Research Paper

Awareness of Sexual Harassment among Women Working in Chakan MIDC Pune

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ABSTRACT

Background: Sexual harassment at a workplace is considered a violation of women's right to equality, life, and liberty. In 2013, the number of sexual harassment at the workplace increased rapidly, it is important to know the awareness level among women employees of "Sexual Harassment at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act 2013". Aim: To study the level of awareness and perception about the implementation and prevention of sexual harassment at the workplace. Methodology: Sixty samples were selected by using Probability Sampling (Simple Random Sampling Method) and tools used for assessment were a semi-structured sociodemographic datasheet and a Self-made questionnaire. Results: More than half of respondents were not knowing the implementation of sexual harassment policy at the workplace and approximately two-thirds of respondents are not aware of the establishment of a women complaint cell in their office. Some respondents have been harassed at the workplace. More than half of the respondents feel sexual harassment at the workplace as being mentally disturbed and a hurdle in the growth of their carrier. Conclusion: Study has evoked the attention towards the importance of awareness of prevention of sexual harassment at the workplace so we can hope to inculcate better and effective implementation of policy and influence organizations to take initiative to spread awareness about prevention of sexual harassment that leads to the safe and healthy working environment for women employees.

Keywords: POSH, Awareness level, Sexual Harassment

INTRODUCTION

Gender equality is a basic human right and the Constitution of India guarantees all its citizen's equality of status and opportunity. From the past year, companies are more focusing on driving gender diversity in the workplace. Their main aim is to give a comfortable environment that encourages growth and development. Indian companies are taking a few steps towards a harassment-free workplace. Companies need to ensure that their establishments are safe so that women employees there feel secure and can work at ease. The greatest threat to the workplace is sexual harassment if it is not handled carefully, it may have adverse ramifications.

Sexual Harassment at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act 2013 and related rules have been framed and was notified by the Indian Parliament to implement in December 2013. It is framed on the bases of Vishaka guidelines which have served as the case law to curd instances of sexual harassment at the workplace since 1997. The main objective of this Act is to ensure the women feel safe at the workplace and to nurture the growth of a holistic work environment.

The rate of an incident of sexual harassment of women at the workplace was increasing. Sexual harassment at a workplace is considered a violation of women's right to equality, life, and liberty. It creates an insecure and hostile work environment that discourages women's participation in work which affects their social and economic empowerment and the goal of inclusive growth. There was no strong law enforced to give justice to the aggrieved women so there was a need for special laws for women to secure them from such sexual harassment.

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The Sexual harassment at workplace Bill was passed by Lok Sabha on the 2nd of September, 2012 and it is called "The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013. (Sharma, S., & Chakrabarti)

As in the 2nd semester I was placed in NGO named "Nari Samata Manch" they were working on women's issues when I attended their SHAW (Sexual Harassment at Workplace) Workshop which gave me the idea to choose this topic as my research study.

Importance of PoSH Policy

A safe workplace is a women's legal right. Sexual harassment at the workplace has assumed serious proportions where women do not report the matter to the concerned authorities in most cases due to fear of reprisal from the harasser, losing one's livelihood, being stigmatized, or losing professional standing and personal reputation. The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 was enacted to ensure safe working spaces for women and to build enabling work environments that respect women's right to equality of status and opportunity.

Effective implementation of the Act will contribute to the realization of their right to gender equality, life, and liberty, equality in working conditions everywhere. The efficacy of an antisexual harassment program depends greatly on awareness levels among a company's employees. Organizations need to educate their employees on proper conduct at the workplace, list the do's and don'ts concerning the behaviours expected of them, conduct regular training and delineate the severe repercussions of violating the norms laid down. Women employees should know their rights and have the confidence to raise red flags if required. It is the employer's responsibility to ensure that women feel safe to report any complaints without fear of victimization. Growing consciousness of issues relating to women's safety has compelled leading organizations to take cognizance of the Act.

It is mandatory under the guidelines of SEBIs and the Ministry of Women and Child Development Indian listed companies should disclose their sexual harassment complaints data for the year gone by. Awareness about PoSH Policy is important among women employees so that they will be aware of the rights they are provided from which they deserve to have a safe and comfortable working environment.

