



Sexual harassment among females in working place at Dhangadhi municipality Kailali, District of Nepal

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GJMEDPH 2014; Vol. 3, issue

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Conflict of Interest—none

Funding—none

ABSTRACT

Sexual harassment is a challenging issue where women and men work together. It is being recognized as a violation of human rights and human dignity which undermines the equality of opportunity and treatment between men and women. So, this descriptive study was conducted in Dhangadhi Municipality Kailali District, Nepal to find out the experience of sexual harassment in female at working place. Only female respondents who were working in office were taken purposively from four sectors such as government sectors, Company, Government and Public School and NGOs/INGOs for the study by using pre-structured interview schedules. From each sector 25% of the total female respondents which was 23 people were selected. Data were collected on the basis of first come first take method till the required number was achieved. The study was conducted among 92 respondents. It was observed that women workers were victimized by all form of sexual harassment such as verbal (56.3%), physical (16.9%), Written or Graphical (11.3%), gesture (8.5%) and emotional (7.0%) form of sexual harassment. Co-workers (52.1%) are the major harassers to the women workers. Among 92 respondents, 71 (77.2%) respondents were facing sexual harassment at working place and major cause of sexual harassment was (36.9%) power and position of male but they often ignore the incidence. Female workers are very much vulnerable to sexual harassment by their male co-workers, immediate Supervisor and manager. It negatively impacts their performance in work, mental and physical health, their human right and dignity.

Key words: Female, sexual harassment, working place

INTRODUCTION

Increasing pattern of education level, awareness and changing concept of society and development has increased the women's participation in the outside work force in public and private sectors and they start to go outside for job. In this journey, they are facing various obstacles such as sexual harassment. Sexual harassment of women at work place is one of those problems which discourage women in taking active participation in economic and social development.¹ It is a great matter of human right and an ethical issue. Sexual harassment in the workplace though an age-old problem has emerged as a serious concern in Asia and the European countries. It is increasingly being

recognized as a violation of human rights and human dignity, which undermines equality of opportunity and treatment between men and women. As women's participation is growing in employment sector, the problem of sexual harassment is a crucial problem to address to ensure safe and healthy working environment. Sexual harassment is a form of gender discrimination. To date, there is not yet a widely acknowledged international definition about the sexual harassment.

“Unwelcome sexual advances or verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature which has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with the



individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, abusive or offensive working environment."³

Sexual harassment is a form of gender-specific violence against women. It is major obstacle to achieve the objective of gender equality, development and peace. It is because of taboos and no any specific law and address mechanism, jobs with low security, low pay, and low conditions of work, low status, and low bargaining power in a narrow range of occupations for female and large numbers of women are supervised by small numbers of men; the problem is not brought out in the open. Victims of harassment may develop significant physical, psychological and job related impacts.⁴ The main purpose of this study was to find out the sexual harassment that working women go through in their workplace.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Table 1. Experience of sexually harassed at work

Experience	No of respondents	Percentage
Yes	71	77.2
No	21	22.8
Total	92	100

Table 2 shows that female workers were victimized by all form of sexual harassment such as verbal, physical, emotional, written or graphical and gesture. The study revealed that more than half (56.3%) of the respondents suffered from verbal

This descriptive cross sectional study was conducted in Dhangadhi Municipality of Kailali District, Nepal. Only female respondents who were working in the office were taken purposively from four sectors such as government sectors, company, government and public school and NGOs/INGOs for the study by using pre-structured interview schedules. From each sector, 25% of the total female respondents which was 23 people were selected. Data were collected on the basis of first come first take method till the required number was achieved. The study was conducted among 92 respondents.

FINDINGS

The study was conducted among 92 respondents. It was clear from Table 1 that majority (77.2%) of the respond suffered by sexual harassment at working place.

type of sexual harassment like teasing and vulgar jocks etc, 16.9% by physical harassment like unwanted touch on sensitive part of the body. 11.3% faced written or graphical and 7.0% faced emotional type of sexual harassment in working place

Table 2. Types of harassment faced by the respondents

Suffering types of harassments	No of respondents	Percentage
Physical	12	16.9
Verbal	40	56.3
Harassment of gesture	06	08.5
Written or graphic harassment	08	11.3
Emotional	05	07.0
Total	71	100

Table 3 shows that around 36.% reported lack of awareness training about sexual harassment and its policy. Lack of female education and attitude of

male and societies toward the female, they faced different types of sexual violence.



