

## SEXUAL HARASSMENT OF WORKING WOMEN IN LUCKNOW CITY: A PSYCHOLOGICAL STUDY

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**Abstract:** Violence against women takes many forms and it is universal in all societies. Women were sexually harassed long before there was a term for it. Women participation in economic sector is crucial for their economic empowerment and their sustainability. Since industrialization, women working in factories and offices have had to endure sexual comments and demands by bosses and co-workers as the price for economic survival. Sexual Harassment at work is an extension of violence in everyday life and is discriminatory, exploitative, thriving in atmosphere of threat, terror and reprisal. It is one such form of offence or exploitation where women experience both physical and mental torture. Studies find that sexual harassment is still endemic, often hidden, and present in all kinds of organizations. Yet it is still not always viewed as a problem, which has to be systematically tackled. It is one of the most difficult problem to articulate as it can be so subtle, so exacting, and so clever that a court of men will rarely acknowledge it as such. Keeping in view of the above facts, the present study has inquired about the full range of potentially sexually harassing behavior, from gender harassment to sexual assault. For this purpose a sample of 50 working women in which 25 respondents were above 26 years and 25 were below 26 years were taken from the city of Lucknow. The variables on which sexual harassment experience was measured are age, job experience, marital status and private and public sector. The tool used to measure sexual harassment of working women is sexual harassment experience questionnaire (SHEQ) developed by Kamal and Tariq (1997). It consists of 35 items, with a four point rating scale ranging from never (score 1) to very frequent (score 4). The findings of this research and other done earlier shows that working women do experience sexual harassment at their work places although intensity and frequency varies from person to person and organization to organization.

**Key Words:** Sexual harassment, Working Women, Public and Private Sector, Age.

### **Introduction:**

Sexual harassment of women is not a new concept. The offences against women covered broad based topics. Sexual harassment is one such form of offence or exploitation where women experience both physical and mental torture. With the women folk entering the labour force the form of harassment has taken a new shape. Women in the workplace experience a wide range of sexual harassment at the hands of their colleagues or superiors. Thus the problem of sexual harassment has become a major social problem now-a-days.

Constitution guarantees equal status to women with men and they also have the right to life and personal liberty. It is also our duty to respect them and let them live in dignity. But with the process and development of society this evil offence is assuming new dimension with the passing of each day and the menace is on the rise. Today almost all the working women are facing the same problem irrespective of their status, nature of job etc. Examples are many. At many places the working women knowingly or unknowingly become the victim of the offence. In most of the cases the women preferred to remain silent because of their economic needs. This economic dependence of women helps the male who by virtue of their status are placed in a superior position in this patriarchal social order to exploit and harass women. Each such incident results in the violation of the fundamental right of women guaranteed under the Indian Constitution. But nobody seems in a position to care and respect this provision and the menace is increasing at an alarming rate despite interference by the Supreme Court. So an in depth studies from various angles taking into consideration various aspects is required to counter this gender bias.

## What is Sexual Harassment?

There is no specific definition assigned to the term ‘sexual harassment’. When anybody falls in love and it is backed by sexual desire of both the sides it will not amount to sexual harassment but when there is sexual desire or urge by one side and the other side is hesitant towards it, we can term such a situation as sexual offence. This is what ordinarily by sexual offence we mean. In the absence of any specific law on sexual harassment at workplace the Apex Court came forward in its landmark judgment to define sexual harassment in the following words.

**For this purpose, sexual harassment includes such unwelcome sexually determined behavior (whether directly or by implication) as:**

- a) Physical contact and advantages;
- b) A demand or request for sexual favors;
- c) Sexually coloured remarks;
- d) Showing pornography;
- e) Any other unwelcome physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct of sexual nature.

Violence against women takes many forms and it is universal in all societies, personal insecurity shadows women from cradle to grave, from childhood to adulthood, they are harassed/ abused because of their gender. It begins at the doorstep of their home and continues---- to street, bus stop to the entrance of the factory/ organizations, they work in at the hands of their male superiors, male colleagues, down to even a male peon.

