

# Impact of Sexual Harassment on Working Women's Psychology

Pooja Ravish\*

M.Com., N.E.T.

**Abstract** – In modernized era, women start working outside their homes, many a times in the male dominated occupation. The increasing presence of women in public and private sector contributes towards the growth of the economy but it does not mean that gender inequality has disappeared. Men who considered workplace to be their domain are more dominating at work and keep on discriminating and harassing women on many grounds. Sexual harassment at workplace in India is quite diffused but the victims scared from lodging a complaint because of social disgrace and loss of work. Sexual harassment affects all women up to some extent. From the last decade or more the presence of women continuously increase so as the cases of harassment. Harassment at workplace adversely affect the psychology of women as a result, they were unable to focus on their work. This research paper focuses on the consequences of sexual harassment of women, including the effects on the women's work and mental health. This paper also focuses on the cure to eliminate the harassment at workplace.

**Keywords:** Gender Inequality, Harassment, Psychology, Domination and etc.

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## INTRODUCTION

As increasing numbers of women have joined the labour force over the last 3 decades, what has also increased is their vulnerability to unwanted attention at the workplace. Today, the problem of sexual harassment in workplaces is acknowledged as a serious issue-as an occupational hazard and a violation of human rights. The devaluation of women and social domination of men still prevails in India. Women are viewed as dowry burdens, the weaker gender and worthy of a lower Social status as compared to man. Because of these factors besides myriad others, India has a very poor Gender Inequality Index apart from overall poor Human Development Index in 2013 UN Human Development Report. India ranks 132 out of the 148 countries polled in Gender Inequality Index and 136 in HDI. [1-3] The Gender Inequality Index (GII) is a composite measure which captures the loss of achievement, within a country, due to gender inequality, and uses three dimensions to do so: reproductive health, empowerment, and labour market participation.

As at present, millions of women are engaged for employment in the agriculture, industry and services. They are found in both organised and unorganised sectors of Indian economy. The women employed in organised sector have some, though not enough, legal protection to safeguard their rights and interests. However, those working in unorganised sector are exposed to a number of problems related to their employment and working conditions. Sexual

harassment is the main problem, now a day, being faced by a substantially large number of women at work place. The origin of this problem dates back to the entry of women in the field of employment, however, this problem is reported and caught attention of the public and the government only recently. Even today this problem is not being seriously taken by the social scientists, the employers and the policy-makers and no effective measures have been adopted to prevent or at least reduce the incidence of sexual harassment at workplace.

## DEFINITION OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Sexual harassment at workplace may be defined, as any unwanted sexual attention that is explicitly or implicitly made a condition for favourable decisions affecting a woman's employment or that, which creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment. It is a specific form of harassment, which occurs all over the world. At times regarded as harmless flirting, it is increasingly recognised that whatever the intent of the perpetrator, it can demean and damage the victim. The Supreme Court of India in its judgement of 14th Aug., 1997 defined sexual harassment to include such unwelcome sexually determined behaviour such as-

- i. Physical contact
- ii. Demand or request for sexual favour

- iii. Sexually coloured remarks
- iv. Showing pornography and
- v. Any other unwelcome physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct of a sexual nature.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Many researchers have studied Sexual Harassment with different views in different environments. The existing literature on the problem is reviewed here under:

**Gutek (1985)** in his book entitled "sex and the work place" discussed the multiple outcomes of sexual harassment in the work place and how it affects the well-being of employees and the productivity of undertakings.

**Mazer and Percival's (1989)**, in their study found that gender role stereotypes were significantly related to attitudes to sexual harassment with respondents who endorsed sexist attitudes being more accepting and tolerant of sexual harassment. It was also found that respondents with less sexist attitudes defined more incidents of behaviour as sexual harassment.

**Foulis and McCabe (1997)** study found that gender differences occur as a result of this conditioning and these differences influences attitudes to sexual harassment. Males perceive more situations as being sexual or potentially sexual, and so view sexual harassing behaviour as normal or appropriate; and therefore see sexual harassment as normal flirtation between men and women.

