

A Minor Research Project on

**“A Study on Sexual Harassment on Women at Workplace in
Dakshina Kannada District”**



Submitted to

**University Grants Commission South Western Regional Office
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by

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MAJOR FINDINGS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS :

1. Age of the women workers is considered as one of the important factor causing sexual harassment and as per this study it is revealed that 67 per cent of the victims of sexual harassment belong to the age group of 20-30 years.
2. The study indicates that majority of the respondents possessed Degree qualification and Diploma qualification. It shows that awareness of Girl Education made an positive impact on the society and which resulted in increase in number of women graduates in the society.
3. This study also indicates that 80 per cent of the women employees exposed to sexual harassment are unmarried. It is also true that even all married women are also not free from sexual harassment abuse. But the rate of harassment is very less as compared to unmarried women.
4. Because of respondent's close association with family members, the harassers may afraid to disturb the women workers stay at their own house. Whereas, majority of the respondents exposed to sexual harassment are stay away from their family members.
5. As majority of the respondents are very young it is natural that they have the health problems at the minimum level.
6. The study reveals that even though majority of the respondents belongs to OBC community they are less affected by sexual harassment abuse when compared to SC, ST respondents. General candidates are least affected by this abuse. It shows that in spite of so many reforms in the society the woman belongs to backward classes are still exploited by the male members.
7. This study reveals that 72 per cent of the respondents working under Industrial and Business Establishment are exposed to sexual harassment abuse. Nature of work, the nature of organisation structure, dominance of male workers etc. are the reasons for the frequent occurrence of such abuses in the industrial establishments. It is found that such abuses are least in case of Government Sector.
8. It is found that majority of the respondents, that is, 63 per cent of the respondents who are affected by sexual harassment abuse are appointed on temporary basis. Lack of security in the job and helplessness of the women employees provokes the harassers to indulge in such abuses.
9. The study reveals that majority of the respondents belong to the Income group of below ₹15,000 p.m., it clearly indicates that the general salary structure of the most of the units in this area is very less or women employees are hired for less salary.

10. As per this study, majority of the respondents have their work place in urban area. Because of the expectation of high salary and challenging job, majority of the respondents prefer to go to urban areas to work.
11. The improvement of the transport facilities enables the women employees to travel over 10-15 Kms. distances from their home. Again good work environment and good salary structure also motivates the women employees to travel over long distance. It is also true that they are ready to travel up to the distance of 10-15 Kms., beyond that distance they will not prefer to go to workplace, because it consumes their time and they prefer to utilise those time for household purposes.
12. This study indicates that higher majority of the respondents use bus as a mode of transportation to reach their workplace. This is because the bus transport provides so many advantages to women like more safety, affordable, economical, timeliness etc.
13. The Government rules and regulation prevents the establishments to appoint the women employees to work in shifts. In spite of this regulation also some of the undertakings allow the women employees to work in shifts. This study also revealed that most of the women employees working in shifts are more prone towards sexual harassment abuse.
14. This study clearly shows that women employees believe that remaining too good and too bad with male co-workers both are detrimental to them. So they try to maintain neutral relationship with the male co-workers.
15. Majority of the respondents treat physical contact as sexual harassment. It is unfortunate that no one respondent consider all the stated factors leads to sexual harassment. It indicates that the women employees lack the adequate knowledge about sexual harassment and this lack of knowledge leads to increase in number of sexual harassment abuse.
16. In reality majority of the women face this abuse in one or other way with varied intensity, but still they do not want to express their problem in front of others. While doing this study the respondents are taken into confidence to get genuine reply but still many respondents failed to give their genuine experience in this regard.
17. This study shows that majority of the women employees are harassed by their Supervisor. As entire control of the team of workers is in the hands of immediate supervisors, some dishonest supervisors may utilise their power in the way of sexual harassment. But in the small organisation with small managerial hierarchy the women employees face such problems directly from the Managers.
18. This study reveals that majority of the respondents face this problem since last few months. Only few respondents face this problem since last few days. This is because even though they

experience sexual harassment, in the initial stage most of them do not want to reveal it in front of others. They will become alert only when the problem becomes serious.

