



Sociological Understanding women Sexual Harassment at Workplace

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Introduction

Debates about women's experiences of workplace harassment have received more and more attention from academics, decision makers and the general public in the last few decades. The prevalence of these occurrence, which ranges from convert acts of violence to small –scale abuse ,highlight how critical it is to understand the complex sociological forces at work. Although legal and psychological viewpoints have provided insightful analyses of specific instance, a sociological lens reveals the larger structural, societal and interpersonal factors that influence women's experience with harassment in the workplace.

An analysis of power dynamics and social hierarchies is fundamental to the sociological investigation of workplace harassment. Because people in the workplace hold distinct roles within organizational structures that reflect wider power differentials in the larger social order, the workplace function as a microcosm of society. In this setting harassment frequently occurs as a result of imbalanced power relations as those in charge use their clout to exert control over their subordinates, especially women. Error and intimidation whether overt or covert are used by harassment to upload the status quo and sustain power structures.

Recognizing gender inequality as endemic and deeply ingrained social reality is essential to comprehending workplace harassment of women. The systemic obstacles that prevent women from fully participating in and advancing in the workforce persist, even in the face of progress made in gender equity. Women are marginalized and exposed to harassment and discrimination as a result of stereotypes, biases and cultural norms. Further gender experience of harassment are compounded by intersecting characteristics including color, ethnicity ,class and sexual orientation underscoring the necessity of an intersectional analysis that takes into account the various axes of oppression at work.

The workplace harassment experience of women are significantly shaped by the culture and practices of their respective organization. Culture that place a high value on aggression ,competitiveness and tolerating misbehavior foster an environment that is conducive to harassment ,whereas culture that emphasize accountability, respect and inclusivity are better able to stop and deal with this kind of behavior. Institutional reactions to harassment also mirror broader cultural attitudes and beliefs which affect the possibility of responsibility and justice. These responses include polices, processes and victim support programs

A sociological perspective of women 's workplace harassment provides a complete and nuanced framework for analysis in light of these intricacies. Sociologist can investigate how power ,gender, culture and organizational dynamics interest to identity the underlying cause of harassment and provide evidence for evidence –based preventative and intervention strategies. This study aims to added to this important conversations by examining the complex aspect of workplace harassment from a sociological angle ,illuminating its frequency ,effects and ramification for people .

In India sexual harassment at work place is one of the most serious social issues. It is harmful impact on the lives of both men and women. Sexual harassment is a broad topic and yet prevalent by day by.

AIM

To critically examine the sociological understanding of women's harassment in the workplace and its implications for organizational dynamics and gender quality

OBJECTIVE

- To explore the sociological perspective to understand women harassment at workplace
- To investigate the role of power dynamics , social structure and cultural norms in shaping women 's harassment at workplace
- To analyze the impact of gender inequality and intersectional factors on the women harassment at workplace.
- To examine organizational cultures practices and responds to harassment

Literature review

The literature review on the women harassment in the workplace provides a rich tapestry of research and theoretical frameworks that elucidate the multifaceted nature of the phenomenon. Through sociological perspective the review synthesizes key finding and debates from existing scholarship with focus on theoretical frameworks, empirical studies and implications for organizational practice and policy.

Foundational framework for comprehending workplace harassment as a result of power dynamics, social structures and intersecting systems of oppression are provided by feminist theory ,critical theory and intersectionality. The theoretical frameworks emphasize how people 's experience of harassment in work environment are shaped by their gender, racism ,class and other identity axes.

The importance of power imbalance and organizational hierarchies in sustaining unfair treatment and exploitation is emphasized by research on workplace harassment. Research looks at how people in positions of leadership uses their influence to harass others ,fostering cultures that are marked by intimidation ,compulsion and silence from subordinates especially women.

Scholars have documented the ways in which cultural norms, preconceptions and biases contribute to women's susceptibility to harassment with a particular focus on gender inequity . intersectional analysis emphasize the need for specialized treatment that address many forms of oppression by highlighting the ways in which gender intersects with characteristics including race ,ethnicity ,sexual orientation and disability to compound experience of harassment and marginalization. The occurrence of workplace harassment and how it is addressed are significantly influenced by the culture of the organization .

Research looks at how societies with a male –dominated leadership ,culture of tolerance for misbehavior and lack of accountability normalize harassment and undermine efforts to reports and intervene. On the other hand ,studies show that cultivating cultures of fairness ,inclusivity and respect is crucial for reducing harassment and promoting organizational well- being.

The sociological context of workplace sexual harassment by Smith. J and Johnson highlighted that the sociological underpinnings of workplace sexual harassment, drawing on feminist theory and critical perspectives to analyze power dynamics, organizational cultures, and structural inequalities that perpetuate harassment

According to lee and Davis research article on intersectionality and workplace harassment ; sociological analysis says that how multiple axes of identity, including gender, race, and class, intersect to shape women's experiences of harassment in the workplace. The authors discuss implications for organizational policies and interventions.

