

Vol 4 Issue 1 Feb 2014

Impact Factor : 2.1506(UIF)

ISSN No : 2230-7850

International Multidisciplinary
Research Journal

*Indian Streams
Research Journal*

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RNI MAHMUL/2011/38595

ISSN No.2230-7850

Indian Streams Research Journal is a multidisciplinary research journal, published monthly in English, Hindi & Marathi Language. All research papers submitted to the journal will be double - blind peer reviewed referred by members of the editorial board. Readers will include investigator in universities, research institutes government and industry with research interest in the general subjects.

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SEXUAL HARASSMENT OF WORKING WOMEN AT WORKPLACE: AN OVERVIEW

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Abstract:- Women and men are the part and parcel of society and they have equal right to fulfill their basic needs as well as live alike their community or society as a whole. Basically if we focus on the status and condition of women, they are not treated equally in society and face discrimination and other similar problems some of which are: subordination and control, violence, humiliations, oppression, exploitations, subjection and so on. Unfortunately status of women gets confined based on sexual division of labour and which has made male dominated society impose on them treating women as a subordinate.

Keywords: Sexual harassment , working women , society , violence.

INTRODUCTION

Although the last few decades has witnessed a major change with women entering into workplace shoulder to shoulder with men, have started being economically stable as well as making their own identity in society. Definitely in one way women have a positive attitude for their future but simultaneously they suffer biggest problem that is of sexual harassment, which is faced by women in general and working women in particular. Sexual harassment is a part of violence which women suffer from birth to death. And it seems this violence against women is increasing rapidly with more and more girls and women are entering into schools and workplace to establish their identity in society and trying to enter into main stream of society because women is considered as a marginalized group. Women are not safe and secure whether at private or public places and it seems that the security of women in society is not as guaranteed as it should be.

METHODOLOGY:

This present study aims to employ a combination of descriptive and analytical approach. The study is based on secondary type of source.

What is sexual harassment?

Sexual harassment would follow the same definition as the harassment, except that the harassment must be sexual in nature. According to The Supreme Court's definition, "sexual harassment is any unwelcome sexually determined behaviour, 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". .In addition when the submission to such conduct is made an implicit condition of an individual's employment, then it is sexual harassment within the workplace. And Catherine MacKinnon, author of Sexual Harassment of Working Women, was the first legal scholar to draw attention to the connection between sex discrimination and sexual harassment:

Workplace harassment:

Workplace is any place where working relationships exist, where employer and employee relations exist. And if we talk about workplace violence meaning it can explain that as the exercise of physical force by a person against a worker, in a workplace, that causes or could cause physical injury to the worker or a statement or behaviour that it is reasonable for a worker

to interpret as a threat to exercise physical force against the worker, in a workplace, that could cause physical injury to the worker. Further the workplace harassment means that “engaging in a course of vexatious comment or conduct against a worker in a workplace that is known or ought reasonably to be known to be unwelcome”. Workplace harassment may include bullying, intimidating or offensive jokes or innuendos, displaying or circulating offensive pictures or materials, or offensive or intimidating phone calls'. Sexual Harassment at work is an extension of violence in everyday life and is discriminatory, exploitative, thriving in atmosphere of threat, terror and reprisal. There is several studies show that sexual harassment touches lives of nearly 40-60% of working women. There are two types of workplace harassment as 'Quid pro quo', means seeking sexual favours or advances in exchange for work benefits and it occurs when consent to sexually explicit behaviour or speech is made a condition for employment or refusal to comply with a 'request' is met with retaliatory action such as dismissal, demotion, difficult work conditions. 'Hostile working environment' is more pervasive form of sexual harassment involving work conditions or behaviour that make the work environment 'hostile' for the woman to be in. Certain sexist remarks, display of pornography or sexist/obscene graffiti, physical contact/brushing against female employees are some examples of hostile work environment, which are not made conditions for employment. Such type of violence which is occurring at workplace with women creates insecure, unsafe, and hostile work environment at workplace. This combat attitude of men with women treating them as a subject and subordinate person that's why such violence faced by working women.

