



Workplace Harassment, Prevalence and Perception: A study in Hyderabad City

Rama Joshi*, Ramyyata Tewari**,

Shruthi Suresh*, Sharmistha Mukherjee*

* Student, MSc. Criminology and Crime Science, Rashtriya Raksha University, Gandhingar.

** Assistant Professor, Criminology, School of Criminology and Behavioural Sciences, Rashtriya Raksha University, Gandhingar. (Corresponding Author)

INTRODUCTION:

Harassment can be defined as a certain set of behaviors that are offensive and are meant to insult, disrespect, or embarrass a person. It can include derogatory jokes, bullying, commenting on a person's accent, touching a person inappropriately, personal insults, etc. Harassments can be of different forms such as physical harassment, verbal harassment, sexual harassment, psychological harassment, and cyber bullying. Harassment in the workplace is known as workplace harassment. It happens irrespective of gender and age. Whenever a person or group of people feels belittled or threatened at work, they experience workplace harassment. Bullying can be caused by many factors, such as workplace stressors, workload, role conflict or ambiguity, cognitive demands of the job, negative emotional states, and aggressive or hostile behaviors. The purpose of this harassment is that a harasser makes their victims feel uncomfortable or unsafe in a certain workplace, to not let the other person grow. It has various names such as workplace bullying, mobbing, etc.

Harassment in general could affect the psychological and emotional health of a person, such that it increases stress and pressure on an individual. If stress increases it might affect the appetite of a person, hence affecting their physical health. Sometimes, it could affect the sleep cycle of the person. Harassment of any type must be reported and should be taken quick or immediate action. There are various laws about the reduction of workplace harassment, such as:

IPC (1860): (i) Section 294 says that Whoever does anything obscene in a public place that causes annoyance to other people and in addition, no person shall sing, recite, or utter any obscene song, ballad, or words, in or near any public place, then that person is punishable with an imprisonment for a term of three months or fine or both. (ii) Section 354 says that anyone who assaults or uses any criminal force on any women then the act is punishable by imprisonment of not less than one year which can extend up to five years with a liable fine. (iii) Section 354A says about sexual harassment and the punishment for it, which is imprisonment for one year or a fine, or both. (iv) Section 509 says that any word, gesture, or act

intended to insult the modesty of a woman, or interfering with their privacy, is punishable by simple imprisonment for a term of one year or with fine or both.

Information Technology Act, (2000): (i) According to Section 67 of IT Act, publishing or transmitting obscene material in electronic form is punishable and anyone who publishes, transmits, or is the cause to be published, transmitted, any material which is lascivious, appealing to a prurient interest, or which causes a harmful effect on the society then, the only punishment that will be imposed upon such depraved or corrupt persons who read, see, or hear the matter contained or embodied therein will be imprisoned of either description for a term that can extend to three years and with fine and conviction, there will either be an imprisonment for up to five years or a fine exceeding ten lakh rupees.

(ii) As per Section 67A, anyone who publishes, transmits, or is the cause to be published or transmitted any material containing sexually explicit acts or conduct faces imprisonment, on the first conviction. The sentence may extend to five years' imprisonment with a fine of ten lakh rupees, and in case of a second or subsequent conviction for either description, it may extend to seven years' imprisonment, and also a fine of ten lakh rupees.

POSH Act (2013): The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013, or "POSH Act", talks about the sexual harassment of women at workplace and this act laid its foundation during the Vishaka guidelines.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

Any conduct that disparages or shows aggressive behavior toward someone because of their demographic characteristics or associative personality, such as forming associations with them, is considered as harassment. Individuals with

