

An examination of sexual harrassment causes and effects



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Sexual harassment is a serious problem. The advent of the term 'sexual harassment' can be looked back to the mid 1970s in North America, despite the fact that the first successful case in UK was when sexual harassment was contended to be a type of sexual discrimination in 1986, under the Employment Protection Act (Hunt et al., 2007, Aeberhard, 2001). It can be described as a type of sex discrimination that encroaches Title VII of the Civil Rights Act (amended in 1991). In 1980, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) characterises sexual harassment as being unwanted sexual conduct based on affecting the dignity of man and woman at work. It can include physical, verbal and non verbal conduct. In fact, an action comprises harassment when compliance with or denial of a particular indecent conduct impacts on an individual's employment, a person's performance at work which are then conducive to an intimidating and unpleasant environment (Kim and Kleiner, 1999) . As such, there exist two basic types of unlawful sexual harassment:

Quid Pro Quo: This happens when a job benefit is associated with an employee submitting to unwanted sexual advances. This form of sexual harassment can be committed only by someone who has power to influence employment actions (such as firing, demotion, and denial of promotion) that will affect the victimised employee.

Hostile Environment: This include: indecent comments and gestures, unnecessary touching, discussing their sex life, using demeaning or inappropriate terms-such as " Babe". The actions must be done with the aim of violating her/his dignity, or of creating an unpleasant and humiliating environment for them.

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The harasser or the victim may be of the male or female gender. The intimidator can be the victim's supervisor, a co-worker or even a non-employee.

The US Merit Systems Protection Board surveyed 23 000 federal employees and found that 42% of females and 15% of males have reported being sexually harassed (Mathis et al., 1981). It has also been found that it is mostly women who reported the cases. Yet, the number of men filing the case are rising significantly, the majority of them filing against their female supervisors. 16 % of men filed the complaints with EEOC in 2007. In addition, Lawyers. com along with Glamour Magazine made a report in which it was found out that 17% of men against 35% of women declared they were victims of sexual harassment (Sexual Harassment Support, 2010). The most common punishment for someone found guilty of harassment was either an official or an unofficial warning. Alarmingly, the next most likely outcome was no action whatsoever.

The purpose of the research is to determine the impact of the law on sexual harassment. The research is designed to further analyse the problematic repercussions on the victims as sexual harassment entails a negative psychic, work and health outcomes. Lastly, we will bring up solutions to avert sexual harassment in the workplace.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Sexual harassment is mainly a misuse of power (Hunt et al., 2007, adapted from Brewis, 2001; Sedley and Benn, 1982). Women are more prone to be victims because they are usually more vulnerable, and have been taught to

suffer in silence compared to men. It is crucial to look at some sources of this plague so as to comprehend why women bear sexual harassment.

Normally, employees rely on their supervisor's acceptance for opportunities and career success. Supervisors and employers can become accustomed to the control they have over their employees. Such closeness can dazzle the professional limits and lead people to step over the line. Individual problems can also be a root cause, and sexual harassment can be a symptom of the impacts of ordeals such as divorce, or death of a spouse or child (Hunt et al., 2007). Also, with more and more women entering the labour market, men tend to feel threatened that their traditional role are being taken from them. Thus, sexual harassment is used as a form of protection, as "an equalizer against women in power" according to sociologists of University of Minnesota. Additionally, their second reaction was to tap the presence of women and offer sexual favours, to which, submission to sexual demeanours would ensure their job: to avoid being fired, demoted, or otherwise adversely affected at work. (Hunt et al., 2007). By harassing a woman, male workers apart from irritating her, they want to recall her of her susceptibility, building stress that make her work more tough-thus, discourages her from seeking a higher post. Hence, sexual harassment sets a climate of intimidation and oppression. As an aftermath, the victim goes through a psychological depression; she may criticise herself and have a very low esteem. Sexist or sexualised environments that promotes sexual jokes, sexual insinuations, and pornography will often be seen in the attitude that the male colleagues will display towards the female. As such, women are 3 times more prone to be harassed than in such a working environment where such culture is

allowed. Sexual harassment of men does happen but they are less common since men do not presumably report the case. It is often of the same-sex harassment. (Sexual Harassment Support Community)

Overall, the outcomes of sexual harassment are: the victim bears stress, depression, humiliation, loss of appetite, feeling of anger, isolation, so much so that this may impact on their work performance and they may even have suicidal thoughts. (UNFPA, 2005).

