

## Problem of Sexual Harassment at Work Place: Prevention and Resolution Strategies

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### ABSTRACT

Workplace harassment is a relatively serious problem being faced by workers at their workplaces. Sexual harassment at workplace affects victims and their organizations by different ways. Victims of sexual harassment at work suffer both direct and indirect negative effects, including health, economic, social, psychological effects and difficulties in career development. Victims may be reluctant to come forward with complaints or confront their harassers because they may be shy or ashamed, fearful of retaliation, or may not know what to do about it. It has been found to be responsible for increased stress, depression, and anxiety resulting in declines in organizational productivity. It is important to ensure that the emphasis should be on prevention and resolution strategies rather than punitive action. So this paper widespread awareness of employers that ensure safe working conditions for women leads to a positive impact on their participation in the workforce and increased their productivity, which in turn benefits the nation as a whole.

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## SEXUAL HARASSMENT

According to The Supreme Court definition, sexual harassment is any unwelcome sexually determined behavior, such as:-

- ↪ Physical contact
- ↪ A demand or request for sexual favours
- ↪ Sexually coloured remarks
- ↪ Showing pornography
- ↪ Any other physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct of a sexual nature.

### Sexual Harassment takes place if a person:

- ↪ Subjects another person to an unwelcome act of physical intimacy, like grabbing, brushing, touching, pinching etc.
- ↪ Makes an unwelcome demand or request (whether directly or by implication) for sexual favours from another person, and further makes it a condition for employment/payment of wages/increment/promotion etc.
- ↪ Sakes an unwelcome remark with sexual connotations, like sexually explicit compliments/cracking loud jokes with sexual connotations/ making sexist remarks etc.
- ↪ Shows a person any sexually explicit visual material, in the form of pictures/cartoons/pin-ups/calendars/screen savers on computers/any offensive written material/pornographic e-mails, etc.
- ↪ Engages in any other unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature, which could be verbal, or even non-verbal, like staring to make the other person uncomfortable, making offensive gestures, kissing sounds, etc.

The best way to prevent sexual harassment is to adopt a comprehensive sexual harassment policy. The aim is to ensure that sexual harassment does not occur and, where it does occur, to ensure that adequate procedures are readily available to deal with the problem and prevent its recurrence.

## SEXUAL HARASSMENT POLICY

**Adopting Sexual Harassment Policy:** What should be included in an anti-harassment policy? A basic policy should set forth the following:

- ✧ An explanation of penalties (including termination) the employer will impose for substantiated sexual harassment conduct;
- ✧ A clear statement that anyone found guilty of harassment after investigation will be subject to immediate and appropriate disciplinary action
- ✧ A clear understanding and strict rules regarding harassment of or by third parties like clients, customers etc.
- ✧ Additional resource or contact persons available for support and consultation;
- ✧ An express commitment to keep all sexual harassment complaints and procedures confidential and time bound;
- ✧ Provisions for training of employees at all levels.
- ✧ An anti retaliation policy providing protection against retaliation to complainants, witnesses, Complaints Committee members and other employees involved in prevention and complaints resolution.

Policies and procedures should be adopted after consultation or negotiation with employee representatives. Experience suggests that strategies to create and maintain a working environment in which the dignity of employees is respected are most likely to be effective where they are jointly agreed. .

### **COMMUNICATE POLICY**

The policy can also be posted in the workplace. If you have employees whose primary language is not English, have your sexual harassment policy translated or communicate to them in their primary language. Discuss the policy with all new employees Ensure that third-party such as suppliers and customers are aware of your sexual harassment policy Review the policy with your employees on a regular basis

### **ENFORCE POLICY**

- ✧ Take complaints of sexual harassment seriously and investigate all sexual harassment charges quickly and thoroughly and professionally.
- ✧ Maintain accurate records of the investigation and the findings.
- ✧ Make sure employees who bring charges do not face retaliation Ensure confidentiality and time bound response to complaints.
- ✧ Take immediate action when sexual harassment is discovered or suspected.
- ✧ Discipline appropriately any employee found to have engaged in sexual harassment.
- ✧ Safeguard your employees from third-party work-related sexual harassment

## SEXUAL HARASSMENT: PREVENTION

There are a number of measures that employees can take to sexual harassment. The goal is to make members sensitive to the problem and to create a climate to discourage sexual harassment and, if it occurs, a climate where victims will feel comfortable turning to the employer for assistance. So other steps employees must take are:

**Speaking Out:** Speaking about sexual harassment is an effective tool to combating it. While speaking about it, the problem becomes visible, it is acknowledged that it exists, and this in turn leads one to take effective measures against it. Speaking about sexual harassment also gives an opportunity to clarify by this about it. It helps in changing attitudes of people towards this issue. Speaking about it creates an enabling environment for the victim to speak out. It mobilizes public opinion against it. It makes it difficult for a potential harasser to commit the crime. It equips people with information as to what is to be done in such a case.