such goals seek to foster a toxic or offensive work environment and undermine their employment prospects (GWH; Rospenda & Richman, 2004b),(Raver, J. L., & Nishii, L. H.,2010). During the course of a long period of time, one or more workers face negative treatment from another worker, in situations where the person(s) exposed to the treatment do not have the ability to defend themselves. (Matthiesen and Einarsen,2007).It is first noted that a 'period' of bullying differs from a 'one-off clash' (Hoel and Cooper 2001; Saunders et al., (2007)),(Branch, S., Ramsay, S., & Barker, M., 2013). Injustice, displeasure, and annoyance can result from poor treatment by an organization and its members. (Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Porter, & Ng, 2001), Studies have found that feelings of injustice are associated with workplace harassment (e.g., Cortina et al., 2001; Frone, 1998b; Tepper, 2000).(Bowling, N. A., & Beehr, T. A. ,2006).The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 defines workplace harassment and explains the causes, effects, and also the legal framework. This kind of experience is often associated with conflict, guilt, and dilemmas that are daunting. This occurs in such a way that women who experience it, don't know how to react to it without making it look inappropriate. It would be pertinent to underline that the experience of "harassment" is not necessarily based on one incident, but on a series of different incidents which may occur. In the Indian context, workplace harassment is a repressed form of gender discrimination (Shukla 2002). According to Anagha Satpodar (2013), privately-owned organizations report no complaints of sexual harassment. Although laws are enacted, many organizations are unwilling to come up with policies or to set up mechanisms to address them. According to Chaudhuri (2008), even if there is a grievance cell in

the workplace, the position, power, and status of the perpetrator in the workplace play a major role in the complaint going unnoticed. (Sahgal, P., & Dang, A.,2017)

Factors that influence workplace bullying include: Society- Einarsen and his colleagues suggest that bullying should be analyzed in light of societal factors including culture, social background, legal context, and socioeconomic factors. Work environment - Bullying could be due to intrapersonal dissatisfaction which is closely related to an increase in a conflict that is either related to the personal or work-oriented conflict. The study also indicates that both organizations and individuals can have an effect on bullying due to certain behaviors such as frustration, conflict, and direct encouragement of bullying. An individual's ability to handle conflict or frustration will determine how well he or she can handle the situation. (Branch, S., Ramsay, S., & Barker, M.,2013).

In order to

build a healthy social environment; people need to be taught about gender equality at the school level. (Banerjee, A., & Sharma, B.,2011)

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The study was conducted among 100 working individuals belonging to Hyderabad City, working in both private and government organizations respectively. A questionnaire was made and circulated among the employees working in both government and private sectors. The study was gender-inclusive. The main objective of the study was to know the prevalence of harassment at the workplace, which gender was affected most and which sector showed more harassment and related issues. Another objective was to know how respondents reacted to certain situations such as physical abuse, and bullying. etc and also to know which age group faced more harassment at the workplace. The

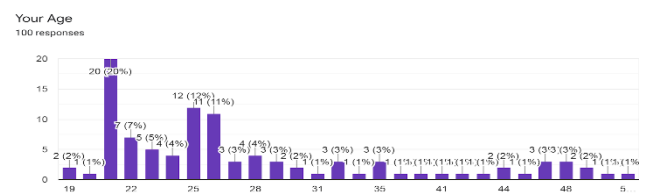
questionnaire consisted of 20 questions, and consent was taken from the respondent to conduct the research. The first set of questions were demographic questions where the respondents were asked to fill in the details about their age, gender, sector, designation, and years of association with their organization.

DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION:

From the 100 respondents participated, the results and findings are as shown below:

Q1. Your Age

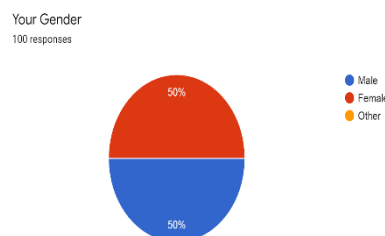


Bar graph 1: Showing age of the respondents

Based on the graph shown above, the respondents of the age group ranging from 19-30 are high (74%) and the respondent's of the age group ranging from 30-60 are low (26%).

Q2. Your Gender

Male(50%) , Female(50%) , Other(0%)

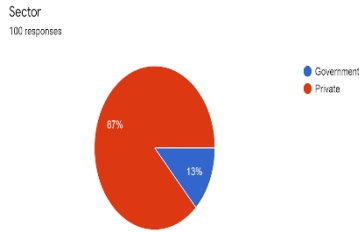


Pie Chart 1: Showing gender of respondents

As the pie chart findings have shown above, in all 100 respondents there were 50 male (50%),50 female(50%), and 0 others (0%).

