evaluate the performance of QMS like quality indicators and internal and external audits.

The Italian standard UNI 11097:2003[9] defines quality indicators as the qualitative and/or quantitative information on an examined phenomenon and processed result. There are different types of indicators which can determine the effectiveness of the QMS in an organization. These indicators should be considered as tools for beneficial improvement for each type of organization (Doucet, 2008). These indicators allow to confirm if the quality objectives are satisfied (Franceschini and al., 2007) and problems within a company can be detected in order the specialists interfere. The quality indicators can be particularly useful to the auditors who control the QMS as long as they are designed to detect any problems or mistakes of the QMS. A great variety of quality indicators can be defined by each organization according to its own characteristics in quality policy, quality objectives, zone of interest[10], factors of performance and the objectives of the process (Franceschini and al ., 2007).

Although the company is free to define its own indicators, there is not always a perfect indicator (Boutry, 2000, Franceschini and al, 2007). The indicators which are defined by an enterprise must be *« technically and conceptually capable to measure with acceptable accuracy the cases that they are supposed to measure and that they remain appropriate in the current deployment of the quality policy»* (Boutry, 2000) and should also lead to regular monitoring. The observation of quality indicators gives information about the quality of the offered products and services and constitutes the proof for the proper function of the QMS. A company's reputation is not built on the price of its products but on their quality as *«the quality remains, the price is forgotten» (*Michel Audiard in Boutry, 2000).

Although it is impossible to achieve an exhaustible registration of indicators which can be selected by the companies, a literature review permits to create a small list with the ones that are mostly used or mostly common (Doucet, 2008):

- evolution of defect rates and the associated costs;
- costs associated with preventive measure;
- delay of solving problems;
- quality of the workforce by measurement, for example the number of pieces produced per employee;
- employee's motivation by measuring, particularly absenteeism and turnover rates of personnel;
- number of control considered / number of controls carried out;
- number of repaired products / number of products;
- number of discarded (rejected) products / number of products;
- number of declassed products / number of product;
- cost of non-conforming products / total cost of products;
- number of products in derogation / number of products;
- customer satisfaction, a parameter that can be measured taking into account both the customer's opinion and the services with/ without defects.

The examination of this list shows an inadequacy to estimate and evaluate the personnel involvement regularly. However, the socially directed indicators could probably show the problems that affect company's personnel, and therefore QMS or quality of products and services. Without the use of the appropriate indicators it is impossible to identify any non-conformed issues which affect the quality negatively.

### 3.3. Limits of ISO 9001 standard

It is obvious, that the primary objective of ISO 9001 certification is not to identify social problems in a company. A non–exhaustive literature review shows a lack of consensus among the authors who carried out their studies regarding the impacts of implementing a QMS according to ISO 9001 (Table 3).

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[9] The standard of l'Ente Nazionale Italiano di Unificazione

[10] Including market competitiveness, customer satisfaction, market share, economic/ financial results, quality, reliability and service, flexibility of industrial systems and "supply services", research and development, progress and innovation, management, human resources development, internal and external communications

Nevertheless, the existence of a number of specific indicators to measure the staff involvement during implementation and function of the QMS is the proper way to ensure an adequate measure regarding personnel issues requirements of the standard.

**Table 3 : Impacts of the implementation of ISO 9001 on organizations**

| Authors | Positive impacts | Negative Impacts |
|---|---|---|
| Sharma (2005) | • Significant improvements in profit margin, growth in sales, and earnings per employee. | |
| Douglas and al (2003) | • Not unnecessary bureaucracy.<br>• A correct financial investment. | |
| Feng and al (2007) | • A positive significant effect on operational performance<br>• A Positive effect on business performance. | |
| Levine and Toffel (2009) | • Improvement in workplace security<br>• Increased sales and annual earnings per employee. | |
| Martinez-Lorente and Martinez-Costa (2004) | | • Increased costs.<br>• Lack of employee motivation because of excessive bureaucracy. |
| Martínez-Costa and Martínez-Lorente (2007) | | • Less earnings and ROA[11] after certification.<br>• No differences in sales before and after certification. |
| Naveh and Erez (2004) | • A personnel more attentive to details. | • Negative effect on the personnel innovation attitude. |
| Souris (2004) | | • Ignorance of basic indicators for the company on internal results (not value added) and external (commercial results and strategic choices).<br>• Not constraint of formalization and process classification.<br>• Not integrated solutions for the problems (only the upper part of the iceberg). |
| Terlaak and King (2006) | • Faster grow to certified facilities. | |
| Terziovski and Power (2007) | • Promotion and facilitation of quality culture.<br>• Improvement of business performance. | |
| Wayhan and al (2002) | | • Not financial advantage over the non-certified rivals. |
| Zurich Continental Europe Corporate (2003) | • Client Satisfaction.<br>• Improvement of the company brand image.<br>• No contestation to the expertise of the company.<br>• Attestation of the conformity of the requirements in regard to the security of products, work etc.<br>• Complete documentation and transparency of process. | |

The thorough examination of Table 3 reveals that the identified effects are subjective enough and can vary from company to company as well as the motivations to obtain ISO 9001 certification. Some companies need the certification only to satisfy the requirements of their clients and others because they believe in the benefits that the standard offers.