Brohi (1994) mentioned that as women increasingly turn to work place owing to financial and economical necessities, their increase in the work face is accompanied by a proportional increase in work related problems. This practice is not a unique country specific phenomenon but a global menace.

Among many problems which women face in their work environment, the most popular is sexual harassment. It is in the form of occupational discrimination against women and occasionally men. If a coworker accidentally brushes you, it would not be considered sexual harassment, however if that person repeatedly find opportunities to brush against you, it would not be considered sexual harassment. Almost all working women experience some sort of sexual harassment in their professional lives. From top executive post to minor domestic workers women often face discrimination and humiliation.

Generally sexual harassment is unwanted sexual attention that makes a person feel uncomfortable and causes problem at work or school. Sexual harassment is bothering someone in a sexual way. The harasser offers sexual attention to someone who does not ask for it and does not welcome it. The unwelcome behavior might or not might not involve touching. It could just be a spoken words, graphics, gestures or even dirty looks to a wider range of behavior such as touching, fondling etc. (Konard & Gutek, 1986)

### Nature of Sexual Harassment:

The nature of the sexual harassment is shown by his data. All data is in percentage. This data represents:

- 40%- facing strong comments
- 30%- facing sexual expressions
- 20%- body touch by colleagues
- 6%- pressure for sexual relationship
- 4%- rape

Sexual harassment in employment has been defined as unwelcome sexual advances requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct. That enters into employment decisions and/ or conducts that unreasonably interferes with an individual’s work performance or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment. This guideline identifies two forms of sexual harassment.

### Two forms of sexual harassment:

There are two forms of sexual harassment. These are:

- (1) Quid pro quo harassment
- (2) Hostile work environment harassment

In the first type “quid pro quo” means “something for something”. This type of harassment occurs when an employee is required to choose between submitting to sexual advances and losing a tangible job benefit. An essential aspect of quid pro quo harassment is the harassers’ employment benefits. This kind of harassment most often occurs between supervisors and subordinates. Hostile work environment harassment is unwelcome conduct

that is as severe or pervasive as to change the conditions of employment and create an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment. It doesn't require response and has no impact on an economic benefit but make the women's work environment unpleasant. It can involve coworkers or third parties, not just supervisors and typically involve a series of incidents rather than one incident.

The norms of most of the societies suggest that men typically hold greater power than women (Lips, 1991; Mainiero, 1986). Consistent with the male stereotypes, men are perceived as goal oriented, aggressive and powerful (Alligeier & Mc Cormick, 1983), stereotypically, women are viewed as passive, interpersonally oriented and incompetent outside the home (Eagle & Mladinic, 1989). Further in our society, being male confer higher status which in turn provides a basis for power and greater latitude in how one influences other.(Johnson, 1976).

In work settings men generally hold the higher status positions while women are more likely to hold jobs that lack power and therefore find little opportunity to exercise it (Kanter, 1977). Individuals who occupy a high status role or positions are believed to have the right to make demands of those in lower status positions; harassing behavior may be viewed by some high status individuals as simple extensions of that right, further lower status individuals are expected to comply. (Cleveland & Kerst, 1993)

In recent days, one organization has done a survey of different organizations and offices in which 2500 women were participated. They talk with these women about sexual harassment and collect the data. The data (in %) is as follows-

80%- sexual harassment in office

49%- women opposes these incidents.

58%- women's have no knowledge about the supreme court orders

20%- in office the orders of Supreme Court were not follows

28%- men were responsible for sexual harassment

20%- women are responsible for sexual harassment

80%- opposition is the only solution for this problem

32%- because of career women did not oppose sexual harassment

68%- boss are responsible for this

Fitzgareald and Ormerod (1992) indicates that younger women are at greater risk for harassment where Anila (1998) found that all women regardless of their age, marital status, job experience, and job status face the same level of sexual harassment. According to Supreme Court, in sexual harassment all sexual behaviors are included in direct or symbol manner. It includes:-

- (1) Bodily relationships
- (2) Request of sexual relationships
- (3) Show magazine containing pornographic material
- (4) Others unwanted physical actions

Out of these actions if any of these actions takes place with any women of public and private sector, and if any women fear that these behaviors insulted her and effects her security and health or if any women feels that her refusals effects her work, promotion or any other bad results, then all these behaviors according to Supreme Court are under the term sexual harassment.

