



An Overview Of “Sexual Harassment” At Workplace

Manisha Panda^{1*}, Debi Prasad Das²

¹Research Scholar, KIIT School of Management, KIIT D/U, Patia, Bhubaneswar – 24. manishapanda0793@gmail.com

²Assistant Professor, KIIT School of Management, KIIT D/U, Patia, Bhubaneswar – 24. debiprasad@ksom.ac.in

Citation: Manisha Panda et al. (2024), An Overview Of “Sexual Harassment” At Workplace, *Educational Administration: Theory and Practice*, 30(4), 182-184, Doi: 10.53555/kuey.v30i4.1430

ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

Workplace “sexual harassment” is a widespread issue that has major repercussions for both people and companies. The research on workplace “sexual harassment” is thoroughly evaluated in this paper, with a focus on definitions, prevalence, effects, contributing factors, and prevention and intervention strategies. Based on academic literature, official reports, and empirical studies, this summary highlights the diverse nature of “sexual harassment” and underscores the need of tackling it to promote safer and more welcoming work environments.

Introduction

Workplace “sexual harassment” is a prevalent and intricate issue that has gained more attention in the last few years (Barling & O'Neill, 2019). “sexual harassment” may be harmful to both people and organizations. It is described as uninvited sexual advances, solicitations for sexual favours, or any verbal or physical behaviour motivated by sexual desire that creates a hostile or unpleasant work environment (EEOC, 2020). “Sexual harassment” affects persons of all genders, ethnicities, ages, and socioeconomic backgrounds in the workplace worldwide, despite legislative and organizational attempts to combat it.

While each nation has its own legal definition of “sexual harassment”, it often covers actions like making unwelcome approaches toward you, asking you for a sexual favour, and engaging in other verbally or physically suggestive behavior (EEOC, 2020). When evaluating “sexual harassment”, scholars have emphasized the need of considering power dynamics, gender norms, organizational culture, and societal attitudes (Fitzgerald et al., 1995). Extant literature indicates that “sexual harassment” transpires across many sectors and organizational contexts. Numerous studies and surveys reveal high incidence of “sexual harassment”, with many reporting unwanted sexual behaviour at work (Smith et al., 2018). Nonetheless, underreporting is still a significant problem, usually brought on by thoughts of minimization or denial, fear of stigma, and fear of retaliation (McLaughlin et al., 2017).

Literature Review

Impacts of “sexual harassment”

“Sexual harassment” has a wide range of negative effects on both people and organizations. Psychological discomfort, including anxiety, sadness, and post-traumatic stress disorder, is often reported by victims (Rogers et al., 2015). Moreover, victims of “sexual harassment” may have detrimental effects on their physical well-being, work satisfaction, and ability to advance in their careers (Cortina et al., 2017). In addition, companies incur expenses related to declining productivity, employee attrition, and legal responsibility (Leskinen et al., 2011).

Contributing Factors

In order to develop effective prevention and response strategies, it is essential to comprehend the fundamental reasons of “sexual harassment”. “Sexual harassment” has been linked to a number of factors, including male-dominated workplaces, hierarchical power structures, a lack of clear policies and procedures, and tolerance for sexist beliefs and actions (Willness *et al.*, 2007). “Sexual harassment” is often sustained by individual factors such as the traits of the harasser, attitudes regarding gender and sexuality, and relationships between individuals (Gruber & Bjorn, 2019).

Importance of Addressing “sexual harassment” at Workplace

Addressing “sexual harassment” is necessary to safeguard the basic human rights and dignity of every person. Every person has the right to work in an environment free from discrimination and harassment (United Nations, 2019). Ignoring “sexual harassment” puts workers' basic rights at jeopardy and fosters an environment of

inequality. The victims of “sexual harassment” may have significant detrimental effects on their mental and emotional health. Research indicates that frequent symptoms for victims of “sexual harassment” include anxiety, sadness, and post-traumatic stress disorder. Businesses may create a safer and healthier work environment where employees feel appreciated, respected, and supported by addressing “sexual harassment” (Rogers et al., 2015). The cohesion, trust, and morale of an organization are all weakened by a corporate culture that either condones or rejects “sexual harassment”. Resolving “sexual harassment” promotes a respectful, truthful, and professional culture where all workers are empowered to report harassment and feel at ease doing so (Cortina and Berdahl, 2008). The happiness, engagement, and retention of employees are all increased by a healthy organizational culture.

Neglecting to tackle “sexual harassment” may cause damage to an organization's reputation and erode confidence among its staff, clients, and interested parties. According to Paludi (2012), organizations that are deemed incapable of adequately addressing “sexual harassment” may be subject to negative public perception, legal obligations, and financial repercussions. Organizations that prioritize the prevention and intervention of “sexual harassment” may exhibit their dedication to moral conduct and social accountability.

In many places, responding to “sexual harassment” is both legally required and morally required. Employers are legally obligated to prevent and address “sexual harassment” in the workplace, since it is forbidden by law (EEOC, 2020). Organizations that disregard these regulatory requirements risk financial fines, legal action, and other consequences. By instituting proactive procedures to prevent and manage “sexual harassment”, organizations may mitigate legal risks and assure adherence to relevant laws and regulations.