"**Violence against Women**" edited by **Pauline B Bart and Eileen Geil Moran (1993)**, highlights pervasiveness or parameters of the work place, sexual assault and formulates the means by which women can curtail or eliminate such behaviour in their places of employment or education.

Law relating to sexual harassment at the workplace edited by **Indira Jaising (2004)** throws light on the various areas of the law that can be used to deal with sexual harassment of women at work place to a certain extent.

A Report on sexual harassment in Delhi University by **Gender Study Group (1996)** illustrated the fact that all most all women face sexual harassment on campuses. The survey report also revealed that the act of sexual harassment has psychological, emotional and educational negative consequences on women and stressed the need of University authorities to take action.

**Popovich et. al. (1992)** also found that gender differences existed in perceptions of sexual harassment, regardless of the form that the sexual

harassment took or the consequences of such behaviour. Female raters tended to perceive the incident described as more likely to be sexual harassment, more likely to have an effect on the recipient of the harassing behaviour, and more negative than did male raters. Pop vouch and colleagues also found in their study that males generally perceived the incident of harassment to be based on attraction, as opposed to females which perceived it to be more power based.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study were as follow:

1. To study the effect of sexual harassment on working women's mindset.
2. To study the current scenario of sexual harassment at workplace in India.
3. To suggest measures to control minimize and if possible eliminate the element of sexual harassment of women at work place.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In the present study, mainly descriptive research design had been adopted as the main purpose of study is to find out the impact of sexual harassment on working women psychology.

## NATURE AND SOURCE OF DATA

Data can be collected through two main sources which include primary data and secondary data. The present study uses secondary data in the light of the requirement of the research objectives.

## SECONDARY DATA

Secondary data are the information gathered from sources already existed. This type of data is easier to be obtained in a faster way, and less expensive than acquiring primary data. However, it may be outdated and may not exactly meet the needs because they were initially collected for other purposes. In present study it would from different sources like:

- Journals, magazines, periodicals, and publications.
- Newspaper having information about these fields.
- Through Internet
- Through Books, dissertations done by other researchers.

## Effects of Sexual Harassment in the Workplace

A hostile working environment characterized by pervasive sexual harassment can make employees uncomfortable, to say the least. However, the serious effects of sexual harassment are often understated. These behaviors can cause significant health problems, financial difficulties, and even global repercussions. If you've encountered sexual harassment in the workplace, you have the right to consult a sexual harassment attorney. Your labor law attorney can explain your legal rights to you and discuss your options for obtaining damages.

**Emotional Well-Being**

Sexual harassment can jeopardize the victim's emotional and mental health. It can lead to the loss of self-esteem and it may even compromise personal relationships. Sexual harassment in the work place can cause significant stress and anxiety. An employment harassment lawyer is also likely to work with clients who have suffered from long-term clinical depression as a result of sexual harassment.

**Physical Health**

Physical health and emotional health are closely linked. When victims of sexual harassment experience mental and emotional problems, it often leads to physical health issues, such as loss of appetite, headaches, weight fluctuations, 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.

**Financial Challenges**

In addition to causing health problems, sexual harassment frequently leads to financial challenges. It's important to tell your sexual harassment attorney in San Jose about any financial consequences of sexual harassment, such as lost wages and unpaid leave. Some victims of sexual harassment may even face broader career repercussions, such as the loss of job reference. They may decide to leave their current position or employer to avoid a hostile work environment.

**Global Consequences**

Sexual harassment has a direct effect on employers and the global economy. Each year, millions are lost due to absenteeism, low productivity, employee turnover, low morale, and legal costs stemming from sexual harassment. The economy also suffers due to premature retirement and higher insurance costs.

