

Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace: an Exploratory study from Baddi, Himachal Pradesh

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Abstract—Sexual Harassment of Women at workplace is a critical human resource and overall managerial issue around the globe. Different nations have taken measures to deal with the consequences of such a problem. India is not different than other countries. Sexual harassment occurs in the workplace, but unfortunately there are no public records of the cases. Therefore, this research attempts to close such a gap. This paper explores sexual harassment at the workplace within selected Baddi, Himachal Pradesh organizations. A questionnaire has been developed and circulated to that purpose. The organizations contacted comprised of hospitals, factories, hotels and a university. The result gives comprehensive information to enable application in terms of on-the-ground practice and levels of awareness and action in the stated regions. It also reflects the current position in Baddi, HP. This paper helps in the development of policies and creation of awareness which build on the findings of this research.

Keywords— *Harassment, employer, employee, sexual harassment, workplace.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Sexual harassment is a common problem affecting all women in this world irrespective of the profession that they are in, but legal system is sleeping and so they fail in providing them security. Sexual harassment is about male dominance over women and it is used to remind women that they are weaker than man. In a society where violence against women is posed just to show the patriarchal value operating in society, these values of men pose the greatest challenge in curbing sexual harassment. It is rooted in cultural practices and is exacerbated by power relations at the workplace. Over the last few years, there has been awareness globally about the existence and extent of sexual harassment of women at the workplace. This occurrence of sexual harassment at workplace in India is actually infringing the fundamental rights of a woman under Article 19(1) (g) of the Constitution of India.

Harassment and sexual harassment are recognized as a form of discrimination on the grounds of sex and, thus, are contrary to the principle of equal treatment between men and women (*Numbauser-Henning & Laulom, 2012*). As defined by EEOC (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission), "It is unlawful to harass a person (an applicant or employee) because of that person's sex." **Sexual harassment** includes such unwelcome sexually determined behavior (whether directly or by implication) as: a) Physical contact and advances; b) A demand or request for sexual favors; c) Sexually colored remarks; d) Showing pornography; e) Any other unwelcome physical verbal or non-verbal conduct of sexual nature.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Dr. Anila Kamal, 1998: The research investigates women's experiences of sexual harassment at the workplaces, its effects on the harassed female workers and the coping strategies employed by them. The research was divided into two parts: Part I and Part II. Part I deals with the development of Indigenous Sexual Harassment Experience Questionnaire. In Part II study looked into the effects of sexual harassment on the harassed women workers in terms of vocational, psychological, interpersonal and physical strain.

Britz, Elmarie, 2007 explained in his study *'The Perceptions of Employees Regarding Sexual Harassment in an Administrative Higher Educational Work Environment'* that sexual harassment may take different forms, namely,

- Verbal - Sexual innuendoes, suggestive comments, jokes of a sexual nature, sexual propositions or sexual threats.
- Non-Verbal - Sexual suggestive objects or pictures, graphic commentaries, suggestive or insulting sounds, leering, whistling or obscene gestures.
- Physical - Unwanted physical contact, including touching, pinching, brushing the body, coerced sexual intercourse or assault.

Danielle Dirks, 2004: The study investigates the extent to which women experience sexual harassment and sexual objectification in their current and/or previous employment while working as managers, servers, bartenders, and hostesses in a variety of restaurants. Further, this study aims to examine the organizational culture by which sexism, sexual harassment, and sexual objectification coexist as institutionalized factors shaping women's workplace experiences.

El Shimi, 2011 in his study states that sexual harassment is considered as a form of illegal discrimination as well as a type of psychological and sexual abuse. In Egypt, 83 percent of Egyptian women and 98 percent of foreign women have been sexually harassed, but only 2 percent have reported it.

According to **Mondy and Mondy, 2012**, "The US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission fielded more than 13,867 charges of sexual harassment. From 1990 to 2009, the percentage of sexual harassment claims filed by male employees has doubled from 8 to 16%.

Paramita Chaudhuri, 2006: Explored the context of sexual harassment of women in the health sector in Kolkata, West Bengal. The study also investigates the nature of action taken to seek redress, and the extent to which working women are aware of the complaint mechanism outlined by the Supreme Court. This paper has explored women's perceptions and experiences of sexual harassment in the health sector and pathways of action taken. Findings confirm the persistence of sexual harassment in the workplace, the reluctance of women to invoke the complaints mechanism and the ineffectiveness of existing complaints mechanisms in punishing the perpetrator. Findings also suggest that attitudes to sexual harassment in the workplace mirror society's norms about sexuality and masculinity more generally — that it is normal and harmless behaviour, that it is women who provoke this behaviour and that (aside from rape) it is an occupational hazard for women in the workplace.

Robbins and Coulter, 2011 contend that sexual harassment is not a problem in one country; "It is a global issue. For instance, the European Commission found that 30 to 50 percent of female employees in European Union countries had experienced some form of sexual harassment. Cases related to sexual harassment have been filed against employers in countries such as Japan, Australia, New Zealand, and Mexico."

III. SEXUAL HARASSMENT AT WORKPLACE

Implications of Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment has many *implications* both on *individuals and organizations*:

- ***On organizations***
 - Decreases productivity.
 - Lead to disrespect and trust among employees.
 - Increases team conflict.
 - Decreases job satisfaction.
 - Increase in absenteeism.

- ***On individuals***
 - Decrease in work.
 - Loss of motivation, depression, anxiety.
 - Humiliation.
 - Loss of trust.
 - Being discriminated from a work place.
 - Loss of career.