**Speak Up At the Time:** Be sure to say "NO" clearly, firmly and without smiling as that is the best way to let the harasser know that his behaviour is offensive. Objecting to the behaviour when it occurs, helps you if you decide to file charges later.

**Keep Records:** Keep track of what happens in a journal or diary and keep any letters or notes or other documents you receive. Write down the dates, times, places, and an account of what happened. Write down the names of any witnesses. Write a letter. People have successfully stopped sexual harassment by writing a letter detailing the behaviour that is offensive and asking the person who is harassing them to stop the behaviour. The letter should be polite, unemotional, and detailed. Such a letter seems to be more powerful than a verbal request. The recipient of the letter seldom writes back; the person usually just stops the behaviour.

**Set Your Own Boundaries:** Say "NO" emphatically and clearly when you are asked to go places, do things, respond to questions, or engage in situations that make you uncomfortable. Do not worry about offending the other person or hurting his or her ego. Take care of yourself first.

**Be Aware Of Situations And People Who May Harm You:** Don't ignore other's warnings about particular people or social settings. Acknowledge their concern for you and for themselves.

**Trust Your Own Instincts About Possible Danger:** In an uncomfortable situation, be direct and honest, and remove yourself from the situation immediately. Regardless of your previous behaviour

or signals you may have given earlier, you have the absolute right to halt any sexual exchange at any time. Accept this right and act on it.

**Tell Someone:** Being quiet or stoic about sexual harassment lets it continue. Talk to other co-workers; you may not be the only one harassed by this person. Do not blame yourself and do not delay.

**Create A Witness To The Behaviour:** Inform a trusted colleague and try to insure that s/he is an eye or ear witness to a situation where you are being sexually harassed. This will be useful later if you chose to file a formal complaint. Send a copy of sexual harassment policy/rules to the harasser. If your workplace already has an anti sexual harassment policy or the conduct rules of your institution prohibit sexual harassment, send a copy of the institution policy/conduct rules to the harasser with the appropriate sections underlined.

**Talk To A Union:** If you are a member of a labour union, talk to your union representative.

**Get A Medical Check-Up:** If you have been raped or physically assaulted, go for a medical check-up. Obtain a medical report. This is important, should you decide to pursue a legal case.

**Report Sexual Harassment To The Appropriate Person In The Organization:** Explore the different avenues available to you and file a formal complaint if necessary. If your organization does not have a policy, ensure that your employer formulates an anti-sexual harassment policy and carries out all the connected task

## **SEXUAL HARASSMENT: SOLUTION**

For all the pieces of paper and rule books, most managers feel ill-equipped to deal with the realities of harassment, either to do their best to prevent it or to effectively respond if it does happen. Effective solutions require three things.

- ↪ First, all levels of management need to acknowledge that sexual harassment is not only a violation of basic decency and the right of women and men to have workplaces where they are treated with respect. It is also a very significant bottom-line issue. It is the cause of job turnover, sick leave, and a drop in individual and group productivity. Expensive lawsuits and fines continue to hit companies.
- ↪ The second thing necessary to significantly reduce harassment is effective action by managers. No matter how many workplace codes of conduct we have, harassment will continue until all

levels of management are committed to doing effective prevention, responding appropriately, and setting an example. They go along with it for various reasons. For some, they are part of the same old boys' network that is committing the harassment in the first place. In other cases where managers aren't directly involved, they are aware of the problem, but share the biases of those committing the harassment. They sympathize not with the harassed but those committing this breach of dignity and appropriate workplace behavior.

↪ The third requirement to dramatically reduce harassment is to revamp our approaches to workplace training. Current education is simply not effective. Many employees have no training in harassment other than being tossed a manual or pointed to some on-line information. In the best of cases where there is training, it is inadequate and often boring. Complex problems are reduced to simple formulae and simplistic lists of dos and don'ts.

## **CONCLUSION**

It is concluded that, these policies as well as prevention and solution strategies will widespread awareness for employers that ensuring safe working conditions for women leads to a positive impact on their participation in the workforce and increased their productivity, which in turn benefits the nation as a whole.

## **REFERENCES**

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