### **Conceptualizing Sexual Harassment at Workplace:**

It is interesting to note that sexual harassment at workplace as a phenomenon acquired its name only in the late seventies. Piotrkowski (2002) quotes Mackinnon who stated in 1978 that historically sexual harassment of women employees was ignored, denied, made to seem trivial, even implicitly supported. Women were blamed for it too. The term sexual harassment was coined through a consciousness rising session connected with the Women and Work course at the Cornell University. As stated by Farley (1978) women in her class described their experiences in the workplace which had a distinct pattern. They either quit or were fired from a job because they were uncomfortable by the behaviour of men. This phenomenon of male harassment and intimidation of female workers had not been described in the literature and was not publicly recognised as a problem, although she continued to hear it described by women from all walks of life. Nemy (1975) says that it was in April 1975 that the phrase sexual harassment was used in the public for the first time by Farley during her testimony before the New York City Human Rights Commission Hearings on Women and Work. She defined as unwanted sexual advances by male supervisors towards women such as constant leering / ogling, brushing against, pinching /

squeezing bodies, forced intimacy and forcing sexual intercourse. Thus it can be understood that prior to the 1970s the term sexual harassment at workplace did not exist plus it was identified as a part of daily work life, a problem without any name. The term sexual harassment was construed to look at the world from the point of view of women. It was an endeavour to reflect and construct women's experience, and confirm that it was a behaviour that women will not endure passively rather can actively protest and resist. A glance at some other definitions of sexual harassment at workplace given by MacKinnon (1979), Aggarwal (1992) and Stanko (1988), highlight certain commonalities, i.e. sexual harassment at workplace is an unwanted sexually oriented behaviour resulting out of unequal power relations at workplace and it has serious consequences on the employment of women. Moving forward from the understanding of it being an unwanted sexually coloured behaviour, Haspels, Kasim, Thomas and Mckann (2001) defined sexual harassment as clear form of gender discrimination based on sex, a manifestation of unequal power relations between men and women. They explain that the problem relates not so much to the actual biological differences between men and women rather, it relates to the gender or social roles attributed to men and women in social and economic life, and perceptions about male and female sexuality in society that can lead to unbalanced male-female power relationships. As mentioned by Haspels et al sexual harassment at workplace is said to occur when personnel decisions are based on gender, an ascribed characteristic, rather than on an individual's qualifications or job performance then it can be stated, that sexual harassment at workplace is a clear gesture of gender discrimination targeted towards women.

### **Extent of Sexual Harassment at Workplace: Indian Context**

Most of the researches reveal that, in terms of who is most likely to be harassed in the workplace are most likely women (Livingstone, 1982; Maypole and Skaine, 1983; Rudman, Borgida and Robertson, 1995). A CII study (2005) stated gender bias in recruitment, gender inequality and sexual harassment at work place as major issues affecting women and influencing attrition rates of women in larger companies where in managerial positions the ratio of women dwindled further. Amongst all the twenty-two countries covered by the IPSOS – Reuters survey (2010), India recorded highest incidence of sexual harassment. Similarly Centre for Transforming India survey (2010) revealed that nearly 88 percent of women witnessed some form of workplace sexual harassment during the course of their work. Additionally, the survey found that there were poor awareness levels among female employees on workplace sexual harassment and therefore majority of them continued with their ordeal of suffering due to fear of professional victimisation. Though sexual harassment is rampant in corporate India, as stated by Shukla (2002) it is the most under reported form of gender discrimination. Gruber and Morgan (2005) suggested that the experience of sexual harassment is universal while Gilbert, Guerrier and Guy (1998) suggest that the true extent of sexual harassment is often hidden, disguised by the conspiracy of silence which shrouds the issues. Studies in India by Chaudhuri (2006), Lawyers Collective (2002), Yugantar (2003) mentioned that, most women respondents did not complain to supervisors or the management about their experiences of sexual harassment at work and dealt with it on their own. They did not report due to fear for further harassment, apprehension of adverse effect on their employment, lack of confidence in the complaints mechanism, possible defamation or threats from the perpetrators and other such reasons. Oversier (2010) stated that considering the social taboos still associated with sexual harassment and the long pendency in courts; provisions on sexual harassment have never been successfully invoked.

