

---

**INCIDENCE OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT  
A CASE STUDY AT WORKPLACES IN KARACHI**

*Dr Memoona Saeed Lodhi*

*Dr Jawaid Ahmed Siddiqui*

*Dr Ghulam Ali Buriro*

**ABSTRACT**

*The study evaluates the proportion of sexual harassment among female workers in Karachi. The participants (N=80) of the study divided on the basis of their socio-economic status who filled out a questionnaire consisting of 16 items. The statistical analysis of the study was conducted by applying t tests. The results of the study provides evidence that lower socio-economic status is inversely proportional to more sexual harassment (SH) and the provision of strict laws does not deter the incidence of SH. Recommendations are suggested for qualitative analysis to provide more in-depth of the phenomena.*

---

**Keywords:** Sexual Harassment; Socio-economic status; Laws

**INTRODUCTION**

In the recent decades women in Pakistan have rightfully shared the economic responsibility of males in an attempt to meet the ever increasing cost of living. However, it is also a common fact that the daily reports of women exploitation are daily occurrence; women are subjected to different forms of harassments at workplaces. Harassment is “a form of discrimination. It involves any unwanted physical or verbal behavior that offends or humiliates ...” (Canadian Human Rights Commission, 2016:3). According to C.F.R. (1980) harassment “has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual’s work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment. In view of this situation, despite the recent addition of the law for sexual harassment (SH) in Pakistan-The Protection against Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2010- female harassment continues to be a major concern for the women in Pakistan.

Furthermore, Preventing Sexual Harassment (1992) identifies the vulnerability of individuals and claims that “a victim may consent or agree to certain conduct and actively participate in it even though it is offensive and objectionable”. Sexual harassment is unwelcome whenever the person subjected to it considers it unwelcome. Whether the person in fact welcomed a request for a date, sex-oriented comment, or joke depends on all the circumstances.

**BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

Being a developing country, Pakistan is still confronted with several outdated conventions which eventually result in extreme anguish for the

public. A man is preferred for being a provider, but in the wake of large sized families and ever-rising inflation, women are not deemed fit to share the economic burden. Job procurement is not considered to be a primary goal for a woman and those who strive to break the barriers are more likely to become victims of sexual harassment from the moment they leave the four walls of their house. Sadruddin (2013:2) argues that “Harassment is one of the serious unreasonable and reprehensible conducts which are routinely practiced at many workplaces”. Previous studies have focused on the negative impact of SH on the perception of women while exposing them as potentially easy targets for the male counterparts.

Victims of SH have been reported to suffer from emotional, psychosomatic, psychological, organizational effects in all empirical studies. Gelf and, Fitzgerald, and Drasgow (1995) have further divided SH into three main components: sexual coercion, gender harassment, and unwanted sexual attention. Numerous measures have been introduced in almost all countries far and wide: Einarsen and Mikkelsen (2003) have indicated that harassment can have negative effects for women at workplaces which eventually affect their job performance. Furthermore, Leymann (1996) also demonstrated the impact of SH to be a detrimental factor for the mental health of the victims.

Many women either leave their jobs or accept their status as submissive victims due to numerous factors which primarily include cultural as well as economic constraints. Research has shown that gestures of SH are linked to declines in job satisfaction, increase in psychological distress, and organizational withdrawal behaviors. Previous research has also extensively documented several detrimental outcomes especially for victims of SH.

#### **THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

Purpose of the study was to determine the occurrence of SH in the organizations. The frequency of SH of women in the workplace environment was gathered to estimate the overall framework in the stated domain. Current evidence related to SH is at the infancy stage due to which there is inherent need for gathering the data in the first place. The current research intends to provide the basic framework for SH according to the socio-economic status of the victims, and highlighting the leading factors which put some women more at risk and the strict adherence to policy making and its implementation to safeguard the interests of working women.

Women’s safety from any kind of harassment is a vital concern for a conventional country like Pakistan; where males are considered to be

the bread winners of the family and females are expected to stay at home. Any kind of harm to women is regarded as a direct threat for their ego. But the issue extends even further beyond individuals and their families. It is of paramount importance to the mental health of the women themselves; they not only are psychologically subjugated but productivity, competitiveness and sustainability of enterprises also suffer at work places. Women who are educated and belong to a upper middle class families are observed to be more confident of their being, whereas women with mediocre background has to endure more hardships at work places.

The research is crucial in highlighting the impact of socio-economic class and the vulnerability of women to be subjected to SH. To accurately assess the impact of SH on women at workplaces according to their socio-economic class, it is critical to isolate the effects of SH from other variables that may be correlated with both harassment and outcomes. The findings of the research will be useful in providing protection to women according to their background, since laws are mostly implemented in the case of more informed people. By conducting comparative analyses data will be sifted through from several angles for pinpointing the major differences, if any, among women and what factors lead to that. The impact of SH on socio-economic and the significance can be accurately assessed by isolating these two variables from other variables that may be correlated with both SH and the role played by the laws in deterring SH.