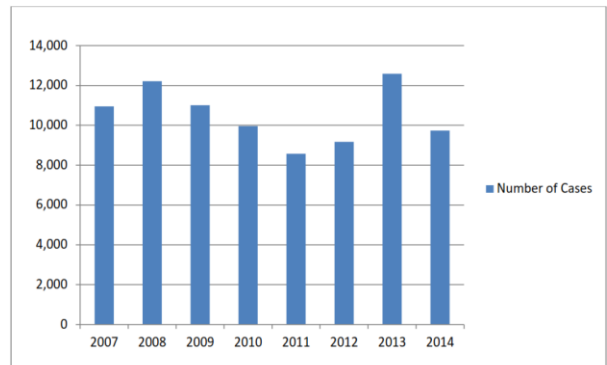
**Current Scenario of sexual Harassment in India**

India's Constitution Prohibits Discrimination Based on Sex, but still:

- 17% of women working in urban India have experienced some form of sexual harassment while on the job
- In 2013, India passed a law to ban sexual harassment in the workplace. The Act defines sexual harassment in the workplace and implements measures to minimize bias or influence during the grievance process
- 95% of women and girls feel vulnerable to sexual harassment in public spaces in the city of Delhi. In Delhi, 63% of women surveyed were afraid to go out alone after dark and 21% did not go out at all.

Sr. No.	Sexual Harassment Cases in India	
	Years	Number of Cases
1	2007	10,950
2	2008	12,214
3	2009	11,009
4	2010	9,961
5	2011	8,570
6	2012	9,173
7	2013	12,589
8	2014	9,735
<b>Total</b>	<b>8 Years</b>	<b>84201</b>

(Source : National Crime Records Bureau, Ministry of Home Affairs)



As we seen from the above table that over last 8 years, there were 84,201 cases of sexual harassment in India. Above chart also shows the variation in number of cases of sexual harassment. Although compare to 2013, in 2014, cases of sexual harassment were reduced but still there is a need to strict the laws and regulation so that harassment at workplace will be minimized and women feel safe.

**SUGGESTIONS TO REDUCE OR ELIMINATE SEXUAL HARASSMENT**

Workplace sexual harassment in India is clearly a social challenge that warrants attention. Greater public advocacy is needed to raise awareness about the issue and bring it out of the shadow.

1. There are actors at different levels that can play a role in its prevention, and in offering protection and support for victims. It is important to identify these actors not only at

the company or organizational levels, but also at the state level. In addition, every individual has a part to play in helping to create a no-tolerance environment for sexual harassment at the workplace, whether it is providing support to recipients of sexual harassment, or speaking up against it.

2. The government can lead the way by implementing policies and programmes that define the problem and enforce clear guidelines on preventative and remedial measures. This would help create a no-tolerance climate for sexual harassment at the workplace and encourage more employers to be socially responsible, and to maintain a safe and conducive work environment for their employees.
3. Employers should consider establishing policies that firmly prohibit sexual harassment, institute clear mechanisms to address complaints, and provide training for managers and staff to recognize and deal appropriately with the problem.
4. Organisations and associations such as family service and counseling centers (voluntary welfare organizations), community legal clinics, industry associations, and unions among others could be instrumental in providing much-needed support and services to individuals who experience sexual harassment, especially if the latter are reluctant or afraid to report incidents, or uncertain and confused about what to do.
5. Much more work is needed to understand the scope and extent of workplace sexual harassment and identify the best possible solutions or avenues of redress. There is certainly a need for greater research into the prevalence rates and scope of workplace sexual harassment in India.

## CONCLUSION

There is still large amount of men who are still unclear about what is sexual harassment is all about and feels that their sexual attitude is normal for men. Taking into considerations that there is a general lack of knowledge on the real definition of sexual harassment amongst men, it can be concluded that sexual harassment should not be viewed as a personal problem but a social problem. Sexual harassment affect not only women psychology but it is also create fear in her mind. Sexual harassment is injurious whether it is happen at public place or workplace. It should be eliminated by creating strong laws and regulation and implement them properly.

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### Corresponding Author

**Pooja Ravish\***

M.Com., N.E.T.

[poojaravish19@gmail.com](mailto:poojaravish19@gmail.com)