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# **A Study on Sexual Harassment in the Workplace and How it Affects Women Empowerment with Special Reference to Chennai**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Sexual harassment in the workplace is a significant barrier to women's empowerment and equal participation in the workforce. It includes unwelcome behavior of a sexual nature, ranging from verbal comments to physical acts, that create a hostile work environment. In India, legal measures such as Section 354A of the Indian Penal Code and the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act, 2013, have been enacted to address this issue. This study, with a special focus on Chennai, uses empirical methods to understand the impact of workplace harassment on women and identifies solutions for preventing such behavior. The research reveals that increasing awareness, strict enforcement of policies, and organizational accountability are key to reducing sexual harassment and fostering women's empowerment.

Keywords: Sexual harassment, workplace safety, Section 354A IPC, women's empowerment, gender discrimination

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## **1. Introduction**

Sexual harassment at the workplace is a deeply rooted issue that affects women's physical safety, mental health, and professional growth. Historically, women faced such behavior in silence due to societal norms, lack of legal protection, and workplace hierarchies. With the passage of time and the emergence of legal reforms, awareness about workplace rights has grown. In India, the landmark Vishaka v. State of Rajasthan case led to the formulation of binding guidelines, later codified into the 2013 Act mentioned above. Despite these efforts, harassment remains prevalent, especially in urban sectors like Chennai's growing IT and service industries. This research investigates how such harassment affects women's empowerment and offers insight into the role of law, policy, and culture in ensuring a safe work environment.

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## **Objectives.**

- To examine how sexual harassment occurs in workplaces in Chennai
- To evaluate the impact of harassment on women's empowerment.
- To identify causes and triggers of harassment at the workplace.
- To analyze government and legal initiatives addressing workplace harassment

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## **Methodology**

This study follows an empirical approach using primary data collected through a Google Forms survey. The sample size is 219, consisting of working professionals from various sectors in Chennai, Tamil Nadu. A convenience sampling method was adopted. Variables such as age, gender, education, and occupation were analyzed against responses related to experiences with harassment, causes, and possible solutions. Data is presented through charts and descriptive analysis.

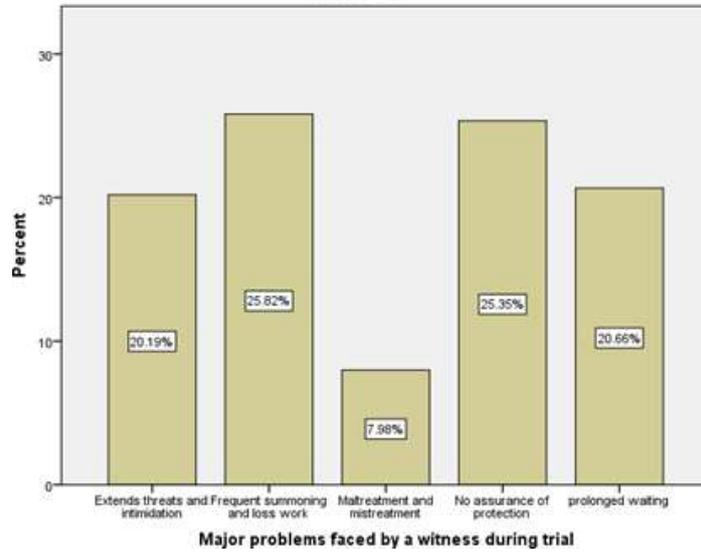
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## **Analysis**

The findings were categorized into several segments: Gender and Awareness: 45% of female respondents emphasized the need for awareness programs in workplaces. Educational Background: Respondents with higher education levels were more likely to recognize harassment and seek redressal. Occupational Distribution: Self-employed and freelance workers reported fewer formal support structures. Age Group Insight: Younger employees (<25

years) appeared more open to speaking out but less aware of legal rights. Root Causes: Poor management policies and gender bias were cited as primary causes.

**Figure 1**  
**FIGURE 1**



**LEGEND**

Figure 1 represents the major problems faced by a witness during trial.

