

# Research paper on sexual harassment

[Business](#), [Industries](#)



Sexual harassment is a term, which is rather difficult to interpret, because people may have various perceptions of elements, which construct it. That is why it would be right to give several generally accepted explanations. Thus, for instance, in accordance with the European Commission Code of Practice, sexual harassment is " Unwanted conduct of a sexual nature, or other conduct based on sex affecting the dignity of women and men at work. This can include unwelcome physical, verbal or nonverbal conduct" (Gilbert, Guerrier, Guy, p. 48).

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission gives a little different explanation and defines sexual harassment as " unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favours, other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature" (Gilbert, Guerrier, Guy, p. 48).

Sexual harassment in the workplace may occur in absolutely different spheres. Hospitality industry is one of those, where complaints against sexual harassment are made. At present time, the problem with sexual harassment in the hospitality business is so serious that employees find it necessary to organize trainings for the personnel. Such trainings are meant to inform about appropriate behavior in the workplace while communicating with customers.

The reason why we speak exactly about hospitality industry lies in the fact that this sphere is closely related to communication with customers.

Employees in this sphere are expected to satisfy the client and meet all his expectations. The majority of employees in this sphere are young women.

Numerous research show that sexual harassment carries pervasive character. There are several reasons and one of them is the role of

appearance. Hall claims that there are such branches of hospitality business, where sexiness and job flirt are even encouraged (cited in Gilbert, Guerrier, Guy, p. 50). Hotel and restaurant industries are definitely among them. Such situation happens, because hospitality service slightly differs from other industries. Therefore the norms of behavior are also different. For instance, it can be often heard from restaurant employees that they have to behave sexually, joke, etc. Such behavior is a norm for hospitality industry, but it would be absolutely unacceptable in other business spheres.

Claims about sexual harassment at work in restaurant business are extremely frequent. Such situation can be explained by various factors. Probably one of the most important roles play appearance of the personnel. Employers want to hire such staff, who has so called outgoing personality. Such people prepossess clients, they look more friendly and open, which is extremely important for the hospitality business.

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission recognized restaurant business as one of the largest spheres, where sexual harassment occurs. This can be easily explained by the fact that " The industry is based on entertainment, enjoyable interludes, romantic dinners, low lighting, fine wine, and match-making" (Foley). It is crucial to note that the smaller the restaurant is, the bigger problems with sexual harassment.

Despite the fight against such cases, education of personnel and even employers, cases of sexual harassment still occur. Nowadays it is more than obvious that all restaurateurs have to work hard to solve this problem. John Foley claims that " A sexual harassment policy should be front and center in your employee manual" (Foley). Restaurant owners should put all efforts in

order to avoid any sexual harassment scandals, because it is incredibly harmful for their business.

In the city of Lafayette a survey was conducted in order to understand the problem of sexual harassment in the restaurant business. 100 restaurant employees were asked questions, which were related to sexual harassment at their workplace. In the result of this survey, it was found out that over 60% of the employees claimed that they felt sexual harassment at their workplace. They also agreed that in their workplace sexual harassment appears more often than in other industries. Also, in the course of the survey it was found out that sexual harassment appears to be more accepted in the restaurant business. Such opinion was expressed by 80% of female and 64, 1% of male respondents (Agrusa, Coats).

Another interesting finding was that almost over 30% of restaurant employees were not informed about sexual harassment policies. The same number of respondents claimed that they felt they were sexually harassed at their workplace.

As it can be seen, the information received in the course of the survey is extremely valuable. It proves that restaurant business has huge problems with sexual harassment and in the majority of cases management of the restaurants avoid talking with their personnel about sexual harassment, because it is rather unfavorable for them.

It was already stated that sexual harassment may occur in many industries. Probably, the second largest industry, where sexual harassment takes place, is hotel business. It is possible to say that it is a so called dark side of this industry. In the majority of cases here we imply sexual harassment of maids.

Journalists of the Wall Street Journal are convinced that cases of sexual harassment are rather common in hotel industry. Not all of them are made public, but still " a " normal year" might include up to half a dozen of sexual harassment cases" (Hsu).

Interestingly enough, when talking about guests of the hotel, both women and men commit acts of sexual harassment against the personnel of the hotel. The majority of such cases are not reported to police and the problems are solved in the walls of the hotels. However, recently several cases on sexual harassment at hotels were made public. For instance, sexual assaults at the hotel " Sofitel" and " Pierre Hotel". It is remarkable that these cases involved VIP guests of the hotels. It is even difficult to imagine the number of assaults, which involve ordinary guests.

The incidents with Sofitel and Pierre hotel gave rise to a number of confessions of maids about sexual harassment. In anonymous interviews, many room maids confessed that they faced such incidents. The hugest problem here is that in the majority of cases the management of the hotels refused to believe them and preferred to close their eyes on the incidents, which involved famous guests.

One of the former employees of the Mercer Hotel shared her experience: " It happens all the time. I think this case was a bit extreme, but yes, it is not uncommon for hotel maids to be harassed or even attacked. I would always hear disrespectful comments, or be asked to join male guests in exchange for money when I worked at the hotel If the employee is unsatisfied with the treatment received, they are more than welcome to find a new job" (Cunico).

Indeed, the mentioned above life experience is very common. Actually, the majority of room maids, face such situations almost each day.

The society is worried about this situation and nowadays sexual harassment policies and corresponding trainings among staff and management are encouraged. The hard work in the field of legislation is already done in order to protect hotel employees from the similar crimes. Today organization of trainings, which will educate personnel about sexual harassment, is required.

Ms. Rosenthal commented one of the reasons of frequent sexual harassment cases at hotels: " Many hotel workers are women who are new to the country and speak limited English, making them particularly vulnerable" (Fickenscher).

Indeed, many hotel maids are immigrants from other countries with low education and limited language. All of them hold on to their work and are extremely afraid to lose it. It is one of the reasons why so many similar incidents are not made public. Probably, there are cases which are not reported even to the hotel employers.

Publicity of the mentioned above cases gave life to another bill as well. Thus, it is suggested that all hotels and motels should provide their personnel with so called panic buttons, which will inform immediately security of the hotel that a certain employee is in danger. A lot of hotels have already provided their staff with such alert buttons.

In conclusion it should be said that in all business spheres sexual harassment may occur. However, restaurants and hotels are the most endangered industries and there are several reasons for that.

If we speak about restaurants, than it should be said that quite often sexuality and friendliness are encouraged at workplace. Moreover, the informal setting of the place also make restaurants a good spot for the sexual harassment. Employers want to hire beautiful open people. Often behavior, which is a norm at a restaurants, will be viewed as sexual harassment in other business spheres. It is crucial to note that in restaurants, managerial factor is one of most important and decisive. A lot of restaurant employers are unwilling to see the problem, educate and train personnel.

The situation with hotels is a little bit different. In the majority of cases, sexual assaults at hotels happen with room maids. Young women without higher education, who are often immigrants from other countries, hold to their job and often fail to stand up for themselves, because they are afraid to lose job.

Both for the heads of restaurants and hotels, it is extremely important to show activity against sexual harassment. Improper behavior should be punished, clients and employees should know that such incidents are absolutely unacceptable. Each employee should remember that sexual harassment is recognized illegal by the law and should be punished correspondingly.

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