19. As the women employees leave the organisation immediately after the working hours or they may accompanied by their colleagues, it is very difficult to make sexual harassment attempt after working hours. During the working hours it is very easy to isolate the employees from the group. As a result, sexual harassment attempts are more during the working hours.
20. This study shows that majority of the respondents experienced the use of sexually explicit pictures by the harasser. This is because, it is very easy for the harassers to mislead the victims compared to other types of harassment.
21. The study indicates that majority of the respondents objected when the sexual harassment took place on them. This study reveals that even though the women employees fail to give strong warning to the harassers, they try to overcome from this problem by objecting this type of act.
22. Majority of the respondents shown their helplessness to the attempt of sexual harassment. It reveals that the women employees are sure that they will not get any support of others in the future in the matter of sexual harassment.
23. This study reveals that when the victims demand for the help of others, the co-workers try to rescue them. In those incidents where the harassment have the minor intensity, the co-workers generally over look this matter.
24. Only few of the co-workers acted as a witness and majority of the co-workers fail to come forward as a witness when respondents lodged the complaint. It shows that most of the people think that acting as witness in such issues may put them in difficulties.
25. Majority of the respondents shared their experience with the friends and least of the workers share with co-workers. Most of the people believe and trust their friends' more than family members and others. They also believe that friends may help them if the problem goes critical. They do not believe co-workers in these matters because normally co-workers are waiting for the chance to put them down
26. Majority are advised to lodge complaint against the harasser. This is because, most of the people believe that solving the problem in the formal and systematic way may reduce the adverse effect of the incident. It is also surprising to know that no one advised to co-operate with the harasser. It shows that all believe that sexual harassment is brutal curse on women employees.
27. Majority of the respondents agreed to the existence of Complaint Committee. This is the effect of rules and regulation framed by the Government to safeguard the interest of working

women at workplace. But it is unfortunate that still many establishments do not follow the Government guidelines properly. It also indicates the lack of interest on the part of Management to safeguard and solve the interest of women and also lack of proper monitoring by the Government on the implementation of such rules.

28. Due to the pressure of friends, family members, colleagues etc. some respondents took the hard step by filing the complaint to higher authority. But majority of them may be due to lack of confidence on self and lack of trust on management, postpone their decision of filing the case against the harasser. Most of the women employees think that if the complaint is filed then the rumour will be created and again it will affect their work life. So, they try to solve this problem by themselves.
29. In majority cases, strong warning is given by the employer on the basis of complaint and only in few cases the complaint forwarded to the police. It is natural that before taking any strong steps, every employer tries to assess the intensity of the problem and reason for its occurrence. If the misconduct of the employee is proved then as a first step he gives strong warning to him. It is also natural that no Employer wants to damage the reputation of his establishment.
30. This study shows that women employees hesitate to file complaint with the higher authority. Management will take the step to safeguard the interest of women employees only if they come forward and express their problem. It is proved in this study that those who filed complaint with the Complaint Committee, are satisfied with its functioning.
31. Majority of the Complaint Committees are headed by women member. It shows that most of the establishments are following the strict guidelines of Government in this regard. But unfortunately, few of the establishments do not give any priority to women member in the Committee. This is because male dominated enterprises may think appointment of women to lead the Complaint Committee may motivate the women employees to file the complaint frequently without any hesitation.
32. Most of the respondents expressed that the efficiency level of the employees are disregarded and their look and sexuality are given more importance while rating their performance.
33. This study indicates that the sexual harassment problem will not be affected by the dressing style of the women employees.
34. Majority of the respondents are in the opinion that Employer should take the prompt and strong step and very few of the respondents are in the opinion that the Society should take the prompt and strict action against the harasser. Some are in the opinion that as women employees directly face this problem, they themselves should take prompt and strict action and keep the harasser permanently away from the issue

35. Most of the respondents undergone the problem of depression due to sexual harassment problem. In most of the cases, women employees are sexually harassed against their will. When such attacks are made unexpectedly, naturally they are shocked and embarrassed. They find it very difficult to adjust themselves to the prevailing situation. It is very hard for them to Express this fact to the others and get the support from them.
36. Majority of the respondents expressed that the depression is the result of loss of interest in life and work due to the incident of sexual harassment. At workplace they have to face the suspected atmosphere and at home they have to undergo the pressure and criticism of family members. As a result they cannot spend a peaceful time either at workplace or at home. As a result their work efficiency will be affected and curiosity about the life will also be hampered.
37. It is natural that efficiency of any employee is not only the result of her competence and inherent quality but also influenced by the work atmosphere. As the victim of sexual harassment has to face numerous problems and she required to give explanation about the issue to others, she will generally lose her work balance. This factor is witnessed by most of the respondents in their opinion.
38. This study shows that even though women employees are well educated, they are ignorant about having some information where their interests are connected. It is unfortunate that no single respondent have complete knowledge of Supreme Court guidelines. Those who possess some information and idea are borrowed from their friends and colleagues.
39. Majority of the respondents are in favour of lodging the complaint against the harasser by the victim without any hesitation. Demotion of the harasser to the lower level is only the temporary remedy and in the long run it will not have much effect on the harasser. Only the victim knows the intensity of the problem and its effect on her personal and work life. So, she should only take strong step. She may get negative feedback and threats. But all those will show their effect only in short period.

