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Abstract

Today's workplace is diverse and constantly altering. The conventional employer/employee relationship of past has been turned upside down. Employees are living in a diverse and growing economy and have almost unlimited job opportunities but they face the bad times of recession too. The overall work environment and global economy are rapidly changing that leaves no space for definite forecasting. These factors have created an environment where the business is in need of its employees more and not the employees in need of job opportunities. For this reason, managers at workplace face several ethical issues; sexual harassment is one of the majors. This paper examines the relationships between survey-based reports of sexual harassment at work places and its impact on job performance. The findings of this paper revealed that sexual harassment is the most rated violence in organizations. The findings further revealed that gestures of sexual nature of opposite sex are associated with sexually offensive comments, invitation of dates and sexual involvements.

Keywords: *Workplace, Sexual harassment, Sexual aggression, Offensive comments, Job performance*

1. Introduction

Offensive, embarrassing and humiliating are the words that are related to the unwanted and unwelcome behaviors of sexual natures, usually termed as sexual harassment which is becoming alarmingly common nowadays at workplaces. Most of the time, it badly affects the job performance. It is mainly related with physical, psychological and job related outcomes [Willness, Steel, & Lee, 2007]. In defining sexual harassment, male and female somehow agree on to which inappropriate (extent) behaviors are considered as sexually harassing [McKinny, 1990; Brewer, 1982; Maihoff & Forrest, 1983]. As compared to women, men are found to be more tolerant of the sexually harassing behavior [McKinny, 1990].

Whatever the theories are, does sexual harassment matter or not at workplaces? And if it does, then the extent to which it matters must be measured. This paper intends to find out the impact of sexual harassment on job performance of various organizations. Wilson and Thompson [2001] argue that mostly men try to impose power over women and this is because women are considered as subordinates at work and in society, they become easy victims of harassment.

2. Literature Review

Some of the administrators and supervisors usually have skeptical ideas about the occurrence of sexual harassment. According to them, it depends on the perception of an individual, how one takes an action. For instance, some individuals might take an unnecessary dinner invitation by a colleague/manager as an attempt to sexually harass and some might take it positively as a friendly gesture. The literature here is merely comprised of sexual harassment theories, how it happens at workplaces, individual and organizational characteristics related to it. Also, we have tried to find out as to how much sexual harassment is affecting the workplace setting, job satisfaction and overall performance of individuals.

2.1 Theories Regarding Sexual Harassment

As much as sexual harassment is increasing day by day at workplaces, in institutions and even in government sectors, it is taken less leniently as ever. After the ground breaking theory presented by MacKinnon [1979], the literature of sexual harassment is following a rather similar track. Sociologists are now broadly linking sexual harassment with workplace inequalities or gender inequalities and other kinds of discriminations related to workplace [Lopez, Hodson, & Roscigno, 2009].

Theories have demonstrated that supervisors or personals at work who possess more power at workplace are known to carry more dominance in sexual harassment than the subordinates. But even after decades of searching and studying [Gutek, 1985; Hendrix, William H., Justin D. Rueb, and Robert P. Steel. 1998; Tong, 1984], whether and how workplace power is impacting harassment, the reasons are still unknown.

2.2 Role of Telephone and Internet

Telephone is also playing an important role in this issue. Sexual harassment is done by phone especially to those who work in call centers or receptions. One of the studies done by German companies found that it was men actually who were harassing women and even 10% reported the threats to sexual violence also. It was a very stressful experience for women who received these calls, they described their feelings as 'disgusted and disrespected' [Sczesny & Stahlberg, 2000]. Another German study revealed that out of 49 women, 50% of women and out of 51 men, 2% were sexually harassed over the telephones [Sczesny, 1997].

Similarly, harassment by means of internet is also getting popular. Women are using more internet than men [LeClaire, 2005]. The percentage of women becoming the victims of online harassing has also increased. With the increase in the usage of net, number of inappropriate emails has also increased a lot [Khoo & Senn, 2004]. People who cannot harass or threaten people face-to-face are now using more threatening and abusive language over the emails.

2.3 Characteristics of Sexual Harassment at Workplace

Sexual harassment is known to occur more likely in organizations with certain characteristics [Pryor, J. B., Giedd, J. L., Williams & K. B., 1995]. Pryor, J. B., LaVite, C.

&Stoller, L. [1993] suggested that if the surroundings help the situation to occur, it automatically occurs, for example, if a person is responsible for sexual threatening one time, he will do it again if the system allows him to do so. According to Gutek& Barbara A.,(1985) sexual harassment is more likely to happen in organizations where all kinds of sexual harassments are common and it actually supports such acts. Sexual harassment appears to be more common (1) In jobs or occupations where males are dominant over the females[European Commission, 1999] and (2) The fear of losing the job upon filing the complaint [Björkqvist, K., Österman, K. &Hjelt-Bäck, M., 1994].

2.4 Impact of Sexual Harassment on Job Performance

Form the observations, it is noticed that the experience of sexual harassment deeply affects an employee’s psychological and physical well-being [Earnshaw& Davidson, 1994]. There are quite adverse effects of sexual harassment like in some cases; it might lead to illness, lack of commitment and performance at job, increased absenteeism and even sometimes resignation [Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2005] while Sczesny and Stahlberg's study [2000] of call centers found that job satisfaction and job performance are extremely affected by telephone based sexual harassment. One of the studies in finding the effects of sexual harassment has shown that men and women both feel humiliated, loss of self-confidence, depressed, low self-esteem and decreased jobs satisfaction [Gutek, Barbara A. 1985].

