



AN EMPRICAL STUDY ON HARASSMENT AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN EMPLOYEES IN IT INDUSTRY

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ABSTRACT

Information Technology is growing promptly and provides employment opportunities for both gender. Women are getting into IT sector and becoming successful in these fields. Their job performance and career advancement is hindered by an issue called harassment. Harassment happens to workers on farms, entrepreneurs, to students and trainees in institutions. Harassment in workplace especially in IT Sector is gradually coming out and it affects the lives of both men and women. This paper mainly focuses on harassment at workplace and the response of women employees towards harassment in workplace. For this study the survey was taken between 100 women employees of various IT companies. Statistical tools such as One-way ANOVA, T-test and Chi-Square test have been used to test the hypotheses. The researcher would like to thank the authorities of Indian council of social science research for their timely help to complete this research paper with funded and deserved manner.

KEYWORDS

Women employees, Harassment, IT industry and Safe Working Environment.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Digital Technology has modernized the world as never before. Information Technology makes transformation in the global scenario. It creates plenty of job opportunities especially for women. High pay, night shift, changed working culture attracts majority of female workers towards IT sector. This changed working culture and execution of foreign culture leads to issues like harassment. Harassment is an immense problem in workplace. The problem of sexual harassment in workplace is coming out increasingly. In workplace Sexual harassment is a type of discrimination and women are the only victims of harassment, it may be in the form of verbal harassment or Non-verbal harassment. It includes unwelcome comments, images, messages or request for sexual favors. Harassment is likely to occur in workplace where there is low number of women in workplace. In IT Sector majority of the employees are men and men occupies majority of the senior positions as well. When women do break into these fields and become successful, men are threatened by entry of females. Harassment is a tool used by male employees to put down the female employees in the workplace. Now-a-days majority of women are bold enough and coming forward to take prevention measures against harassment.

2.0 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Brooks and Perot et al. (1991) claim that considerable variation exists in the estimated proportions of women reporting experiences with sexual harassment. Depending on the sample used, 16 to 90% of working women experience sexual harassment in their lifetime.

Heise (1992) say that the experience or threat of violence affects the lives of millions of women worldwide, in all socio-economic and educational classes, cutting across boundaries of wealth, race, religion and culture thus violating and impairing or nullifying the enjoyment by women of their human rights and fundamental freedoms. Every form of violence threatens all women and limits their ability to make choices about their lives. At a 12- country workshop held in China on women's non formal education, participants were asked to name the worst aspect of being female: fear of male violence was the almost unanimous answer.

MacMillan et al. (2000) demonstrates why literature on harassment in the workplace and academic settings is not as applicable to public harassment. There is a difference in how women perceive harassment from strangers versus non-strangers. Public harassment is perpetrated by strangers, whereas

harassment at work or school is most likely perpetrated by someone known to the victim. Additionally, women who are harassed by strangers may have little recourse. There are sexual harassment policies that can protect women at work, but on the street there are fewer policies, and they may be difficult to enforce.

Shahnaz (2001) finds that there were indications that more women than men were kept after hours to do overtime work. Several respondents in the Bangladesh and India country studies identified 'being asked to stay back late unnecessarily' as being harassment.

3.0 HARASSMENT IN WORKPLACE

The concept of sexual harassment is relatively a new term that started in 1960 though harassment existed long before the term was first used. The problem of sexual harassment in work place is gradually coming out of the closet. Today the problem of sexual harassment in workplace is recognized as a serious issue as an occupational hazard and a violation of human rights. The Indian Labour organization called it as a violation of the fundamental human rights of workers, a problem of discrimination, unacceptable working conditions a form of violence against women all these factors makes lack of safe working environment for women. With the reducing trend of gender superiority at workplaces, men and women are interacting with each other in the workplace. These types of interaction makes better working environment for both men and women. The existence of free and unmonitored work environment along with co-existence of liberties to be frank and humorous with each other at workplace and this kind of free and unmonitored work environment is also one of the reasons for harassing behaviors in workplace. Harassment occurs in the workplace due to unwelcome, unwanted, uninvited, action or behavior of a person that causes discomfort, humiliation, offence or distress to the other. Majority of such cases are directed towards woman by men working at high position in an organization. Harassment at a workplace is uninvited behavior as it affects not only the terms conditions of employment but also have huge bearing on the working environment of an organization. Harassment threatens the women employees and affects the job performance of the employees. The company should take measures to file complaint and take remedies against harassment.

The main reasons for not reporting the harassment are i) lack of faith in the formal complaint mechanism, ii) a belief that the experience was not serious enough to warrant reporting and iii)

the target dealing with the problem themselves. An unfriendly working environment characterized by prevalent harassment that makes employees uncomfortable. However, the serious effects of sexual harassment are often understated. These behaviors can cause significant health problems, financial difficulties, and even global effects. The effects of harassment are

3.1 EFFECTS OF HARASSMENT

The following are the effects of harassment:

1) Emotional Well-being: Harassment can threaten the victim's emotional well-being and mental health. It can lead to the loss of self-confidence and it may even compromise personal relationships. Harassment in the workplace can cause significant stress and nervousness. Because of the lack of self-confidence, emotional and mental instability it affects the career and personal life of the women.

2) Physical health: Physical health and emotional health are closely linked. When victims of harassment experience mental and emotional problems, it often leads to physical health issues, such as loss of appetite, headaches, weight fluctuations, long term stress and sleep disturbances. Sleep disturbances can in turn lead to other serious health problems, such as hormonal imbalance, an increased risk of high blood pressure, and a weakened immune system.