Q3.Sector

Government(13%), Private (87%)



Pie Chart 2: Showing working sector of respondents

As shown in the pie chart, from 100 respondents, 13 individuals are working in the government sector and 87 individuals are working in the private sector.

Q4. Years of association with the organisation.

Years of association	Number of respondents
0-9 months	16
1-10 years	66
11-20 years	9
21-30 years	9

Table 1: Showing years of association of the respondents in the organisation.

As shown in the above table, from 100 respondents, the highest number of individuals are having 1-10 years of association with their organisation that is 66%, 16% of respondents are having 0-9 months of association, 9 % of respondents are having 11-20 years and other 9% are having 21-30 years of association with their organisations respectively.

Q5. Your position or designation in the organisation.

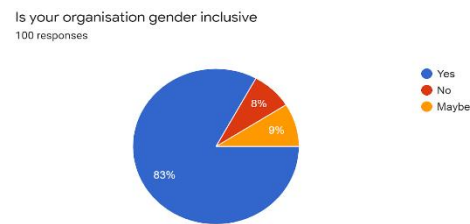
Designation or position	Number of respondents
Manager	18
Health department	10
Engineers	30
PhD/ Research	11

assistant	
others	31

Table 2: Showing designation of respondents

As shown in the above table, from 100 respondents, 30 individuals are managers(30%), 18 individuals are working as Managers(18%), 10 individuals are working in the health department(10%), 11 are working as research assistants and Ph.D. scholars(11%) and 31 are working in other various positions in their organisations (31%)respectively.

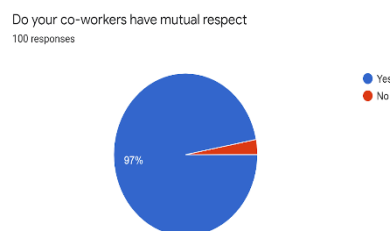
Q6. Is your organisation gender inclusive?
Yes(83%), No(8%), May be(9%)



Pie chart 3:Showing the responses to the gender inclusiveness of organisation

As shown in the above pie chart, from 100 respondents, the majority of them that is 83 % have voted yes saying that their organisation is gender-inclusive and 8 % have voted No, whereas the rest 9 % have voted maybe this says that they are inconclusive to say whether their organisation is gender-inclusive or not.

Q7.Do your co-workers have mutual respect.



Pie chart 4: Showing the responses to the given question

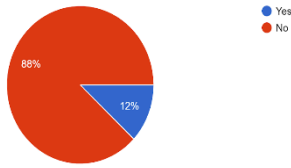
As shown in the above pie chart, from 100 respondents, 97 individuals(97%) have voted yes saying that their co-workers have mutual respect and 3 individuals(3%)

have voted No saying that their co-workers have no mutual respect.

Q8. Have you ever been body shamed at your workplace

Yes: 12 (12%), No 88 (88%)

Have you ever been body shamed at your work place
100 responses



Pie chart 5: Showing responses to the given question

All the 100 respondents answered this question, where 88% was found to be the majority of option “no” and 12% of people voted for “yes”. 5 of the people who voted yes were female and the rest 7 people were male. The most number of body shaming cases were from private organisations, which was 11 in number, and the number of body shaming cases in government organisations was only found to be 1.

Q9. If yes what was your response to the situation

Responses given	Frequency
Ignored and moved on	3
I’m working on it	2
Excuse me?	1
NA	8

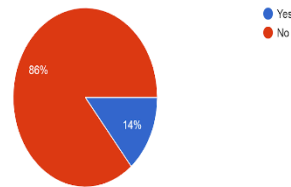
Table 3: Showing responses to the given question

16 responses were received for this question and most of the responses were “ignored and moved on”(3), “thank you, I’m working on it” (2), “Excuse me?” (1), and “NA”(8),

Q10. Have you ever been subjected to bullying

Yes: 14 respondents (14%), No: 86 respondents (86%)

Have you ever been subjected to bullying
100 responses



Pie chart 6: Showing responses to the given question

Age	Gender	Sector
25 years	Female	Private
28 years	Female	Private
19 years	Male	Private
21 years	Female	Private
32 years	Female	Private
21 years	Female	Private
25 years	Female	Private
30 years	Female	Private
28 years	Female	Private
26 years	Male	Private
26 years	Male	Private
39 years	Female	Private
43 years	Male	Private
35 years	Female	Private

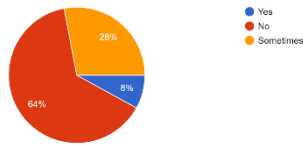
Table 4: Showing responses to the given question.

