

Work Place Sexual Harassment among Female Employees in Lalitpur District

Bhandari B¹, Acharya DK²

1. Nursing Officer, National Academy of Medical Science, Bir Hospital Nursing Campus

2. Lecturer, TU, IOM, Maharajung Nursing Campus

Abstract

Sexual harassment is increasingly viewed as one of the most terrible forms of violence against women in the workplace. Women are more likely to suffer from sexual harassment because they are supposed to have lack of power, social security and self confidence as well as they remain silent against sexual harassment (Dhaka,2009,Rankin, 2010).The objective of this study was to find out sexual harassment faced by female employees in their work place.

This descriptive cross-sectional study was carried out during April 6, 2014 - May 3, 2014 in thirteen government & semi-government organizations. Total 111 female employees were included as study sample. Self-administered semi-structured questionnaire was used. Descriptive statistics and inferential statistics (Kruskal Wallis test) was used to find the association among the age, marital status, education, experience of work, position of job and sexual harassment.

Regarding Sociodemographic information 38.7% were age group of 31 to 40 years, 45% were Brahmin, 91% were Hindu, 67.6% were married and 72% completed secondary level and above education, 40.5% had less than 10 years working experience where as 72.1% were permanent employees and 85.6% were holding non officer post. Among 111, 42 (37.8%) had encountered sexual harassment by their male colleague in their work place. Out of 42 respondents who faced sexual harassment; 69% had psychological, 33% had physical health problems and 24% had impact in their performance.

In conclusion, significant association was found between experience of sexual harassment and job position ($p=0.033$) and level of education ($p=0.001$).The study also revealed that sexual harassment had caused negative impact in health and performance. Sixty two percent had psychological &, 32.1% had physical problems and 20.1% experienced low job performance. Majority (86.4%) of the respondents felt the need of the government to develop strong policy in the prevention of sexual harassment at work place.

Key words: Female employee, Sexual harassment, Work place

Introduction

Sexual harassment is unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature that tends to create a hostile or offensive work environment. It is

a form of sex discrimination (The free Dictionary). Harassment does not have to be of a sexual nature, however, and can include offensive remarks about a person's sex; like harass a woman by making offensive comments about women in general. Both

victim and the harasser can be either a woman or a man, and the victim and harasser can be the same sex (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2005).

Sexual harassment can have a negative effect on the individual, in both the short and long term. Those who have been harassed may experience illness, humiliation, anger, loss of self-confidence and psychological damage. It also may lead to workplace problems such as decreased performance, lower job satisfaction and higher absenteeism. In some cases, it may lead to resignation (Carrie, 2007).

Sexual harassment at work affects victims and their organizations in 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 (Phoebe & Gruber, 2010).

Sexual harassment is a relatively new area of study in many countries in Asia and the Pacific. It is due to the traditional attitudes and perception on the roles of women and men. Sexual harassment is more prevalent in certain work situations, in jobs where there are unequal sex ratio; where there are large power differentials between women and men during periods of job insecurity or when a new supervisor or manager is appointed (Carrie, Fielden, Davidson, Marilyn, Hoel, 2009).

Methodology

Descriptive cross sectional research design was used to collect the information about sexual harassment among female employees. This study was conducted in Lalitpur sub-metropolitan city. There were 24 government and semi government organizations in Lalitpur Submetropolitian city. Among them 13 organizations were purposively selected. The study population was all female employees who were working in these thirteen organizations. All female employees who had passed SLC and above and were working for at least 6 months in these organizations were selected as study sample. There were 111 study samples. Self administered semi-structured questionnaire was developed and it consisted socio demographic information types of sexual harassment and its impact on physical & psychological health and job. Pretesting of the instrument was done in 10% of the sample size in Nijamati Kitabkhana. Research

proposal was approved from Institutional Review Board of Institute of Medicine. Written permission was taken from organizations and verbal informed consent was obtained from each respondents prior data collection. Data was entered in SPSS program. Descriptive statistics was used to calculate the frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. Similarly inferential statistics; Kruskal Wallis test was used to identify the association between sexual harassment and selected demographic variables.

Result

Regarding socio-demographic information, among 111 respondents 55.8% were 31 to 40 years age group while mean age was 36.63 years, 45% respondents belongs to Brahmin ethnicity, 91% were Hindu and 67.6% were married.

Indeed, 45% of the respondents had completed bachelors level and above education, 60.2% had working experience of 11 to 15 years. Mean working experience was 12 ± 7.6 years, 72.1% had permanent job and more than two third (85.6%) of them hold non officers post.

Similarly, information on sexual harassment 56.1% of the respondents were harassed by co-workers, most common place was working room and 61.9% were harassed at working time.

TABLE 1
Types of Sexual Harassment

n=111		
Variables	Frequency	Percent
Sexual harassment		
Yes	42	37.8
No	69	62.1
Type of sexual harassment (n=42)		
Suggestive looks or gesture	16	38.1
Touching sensitive body part	7	16.6
Letters, telephone calls or sending obscene materials	3	7.1
Pressure for sexual favours	2	4.7
Passing vulgar jokes and remarks	14	33.3

Table 1 shows that about one third (37.8%) of the respondents had faced sexual harassment in their

work place. Among 42 respondents; 38.1% faced suggestive looks or gesture and 33.3% reported of passing vulgar jokes, remarks or teasing obscenely by perpetrators.

TABLE 2
Physical Effects of Sexual Harassment
n=14

Physical Effects	Frequency	Percent
Headache	5	35.7
Over eating	1	7.1
Bodyache	2	14.3
Difficulty in breathing	1	7.1
Weight gained	1	7.1
Restlessness	4	28.6

*Multiple Responses

Among 42 respondents who had faced sexual harassment; 33.3% reported that they developed physical symptoms as a result of sexual harassment. Among these 14 respondents, 35.7% were suffered from headache, 28.6% were restlessness.