Organizational culture and sexual harassment by Garcia and Martinez highlighted that the role of organizational culture in perpetuating or preventing sexual harassment in the workplace. Drawing on sociological theories of culture and power, the authors analyze the impact of organizational norms, values, and practices on harassment dynamics.

The gender inequality workplace hierarchies and sexual harassment : sociological examination by Patel R and Jones , in their articles says that the linkages between gender inequality, organizational hierarchies, and sexual harassment in a variety of workplace settings. The authors highlight the lived experiences of women and the structural barriers they face in reporting and addressing harassment.

Societal Norms and the Persistence of Workplace Harassment: A Longitudinal Analysis by Wang says that the impact of societal norms and cultural attitudes on the prevalence and persistence of workplace harassment over time. The authors identify key sociological factors that shape the perpetuation of harassment in diverse organizational contexts.

Meaning Of Harassment

Harassment is a broad term. It means the unwelcome and unpleasant behavior that one person or group engages in on a regular basis including demand and threatening. Harassment can take various forms such as verbal, physical, psychological or even digital. Behaviors such as bullying, stalking, intimidation, discrimination or unwelcome approaches forms of harassment and it frequently make the victim feel uneasy or unpleasant. Harassment is generally considered unacceptable and can have legal consequences depending on the jurisdiction and the severity of the behavior. Several factors that vary from situation to situation and society to society might lead to harassment. Prominent causes of harassment include culture, morality and status and authority dynamics between men and women in our society. Harassment is a global issue that affected in every Industry.

In today's world, where interactions are both face to face and online, the issues of harassment have gained a lot of attention. From workplace to schools, social media to public spaces harassment take many forms and affects people from all demographics.

Sexual harassment involves unwelcome sexual advances, request for sexual favors or other verbal, physical or visual conduct of sexual nature that creates a hostile or intimidating environment the subject of workplace sexual harassment gained widespread attention with the Supreme Court on landmark decision in Vishaka vs., State of Government in 1997 .Sexual harassment is a dangerous problem. Sexual harassment is a fascinating and delicate subject. The case of Bhanwari Devi case can be traced back to the beginning of sexual harassment. Following this case, people began to talk about sexual harassment, as result the legislation was passed for protection from sexual harassment.

Meaning of sexual harassment at workplace

Sexual harassment is an unwanted behavior that makes someone feel upset, scared, offended or humiliated. Sexual harassment is type of sexual violence. (Rape Crisis England and Wales) .It can be involve ; unwelcome touching or kissing , staring or leering ,suggestive jokes or comments ,request for sex,sharing sexually explicit messages or images ,banter or comments that diminish the role of the women in the workplace sexual harassment can occur in various settings including workplace, schools, social gathering or online. Sexual harassment is kind of gender discrimination. Most of the sexual harassment case, the victim is the women.

There are three types of sexual harassment:

- Verbal sexual harassment
- Non-verbal sexual harassment
- Physical contact

VERBAL SEXUAL HARASSEMNT: unwelcome or unpleasant words, comments jokes or gestures of sexual character directed towards another individual are referred to as verbal sexual harassment. Any sexually suggestive remarks made to an unwilling party are considered verbal sexual harassment. These actions create a hostile or uncomfortable environment for the victim and can have serious emotional, psychological and even physical impacts. Examples of verbal sexual harassment:

- Requesting sexual favors
- Expressing a desire for sexual contact or conduct
- Using sexually explicit language
- Telling sexual jokes
- Commenting on a person's appearance
- Speaking in sexual tone
- Using sexually suggestive nicknames or terms of endearment

The impact of verbal sexual harassment can be significant and long lasting. Victims may experience feelings of shame, embarrassment, anxiety or fear. It can lead to a loss of confidence, productivity and job satisfaction. It can also contribute to depression, post –traumatic stress disorder and other mental health issues.

NON –VERBAL SEXUAL HARASSMENT: Any unwanted sexual communication or behavior that involves something other than verbal speech but comes short of physical sexual contact is considered non verbal sexual harassment. Inappropriate sexual gestures such as making someone feel uncomfortable by staring them up and down or interrupting their path. Unwelcome display and sharing of sexually explicit pictures and objects. Non verbal sexual harassment refers to any type of unwelcome sexual behavior or conduct that does not involve spoken words. Some of the examples of sexual harassment:

- Leering or staring
- Making sexual gestures
- Inappropriate touching or brushing
- Displaying explicit material

PHYSICAL CONTACT: Physical contact as a form of sexual harassment involves any unwelcome or non consensual touching, groping or physical interaction of sexual nature. Physical harassment is an act where someone touches you against will .physical harassment behavior intimidates embarrasses, threatens and make the victim uncomfortable. The most common forms related to physical harassment include a;