Responsibilities and Duties of Employer in PoSH Policy which will help prevent harassment at Workplace

Employer's responsibilities under this Act

- Display penal consequences of sexual harassment
- Organize workshops and sensitization programs
- Formulate an internal policy
- Form an Internal Complaints Committee where the number of employees is more than ten
- Provide necessary facilities to the Committees
- Monitor timely submission of committee reports
- Assist the woman in pursuing a criminal case if she chooses to
- Maintain confidentiality of the inquiry process and the Act lays down a penalty of Rupees
 5,000 on the person who has breached confidentiality
- With sexual harassment being a crime, employers are obligated to report offenses.

Employer's duties under this Act

- Offering a safe working environment
- Undertake workshops and training programs at regular intervals for sensitizing employees, providing assistance during the inquiry, and initiating action against the perpetrator.

- Every employer is required to constitute an 'Internal Complaints Committee' at all offices and branches with a staff strength of 10 or more employees. Members of the committee shall include a senior woman employee, two or more employees, and one member from an NGO committed to the cause of women.
- A 'Local Complaints Committee" is required to be constituted in every district. An additional 'Local Complaints Committee' shall also be constituted at the block level to address complaints in situations where the complainant does not have recourse to an Internal Complaints Committee or where he complaint is against the employer himself.
- The 'Local Complaints Committee', to be constituted by the District Officer, shall include an eminent woman as the chairperson, a woman working in the area, two members from an NGO committed to the cause of women, and a Protection Officer appointed under the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005.
- At least 50 percent of the nominated members must be women in any internal of local committee.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In the study by Kulkarni et al. (2019) in their study on awareness regarding 'sexual harassment of women at workplace act" among non-teaching female staff in a tertiary care hospital. A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted in tertiary care hospital. A total of 60 non-teaching staff members were included in the study. Data were collected using a pre-designed questionnaire. The present study is a new study and no such study had been conducted to find out awareness regarding "sexual harassment of women at workplace act" among the non-teaching staff of the hospital. It had helped in assessing awareness regarding the act. There were some limitations of the study. Non-teaching staff members were aware of the provision of the sexual harassment committee in the institute. However, awareness was found to be poor regarding the details of legal provisions under the act.

Edison (2014), conducted a study focused on finding the prevalence of sexual harassment and its impact among working women. The researcher used a descriptive study design with a sample consisting of one hundred women workers from various private retail shops in Vellore City and the Purposive sampling method was used in this study. Data collection was done with the help of a questionnaire. A pre-test was conducted before the actual data collection and the appropriate changes were made. Assertive women have fewer problems compared to others and hence it is advised that the organizations should create an appropriate environment. The sexual harassment-free environment is not just the responsibility of the organization or the victim only but it requires support from all the employees whether women or men. On the other hand, the women worker needs to be more vigilant and should take bold steps to report any unwelcome incidences immediately to the concerned authority.

In the study conducted Swarnalatha (2012) investigated the relationship between sexual harassment and job satisfaction. In the study, 240 employees working in automotive industries participated in this study. Data was collected by using a self-made questionnaire. This research paper identifies the range of workplace harassment that men and women experience and examines the effects of their experiences in the automotive industry in India. This research paper also shows the recommendations for reducing the risk of harassment and for providing employees with support and legal remedies if they are harassed. The purpose of this research is to prevent employees from losing their life and to stop the daily harm being done to employees through workplace harassment.

METHODOLOGY

The descriptive research design was adopted for the study. Sixty women employees working in Chakan MIDC. Those who were above the age of 19 years and below 60 years. The excluded subjects were those who were not interested and those who were not working at Chakan MIDC, Pune.

Details of employees were collected with help of semi-structured socio-demographic data which helped in collecting information about department, designation, and duration of women employees.

A self-prepared Interview Schedule was used to collect required information this questionnaire was an approved subject experts Questionnaire consisting of a set of structured open-ended as well as closed-ended questions.

RESULTS

The department of respondents in which respondents from HR, Quality, Production, and Finance Department are highest while departments like Marketing, I.T are having lowest respondents comparatively.

The maximum number of respondents i.e. 47% have a working duration of 2 to 5 years and 10% of respondents i.e. minimum no of respondents have beyond 5 years of working duration.