As seen in the above table, the total number of respondents was 100, out of which 14 subjects voted for “yes” for being bullied and the rest of the majority of the respondents, which were 86, opted for “no”. Among those who opted for yes (14), were all belonging to the private sector and no case of the government sector was reported. 10 of the 14 respondents were female and the rest 4 were male.

Q11. Have you ever been criticised of your communication style

Yes: 8, (8%), No: 64 (64%),
Sometimes: 28 (28%)

Have you ever been criticized of your communication style
100 responses



Pie chart 7: Showing responses to the given question

All the 100 respondents answered the question, and 28 respondents opted for yes, 64 respondents opted for no and 8 respondents opted for sometimes.

No. of respondents	Yes	No	Sometimes
100	8	64	28

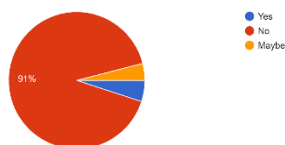
Table 5: Shows responses to the given question

As seen in the above graph and table, there were 8 respondents who opted for yes where 4 were male, and 4 were female. 2 respondents from each gender belonged to the government sector, such as 1 male and 1 female from the government sector respectively.

Q12. Have you ever felt unsafe at your workplace

Yes: 5 (5%), No: 91 (91%), Maybe: 4 (4%)

Have you ever felt unsafe at your workplace
100 responses



Pie chart 8: Showing responses to the given question

All the 100 respondents answered the question, out of which 5 respondents opted for “yes”, 91 respondents opted for “no”, and 4 respondents opted for “maybe”. 3 out of the 5 respondents who opted for yes

were male and the rest 2 were female. 3 respondents (2 male and 1 female), belonged to the Private sector and 2 respondents (1 male and 1 female) belonged to the Government sector.

Q13. Have you ever received any inappropriate texts or visuals from your colleagues

Yes: 4(4%), No: 96 (96%)

Option (yes)	Age	Gender	Sector
Yes	21	Female	Private
Yes	21	Female	Private
Yes	22	Female	Government
Yes	26	Male	Private

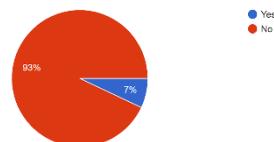
Table 6: Showing responses to the given question.

As shown in the above table, 4 of the 100 respondents opted for “yes” for being shown inappropriate texts or visuals, out of which 3 were female and 1 was male. Among these 4, 1 of the respondents who was a female belonged to the Government sector and the other 3 respondents, which were two female and one male, belonged to the Private sector. The age groups were between 20-30 years.

Q14. Have you encountered any uncomfortable touch at your workplace

Yes: 7 (7%), No: 93(93%)

Have you encountered any uncomfortable touch at your workplace
100 responses



Pie chart 9: Showing responses to the given question.

All the 100 respondents answered this question, were, 7 respondents opted for “yes” and 93 respondents opted for “no”

Option (yes)	Age	Gender	Sector
	21	Male	Government
	21	Female	Private
	22	Female	Government
	26	Female	Private
	27	Female	Government
	26	Male	Private
	21	Male	Private

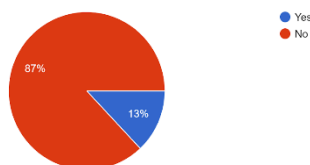
Table 7: Showing response to the given question

As shown in the above table, 7 respondents opted for “yes”, out of which, 4 were female and 3 were male. 3 respondents belonged to the Government sector and 4 respondents belonged to the Private sector. The age group which experienced the most uncomfortable touch was 21 years, which was 3 out of 7 and from these 3, 2 respondents were from the male gender. The next age group was 26 years, where 2 respondents faced uncomfortable touch in the organisation, 1 was male and 1 was female.

