

Sex and intimacy in the workplace essay



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Despite being illegal and prohibited by laws of many countries, sex and intimacy is still a very much alive in our work places just as if is legal (Achampang, 34). This discussion focuses on whether our response to the problem of sexual harassment in the workplace is still inadequate; or whether our response has in some sense done more harm than good. This is in an attempt to establish whether the measures taken to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace are adequate and if not, what can be done to step up those measures. Sexual harassment in the workplace by definition is any form of sexual advance which is unwelcome or uncalled for which tends to interfere with a person's output at work by intimidating such a person or creating an uncomfortable working environment. Before we shift our focus on the measures that are taken to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace and whether these measures are adequate let us first examine some of the major causes of sexual harassment.

It is believed that is more effective to deal with the root cause of a problem as opposed to addressing when it has already taken place. Focusing on the causes of sexual harassment would help in knowing the best method and ways to prevent the same from happening. Researchers have termed the establishment of causes of sexual harassment in the workplace as one of the most difficult thing to do. The reason is because colleagues at work share common interest and therefore it becomes difficult to draw a line between normal work relations and sexual relations which may then culminate to sexual harassment (Achampang, 76-80). Teamwork and support for each other in workplaces is a common phenomenon.

So just when do you judge that the teamwork work or the support among colleagues is going too far and come to the conclusion that one of the colleagues is harassing the other sexually? Research carried out by scholars indicate that the closeness that exist either between colleagues at work or employees and employers play a major role in sexual harassment in workplaces. People cross professional lines and boundaries and go overboard perhaps without full knowledge that they are doing so because of the ordinary relationship of closeness and team work that exist between colleagues at work (Solotoff, 60-64). Hostile working environments which are caused by poor management skills at work are also said to play a key role in bringing about sexual harassment in the workplace. Personal problems especially those that are marital related like divorce or an abusive spouse are also said to be major causes of sexual harassment at the workplace (Solotoff, 80-82). There is no profession that does not experience or is not prone to sexual harassment. Equally there is no gender that cannot face sexual harassment.

However, according to a research conducted, statistics indicate that women are more prone to sexual harassment than their male counterparts. The research also reveals that women are more likely to be harassed in fields which are believed not be their areas of specialization. For example a woman working in fire department or engineering departments which are believed to be fields of men are more prone to sexual harassment than a woman in a white collar job. Due the fact it is not easy to clearly establish when sexual harassment takes place in a workplace scenario it is equally difficult to curtail the behavior. However let us look at some of the measures that are

taken or those that ought to be taken. This discussion will also focus on whether the measures that are taken are sufficient to curb this unethical behavior.

Some of these measures include creation of an atmosphere or work environment of understanding and respect. The elements of understanding and respect are mutual in this case so that both the employer and the employee and among the employees themselves there ought to be respect and understanding regardless of one's rank (Achampang, 85-87). Another very effective measure is to make it clear from the beginning when a person joins the company that the organization does not tolerate any form of discrimination. It is also important for the management of the organization to spell out clearly disciplinary actions that are to be taken against any person who engages in such behavior which action should be severe. Another measure that is taken although many organizations are not keen on it is to ensure that a step or an action is taken as soon as it is discovered that sexual harassment is taking place.

Ignoring such a problem only makes it worse. Communication is a key factor in preventing sexual harassment at the workplace. Employers need to frequently talk with their employees in order to know exactly what is happening. There should not be a big gap between the employer and the employees as this will facilitate effective communication.

Consequently employees are likely to open up and speak out what has been happening in the office (Solotoff, 109-110). Another important measure is to come up with a policy as an organization which deals with matters of sexual

harassment so that should it occur then the management knows exactly how to deal with it. Failing to come up with such a policy may increase sexual harassment in places of work as employees are likely to undermine the seriousness of the consequences. Proper training by the management of an organization on how to deal with matters related to sexual harassment must also be clear as a means of dealing with sexual harassment in the workplaces. It must always be remembered that sexual harassment is not a problem of the victim alone but also an organizational problem. It must therefore be dealt with the magnitude it deserves.

Having looked at some of the measures that organizations take to curb the vice of sexual harassment in the workplaces the question that still lingers in the minds of many is are these measures really sufficient in curbing the vice? Is there more that can be done to reduce sexual harassment in the workplace? This has been a controversial debate for a long time with many feeling that these measures have not been sufficient enough in curbing the vice (Achampang, 93-97). In my opinion I feel that the measures per se are enough. Perhaps the problem is lack of proper implementation by the management of organization. If the management of organizations took these measures seriously and effected them properly then there would be a difference.

It is therefore a challenge to the management of organizations to ensure that more effort is put in the implementation of these measures to make them effective.