### **Instructions of Supreme Court:**

Sexual harassment is not new, not are legal remedies against it. It has been recognized for nearly 20 years as a form of sex discrimination under the civil rights act of 1964. In 1977 in the case of sexual harassment of working women Supreme Court also takes some actions. In the case of "Vishakha vs. the state of Rajasthan" Supreme Court gives some instructions for the sexual harassment of working women. Court decided any employer who harasses the working women on her work place is directly responsible for that harassment. Yet Supreme Court didn't clear the forms of sexual harassment but court decided that any type of direct or indirect sexual behaviors, body touch, requesting for sexual relationships, sexual comments, these are the sexual behavior which are included under sexual harassment. According to court employer should take preventive steps for the security of working women on her place. For this reason the multinational companies take preventive steps to stop the sexual harassment of working women. Therefore, prevention in the form of policy, training, supervision, and discipline

is the best way to avoid sexual harassment in the work place. Many policies are made for preventing sexual harassment, and at a minimum any sexual harassment should include:-

- A statement that the criminal justice agency will not tolerate sexual harassment.
- A definition of sexual harassment, including examples of “quid pro quo” and hostile work environment harassment.
- A statement advising employees of the agency’s grievance procedure and requiring employees to immediately report incidents.
- A statement that complaints will be taken seriously and investigated immediately.
- A statement that all employees are to treat each other professionally and respectfully

The court found that private possession reading, and consensual sharing of such magazines is protected by the first amendment to the constitution. A critical element of the court’s decision rested on the private nature of the possession and use of such materials. When sexually explicit materials are not private but are public, then their presence may rise to the level of actionable sexual harassment. Thus Supreme Court gives the responsibility to the owner of the organization employers and officers that they give the information about what is sexual harassment.

In the present study we have dealt with the concept and related explanation concerning sexual harassment of working women. The present chapter is aimed at a brief statement of the problem followed by the hypothesis and the details of psychometric devices utilized in the study. A brief description of sample size and its characteristics have also been discussed.

### **Objectives of the present study:**

The present study attempted to examine the experience of sexual harassment in working women of Luck now City. This problem has been chosen because in today’s life each and every working woman feel and experience sexual harassment in their work place. Keeping in view of the above facts, the present study attempts to find out different harassment experiences regarding certain demographic variables like age, public and private sector, marital status, job experiences and their differences if any in sexual harassment at their work place.

### **Hypothesis:**

Based upon social scientific research a few hypotheses are formulated and tested in the present study. There are four hypotheses are formulated in the present study:

- (1) Females less than of 26 years of age experience more sexual harassment as compared to female of 26 years and above.
- (2) Unmarried females experience more sexual harassment as compared to married females.
- (3) Females who have job experience of less than five year’s experience more sexual harassment as compared to females of more than 5 years of job experience.
- (4) Females of private sector experience more sexual harassment as compared to public sector females.

### **Measures:**

To study the present problem sexual harassment questionnaire (SHEQ) developed by Kamal and Tariq (1997) was used. It consists of 35 items, with a four point rating scale ranging from never to very frequent. The scoring was given to each response is 1 for never, 2 for once, 3 for few times and 4 for very frequent. As the SHEQ was designed to identify the frequency of various types of harassment, it was scored simply by counting the number of subjects who endorsed “Never”, “Once”, “a few times”, and “Very frequent” responses for every item. The scoring ranges from 35 to 140.

There are three dimensions in SHEQ. These are:-

- (1) Gender harassment, 7 items (e.g., staring, suggestive jokes or songs, use of pornographically material etc.). The respondents, who experienced the least gender harassment, scored 7 and who experienced the maximum gender harassment scored 28 in SHEQ.
- (2) Unwanted sexual attention has 21 items (e.g. unwanted discussion of personal or sexual matters request for dates, attempt to establish a romantic sexual relationship, unwanted forceful attempts to touch or fondle, rape etc.)
- (3) Sexual coercion has 7 items, (e.g. subtle or direct bribery for sexual cooperation, subtle or direct threats for retaliation of sexual non cooperation etc). In this category score ranges from 7 to 28.