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[11] Return On Assets (ROA)

Besides to the real benefits of implementing a QMS according to ISO 9001, it is important to mention that the company's stakeholders have a responsibility which is variable and limited. If the primary stakeholders - shareholders, employees, suppliers and customers (Igalens & Point, 2009) - have a primordial role to play in the perpetuation of the enterprise, the secondary stakeholders - media, consumers and other pressure groups (Igalens & Point, 2009) – nowadays hold a role which is more and more important in a company's life (Clarkson, 1995). Dowling (2001) who classifies stakeholders into four categories underlines the important role that standards' developers and certification bodies may play.

## 4. QMS and importance of workplace harassment incidents

### 4.1. Questioning

All the above provides a good background and a reason to identify the responsibilities of external and internal auditors and take into consideration the involvement of personnel during the implementation of a QMS regarding ISO 9001 requirements. The previous mentioned concern is justified, especially because of the position of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) in 2010. ISO determined the implications for personnel regarding the requirements of personnel involvement. The importance of impediments' analysis was also underlined in order to secure the efficient performance of personnel and the opportunity to freely discuss problems and ask questions that may arise[12].

The objective is therefore to understand if the auditors notice these types of components during the internal or external audits which are realized in the level of monitoring and control of the QMS. It is also important to understand if the available evidence permits the detection of workplace harassment cases, including direct or indirect impacts on the quality of products/ services and on the entire QMS. In other words, the posed queries appear to know if a properly designed QMS is able to uncover problems related to workplace harassment. Depending on the case, we propose a sensitive tool to draw the auditors' attention towards possible problems in order to detect system malfunctions.

### 4.2. Analytical framework and methodology

In order to answer those questions, an experimental study was carried out on a harassment case occurred in the late 2010 in a Belgian company as mentioned in the introductory section. In order to identify the characteristics of the respective company and the peculiarities of its QMS, an interview was conducted with the company's managers. Apart from other queries it was also inquired to mention the products' controls, the manufacturing process' levels which are controlled, the used quality indicators, etc.

The media reviews also provided us the required information to complete our review concerning the circumstances under which the harassment incidents occurred.

Finally, the proposed detection tool has been developed in collaboration with a specialized psychologist in issues of workplace harassment.

### 4.3. Case study: Applicability of the QMS and quality indicators

The present case study has been carried out for a period of 2 years starting from the early 2005, when the incidents of harassment started, until the end of 2007 which is coinciding with the period of cessation of those acts and the obtainment of the ISO 9001 certification. The procedure for setting up the QMS also started in the early 2005. It is quite disconcerting that while obtaining the ISO certification there was not any detection of the existing harassment problems. The QMS set up by the company is focused on the product, which must satisfy the requirements of the client in all areas (Table 4).

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[12]http://www.iso.org/iso/fr/iso_catalogue/management_and_leadership_standards/quality_management/qmp/qmp-3.htm

**Table 4: QMS of the studied company**

| Level | Input Elements | Elements controlled or actions taken | Release Elements |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Planification** | • Order book.<br>• Sales forecast. | • Formulation of product<br>• Control of raw materials.<br>• Organization of production tools.<br>• Organization of human resources, unemployment, temporary employees. | |
| **Realisation** | | • Input of raw materials.<br>• Receipt of raw materials.<br>• Quality control of raw materials (certificates, tests, etc.). | • Acceptance of raw materials.<br>• Downgrading of raw materials with complaint to supplier |
| **Production** | | • Mixture of raw materials, if necessary.<br>• Implementation of raw materials.<br>• Realization of quality test at every level of the process. | • Acceptance of the product at all stages of implementation. |

The company adopted several indicators including the defect rate, the ratio "number of complaints received / number of manufactured products" and the ratio "number of rejected products / number of manufactured products". If a negative evolution is the case**,** these indicators could be a sign for the existence of social problems within the company.

The above indicators are among the most commonly used indicators by companies in order to identify non-conformities or malfunctions of the QMS. The performance of the company is studied on the basis of these indicators. Among the others, the results of these studies could show incidents of harassment. For example, the negative development in defect rate, in the ratio "number of complaints received / number of manufactured products" and "number of rejected products / number of manufactured products" could have a positive or negative connection with some employees directly - or not - linked to production. The fact that these indicators are negative can also be caused by: a fault in the product manufacturing chain which affects the quality of the offered product; a mismatch between the training of the personnel for the occupied place; a rate of inadequate production, etc. The negative performance of these three indicators can be explained for diverse reasons as to identify cases of harassment at work within the studied company.