Q15. Have you ever been verbally abused at your workplace

Yes- 13(13%) No 87(87%)

Have ever been verbally abused in your workplace
100 responses



Pie chart 10: Showing responses to the given question

There were a total of 100 responses to this question in which the majority of the respondents answered “ “No” which accounts for 87% whereas the remaining answered “Yes' ' which is 13% . Among the 13 respondents who voted “Yes” , 7 were females whereas 6 of them were males. Two of the females were found to be employees in the government sector whereas one male was found to be an employee in the government sector. The

respondents who voted “NO” were employees from the private sector. This means that employees working in the government sector may face verbal abuse often as compared to those working in the private sector.

Q16. If someone tells you that they are having a problem with another colleague and wants you to keep it a secret, what would you do ?

Total no of responses received	Response given	No of respondents who had same view
100	Wanted to keep secret	36
	Help their colleague come out of such situation	27
	Haven't experienced any such issues	3
	Complain about it to higher official	25
	Avoid interfering	9

Table 8:Showing responses to the given question.

There were a total 100 responses received .36 of the respondents wanted to keep it a secret , 3 respondents haven't experienced any such issues at workplace , 27 respondents wanted to help their colleague to come out of such situations, 25 respondents wanted to complain about it to the higher officials , 9 of the respondents chose not to interfere in other colleagues life

Q17. If your colleague experiences excess pressure from the higher authorities and shares it with you what would you do?

Total No. of responses	Responses given	No of respondents who had the same view
100	Provide help to their colleagues	41
	Report to the higher authorities	34
	“NA” / “-”	5
	Have not experienced such situations at their workplace	12
	Ignore it	8

Table 9: Showing responses to the given question.

There were a total of 100 responses received. 41 of the respondents wanted to help their colleagues by sharing their work, listening to their problems, giving them mental support, empathising, through talking, advising to take up training, time management, consoling and suggesting to keep calm in pressure situations. 34 of the respondents would advise the concerned person to report to the higher authorities (Manager/HR/Boss). 12 of the respondents have not experienced such a situation yet at their workplace. 5 of the respondents wrote “NA” & “-” in answer to this question and 8 of the respondents wanted to ignore their colleagues' problem.

Q18. If someone slaps your colleague in front of you, how would you react?

Total No of responses	Responses given	No of respondents who had the same view
100	Complain to the higher authorities	24
	Act according to the situation	7
	Slap the initiator back	17
	Stop the fight and solve the situation	20
	Haven't encountered such situation	16
	Ignore the situation	10
	“NA” / “-”	6

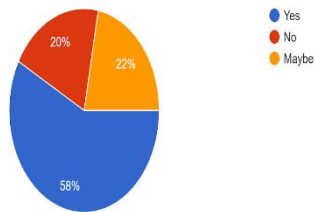
Table 10: Showing the responses of respondents.

There were a total of 100 responses received. 24 of the respondents wanted to complain to the higher authority against the employee who was responsible for slapping, 7 of the respondents wanted to act accordingly depending on the situation, 17 of the respondents wanted to slap the employee who initiated the fight, 20 of the respondents wanted to take a stand for the victim by trying to stop the fight, by solving the reason behind slapping by compelling them to apologise and by advising them not to behave inappropriately inside the office premises, 16 of the respondents haven't encountered such situations at their workplace, 10 of the respondents wanted to ignore the situation whereas 6 respondents wrote “NA”/ “-” in response to this question.

Q19. Does your organisation have an anti harassment board

Yes- 58 (58%) No- 20 (20%) Maybe- 22 (22%)

Does your organization have an anti harassment board
100 responses



Pie chart 11: Showing the responses for the anti-harassment board of respondents.

There were a total of 100 responses . Among the 100 responses , 58 employees i.e. 58% of the employees stated that their workplace have anti harassment board , 28 employees i.e. 28% said that their workplace do not have any anti harassment board whereas 22 employees i.e. 22% were unsure whether their workplace have anti harassment board or not .