Strategies for Prevention and Intervention

A multifaceted approach including organizational policies, training initiatives, leadership dedication, and cultural transformation is required to effectively combat “sexual harassment”. Implementing thorough and comprehensive anti-harassment policies, offering guidance and training on appropriate workplace conduct, fostering an accountability and support culture, and setting up private reporting channels are all examples of effective preventive strategies (Paludi, 2012). Additionally, according to Cortina and Berdahl (2008), victim support services including counselling, legal assistance, and tools for navigating the reporting process should be given priority in interventions. The following are some crucial strategies to stop sexual assault at work:

a. Establish clear and comprehensive anti-harassment policies

Organizations should develop and implement thorough anti-harassment policies that clearly prohibit “sexual harassment” in all its forms and specify how instances should be reported and handled. All staff members should be given access to these rules via handbooks, orientation courses, and frequent instruction (EEOC, 2020).

b. Provide Training and Education:

Training programs that raise awareness of and prevent “sexual harassment” are essential for establishing a respectful and dignified work environment. These training sessions need to explain to staff members what “sexual harassment” is, how to report it, what happens when someone does it, and how important it is for bystanders to step in and help. To ensure broad awareness and compliance, all staff members—including managers and supervisors—should get regular training (Paludi, 2012).

c. Foster a Culture of Accountability and Support:

Establishing an accountability culture where all workers are held responsible for their actions and behaviour is important. This entails holding “sexual harassment” offenders responsible via swift, impartial investigations and suitable disciplinary sanctions. Organizations should also provide resources for reporting and seeking redress, as well as counselling and legal assistance, to victims of “sexual harassment” (Cortina & Berdahl, 2008).

d. Establish Confidential Reporting Mechanisms:

Employers need to provide secure channels for reporting “sexual harassment” so that staff members may come forward without worrying about reprisals or social disapproval. This might include designated individuals inside the organization who have been educated to handle harassment reports delicately and securely, anonymous hotlines, or online reporting platforms (Willness et al., 2007).

e. Promote Gender Equality and Diversity:

Dismantling outdated power structures and stereotypes in the workplace via the promotion of equal opportunities for women and men may help to lower “sexual harassment”. It is the goal of organizations to create environments where all workers, regardless of gender, age, race, or sexual orientation, feel valued and respected. Adopting laws and procedures that support fair pay parity and equal development prospects is one way to do this (Barling & O'Neill, 2019).

f. Lead by Example:

Establishing a work environment that prioritizes professionalism, integrity, and respect requires a strong commitment from the leadership. Senior managers and leaders may lead by example by modelling appropriate

behaviour, promoting candid communication, and promptly and effectively handling “sexual harassment” complaints. Allocating resources and supporting anti-harassment initiatives should be a top priority for leadership (Paludi, 2012).

Conclusion

To effectively address sexual misconduct in the workplace, which is a complex and pervasive problem, policymakers, practitioners, and academics must work together. This research emphasizes the need to comprehend sexual harassment’s descriptions, prevalence, repercussions, contributing causes, and prevention strategies by synthesizing the body of current literature on the subject. We must keep pushing for safer, more welcoming workplaces in the future, where everyone may work without fear of harassment or discrimination. Organizations that want to foster inclusive, healthy, and productive workplaces have a moral and strategic commitment to address sexual assault in the workplace. Organizations may foster a culture of creativity, professionalism, and cooperation while advancing the core values of justice, respect, and dignity by making the early detection and treatment of “sexual harassment” a top priority.

References

1. Barling, J., & O’Neill, T. A. (2019). Workplace “sexual harassment”. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, 6, 181-205.
2. Cortina, L. M., Berdahl, J. L., & Fitzgerald, L. F. (2017). “sexual harassment” and assault in organizations: A review of the literature and suggestions for future research. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 22(3), 381-394.
3. EEOC. (2020). “sexual harassment”. Retrieved from <https://www.eeoc.gov/sexual-harassment>.
4. Fitzgerald, L. F., Drasgow, F., Hulin, C. L., Gelfand, M. J., & Magley, V. J. (1997). Antecedents and consequences of “sexual harassment” in organizations: A test of an integrated model. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 82(4), 578-589.
5. Gruber, J. E., & Bjorn, L. (2019). Status and power inequalities in “sexual harassment”: Implications for theory and research. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 45, 455-479.
6. Leskinen, E. A., Cortina, L. M., & Kabat, D. B. (2011). Gender harassment: Broadening our understanding of sex-based harassment at work. *Law and Human Behavior*, 35(1), 25-39.
7. McLaughlin, H., Uggen, C., & Blackstone, A. (2017). The economic and career effects of “sexual harassment” on working women. *Gender & Society*, 31(3), 333-358.
8. Paludi, M. A. (2012). “sexual harassment” in education and work settings: Current research and best practices for prevention. Praeger.
9. Rogers, L. K., Kelloway, E. K., & Marzec, N. (2015). Interventions for workplace harassment: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 20(2), 1-14.
10. Smith, K., Anthony, M., & Sverdlik, A. (2018). “sexual harassment” and assault in the US military: A review of policy and research trends. *Military Psychology*, 30(5), 408-421.
11. Willness, C. R., Steel, P., & Lee, K. (2007). A meta-analysis of the antecedents and consequences of workplace “sexual harassment”. *Personnel Psychology*, 60(1), 127-162.