CONCLUSION :

It can be said though we now have a specific law to prohibit sexual harassment at workplace apart from already existing landmark guidelines of Supreme Court of India, but most of the women workers do not report sexual harassment as they are afraid of public humiliation and they were scared of facing the harassers. The abuse of sexual harassment cannot be controlled until and unless the mentality of society especially males in general would not change. Till the basic human dignity of women is not recognised and respected by men, no law will be effective. It is important that constitutionally guaranteed principles of equality among men and women do not remain only in empty words and should be upheld in practice.

OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT :

The specific objectives of this study are:

- (i) To find out the intensity of Sexual Harassment cases at workplace.
- (ii) To identify the common effects of harassment on victims.
- (iii) To find out the reason for the hesitation of the victims to report the harassment cases to the authority in time.
- (iv) To understand the functioning of Grievance Redressal System at work place in this regard.
- (v) To identify the awareness of prevailing laws related to Sexual Harassment amongst the respondents.

WHETHER OBJECTIVES WERE ACHIEVED :

In this study, an assessment is made on the intensity of sexual harassment cases on women at workplace of Dakshina Kannada District. The common effects of harassment on victims were identified. The reason for the hesitation of the victims to report the harassment cases to the authority was also analysed. The effective functioning of Grievance Redressal System at workplace have been evaluated. The awareness of prevailing laws related to sexual harassment amongst the respondents have been identified. Based on the findings, several suggestions are made.

ACHIEVEMENT FROM THE PROJECT :

It was found in the study that majority of the victims hesitate to file complaint against the harasser to the authority in time and so measures must be taken to boost the confidence level of women and the Employer must be given assurance to the victims to give them all the possible support. The causes and consequences of sexual harassment on women and problems associated have been identified. Wherever possible, likely remedies for such problems have been suggested.

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS :

Sexual Harassment on women at workplace in Dakshina Kannada district has been studied. The legal equalities and the constitutional directives that have boosted the position of women have not, however been supported by the male dominated work environment to give social reality to the objectives of legislation in regard to safety of women. Majority of the women work at different fields are young. The qualification possessed by the women shows that the awareness of Girl Education made a positive impact on the society. The women worker more prone towards sexual harassment belongs to other backward classes. Most of the women employees get the placements in Business and Industrial Establishments, and particularly in this area of employment frequent occurrence of such abuse is found. The workers employed in temporary basis and lack of security in the job and helplessness of the women employees provoke the harassers to indulge in such acts. Again, women employees stay away from their home are more affected by this abuse. This study clearly shows that women employees believe that remaining too good and too bad with male co-workers both are detrimental to them. Most of the women employees lack the adequate knowledge about this issue and they assume force for physical contact can only be considered as sexual harassment. Most of the cases, women employees are harassed by their immediate supervisor as entire control of the workers are in their hand. This study also identified that in the initial stages of harassment women employees do not reveal the fact. They will become alert only when the problem becomes serious. Respondents showed their helplessness as they are sure that they will not get any support of others in future in this matter. As people believe and trust their friends more than family members, they share their experiences with their friends. The rules and regulations framed by the Government to safeguard the interest of working women at workplace has made a positive impact in many places of work establishments which can be seen through the existence of Complaint Committee. But the ineffective functioning of these committees will not bring any positive results. The study also revealed that the efficiency level of employees is disregarded and their look and sexuality are given importance while rating their performance. The women employees are in the opinion that the Employer should take prompt and strong action against the harasser to prevent the problem. As the victims of sexual harassment have to face numerous problems, they will lose their work balance. It is unfortunate that, in spite of good education, women employees are ignorant about the Supreme Court guidelines with this regard. The Employer must actively implement the precautionary measures to minimise the risk. The Government should take strict action against the organisations which do not follow Supreme Court guidelines in this matter. Organisations should conduct sexual harassment training programmes to male workers and ensure that they understand their obligation to maintain zero tolerance for harassment. Sexual harassment Prohibition and Prevention Policy must be made known to each and every individual employee at their entry level itself.

The project was carried out in Dakshina Kannada district of Karnataka State. The findings from the study may or may not hold good for other districts of Karnataka.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE SOCIETY :

The general well being of the society can be said to improve only when the safety of women community are achieved. In spite of many rules and regulations enacted by the Government to be followed by work establishments with regard to women safety, majority of the working women are more prone to this problem in Business and Industrial Establishments and hence strict implementation of rules and regulations is needed. The study also throws light on causes, consequences and problems associated with this issue. The study also suggests possible remedies for the certain key issues faced by the women employees with regard to sexual harassment.