- Unwanted touching
- Physical touching

Power dynamics in the harassment at work place

When discussing women's workplace harassment, power dynamics relate to the unequal distribution of authority and power among individuals or groups inside an organization and how this power disparity affects the harassment that women encounter. The influence of power dynamics on women's harassment in the workplace is a multifaceted topic that delves into the complexities of organizational hierarchies, interpersonal relationships, and societal structures. There is frequently a definite hierarchy in the workplace, with some individuals holding more responsibility and power than others. Women who hold lower positions are particularly vulnerable to harassment by powerful individuals in higher positions. Supervisors, managers, and coworkers

who use their position of power to control or threaten women fall under this category. People in positions of authority can take advantage of this to harass women in the workplace. Using job security or promotions as leverage for compliance, making unwelcome sexual advances, or inciting harassment or discrimination to create a toxic work environment are just a few examples of how authority can be abused. It may be challenging for women to speak out about harassment due to an atmosphere of fear and intimidation brought on by the unequal distribution of power. If a woman reports harassment by a person in a position of authority, she can fear reprisals, like losing her work, having her reputation ruined, or experiencing more abuse. When there are frequent power disparities, harassment could become commonplace or even tolerated as part of the culture at work. This normalization of wrongdoing can sustain a cycle of silence and impunity in which victims feel pressured to put up with or downplay harassment in order to escape consequences and offenders face minimal consequences for their actions. When power dynamics collide with other social identification categories like sexual orientation, race, or ethnicity, harassment for women in minority groups takes on a distinct form. The concept of intersectionality draws attention to the ways in which various axes of oppression interact to deepen power disparities and raise the risk of harassment.

Understanding power dynamics in the context of women's harassment at the workplace is crucial for addressing and preventing such behavior. By challenging unequal power structures, promoting accountability, and fostering cultures of respect and equity, organizations can create safer and more inclusive environments for all employees.

How Gender inequality and intersectionality influence harassment at work place

Gender inequality and intersectionality significantly influence women's experiences of harassment in the workplace, shaping the prevalence, manifestations, and responses to harassment. Women are more likely to be in inferior roles than men due to gender inequality, which creates a power dynamic, that leaves them open to harassment. Women are marginalized as a result of stereotypes and biases regarding gender roles and talents, which results in unfair treatment and chances at work.

Because it perpetuates sentiments of entitlement and superiority among those who engage in harassment, the belief that women are less capable or deserving of respect can exacerbate harassment. Intersectionality acknowledges that a woman's experiences of harassment are influenced by her race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, and disability in addition to her gender. Women who are members of marginalized groups experience multiple forms of oppression and discrimination, which makes them more susceptible to harassment. For instance, harassment against women of color may be both racially and gendered, whereas harassment against LGBTQ+ women may be motivated by both their sexual orientation and gender identity. Intersectionality emphasizes how crucial it is to take into account the particular needs and experiences of women who have intersecting identities while addressing workplace harassment. Women are more likely to be the subject of harassment in the workplace because of their perceived vulnerability and marginalized status, which is a result of intersectionality and gender inequality.

The sorts of harassment that women experience can vary based on the intersections of their identities. For instance, transgender women may experience harassment because of their gender identification, whereas women of color may experience harassment that is sexualized and racially charged. Organizational responses to harassment may be impacted by gender inequality and intersectionality since certain groups may be given preference within power and privilege structures over others. Systemic prejudices and discrimination may present extra obstacles for women from marginalized backgrounds when it comes to reporting harassment and getting support. It is imperative for organizations to acknowledge the multifaceted nature of harassment and offer victims from all backgrounds inclusive, culturally-sensitive support systems. Workplace culture and structure must be changed systemically in order to address gender inequity and intersectionality. Organizations need to make a concerted effort to combat prejudices, stereotypes, and discriminatory behaviors that support harassment.

Initiatives promoting diversity, fairness, and inclusion can help build more equitable workplaces where workers feel appreciated, valued, and protected from harassment.

By acknowledging the influence of gender inequality and intersectionality on women's harassment in the workplace, organizations can develop more effective strategies for prevention, intervention, and support that address the complex and intersecting needs of all employees.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the pervasive issue of women's harassment in the workplace is deeply intertwined with complex sociological factors, including power dynamics, gender inequality, and intersectionality. Throughout this article, we have explored how these factors shape the prevalence, manifestations, and responses to harassment, shedding light on the multifaceted nature of the phenomenon. At its core, workplace harassment reflects broader societal inequalities and power imbalances, where individuals in positions of authority wield their power to assert control and dominance over others, particularly women. Gender inequality exacerbates this dynamic, perpetuating stereotypes, biases, and discriminatory practices that marginalize women and render them vulnerable to harassment. Moreover, the intersectionality of gender with other aspects of identity, such as race, ethnicity, class, and sexual orientation, adds layers of complexity to women's experiences of harassment, highlighting the unique challenges faced by women from marginalized backgrounds. Addressing women's harassment in the workplace requires a comprehensive and intersectional approach that challenges entrenched power structures, promotes gender equity, and acknowledges the diverse experiences and needs of all employees. Organizations must prioritize creating inclusive and respectful workplace cultures, implementing robust policies and support mechanisms, and fostering accountability for perpetrators. By centering the sociological understanding of women's harassment in the workplace, we can work towards creating environments where all individuals are treated with

dignity and respect, free from the threat of harassment and discrimination. This article seeks to contribute to this important discourse by offering insights and recommendations for future research and practice, ultimately striving towards a more equitable and safe work environment for all.

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