## 4.4. Proposed tool for detection

The results of the analysis in the Belgian company's case show clearly that the QMS, although it had received ISO 9001, has a small interest in the social issues that may impact the product quality. The company's quality indicators by the company are too general to be capable of pointing harassment situations. In addition, during external audits, the auditors examine the QMS, its function and its conformity with the requirements of the standard and they pay little attention to the evolution of quality indicators defined by the company[13]. Under these circumstances the fact that the realized internal and external company audits during the period of 2005-2007 (period of implementation and certification of QMS) did not identified incidents of workplace harassment is not a surprise. The auditors cannot draw conclusions based on the documentation and records (including development of quality indicators) which are available to them or based on the findings on the shop floor.

To detect problems, like physical harassment in the workplace, it is necessary to have specific indicators in the framework of the implemented QMS or, alternatively, to have several "classic" indicators to be possible to reveal social dysfunction.

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[13] Information provided on the basis of acquired experience at the Faculté Warocqué d'Economie et de Gestion (UMONS) during the ISO 9001certification

Considering the effects of harassment on victims (Table 2), three "classic" quality indicators might be selected in order to identify cases of harassment. Thus, an abnormal evolution of the rate of absenteeism, turnover (rotation) and staff satisfaction should not be omitted, as these rates could indicate a problem which affects the personnel motivation. Despite this a further analysis could probably lead to point out problems of harassment.

Besides the measurement and monitoring of these three ratios it is proposed to hand over to all staff an anonymous questionnaire at least once a year in order to identify incidents of ill-being (Table 5). Specifically, questions 2, 3, 7 and 8 can highlight a situation of stress, demotivation, depression, anxiety etc and effects to both physical and mental health. Considering that the every person is clearly positioned, we propose a weighting scale with four answer levels: «Very dissatisfied», « Somewhat unsatisfied», « Somewhat Satisfied» and « Very satisfied » (questions from 1 to 6).

**Table 5: Type of anonymous questionnaire**

1. How satisfied are you by your job profile?
   o tasks to realize
   o responsibility
   o flexibility
   o variety
   o others (precisely)
2. How satisfied are you with the work environment
   o relations with colleagues
   o relations with supervisors
   o relations with the rest of hierarchy
   o others (precisely)
3. How satisfied are you with the communication within your department
   o communication between colleagues
   o communication with supervisors
   o communication with the rest of hierarchy
   o others (precisely)
4. How satisfied are you with the physical working conditions?
   o comfort
   o equipment
   o others (precisely)
5. How satisfied are you with working hours and vacation periods?
6. How satisfied are you with preventive measures and safety at workplace?
   o accidents
   o thieveries
   o others (precisely)
7. What are the 2 main positive points of your work within your department?
   o work atmosphere
   o relationship with the hierarchy
   o teamwork
   o assigned tasks
   o attributed responsibilities
   o training with direct or indirect relation with your work
   o others (precisely)

It is necessary to conduct a satisfactory survey anonymously and send it to each employee personally in order to determine the existence of deeper problems within the company. Anonymity is essential to give the employees the opportunity to express themselves freely. Otherwise, they might avoid expressing their discomfort fear of a negative impact.

## 5. *Conclusion*

Literature review and the Belgian company's analysis lead us to the main conclusion that developed QMSs to satisfy the requirements of ISO 9001 standard are concentrated on the quality of products and on the proper function of the QMS as whole. In this way they focus more on dysfunctions related to social aspects of the company's activity, than to standard's requirements in terms of personnel motivation.

However, we estimate that the important impacts of social problems (like harassment) on the quality of products and services and thus on the company's reputation, it should not be neglected. There is therefore a need for implementation of the appropriate tools in order to detect the problems as early as possible. On this behalf, it is proposed to ISO 9001 certified companies to choose indicators that are applicable to identify anomalies in the eight key areas of standard. It would also be interesting to deal with a further analysis which will include social dimensions and the implementation of corrective and preventive actions in order to avoid the non-conformity and similar cases of workplace harassment.

However the indicators should not be considered as the main solution, but as a sign, a warning alarm for the companies to arrange such problems as quickly as possible. It is, among others, essential to complete the information provided by the indicators, through the use of other tools such as satisfaction surveys which might indicate the nature of problems.

Workplace harassment can have tremendous consequences for the employees (impacts on the private area, on the psychical health, etc.) but also for the enterprise (high absenteeism, reduced productivity, impact on quality products, etc.). Being attentive to this problem is very beneficial for the company as long as it avoids loss of profitability.

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