

Sexual harassment at work research paper examples

[Business](#), [Employee](#)



Overcoming Communication Problems

Training Workshop

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Sexual Harassment at Work

Overview

Unfortunately sexual harassment has been a much too common characteristic of workplaces especially if there is a real or perceived power imbalance. Most commonly the imbalance of power is the dominance of male over the subordinates of females. This paper has reviewed the literature in order to find definitions, why it is important to address the issues and a brief review of basic theories. The research has been evolving so that more successful and efficient prevention strategies are targeted at stopping the problem before it starts. Looking at the problem from a new perspective may lead to better results when communicating and therefore in finding solutions to the problem.

Behavioral Objectives

Define Sexual Harassment

Understand the imbalance in power that can cause the behavior

Learn how to identify the behavior

Learn how to report an incident (victim)

Learn how to find assistance for changing behavior (harasser)

Learn prevention strategies for the workplace

Recognize the signs of a sexual harasser in action and learn to avoid the behavior

Ask for support from management and co-workers

Outline of Training Session

I. Understanding Sexual Harassment - Sexual harassment can be understood as an imbalance in power between a boss and an employee, most often between male and female. A new perspective may be more useful in understanding sexual harassment. The recognition that the problem is due to androcentrism, the design of institutions around the male in the society, can lead to more effective understanding and solutions.

A. Learn the legal definition

B. Study cases and discuss them from an ethical point of view

C. Learn examples of where it has successfully been prevented.

II. Communication

A. Interpersonal Skills - personal behavioral responsibilities

1. Build Self Confidence and learn to set personal boundaries

2. Practice Communication Skills

3. Learn new ways of viewing the interpersonal and managerial dynamics of your workplace

4. Learn prevention strategies

5. Learn how to report

6. Learn how to ask for support

B. Intrapersonal Skills - relationships between co-workers; relationships between employers and employees

1. Learn the perspectives of others

2. Training to recognize sexual harassment behaviors

3. Understand cultural diversities and personality styles

4. Respect diversity and learn compassion for others

III. Role Play Exercises

IV. Discussion of training, fill out evaluation papers

V. Receive Summary of Training Class with tips and contact numbers

VI. Conclude with coffee-café (catered)

Literature Review

Einarson (et al., 2003) has described the relationship between bullying, emotional abuse and sexual harassment whose solutions can be focused on the harasser (perpetrator) or on the injured party (the victim). A family therapist in Scandinavia in the 1980s first recognized bullying in the workplace as an important area of research. The research has mainly looked

at the problem as a problem of gender inequality. (Einersaon et al., 2003) Dr. Sandra Lipsitz Benz of Cornell University in her research has asked that Americans look at the problem of sexual harassment with from a different perspective. Instead of concentrating on the differences between males and females (the biological differences) the problem can be viewed as being based in society's androcentric (male-centered) institutions. (Bem, 2003) Thinking 'out of the box' can be a good way to observe the problem and find solutions. Organizations must make ethical policy, in the U. S. it is the law and people whether they are employers or employees, need to learn how to set personal boundaries.

Definitions

Sexual harassment can take the form of unwanted sexual touching or being sent inappropriate messages with sexual content. Unwanted sexual overtures from a boss which make an employee uncomfortable can be defined as sexual harassment. The conduct is disrespectful and the employee may think they have no choice but to take part or else they will lose chances at promotions or they may even lose their job. The sharing of unwanted videos, photographs, printed material or emails with sexual content and/or pornographic content is also defined as sexual harassment. (Howard 2007)

Paludi and Paludi, Jr. have written an important 'handbook' which describes and discusses sexual harassment in the workplace and in academia. They quote a high school girl as stating "Society treats woman as second class - that's why this happens. It's a symptom of a bigger problem" (Paludi &

Paludi, Jr., 2003, 114). Sexual harassment has been regarded as an issue of control and power as well as some men's feelings of entitlement. Most sexual harassment is by males towards females and is often regarded as an act of sexism.

Facts and Figures

In 1980 the Federal Law, the U. S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) was voted into law to address the problem of gender-based discrimination. Firstly the law notes that a hostile environment in a workplace due to unwelcome sexual advances or unwelcome gender-related behavior is illegal. Secondly sexual harassment is also any unwanted sexual behavior that an employee is forced to agree to in order to be promoted or in order to keep their job. In other words the employee is expected to agree to the conditions quid pro quo. (Prior & Fitzgerald, 2003) In 1991 Title VII of the law was amended to " permit compensatory and punitive damages and jury trials, creating the possibility of damages for hostile environment cases" (Hodges, 2006, 183).

Hodges (2011) emphasizes the need to take claims of sexual harassment seriously. She has noted that since women are entering the workplace more due to changes in demographics problems arise in white-collar, blue-collar and service industries.

Between 1980 and 2000 the number of women over 25 in the work force increased from 33. 2 million to 55. 4 million Seventy percent of women with school-age children are currently working. . . Moreover, women hold a high

percentage of jobs in the occupations and workplaces which account for the net job growth in the 1990s. (Hodges, 2006, 185)

Effects

Organizations suffer loss in work days and profits. Employees have more sick days from bad situations in the workplace. A hostile environment at work makes everyone less productive. Long term sexual harassment by a boss has been shown to produce the symptoms of post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Women who are targeted with sexually implicit comments from co-workers show more symptoms of heart and vascular diseases. “ Women who are continually exposed to sexist behavior may be at a greater risk for long term health consequences” (Einarson et al., 2003, Intro.).

Strategies

Americans assume that the problems causing sexual harassment are motivated by biological differences (a) sexual inequality and (b) gender. (Bem, 1996) Hodges has suggested that it is very important for labor unions to step up and support people with claims of sexual harassment. Not only that they need to look for methods to prevent the behavior. (Hodges, 2006, 184)

Dr. Sandra Lipsitz Bem (1996) has suggested a useful perspective would be to blame androcentric (male-centered) institutions rather than biology. “ We need to reframe our discussion of sexual inequality so that it focuses not on male-female differences per se but on how our androcentric (or male centered institutions) transform male-female difference into female

disadvantage" (Bem, 1994, 42).

What can managers do?

Effective managerial communication is very important to making everyone aware of the concept of sexual harassment and the need for appropriate behavior in the workplace. Training workshops have been shown to successfully help resolve many issues surrounding the sexual harassment dynamic; the three general steps are (a) prevention, (b) recognition, and (c) treatment (Pryor & Fitzgerald, 2003, 93).

POAS

Preventive Organizational Actions (POAs) require (a) the strong commitment of top management, (b) zero tolerance for misconduct, (c) notification to newly hired employees and job applicants that the workplace is harassment-free, (d) regular organizational assessments, and (e) regular teacher-directed training. (Bell et al., 2002). All levels of an organization must be aware and adhere to the POAs. Communication strategies for protecting personal boundaries need to be shared. There also needs to be the recognition that each sexual harassment situation is different because both the perpetrator and the victim are unique personalities with unique needs. There must be an obvious and easy way to register complaints and availability of services for the victims. The perpetrators of the harassment also need access to useful information and ways to access counseling.

Conclusions

In order to deal with the situational characteristics that lead to sexual harassment three steps are helpful to keep in mind (a) assessment of the potential risks, (b) a change in behavior when necessary, and (c) the creation of healthy workplace conditions. Training sessions can be offered at regular intervals in a company or at the beginning of employment. Perceiving the problem as being generated by the society's design may be the key to solving the problem. Designing institutions and organizations as people-centric or family-centric will ensure that new ways of prevention will evolve.

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