3. Methodology

The aim is to determine the relationship and to analyze the associations between different variables related to sexual harassment. To conduct this research, primary data was collected in the form of 'questionnaires-survey' as the research tool from employees of different organizations working in Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom and United States of America.

The total of 150 questionnaires with cover letters having handy instructions attached was hand delivered to the respondents. The Spearman and T-test (one sample test) are used to test the association between sexual harassment and job performance. By applying these tests, we found out that sexual harassment has no direct impact on job performance in all studied countries. But in Pakistan, job stress and performance decline have caused due to sexual harassment.

4. Research Hypotheses, Results and Discussions

The Statistics table below shows that for N=23, who have suffered violence in organizations, the $0.87 > 0.00$ Mean of “Sexual Aggression” and “Others” results in the acceptance of the hypothesis being stated as “Sexual Harassment is the most rated violence in organizations”.

Table 1:Sexual Harassment is the most rated violence in organizations

		Statistics				
Did you suffer any kind of violence?	Hold Up	Robbery	Physical Aggression	Sexual Aggression	Others	
Yes	Valid	23	23	23	23	23
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0
	Mean	.22	.70	.65	.87	.87

	Median	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
No	Valid	63	63	63	63	63
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0
	Mean	.00	.00	.00	.00	.08
	Median	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00

Table 2: Impact of Sexual Harassment on Job Performance

Hypotheses	Mean	N	Empirical Conclusion	
Frequency Distribution Test				
H1: Sexual Harassment is the most rated violence in organizations. (Sexual Aggression)	.87	23	Accepted	
Spearman's rho Correlation [Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)].	Correlation Coefficient(r_s)	Sig.(2-tailed)	N	Empirical Conclusion
H2: Gestures of sexual nature are associated with sexually offensive comments.	.772	.000	86	Accepted
H3: Gestures of sexual nature are associated with invitations of dates.	.788	.000	86	Accepted
H4: Gestures of sexual nature are associated with invitations for sexual involvements.	.760	.000	86	Accepted
One-Sample Test, Test Value = 4				
	Mean	Sig.(2-tailed)	Empirical Conclusion	
H5: Job Satisfaction is highly affected due to sexual harassment.	2.17	.000	Rejected	
H6: Professional Relationships Satisfaction is highly affected due to sexual harassment.	2.27	.000	Rejected	
H7: Psychological well-being is highly affected due to sexual harassment.	2.40	.000	Rejected	
H8: Turnover Intentions are highly affected due to sexual harassment.	2.35	.000	Rejected	
H9: Intentions to change career are highly affected due to sexual harassment.	2.41	.000	Rejected	
H10: Organizational Commitment is highly affected due to sexual harassment.	2.36	.000	Rejected	
H11: Job Stress is highly affected due to sexual harassment.	2.45	.000	Rejected	
H12: Performance is highly declined due to sexual harassment.	2.50	.000	Rejected	

A conventional way of reporting the figures of Spearman's rho Correlation in **Table 2** is as follows:

$$r_s = 0.772, 0.788, 0.760 \quad N = 86, p < 0.01$$

These results indicate that as the rating of “Your co-worker/supervisor makes gestures (signs) of a sexual nature” increases, the rating of “Your co-worker/supervisor makes sexually offensive comments”, “Your supervisor asks you to go out on a date with the promise that it will help on the job” and “Your supervisor invites you for sexual involvements” also increases. This shows that above mentioned variables are directly proportional to each other, hence ‘Accepting’ the hypotheses.

This One-sample test has been conducted at Test Value=4 which indicates the rate of "Agree". The testing proceedings show that all hypotheses are rejected because their p value is less than 0.05, thus making the 2-tailed value significant at the 0.001 significance level. Job Satisfaction is highly affected due to sexual harassment.

Willness, Steel, & Lee, 2007 has viewed that most of the time; sexual harassment badly affects the job performance. It is mainly related with physical, psychological and job related outcomes. Our study has also showed that despite of modernism and open-mindedness, workers still are getting harassed and due to which effectiveness on job performance is seen in Pakistan only. Theories have demonstrated that supervisors or personals at work who possess more power at workplace are known to carry more dominance in sexual harassment than the subordinates. But even after decades of searching and studying [Gutek 1985; Hendrix, Rueb, and Steel 1998; Tong 1984], whether and how workplace power is impacting harassment, the reasons are still unknown. The present research has somehow proved this phenomenon with the results where the employees were definitely and openly harassed by her supervisor with the perception to continue her job.

According to the German study, out of 49 women, 50% of women and out of 51 men, 2% were sexually harassed over the telephones [Sczesny, 1997]. These two channels are playing a vital role in harassing too. As the use of cell phones has increased to a tremendous level nowadays, this might also prove to be helpful for the harassers to harass the victims. One of the studies in finding the effects of sexual harassment has shown that men and women both feel humiliated, loss of self-confidence, depressed, low self-esteem and decreased job satisfaction [Gutek, Barbara A. 1985]. The present study shows that in Pakistan, there is a remarkable increase in job stress and performance decline but other countries are not bothered by this issue.

The best tool to eliminate sexual harassment is prevention. This can only be done through proper awareness and awareness again is done through good training program which can prepare workers to recognize sexual advances and develop ways to deal with them. It is not just the sole responsibility of the management to address such issues but also the employee's responsibility to speak up and stand against such behaviors.

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