Prevention of Sexual Harassment

It is rightly said, “Every employer, regardless of size, must take all reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace to avoid liability. Employers must implement precautionary measures strictly to minimize the risk of sexual harassment occurrence. Employers may take two main actions, namely,

1. Take all reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment from occurring.
2. If sexual harassment does occur, take appropriate remedial action.

A sexual harassment policy should be there to prevent sexual harassment. Proper remedial procedures should be set up for dealing with complaints.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Objectives:

1. To examine the nature of sexual harassment.
2. To analyze the causes of sexual harassment.
3. To determine the relationship of different demographic variables.
4. To study the effect of sexual harassment on harassed persons.
5. To analyze the various institutional measures to curb the menace of sexual harassment

Research Approach: The study is exploratory and descriptive in nature. The research conducted in Baddi, Himachal Pradesh. The data will be collected from the staff employed through questionnaires.

Data: *Primary data* has been used. For this, a survey questionnaire has been designed which is divided into four parts:

- i. It is composed of demographic questions.
- ii. It consists of questions regarding habits and knowledge about sexual harassment.
- iii. This deals with personal experience of sexual harassment.
- iv. This part deals with actions taken against sexual harassment.

Sample Design and Sample size:

For the purpose of sample, the present study considers the selective population. The primary data will be collected personally from Baddi area. For this purpose, questionnaire method will be used. Respondents belong to several organizations, including, factories, hotels, university, and hospitals

Sample size: 150

Using **SPSS, Statistical Product and Service Solutions**, data analysis was performed.

V. RESULTS & FINDINGS

It was found that 54% of the respondents were males and 46% were females. The average age is 28 years for both genders. 56% of the respondents earned their graduation degree(s), 22% has Master's degree(s), 7% has a doctorate degree and the remaining respondents have vocational and high school education. Majority of the respondent's i.e 76% of the respondents were employees, 13% were managers, and 5% are owners of businesses.

Habits

From survey, it was found that 76% engage themselves in night activities (48% males and 28% females), and 71% do not object that their friends having drinks (39% males and 32% females). However, 86% of the respondents believe in their family values (38% males and 48% females), and 82% declared that trust is the important part of their lives (36% males and 46% females). Furthermore, 61% follow the fashion fad (28% males and 33% females), and 43% have no restrictions as to their habits (28% males and 15% females). Results also show that males, which constitute 52% of the sample, is divided in such a way that 22% have a male supervisor, and 30% have a female supervisor. Also, the females, who constitute 48% of the sample, are divided in such a way that 34% have a male supervisor, and 8% have a female supervisor.

Work Culture

About 65- 71% claims that culture of their organisation is formal.

Promotional Criteria

84% of the respondents of both genders believe that performance standard is the main criterion for promotions in the job. Moreover, 16% of the respondents claim that the relationship with the boss or manager is a criterion for promotion.

Definition of Sexual Harassment: Respondents prefer to recognize sexual harassment as physical interference (85%) which includes touching, rubbing or invading the personal space of the other. More descriptions include asking for sexual favors (67%), exposing sexual material (59%), and using verbal remarks (48%). It is also interesting to note that sexual jokes and prolonged staring came at the bottom of the list with 33% and 32%, respectively and usually are not considered offensive.

Experiencing Sexual Harassment

A total of 32% (6% of the male respondents and 26% of the female respondents) were sexually harassed at work. Surprisingly only 3% of the cases were reported.

Effect of Sexual Harassment

Respondents who encountered to sexual harassment felt ashamed and insulted. To my surprise it was found that 7% of them claim that they were not affected.

Reaction to Sexual Harassment

Only 3% of the harassed respondents (males and females) have taken action.

Reasons (Incident not Reported)

REACTION TO SEXUAL HARASSMENT	MALE %	FEMALE %	TOTAL %
Fear of not being taken seriously	3	1	4
Fear of not being promoted	2	3	5
Fear of being fired from the job	1	1	2
Fear of receiving warning	1	2	3
Out of shame	0	2	2
Total	7	9	16

Causes/ Personal preference(s)

It is found that Physical appearance is one of the main causes. 69% respondents believe that physical appearance is important at work and impacts the behavior of the other towards them.

On the other hand, 35% believes that wearing an attractive outfit and strong accessories like perfume, deodorant, etc. is another cause (40%).

Attitude towards Sexual Harassment

ATTITUDE TOWARDS SEXUAL HARASSMENT	MALE %	FEMALE %	TOTAL %
Do you know of anyone in your immediate circle of friends who has been sexually harassed?			
Yes	28	22	50
No	24	26	50
Have you ever quit work because of sexual harassment?			
Yes	00	03	3
No	54	45	99
Have you asked to be transferred to another department / branch because of sexual harassment?			
Yes	00	03	03
No	66	30	96
If any incident of sexual harassment occurs, who would you blame?			
The Harassed	31	22	53
The Harasser	07	14	21
Both Harassed and Harasser	24	32	56
None	02	00	02

VI. CONCLUSION

Sexual harassment is a taboo subject to be discussed but it is such an important issue that adversely affects the environment of an organization. Results show that 32% of the respondents have experienced sexual harassment. According to a survey by the *Society for Human Resource Management*, 63% of the companies surveyed view sexual harassment as a real problem. 3% of them offer training programs, and 97% have written policies on sexual harassment.

In the present research, sexual harassment is found to be a hot zone where the harassed still consider it a taboo. This is due to social environment, culture, norms, and values. Codes of Practice in dealing with the issue of sexual harassment are limited in Baddi, Himachal Pradesh.

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