The alpha reliability coefficients of total and subscales of SHEQ have also been determined for the present sample as shown in table 1.

**Table 1:** alpha reliabilities of total and sub-scales of sexual harassment experience questionnaire.

Scales	No. of items	Reliability coefficients
Gender Harassment	7	.70
Unwanted sexual attention	21	.89
Sexual Coercion	7	.70
Total (SHEQ)	35	.91

### Method:

#### Sample

The sample consists of 50 working women living in the city of Lucknow, in which 25 respondents were above 26 years and 25 were below 26 years. Only those employees were included in the sample who agreed to participate in the study. The variables on which sexual harassment experience was measured are age, job experience, marital status and private and public sector. Out of 50 women 28 were unmarried and 22 were married, 25 women had job experience of 5 years and less and 25 had more than 5 years of experience. 21 are from public sector and 29 from private sector.

#### Variables:

##### Classificatory variables:

Age- less than 26 years and above 26 years

Marital status- married and unmarried

Job experience- less than 5 years and more than 5 years

Organization- public and private

**Psychological variable-** Sexual harassment

#### Data Collection:

For collecting the data SHEQ was administered to respondents. A verbal consent was taken from each respondent after taking her in confidence and informing the purpose of study. They were assured that the information they provide would be kept strictly confidential and used only for research purpose. They were instructed that while responding to each item they should keep in mind that the experience of sexual harassment could be different from social interaction at work which involves social relationship. They were also requested to give their true responses. Each participant took about of 13-15 minutes in filling the questionnaire.

#### Scoring:

After the forms were filled by the working women they were scored. In the experience of sexual harassment scored were given as 4-3-2-1.

#### Analytic strategy:

The experience of sexual harassment scores has been obtained and then the whole data have been analyzed and obtain the results in mathematical terms. Data were analyzed using mean, standard deviation and t test. Frequency and percentage were also calculated for each of these items.

#### Results and Interpretation:

**Table 2:** Age differences on subscale and total of sexual harassment experience questionnaire.

Sub scale	Age below 26 years		Age above 26 years		't' ratio	P
	M	SD	M	SD		
Gender Harassment	12.68	4.49	12.64	3.80	0.33	N.S
Unwanted Sexual Attention	34	9.17	32	11.46	0.67	N.S
Sexual Coercion	12	4.75	11	4.21	1.77	N.S
Total (SHEQ)	58	9.89	56	13.5	0.59	N.S

df=48,  $p < .01$ ,  $p < .05$ , N.S: not significant

The results in Table 2 indicate no significant difference among women of less than 26 years and women of 26 years and above, on the total Sexual Harassment Experience Questionnaire and in all its sub scales although the differences are not significant but their mean scores indicates that younger women face more harassment of all kinds as compared to women of older age (above 26 years) at their work place.

**Table 3:** Marital status wise difference on subscale and total of SHEQ

Sub scales	Unmarried (N=28)		Married (N=22)		't' ratio	P
	M	SD	M	SD		
Gender Harassment	13.20	4.38	12.5	3.52	0.85	N.S.
Unwanted Sexual Attention	34.00	10.9	31.0	10.76	0.95	N.S
Sexual Coercion	12.09	5.31	11.64	6.47	0.30	N.S
Total (SHEQ)	59.00	14.5	52.0	13.30	1.75	N.S

df=48, p<.01, p<.05, N.S: not significant

Table 3 indicates that there is no significant difference between married and unmarried. Although, their mean value indicate that unmarried women face more sexual harassment on total sexual harassment experience questionnaire and its all subscales, but their difference is not significant which indicates that all working women face same level of sexual harassment regardless of whether they are married or not.