**Figure 2**

**FIGURE 2**

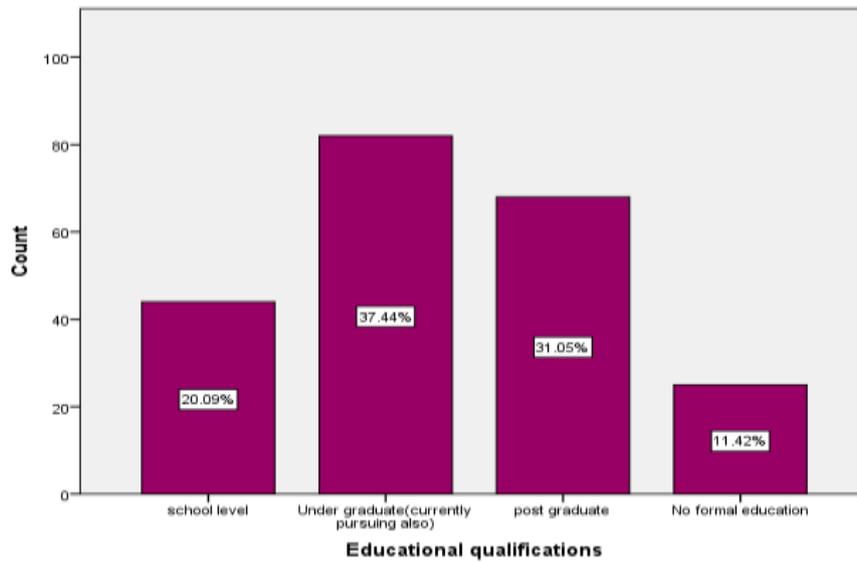


Figure 2 shows the educational qualifications with preference of sample population in Chennai.

Figure 3

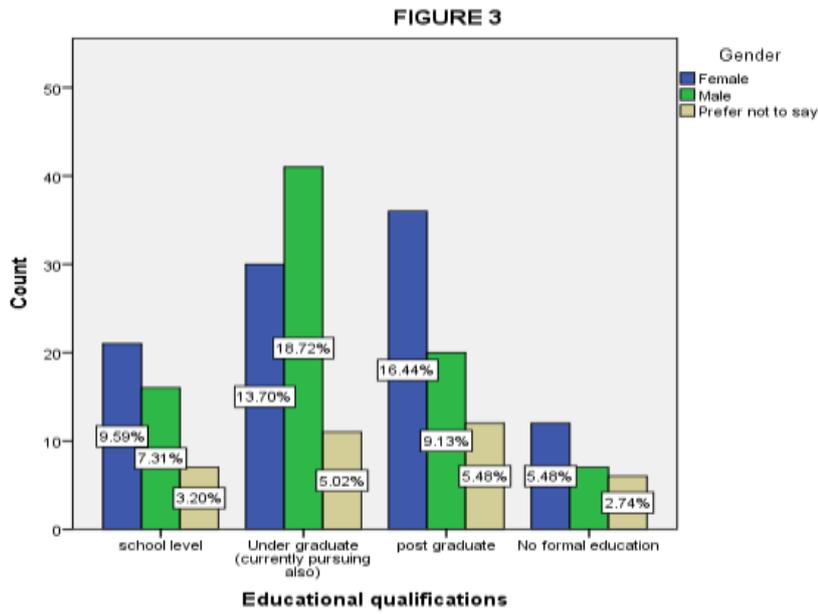


Figure 3 shows the educational qualification with gender distribution of sample population in Chennai.