Table: Overall Awareness

Sections	Awareness About	Awareness Level	%
Awareness about Provisions of Act	Provisions of Act	Yes, Very Much Aware	55%
	Designed POSH Policy	Yes, Very Much Aware	83%
	Objectives of POSH Policy	Yes, Very Much Aware	46%
	Aware about ICC Committee	Yes, To Some Extent	41%
		Aware	
	Members of ICC Committee	No, Not Aware	53%
	Important to appoint third party members to the committee	No, Not Aware	55%
Awareness of procedure & Practices	Complaint Process	Yes, To Some Extent Aware	45%
	Filing of Complaint under Act	Yes, To Some Extent Aware	50%
	Inquiry Process Under this Act	Yes, To Some Extent Aware	53%
	Procedure under Act	No, Not Aware	45%
Awareness About Roles	Role of ICC Committee	Yes, To Some Extent	55%
		Aware	
	Role of Third Party Member	No, Not Aware	46%
	Role of organization	Yes, To Some Extent Aware	58%
Awareness About Implementation and Applicability	Applicability of Act	Yes, Very Much Aware	53%
	Implementation of Posh Policy	Yes, To Some Extent Aware	41%
	Conduct Various Programs of	Yes, To Some Extent	50%
	Awareness	Aware	
	Document exhibited	Yes, Very Much Aware	53%
Accessibility in Act	Member Accessibility	Yes, To Some Extent Aware	38%
	Cases quickly responded	Yes, To Some Extent Aware	48%

This table shows the overall level of awareness among respondents about the POSH Act.

- Awareness about provisions of Act, that more than half of the respondents are very much aware of provisions, designed policy. But we can also see that respondents who are not at all fully aware of objectives of the POSH policy, ICC Committee, members of ICC Committee, and the importance of third-party members in the committee.
- Awareness of Procedure & Practices under Act are more than 50% of respondents are aware to some extent about the filing of complaint and inquiry process under the posh policy. And most of the respondents are not aware of the complaint process when the case is serious and procedure under the posh act.
- Awareness about the role of members, more than 50% of respondents are to some extent aware of the role of the ICC Committee, and the role of organization, and most of the respondents are not at all aware of the role of a third party member in the committee.50% of respondents to some extent aware about the implementation of Posh and various programs of awareness conducted in their organization.

General Perception of Respondents

- ➤ Out of 100%, only 12% don't feel that organizational culture has an impact on the increasing rate of sexual harassment. The rest of the respondents i.e. 88% feel that organization has its impact in increasing the rate of harassment.
 - It demonstrates that organizational culture, climate, and environment also impact increasing incidents of sexual harassment.
- ➤ Majority i.e. 48% respondents feel that there should be a change in POSH Policy to some extent. And remaining i.e., 47% of respondents feel there should be no change in POSH Policy. As we can see the mixed response.
- ➤ Out of 60 respondents, 60% respondents agree that being a woman is the reason for getting different treatment in the organization.
- ➤ Most respondents i.e. 85% respondents believe that employees should be praised for their quality of work not by their gender.
- ➤ Concerning the opinion of respondents, to some 42% of respondents feels that their change in organization scenario after enforcement of the law, and 27% of respondents completely agree with the statement. 32% of respondents disagree with the statement
- ➤ Out of 100%, 45% of respondents don't feel that there is a change in the behavior of male employees towards the female employee because of POSH Policy.
- More than half of the respondents i.e., 57% feel that due to degradation of morality there is an increase in incidents of sexual harassment and 25% of respondents are agree to some extent about this statement. This shows a maximum number of respondents agree with the statement.
- From all respondents, half of the respondents i.e. 50% to some extent believe that there is an increase in incidents of sexual harassment because of the insensitivity of media towards women. In that, more than 32% are strongly agreed with the statement.