Table 3. Cause of Sexual Harassment

Causes	Frequency	Percentage
Lack of effective law	18	19.6
Lack of Awareness training/Education	22	23.9
Power/position of male	34	36.9
Opportunities/Attitude of male toward female	18	19.6
Total	92	100

Table 4 shows that more than half of respondents were victimized by their co-worker

(52.1%). immediate supervisor (19.7%) and manager (12.7%).

Table 4. The person caused sexual harassment

Person	No of respondents	Percentage
Manager	09	12.7
Immediate supervisor	14	19.7
Co-worker	37	52.1
Subordinate	04	05.6
Clients	07	09.9
Total	71	100

Table 5 shows that around 42.3% were suffering once to twice times and 39.4% were suffering

sometimes from sexual harassment in their working life.

Table 5. Frequency of suffering from sexual harassment

Frequency of suffering	No of respondents	Percentage
Once to twice	30	42.3
Sometimes	28	39.4
Often	09	12.7
Very often	04	05.6
Total	71	100.0

DISCUSSION

The current study amongst female workers in Dhangadhi municipality, Kailali district of far Western Nepal showed majority (77.2%) of the respondents suffered sexual harassment in working place. A similar study in Nepal, reported that in carpet factory about half (52%) had faced sexual harassment problem in their workplace.⁵ Ethiopia reported that workplace abuse or sexual harassment was 86.3 percent and Similar study by

in Nepal revealed that problem on sexual harassment is highly prevalent in workplaces, as 53.84 percent of women employee/workers reported that they have faced the problem of sexual harassment in their workplaces.^{6,7}

Verbal, physical, emotional and written or graphical and gesture were the common form of the sexual violence in the current study. In contrast, similar study in Nepal in carpet factory showed that the



most frequent type of sexual harassment was passing vulgar jokes, remarks or teasing obscenely 87 percent.⁵ An exploratory study among women health workers in four hospitals in Kolkata, India showed four types of experiences. Of 135 women 77 women experienced 128 incidents of sexual harassment: verbal harassment (41), psychological harassment (45), sexual gestures and exposure (15), and unwanted touch (27). None of the women reported rape, attempted rape or forced sex but a number of them knew of other women health workers who had experienced these.⁷

Similar study by in Croatia found 67.3 percent of harassment were verbal in manner whereas 22.7 percent were physical.⁹ Further the study amongst psychiatric trainees showed 86% experienced unwanted sexual contact, with 47% experiencing deliberate touching, leaning over or cornering, and 18% receiving letters, telephone calls or material of a sexual nature.¹⁰ A study in McMaster University Residency Training Programs revealed that all female, reported having experienced discrimination on the basis of their sexual orientation. Most of the respondents experienced sexual harassment, especially in the form of sexist jokes, flirtation and unwanted compliments on their dress or figure. On average, 40% of the respondents, especially women reported experiencing offensive body language and receiving sexist teaching material and unwanted compliments on their dress.⁸

In this study the major cause of sexual harassment was power and position of male and lack of awareness training about sexual harassment and its policy. Similarly study in Croatia showed Co-workers 47.9 percent were the major harassers to the women workers.⁹ A study among pharmacies in Ohio showed Colleagues were responsible for 47%

of instances of unwanted sexual attention, patients for 37%, and superiors 16%.⁹

CONCLUSION

Women workers were victimized by all form of sexual harassment such as verbal (56.3%), physical (16.9%), Emotional Written or Graphical (11.3%), gesture (8.5%) and emotional (7.0%) form of sexual harassment. Co-workers (52.1%) were the major harassers to the women workers. More than half (77.2%) was facing sexual harassment at working place and major causes of sexual harassment was power and position of male (36.9%) and lack of awareness training and education (23.9%) but they often ignore the incidence The study gives an insight into the depth of the workplace harassment among women, which is on the rise because of the increase in number of working women.

At last it is concluded that, "Harassment is a serious problem in working place that must be addressed by the government in order to ensure a safe working environment for women."

RECOMMENDATIONS

There is a need for the formation of clear and strict policy to those who involve in the harassment in the working place. Accessible place for reporting the harassment has to be established in every working institution. Prompt actions should be done after the complains. Further explorative studies have to be conducted to know the factors associated with such kind of harassment.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors would like to acknowledge all the female staff who are participated in study and others who directly and indirectly contributed to the completion of this work.



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