



A Study on Awareness and Understanding of PoSH Act 2013, Prevention of Sexual Harassment at Work Place

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ABSTRACT

Workplace sexual harassment is still a serious concern, impacting women's rights, mental health, and career development. The Prevention of Sexual Harassment (PoSH) Act, 2013, was enacted in India to prevent workplace harassment, providing a secure and respectful environment for women. Legal provisions notwithstanding, the awareness and knowledge of the PoSH Act among employees are highly variable. This research reviews the levels of awareness, perceptions, and experience of female faculty and healthcare professionals towards workplace harassment and the PoSH Act. The study, with a descriptive design, interviewed 15 female participants from Parul University. The results indicate that a high percentage of women are not aware of the PoSH Act and its provisions. Although some of the respondents identified harassment, most were afraid to report because of the fear of repercussions. The study indicates the imperative necessity for organized awareness programs, institutional training, and policy reform to ensure women's safety in the workplace. Increasing internal complaint procedures and a culture of zero tolerance for harassment are essential for assuring effective enforcement of the PoSH Act..

Introduction

Women have traditionally experienced systemic discrimination in the workplace, which is usually expressed in the form of harassment and discrimination. With an increasing number of women entering the workforce, the problem of workplace harassment has been more evident. Gender inequality has been a long-standing social phenomenon, with women being confined to domestic roles in the past. Modernization has, however, empowered women to pursue various careers, making huge contributions to economic and social growth. Despite these advancements, harassment remains a persistent issue, undermining women's rights and workplace safety. Sexual harassment in the workplace is a contravention of basic human rights and dignity. The PoSH Act of 2013 was passed to protect women from workplace harassment, focusing on prevention, prohibition, and redressal. This research examines the awareness of the PoSH Act among female workers, their knowledge of legal protection, and their experiences of harassment. Through the analysis of workplace attitudes, the research establishes areas of ignorance and recommends steps to improve legal awareness and policy implementation.

Review of Literature

Research on Workplace Harassment and PoSH Act Awareness Edison (2014) studied workplace harassment among women retail employees in Vellore. The research revealed that assertive women encountered fewer problems, pointing towards the importance of proactive workplace policies. Lakshminarayanan & Kosir (2024) reviewed gender violence in academia and stressed that sexual harassment inhibits women's career development even with legal safeguards. Jumde & Kumar (2023) examined corporate adherence to the PoSH Act and concluded that while most companies had policies, the complaint mechanism was not effective in most of them. These studies suggest that though legal frameworks are in place, their success is subject to awareness, right implementation, and institutional commitment.

Research Design

This research employs a descriptive research methodology to determine awareness and knowledge about the PoSH Act, 2013 by female faculty staff and healthcare personnel at Parul University. The purposive sampling method was utilized to recruit 15 respondents while ensuring diversity in workplaces where gender-related issues are commonly found. The research concentrates on the respondent's awareness about the PoSH Act, incidence of workplace harassment, and success of reporting channels.

Data was obtained via systematic questionnaires and interviews where respondents could detail their experience and perception. The primary data were collected from participants directly, with secondary data gathered from research journals, court records, and work policies giving depth to the issue.

Analysis focused on extracting trends in awareness, work environment experiences, and institution support systems. The results provide evidence to understand the gaps in the enforcement of workplace harassment policies and propose means to improve awareness and protection for women workers.

Analysis And interpretation

The research identifies that most of the respondents (62.5%) did not know anything about the PoSH Act, 2013, showing an immense lacuna in legal literacy and sensitization of the workplace. Even in the cases of people who were aware of the Act, none could elucidate its provisions in a proper way, proving that there is a necessity for proper awareness programs. Harassment but were reluctant to act on the issue because of fear of revenge or ignorance regarding complaint mechanisms. This reluctance explains the difficulties for women in complaining about incidents despite being in the regulated professional domain.

Institutional channels, including the Internal Complaints Committee (ICC), were identified by 75% of the respondents, yet awareness of the reporting process as such was low. The survey identified that 62.5% of the respondents were not certain if the process was inclusive or women-friendly, indicating that the policies may not be conveyed or accessible to them. Sensitization programs at the workplace were also irregular, with a mere 43.75% of the respondents confirming bi-annual training sessions, while others noted irregular or zero training. The irregularity of such awareness drives a direct hit on employees' capacity to demand redressal when required. Irrespective of these difficulties, 75% of the interviewees concurred that more awareness could prevent harassment, indicating a readiness to discuss and undergo training if appropriate steps were initiated. Nonetheless, fear of professional consequences and the absence of a transparent, public complaint system were still major obstacles. All these points highlight the imperative for frequent training workshops, enhanced institutional accountability, and an open office environment in which women do not hesitate to report harassment.

Findings

The research identifies major gaps in awareness and application of the PoSH Act, 2013 among women faculty and healthcare professionals. Most respondents (62.5%) did not know about the Act, reflecting a lack of institutional initiative in sensitization and training. Even among those with some awareness, few were able to describe its provisions, reflecting limited comprehension of legal safeguards and reporting procedures. The results further indicate that 69.5% of those surveyed had witnessed some type of workplace harassment but did not report it because they feared retaliation or were unclear on how to proceed with a complaint.

Institutional mechanisms like the Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) were recognized by 75% of the respondents, but most were unclear about the effectiveness and accessibility of the reporting mechanism. Moreover, 62.5% of the respondents were not sure if the complaint mechanism was inclusive or women-friendly. Sensitization programs in the workplace were uneven, with just 43.75% of the respondents receiving bi-annual training sessions, while others had little or no exposure to awareness programs. The research also discovered that 50% of the respondents believed they were treated differently at work because of their gender, which indicates ongoing gender biases in the workplace.

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- Let me know if you need any modifications!