Q20. Would you like to add any suggestions ?

Among 100 respondents , 72 of them skipped the question , 18 of the respondents answered as “NO” , “NA” , “-” . 11 respondents answered “Good Questionnaire”.

The main objective of conducting this study is to see which gender is affected most in the workplace. Based on the data collection and analysis, it was found that the female gender faced more workplace harassment compared to the male, and the private sector faced more harassment compared to that of the government sector. The most affected age group was between 20-30 years of age with different professions. The majority of the employees working in the private sector have faced body shaming as compared to those in the government sector. Also, surprisingly, males were subjected to more body-shaming than females but the percentage was less. Among 12% of the cases reported, 7% were males who were body shamed at their workplace. Also, 88% of employees haven't encountered any body-shaming at their workplace.

Also, 68% of the employees were not judged based on communication style 28% of the employees were judged based on their communication and the other 8% were occasionally judged. This means employees at some point in their work-life were subjected to judgment based on their style of communication as well. This promotes that employees might have developed sour relationships at their workplace due to insults. This can cause a negative environment at the workplace and employees might develop stress, depression, inferiority complex, and anger issues. When asked if they received any inappropriate texts or visuals, 4% of the respondents opted for yes and it was found that 3 out of these 4 employees were female and 1 was male. 3% of the cases were reported in private organisations. Around 7% of the respondents encountered uncomfortable touch out of which 4 of the respondents were found to be female and 3 were male. Private organizations reported more cases compared to that of the Government sector. Employees working in the government sector have faced verbal abuse but the percentages were low. Only 13% of the respondents reported having verbal abuse among which 3 of the employees have been working in the government sector. But the private sector could be a concern as, according to the survey conducted, 10 of the respondents faced verbal abuse in the private sector. Importance should be given to the fact that 87% of the respondents haven't faced any verbal abuse which is a positive thing. Also, according to this survey, 97% of the employees had mutual respect among their co-workers which suggests that they were valued for their qualities and achievements. This promotes that employees had a positive work environment where their needs were fulfilled and motivated them to work at their best. In this survey, employees were also asked to answer certain situation-based questions. Most of the employees

have answered to help their co-workers in pressure situations at the office through sharing their work among themselves, by motivating each other, or by reporting about the issues to the higher authorities. Also, most of the employees wanted to take a stand for their co-workers if they were physically abused in front of them. Employees through this survey said that they want to report immediately if any act of fight was encountered among any of the co-workers or try to stop the fight and solve the issue among them. This says that employees want to maintain a peaceful environment inside the office and protest against the wrong. It also suggests that employees wanted to have a good bonding with the other co-workers. Most of the employees suggested that they wanted to respect their co-workers' privacy(if any the secret was shared with them) at any cost. The instances of sexual abuse were present in the workplace irrespective of the job sector. Among 100 respondents, 3% of the workers reported receiving inappropriate texts or visuals at their workplace. 7% reported experiencing inappropriate touch at the workplace. This creates an uncomfortable working environment, causing psychological issues such as depression, anxiety, humiliation, reduced motivation among the employees and strict action must be taken against it. All employees irrespective of gender have the right to demand a secure, non-discriminated, and comfortable workplace.

CONCLUSION

Workplace harassment is one of the most prevalent types of harassment these days. Not many report this type of harassment, due to various reasons like fear of losing their job, family, or only earning bread for the family. The subjects were well aware of the topic and hence it was easier for them to understand the questions. Many have a perception that only the female gender gets abused in the workplace, but this study helped prove them wrong that,

not only the women but also the men get affected in various ways, like verbal abuse, sexual abuse, body shaming, etc. Through this study, we know that the private sectors were affected more, irrespective of gender. We also received a few suggestions and opinions like what would they do, if such a situation existed, surprisingly, most of the respondents answered it.

Any sort of harassment, at any point in time or place, must be reported, as the person facing it or the victim, would be under immense pressure. To release the pressure, they have to either report to the higher authorities, or in case the person causing trouble is in a higher position, they could always take a legal step by reporting it to the police. One must always stand up for themselves and support others going through the same issue. In this way, the world would be a better and safe place.

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