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of this research is to analyse sexual harassment, particularly, in the workplace and to assess how far the company's policy against sexual harassment is efficient.

Specific Objectives

Identify the motives of the harasser and profile of harasser.

Explore the short and long term consequences of sexual harassment.

Determine the strategies used by employers to avoid, handle sexual harassment.

To assess whether government laws and regulation against sexual harassment is efficient in protecting victims and the working population as a whole.

To know whether men or women are more prone to be victims of sexual harassment.

To suggest possible solutions against sexual harassment.

METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH DESIGN

In order to collect information for the research, the researcher will have recourse to both primary and secondary data. In the first instance, the collection for primary data will be discussed. In order to gain quantitative description, a survey will be carried out. The survey method requires a sample of respondents to reply to a number of questions that have been previously determined as relevant to the research. However, when doing a survey, only a representation of a population can be chosen and this can be referred to as a sample. Face-to-face interviews and the telephone method will be used to obtain the attitudes, behaviours and opinions about sexual harassment from a group of people (Stangor, 1998) . The face-to-face interviewing will be a good method because response rate may be high compared to the telephone method. The researcher will choose his sample randomly or he may use convenience sampling.

Data will further be garnered by the use of questionnaires. Without doubt, questionnaires will allow gathering information that cannot be found elsewhere from secondary information such as books, newspapers and Internet resources. Basically, there are two types of sampling techniques, which are probability sampling and non-probability sampling. In this research, the researcher will use probability and non-probability sampling. In this case the sample size will be 60 respondents. The researcher initially prepared 10 sets of questionnaires as a draft to use as pre-testing. The pre-

testing enabled the researcher to know whether the question layout, question sequence, question design are appropriate and understood by respondents. The aim of conducting a pre-testing is to ensure that the respondents have had no problems with understanding or answering the questions and followed in all instructions correctly (Malhotra and Peterson, 2002). After the pre-testing was done, the researcher revised the questionnaire and finished the final draft of it. At first, he will use stratified sampling to divide the working population in two strata: the public and the private sector. Then, he will randomly choose 22 public and 10 private companies, using both random and convenience sampling which is a non-probability method.

In this research, the questionnaire has various kinds of questions. The use of open-ended questions is to gather the respondents' views on whether they think that their company has good policies against sexual harassment, or gives them the opportunity to suggest some other solutions not already mentioned in the questionnaires, so as to increase understanding of the topic. Also, dichotomous and multiple-choice questions were used, whereby, the respondents had to answer the questions asked in the questionnaire by selecting the appropriate answer provided.

Qualitative data were collected so that researchers can know more about things that cannot be directly observed and measured. For this thesis, the researcher plans to conduct two in-depth interviews with two HR personnel from two different organisations and if possible, two more interviews with either a victim of sexual harassment, the harasser himself or a witness. The purpose of these interviews was to get an insight and views of sexual
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harassment in the workplace and what are the strategies that they would recommend to deter such behaviour that creates a hostile environment for a person.

In addition, the researcher will use secondary data available on the internet, in books and from the CSO.

Data will then be analyzed using a specific software which is called the SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) and the frequencies will later be keyed in Microsoft Excel in order to generate the graphs (bar charts and pie charts).

BENEFITS OF THE RESEARCH

The advantages of this research is to identify projects and campaigns that had been carried out or are on-going which have the aim of raising awareness among the working population which consists of employers, employees, future working population who can obtain a more solid definition of this plague in the research. People need to be conscious of appropriate behaviour in the workplace and how, what looks like friendly teasing could be misinterpreted as something else. The research will furthermore help the working population to know how to deal with the issue: they can become aware of their rights and how they can demand redress if they experience any kind of sexual harassment. This research may equally provide a ground for the cost implications of sexual harassment in the work place-thus can persuade employers that it is in their interest to address this issue. They can moreover, become aware of the laws that already exist and can thus sue the harasser in question.

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