Figure 4

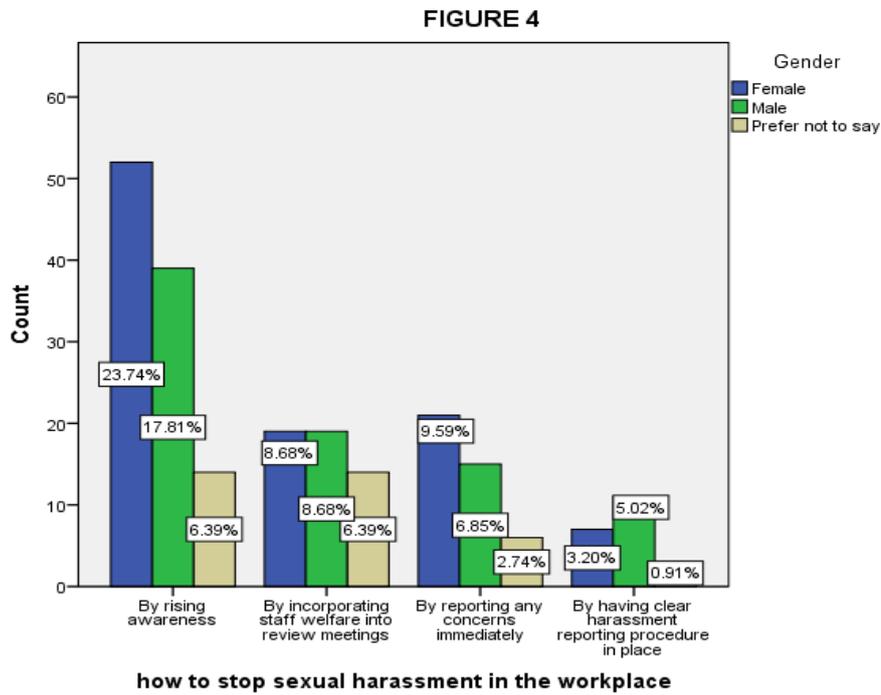


Figure 4 shows the gender distribution of sample population in chennai, how to stop sexual harassment in the workplace.

Figure 5

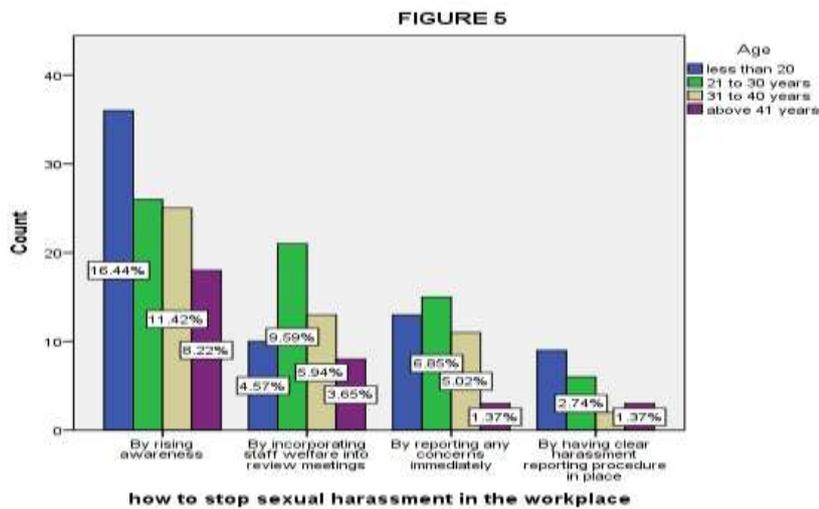


Figure 5 shows the age distribution of sample population in Chennai, how to stop sexual harassment in the workplace.

## RESULTS

- 23.74% of respondents believed that awareness programs could significantly reduce workplace harassment.
- 16.44% of respondents aged under 20 emphasized the importance of youth education on this issue.
- 19.18% cited lack of clear policies as a core reason for ongoing harassment.
- 15.98% of female participants stated that discrimination contributes directly to harassment.
- 26.03% of respondents were self-employed, revealing a gap in formal complaint structures.

## DISCUSSION

Workplace harassment directly undermines women's confidence, mental health, and ability to grow professionally. The study confirms that while Chennai's corporate and tech sectors have adopted formal policies, implementation is weak. Victim blaming, lack of internal committees, and insufficient training worsen the situation. Movements like #MeToo and global conventions by the United Nations (CEDAW) have influenced policy shifts, but a deeper change in workplace culture is essential.

## LIMITATION

The study focuses only on Chennai and may not reflect broader national trends. The use of convenience sampling limits the generalizability of the findings. The sample size of 219 is not representative of India's working population.

## CONCLUSION

Sexual harassment remains a major barrier to women's empowerment despite the existence of laws and guidelines. This study shows that proactive steps such as awareness training, strict HR protocols, and better grievance redressal mechanisms can reduce incidents of harassment. Legal provisions like Section 354A IPC and the 2013 Act must be implemented more rigorously. Empowering women with knowledge of their rights is just as critical as punishing offenders.

## SUGGESTIONS

Employers should create a culture of zero tolerance toward harassment. Regular workshops should be conducted on workplace ethics and rights. The government must improve monitoring and ensure all organizations have functioning Internal Complaints Committees.