**Table 4:** job experience wise difference on sub-scales and total of SHEQ

Sub scales	Unmarried (N=28)		Married (N=22)		't' ratio	P
	M	SD	M	SD		
Gender Harassment	13.20	4.38	12.5	3.52	0.85	N.S.
Unwanted Sexual Attention	34.00	10.9	31.0	10.76	0.95	N.S
Sexual Coercion	12.09	5.31	11.64	6.47	0.30	N.S
Total (SHEQ)	59.00	14.5	52.0	13.30	1.75	N.S

df=48, p<.01, p<.05, N.S: not significant

Table 4 further indicates no significant difference in the experience of sexual harassment for women who are working for more than 5 years and for those who have less experience in their jobs. Their mean values slightly varied on all the sub- scales of sexual harassment experience questionnaire but their differences is not significant which indicates harassment to be regardless of their experience in job and hence they face same level of harassment.

**Table 5:** Public and Private sector wise difference on subscale and total of SHEQ

Sub scales	Public sector (N=21)		Private sector (N=29)		't' ratio	P
	M	SD	M	SD		
Gender Harassment	12.0	4.40	13.0	3.52	0.15	N.S.
Unwanted Sexual Attention	29.00	12.43	33.0	10.76	1.23	N.S
Sexual Coercion	10.0	5.58	13.0	6.47	1.87	N.S
Total (SHEQ)	58.00	11.4	60.0	15.50	0.46	N.S

df=48, p<.01, p<.05, N.S: not significant

Table 5 indicate that there is no significant difference among women who are working in public sector and women of private sector on total harassment experience questionnaire and its all subscales. Although the

difference are not significant but their mean scores indicates that women who are working in private sector experience more sexual harassment as compare to public sector.

### **Discussion:**

The present study aimed to identify the experience of sexual harassment of working women at their workplace. The results of the study should be viewed against the following social context. For measuring sexual harassment at work place a sample of 50 working women has been taken. The variables on which sexual harassment experience was measured are age, job experience, marital status and private and public sector. The tool used to measure sexual harassment of working women is sexual harassment questionnaire (SHEQ) developed by Kamal and Tariq (1997). It consists of 35 items with a four point rating scale. Four hypotheses were made and all of them are not accepted. The 't' value of all the tables suggests that there will be no significant difference between all the measured variables. The main reasons behind this finding that working women whether it is from public sector or private sector, married or unmarried experience sexual harassment at their workplace, although intensity and there frequency varies from person to person and organization to organization. From the time immemorial the problem of sexual harassment has been facing by women in some form or other. The problem of sexual harassment at the work place is a major occupational hazard affecting women all over the globe. In the Indian context, the situation is even more serious s 92per cent of working women are in the informal, unorganized sector where they don't get any statutory protection. Over the years, women in our society have been subjected to various injustices and inequalities at every stage of life. They face neglect all kinds of physical and mental abuses, servitude and rejection. Sexual harassment at work is something that most people often face but not many talk about openly. This is usually for the fear of losing their job, facing mockery at the hands of the society, getting trapped in the never ending judicial proceedings or due to other unsaid reasons. The typically men oriented workplace has been replaced by a large number of women getting employment in every possible field of work. This has given rise to a number of issues that affect the integrity of the women. In its different forms, sexual harassment is still a part of the workplace irrespective of the fact that it is reported or not.

Sexual harassment at the workplace is a universal problem. Even though the offence of sexual harassment at workplace has existed in India for a long time, this is the first time that it has been recognized as an infringement of the fundamental rights of a woman under article 19(1) (g) of the constitution of India. But it can be said that though we now have a specific law to prohibit sexual harassment at workplace apart from already existing landmark guidelines of the supreme court of India but the menace cannot be controlled until and unless the mentality of males in general would not change as well as women in general didn't raise their voice against sexual harassment. Till the basic human dignity of women is not recognized 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 empty words and should upheld in practice.

### **Conclusion**

The present research has inquired about the full range of potentially sexually harassing behavior, from gender harassment to sexual assault. Although a few demographic variables have studied in this study. Yet there are many more personality, demographic, and organizational variables, which may also play a role in the women's experience of sexual harassment at work place e.g. physical attractiveness, education, working hours of the organization, nature of the job etc. these variables are yet to be explored as it leads to very harmful effects to victims. only through further studies into the phenomenon of sexual harassment we can do something to minimize this prevailing issue so as to meet the problem of the present day.

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