Nowadays we have started to saying that we live in Gandhian era where “Aahmsa Pramo Dharma” however every day we find several cases of violence which occur with women at public and private places. If we believe in every day women inclusion and gender equality then it is fair to say that sexual harassment is a violation of women's right to gender equality as well as liberty and life as a whole. Now moving forward, eve teasing is a term that is used in India for sexual harassment and it can described using an incidence as: Deputy Director of Tripura's urban development department, S.S.S.B.P. Mishra was suspended for molesting a junior woman employee at the office here on Dec 7. Source: IANS via daijiworld Jan 3,2011. Recently a case occurred in 2013 Tarun Tejpal, Editor-in-chief of Tehelka magazine, for sexual assault on a woman colleague while she was fulfilling work-related responsibilities.

A survey was conducted by Oxfam in India in organized and unorganized sector and they found that most women face incidents of harassment that are non-physical in nature and that top three industries unsafe for women are: labours, domestic help, and small scale manufacturing.

Some effects of harassment on working women:-

- 1- Makes working condition hostile, intimidating environment and unpleasant.
- 2- Puts indirect pressure on her to leave job.
- 3- Makes her unable to perform her job properly.
- 4- Serious emotional torture or mentally torture.
- 5- Demoralizes women or discourages her improvement.
- 6- Increases mental disease in working women.
- 7- Risks chances for a promotion,

Prevention is only part of the solution. In India where we have male dominated society as well as patriarchal society exists and the rule and regulations are made in the point of male androcentric scheme, either public or private places everywhere women are oppressed by men, but moreover some initiative have been taken by our government definitely in solvation of oppression and exploitation of women but one shall also consider the fact that it is challenge before women to have strength to survive with such patriarchal attitude, social values, norms and man androcentric workplace which seems be not of such help to reduce such types of violence against women. Now we need a strategy to deal with the problem regarding working women so to provide a safe and secure workplace.

Further can be mentioned that women and child development ministry has initiated a scheme known as 'Saksham' which mobilizes young men and women at the grassroots level as change agents to achieve a solution for “violence against women”. In India, our constitution has made Indian Penal Code (IPC) Section 354 which deals with "assault or criminal force to a woman with the intent to outrage her modesty. IPC Section 509 deals with "word, gesture or act intended to insult the modesty of a woman”. The Supreme Court of India in 1997 has defined sexual harassment at workplace, preventive measures and redress mechanism. The prominent judgement is known as Vishaka Judgement. Accordingly Indian constitution infringes the fundamental right of a woman to gender equality under Article 14 right. Article 21 provide right to her to life and live with dignity. Protection against sexual harassment of working women bill's draft came in 2010 and which has been passed by Lok Sabha in 2012 but Rajya Sabha could not pass because of some reason. Now the protection of women against sexual harassment at workplace bill has just got passed in 26 feb

2013 by both houses of the parliament ensures a safe environment for women at workplaces, both in public and private sectors whether organised or unorganised. The bill is known in the name of “The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Bill, 2012”.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION:

All told it can be concluded that sexual harassment at workplace is now going to become a serious problem now because nowadays more and more women are entering into workplace because of economic crisis as well as for making her identity in society. Although the cases of sexual harassment are common at every workplace but in recently more and more cases are recorded at teaching institutes also. Then the question arises that where we give education and knowledge to build character and save humanity, such a crime is also occurring at such places then what can we expect from others. Even if we have several laws and reforms regarding such crimes but it seems that still it's not very helpful for working women. Furthermore it can be said that either various laws have been made but proper enforcement and quick action should be taken then alone we will be able to help working women or that new laws are required and to be enforced with full strength.

Again it is worth mentioning here that according to Swami Vivekananda that "We should not think that we are men and women, but only that we are human beings, born to cherish and to help one another. No sooner are a young man and a young woman left alone than he pays compliments to her, and perhaps before he takes a wife, he has courted two hundred women. Bah! If I belonged to marrying set, I could find a woman to love without all that!" (CW Vol. 5, p. 412-413)

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