Overall awareness through situation/cases

Table: Respondent's awareness about cases/situations

Cases/Situations	Awareness	Percentage
	level	
Handshake is physical contact, is that sexual harassment	No/Not Agree	78%
Telling a person his/her hair looks nice is harassment	No/Not Agree	76.7%
Ignoring another employee constitutes sexual harassment	No/Not Agree	76.7%
People in some cultures are more physical and openly	Yes to some	58%
affectionate than others and co-workers should understand	extent Agree	
their actions are not meant as sexual harassment		
Sexual innuendos made at an office party are not sexual	No/Not Agree	55%
harassment	_	
Constantly staring at a co-worker is not harassment	No/Not Agree	51.7%
Interviewing someone in a hotel room is harassment	No/Not Agree	48.3%
A single unexpected flirtation is a harassment	Yes to some	41.7%
	extent Agree	

The above table represents the perception of respondents on given cases and situations

- We can see that 78% of respondents are disagreeing with the statement that handshake is considered sexual harassment.
- From 60 respondents 76.7% of respondents disagree that telling a person that her/his hair looks nice is harassment.
- Out of all respondents, 76.7% of them disagrees that ignoring employee constitutes sexual harassment.
- Among all respondents, 58% of them to some extent agree that organization differs so their actions are not meant sexual harassment.
- Majority i.e. 55% of respondents said that sexual innuendos made at office parties are sexual harassment.
- As we can see 51.7% of respondents said that constantly staring at co-workers is sexual harassment.
- Among all respondents, 48 percent of respondents said that interviewing someone in a hotel is not harassment.
- Out of 60 respondents, 41.7 percent respondents said that a single unexpected flirtation can be considered harassment to some extent.

Table: Overall Perception of Respondents Other Aspects about Perception

Statement	Perception Level	%
Employee Should be praised by the quality of work and not by gender	Agree	85%
Organizational culture impact in increasing rate of sexual harassment	Agree to some extent	68%
Due to the degradation of morality, there is an increase in incidents of	Agree	56%
sexual harassment		
Insensitivity of media towards women leads to an increase in incidents	Agree to some extent	50%
of harassment		
Changes in POSH Policy	Agree to some extent	48%
Change in behavior of male employee because of PoSH Policy	Disagree/ Can't Say	45%
Change in Organization scenario after enforcement of law	Agree to some extent	41%
Being a woman is the reason for different treatment	Disagree/ Can't Say	40%

Other aspects about prevention of Sexual Harassment

- Among all the respondents, 73% respondents feel that social media should take an initiative in spreading awareness about the prevention of sexual harassment.
- ➤ Nearby half i.e. 48% respondents are aware of the sensitivity of managerial level employees about the implementation of PoSH policy.
- ➤ Majority i.e. 68% of respondents feel that they are aware of the challenges actively addressed during the implementation of policy.
- > Out of all the respondents, 60% of respondents demonstrated that no training program on gender sensitization is conducted in their organization.
- ➤ In the organization of the majority of respondents i.e. 67% of respondents training programs are conducted to spread awareness about the sexual harassment Act.
- ➤ Almost 90% of respondents preferred no suggestions for effective implementation of PoSH Policy.
- ➤ Conducting workshops, frequent awareness programs conducted are suggestions regarding awareness programs held in their organizations.
- Among 100%, 43% respondents have suggested Spread Awareness about Posh Policy At All Workplaces, 11% respondents suggested to conduct awareness programs and spread awareness about gender sensitization are suggestions from respondents to the prevention of sexual harassment at workplace.

DISCUSSION

The present study was designed to assess the awareness among women employees working at Chakan MIDC, Pune about sexual harassment at the workplace. Sample Consisting of 60 employees. Samples were selected from 5-6 companies located in Chakan MIDC, by following inclusion and Exclusion Criteria. In the tools Socio-demographic sheet, a Self-made questionnaire scale was administered on the sample. First and foremost, the researcher took ethical permission from the ethical for conducting the present study. A study of sexual harassment at workplace among women employees working at Chakan MIDC, Pune. After screening according to the above-mentioned inclusion and exclusion criteria.

In the present study, from the data analysed, it is evident that the demographic variable. All respondents are women employees. The majority of participants were from the department Human Resource Dept. (HR). The majority of participants are at the Managerial level. As per working experience, the majority of participants were having experience of 2 to 5 years in the same company.

Finding showing the awareness level.