3) Financial Challenges: In addition to causing health problems, harassment frequently leads to financial challenges. The financial problems like lost wages and unpaid leave. Some victims of harassment may even face broader career repercussions, such as the loss of job references and so on. They may decide to leave their current position or employer to avoid an aggressive work environment.

4) Global Consequences: Sexual harassment has a direct effect on employers and the global economy. Each year, millions of employees are lost due to absenteeism, low productivity, employee turnover, low morale, and legal costs stopping from harassment. The economy also suffers due to premature retirement and higher insurance costs. These are the various consequences of harassment in workplace. It affects both the performance of the employees and the productivity of the organization. So, it is necessary for the organization to create friendly and safe working environment for the women employees.

4.0 METHODOLOGY

Descriptive research design is adopted in this study. Descriptive research studies are those studies which are concerned with describing the characteristics of a particular individual or a group. The purpose of this study is to analyze the harassment against women employees in IT companies. The present study is based on Primary data. Primary data was collected through questionnaire from women employees in IT Industry. Sample consisted of 100 women employees in IT Industry. The respondents were selected by simple random sampling method. The statistical tools used for this study are One-way ANOVA, T-test, and Chi-Square test to test the hypotheses for the study.

4.1 Relationship between age groups of the respondents with respect to harassment in workplace:

Analysis of variance is used to test the following hypothesis:

Ho: There is no significant relationship between age of the respondents with respect to harassment in workplace.

Table 1: One Way Analysis of Variance among age groups of women employees working at IT Companies with regard to harassment

Source of variance	Sum of squares	Degrees of freedom	Mean square	F	P Value
Between Groups	75.716	4	18.929	3.975	0.005
Within Groups	452.444	95	4.763		*

Source: Primary Data * 1% Significance Level

It is inferred from table 1 that since P value is less than 0.01, Ho is rejected at 1% level of significance. Hence, it is concluded that there is significant difference between age groups of the respondents with respect to harassment in workplace.

4.2 Relationship between marital statuses of the respondents with respect to harassment in workplace:

Independent sample T-test is used to test the following hypothesis:

Ho: There is no significant relationship between marital statuses of the respondents with respect to lack of safe working environment.

Table 2: Independent sample T-test for marital status and lack of safe working environment

Marital Status	Mean	t	Mean Difference	Sig. (2-tailed)	P Value
Married	3.40	2.192	0.58	0.031	P < 0.05 *
Unmarried	2.81	2.816	0.58	0.032	

Source: Primary Data * 5% Significance Level

It is inferred from table 2 that since P value is less than 0.05, Ho is rejected at 5% level of significance. Hence, it is concluded that there is significant difference between marital statuses of the respondents with respect to harassment in workplace.

4.3 Association between experience of the respondents with respect to remedies taken by the company to avoid harassment:

Chi-square test is used to find the following hypothesis:

Ho: There is no association between experience of the respondents with respect to remedies taken by the company to avoid harassment.

Table 3: Chi-Square test for association between experience of the respondents and remedies taken by the company

	Experience	Remedies taken by the company	P Value
Chi-Square	6.000	14.000	P < 0.01 **
Degrees of freedom	4	4	
Sig.	.199	0.007	

Source: Primary data Note: ** denotes 1% level of significance

Since P Value is less than 0.01, Ho is rejected at 1% level of significance. Hence, it is concluded that there is an association between experience of the respondents with respect to remedies taken by the company to avoid harassment.

5.0 FINDINGS

The following are the findings of the study

- From the above study it is found that among 100 respondents, 40% of the respondents are married and 60% of the respondents are unmarried.
- It elucidates from the above study that 30% of the respondents are between the age group of 23-25 years and 12% of the respondents are below 20 years.
- It is identified that 26% of the employees have 3-5 years of experience whereas 12% of the employees have experience below 1 year.
- It is inferred that 34% of the employees Disagree that company will accept complaints and take remedies against harassment and 12% of the respondents strongly agree.
- It is found that 38% of the respondents states that they will be fearful if they have been harassed or witness anyone being harassed, 30 % of respondents says they will get angry, 22% says that they will file a complaint and only 4% says that they will take remedies to prevent harassment.

6.0 SUGGESTIONS

Based on the major findings of the study the following recommendations are provided

- The present study encounters that comparing to married women employees, unmarried women employees are more subjected to harassment. The organization may stick posters like warning quotes on harassment, harassment prohibition act and rules can be glued everywhere. This system may deter the potential harasser not to perpetrate his harassing behavior.
- The Employers should strive to create very clear harassment prohibition and prevention policy which must be known to each employee in the organization and also certain steps should be taken to ensure that affected women will be given adequate compensation like filing complaint or immediate dismissal of the harasser.
- The organization can provide trainings to women employees to challenge the different and difficult forms of harassment situations at workplace and the way to prevent such victimization.
- It is suggested that all women should have stimuli to take remedies to prevent harassment in workplace by raising awareness on legal safeguards available to protect the women from harassment, which may include the available laws related to harassment in our country.

7.0 CONCLUSION

Sexual harassment in a work place is a sensitive issue because women are the only victims of harassment. Harassment occurs in both public places and in workplace. In workplace, women are more concerned about their job and career and they generally do not come forward to complaint and take actions against the incidents of harassment. In this study, it is clearly known that women employees at their young ages (Table 1), unmarried (Table 2) and also less experienced (Table 3) face more harassment in their workplace than others. Therefore the organizations should frequently monitor the issues and should take remedies for harassment especially with the above mentioned segment of women employees. This will surely in turn make the woman confident, free from fears of harassment and work peacefully.

“Respect for women” is one of the “non-negotiable demands of human dignity”.

-President Bush, State of the Union Speech, 2002

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