TABLE 3
Psychological Effects of Sexual Harassment
n=29

*Psychological effects	Frequency	Percent
Getting angry for no reason	10	35.7
Feeling of shame and guilt	7	25.0
Feeling of low self respect	5	17.9
Feeling of loneliness	2	7.1
Feeling of going out of control	2	7.1
Distrubance in sleep	1	3.6
Feeling like crying for no reason	1	3.6
Irritability	1	3.6

*Multiple Responses

Table 3 revealed that, out of 42 respondents who were sexually harassed; 29 respondents had developed psychological effects after sexual harassment in their work place. Among these 29 respondents; majority (35.7%) reported that they become angry with out any reason, 25% felt shame and guilt.

TABLE 4
Job Related Effect of Sexual Harassment
n=9

*Effect at Work	Frequency	Percent
Feel like quitting a job	8	88.8
Lost interest in work	4	44.4
Staying away from the work	1	11.1
Coming late to the work	1	11.1
Inability to concentrate on the work	3	33.3

*Multiple Responses

As above table 4, 9 respondents had experienced the impact of sexual harassment in their job. Most of the respondents (88.8%) felt like quitting a job and 44.4% had lost interest in their work.

TABLE 5
Association between Age, Marital Status, Position, Nature of Job, Level of Education and Sexual Harassment
n=111
p-value

Variable	Sexual Harassment		Total No	p-value
	Yes No. (%)	No (No. %)		
Age				
21 to 30	12(28.5)	20(28.9)	32	0.825
31 to 40	15(35.7)	28(40.5)	43	
41 and above	15(35.7)	21(30.4)	36	
Marital Status				
Unmarried	9(21.4)	14(20.2)	23	0.954
Married	28(66.6)	47(68.1)	75	
Single women	5 (11.9)	8(11.5)	13	
Job Position				
Non-officer	32(76.1)	63(91.3)	95	0.033
Officer	10(23.8)	6(8.6)	16	
Nature of Job				
Permanent	31(73.8)	49(71.0)	80	.751
Temporary	11(26.1)	20(28.9)	31	
Level of education				
Secondary level	6(14.2)	25(36.5)	31	0.001
Higher secondary	8(19.0)	22(31.8)	30	
Bachelors level and above	28(66.6)	22(31.8)	50	

Chi Square test p value ≤ 0.005 considered significant

Table 5 reveals about the association among age, marital status, position and nature of job and level of education of the respondents and experienced of sexual harassment. Chi square test reveals that there was no significant association of sexual harassment with the age, marital status, position and nature of job of the respondents, where as significant association was found with level of education.

Discussion

Demographic finding of the study reveals that most of respondents (38.7%) were age group of 31 to 40. This finding is consistent with the study conducted by Dhakal (2009), which reported that most of women (69.3%) working in carpet factory was 20 to 39 years age group. In this study 45% were brahmin, 91% were hindu, 67.6% were married, 54.9% were completed the 10+2, and 24.3% completed the bachelor degree and 20.7% obtained master degree. The study conducted by GEFONT (2003) showed that 67.7% were uneducated so the finding is contrast with the previous research finding. In this study 22.5% of the respondents had working experience of 11 to 15 years. The almost similar finding was found by Dhakal (2009) in her study, where 24% had been working there for long duration of 10 years or more.

Majority of respondents (89.1%) were aware about sexual harassment and among them 37.8% had faced the sexual harassment in their working place. This study finding is supported by Dhakal (2009) showed that majority (72.2%) of women were aware about sexual harassment in their working place.

A report published by Pal (2010) revealed that 48.4% of working women in Nepal face sexual harassment in their work place. Another study conducted by ILO (2004) in Nepal showed that 40% female employees were aware of sexual harassment and 53.8% of the female workers had experienced sexual harassment in their work place.

The awareness level is found quite high in this study than ILO report because this study was conducted in government and semi government office of Lalitpur submetropolitan city and respondents were the women whose education level was above the SLC passed. Educated women may be more aware than uneducated women. New technology and advanced in communication also helps to increase the level of awareness about sexual harassment. Similarly another survey on Gender and Judges conducted by pro-public found that 73% women lawyers had experienced physical and verbal harassment (ILO, 2004). These survey showed that sexual harassment is spread as an endemic in work place in Nepal, as women face harassment in public place, private working places, government organization and private life.

In this study there was no significant association between the age of workers and experienced of sexual harassment. This study finding is consistent with the study findings conducted by Dhakal (2009) which reported that there was no relationship between age of the women and experienced of sexual harassment. According to educational attainment, there was significant relationship between level of education and experienced of sexual harassment. In this study 22% 10+2 passed respondents faced the sexual harassment in their work place and only 11% respondents faced the sexual harassment, who completed the master degree. This finding is supported by study conducted by GEFONT showed that uneducated were more suffered from sexual harassment than educated so higher the education lower the incidence of sexual harassment. In this study, it was found that married women were most likely to experienced sexual harassment than unmarried. This findings is not supported by other study. Study conducted in US showed that unmarried faced sexual harassment more than married (The Illinois Department of Human Right, 1994).

In this study, majority (38.1%) of the respondents were suffered from suggestive looks or gesture type

of harassment followed by passing vulgar jokes and remarks. This result is consistent with the study result by (Shrestha,R.,& Thapa,C. 2014).

Conclusion

Women are suffering from verbal, non verbal and physical sexual harassment in their workplace. This study concluded that every age, every level of workers and every level of educated women would be suferer from sexual harassment. Altimately it affected the health and performance of every female employees.

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