A study by Bothra, N. (2014)., supports the present study as he also examined awareness levels among working women regarding sexual harassment at Govt. organizations. This study was conducted by using a random sampling method with a sample size of 50 employees working in Govt. offices in Lucknow, India. Data was collected in form of a questionnaire. The survey contained a variety of questions regarding the organization, work environment, employee relations, job attitudes, their profile, past cases, management reaction there awareness on the issue, guidelines by court and Act which is enacted recently and lastly on knowledge on complaint cell there duty's and rights which have provided. The result of the study shows that most of the working women were aware of guidelines issued by Supreme Court on sexual harassment about 76% but most of the working women about 62% were not aware of women's complaint cell at the workplace. Based on findings it was concluded that more than half of respondents were not knowing the implementation of sexual harassment policy at the workplace and approximately two-thirds of respondents are not aware of the establishment of

a women complaint cell in their office. Some respondents have been harassed at the workplace. More than half of the respondents feel sexual harassment at the workplace as being mentally disturbed and a hurdle in the growth of their carrier.

In the study by Dr. Edison Nesa Doss, More than 50% of the respondents did not react when sexually harassed. This may be due to a sense of embarrassment, poor financial situations, or a fear of social stigma. This study also shows that 40% of the respondents want to resign from their job because of sexual harassment. The majority of the respondents (77%) are not aware of the Sexual Harassment Act 2012. Without the knowledge of legal rights, women are being exploited. For true women empowerment, it is necessary to make women aware of their rights at the workplace. Each employer should have protocols to ensure a safe workplace for their women workers. An orientation at the time of joining will make the employees aware of these before the need arises. This supports the present study as in it is assessed that awareness about posh will prevent and reduce the incidents about sexual harassment at workplace through study it can be found that training programs awareness is spread among working women which will make both male and female employees aware about the act that will reduce the incidents.

LIMITATION

A major limitation of the study was to disclose the names of the organization's data collected as the topic is a sensitive organization not permitted to reveal the name of the organization. The primary limitation of the study was to get the data from the employees since the topic is very sensitive.

CONCLUSION

We have understood the concept of sexual harassment and the inculcated knowledge about prevention of sexual harassment at workplace Act, through discussions of cases. We understood the importance of awareness about the Act for effective implementation which will positively impact respondents i.e. women employees and also on the environment of the organization.

In the study, we tried to find out the level of awareness among women employees working in different departments and different designations for a specific period.

The study indicates the awareness level among women employees about, provisions of the Act; procedures are practiced under the act, applicability of act, accessibility in the act, roles of members under the act, implementation of the act. Along with this, we also succeed to demonstrate the perception of women employees about social issues related to sexual harassment.

The study demonstrates the level of awareness among employees. This helped us to know the sensitivity of the organization. From this, we understood the initiative taken by the organization to spread awareness about Posh Act.

This study also represents perception about given cases and situations this helped us to know the opinion of respondents. From this, we understood the sensitivity of the posh act in an organization.

The study also showed the impact of gender sensitization in organizations. This affects the organization's culture and climate.

Researchers have one assumption that awareness about posh will prevent and reduce the incidents of sexual harassment at the workplace through study it can be found that training programs awareness is spread among working women which will make both male and female employees aware of the act that will reduce the incidents.

This study indicates importance of training and awareness are crucial. It has been seen that the different styles of implementation of policy in the organization.

It has been 5 years after the enforcement of the POSH Act and still, it is observed that there is no better implementation and awareness about the act. It was observed that employees were not sensitive enough about the awareness about PoSH.

It is hoped that the study has evoked the attention towards the importance of awareness of prevention of sexual harassment at the workplace so we can hope to inculcate better and effective implementation of policy and influence organizations to take initiative to spread awareness about prevention of sexual harassment that leads to the safe and healthy working environment for women employees.

SUGGESTIONS

The study has brought to light, that awareness about Posh is important to prevent sexual harassment at the workplace to increase the level of awareness following suggestions should be adopted:

- Organizations should survey awareness about Posh quarterly and conduct awareness programs for both males as well as female employees working in the organization.
- As it is a taboo topic, the organization should have weekly discussions about sexual harassment with employees.
- Organizations should drive awareness through online and offline training
- They should organize and hold orientation programs and seminars and conduct capacity and skill-building programs for ICC members.
- The organization should investigate complaints and take strict action against the perpetrators in the prescribed duration.
- From the study it is observed that organizations are not sensitive about the posh implementation in the organization, they should start conducting training programs frequently.
- An increase in incidents is inadequate training for employees, especially for new joiners.
- To conduct gender sensitization programs is also important.
- Most of the employees are not aware of ICC Committee, organization should spread awareness about compliance related to the posh policy.

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