#### **OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH**

- To determine the frequency of sexual harassment
- To identify the factors that increase the vulnerability of the female S.H victims

#### **HYPOTHESES**

- Socio-economic factors do not play any role in Sexual harassment.
- Sexual harassment is preventable with strict laws.

#### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The research selected only female participants (N=80) who were working in the factories and office areas. The participants of the study divided on the basis of their socio-economic status: those who work in the industrial areas (n1=69) and those who work in offices (n2=21). The study adopted quantitative method and data was collected through field survey; all participants completed a questionnaire consisting of 16 items.

**Findings of Hypothesis-1:** According to table t, it is found that the tabulated value of S.H in relation to the hypotheses of the study, the null hypothesis (Socio-economic factors do not play any role in Sexual harassment) is rejected and it is concluded that there is a significant

difference between the female employees in relation to their socio-economic factors.

H<sup>o</sup>:  $\mu = \text{middle class} = \mu \text{ working class}$  Socio-economic factors do not play any role in Sexual harassment.

Leven's Test for Equality of variance		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
F	Sig.	t	df	Sig.(2-tailed)	Mean difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
2.746	101	3.483	78	.001	1.000	.287	.428	1.572

The t test shows significant result thus the H<sup>o</sup>: Socio-economic factors do not play any role in sexual harassment is rejected.

**Findings of Hypothesis-2** (As per statistical data obtained from the same table furnished above).

H<sup>o</sup>:  $\mu = \text{Sexual Harassment} = \mu \text{ Strict Laws}$ . Sexual harassment is reduced with strict laws. The result of the hypothesis is not significant. Thus the null hypothesis is upheld and the study indicates that strict laws do not prevent the incidence of SH.

## DISCUSSION

The paper has addressed the issue of SH of females at work environment that shows that female workers have to endure this behavior regularly. Moreover, it has been found out that SH is significantly linked to the socio-economic status of females. Independent sample "t-tests" were used to indicate the statistical significance difference between two groups of females. The paper also investigates the adverse effects of SH and lack of observance of laws; the issue is serious in nature as it devastates the female victim's psychological health, physical well-being and vocational development.

## LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study has been conducted only on female workers in the industrial area and offices which reflect a limited view. Female workers from caring professions like nursing and teaching may offer a different ratio of SH. Moreover, no comparison has been made with males in terms of quality of life. Thus the impact of SH can be further investigated on job satisfaction of female workers and a comparison can be made with male workers to gather more realistic picture of SH. A similar research has been conducted by Fitzgerald, Hulin and Drasgow (1995). They have demonstrated that SH triggers lack of job satisfaction and physical well-being.

**CONCLUSION**

The research indicated that the area of SH of females is largely ignored whereas all the participants of the study have considered social class to be a significant factor in increasing their vulnerability. Furthermore, lack of adherence to laws indicates weak moral grounds and lack of implementation of laws shows weak formal control of the state. The issue of SH is pertinent and needs to be immediately taken into consideration by the concerned authorities since it adversely affects the quality of life for female victims.

**REFERENCES**

- Ali, F. (2010). Sexual harassment in Pakistan: An invisible crime, SEPLAA News. <http://www.seplaafoundation.org/index.php/2011/01/sexual-harassment-in-pakistan-an-invisible-crime/> [Accessed: March 24, 2016].
- Canadian Human Rights Commission (2016). Accessed on March 23, 2016 from: <http://www.chrc-ccdp.ca/eng/content/what-discrimination>
- Einarsen, S & Mikkelsen, E.G. (2003). Individual effects of workplace bullying. In S. Einarsen, H. Hoel, D. Zapf, C.L. Cooper (Eds.), *Bullying and emotional abuse in the workplace: International perspectives in research and practice*. London: Taylor and Francis.
- Fitzgerald, L. F., Hulin, C. L. & Drasgow, F. (1995). The antecedents and consequences of sexual harassment in organizations: An integrated model. In G. P. Keita & J. J. Hurrell (Eds.), *Job stress in a changing workforce: Investigating gender diversity, and family issues* (pp.55-73). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- <http://www.paycheck.pk/main/labour-laws/fair-treatment/sexual-harassment-1/sexual-harassment>
- Leymann, H., & Gustafsson, A. (1996). Mobbing at Work and the Development of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorders. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 5:251-275. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13594329608414858>
- Preventing Sexual Harassment (BNA Communications, Inc). (1992) SDC IP .73 1992 manual
- Sadrudin, M., M. (2012). Sexual Harassment at Workplace in Pakistan- Issues and Remedies about the Global Issue at Managerial Sector, *Journal of Managerial Sciences*, Volume VII, Number 1:113-125.
- Supreme Court Section No.CFR 1604.11 (1980). *Guidelines of Sexual Harassment*, Legal Information Institute, Cornell Law School, 477 Myron Taylor Hall Ithaca, NY 14853.