

A Correlational Study of Experienced Sexual Harassment, Anxiety and Depression among Working Unmarried Women

Radha Vibhuti^{1*}, Shradha Sakatkar²

ABSTRACT

A present study investigated the correlation between experienced sexual harassment and anxiety, depression among working unmarried women. A purposive sample of 100 working unmarried women (25 to 35 years) was selected. Sample was collected from Mumbai. Sample involves unmarried women working in private sectors with same occupational background. The Sexual harassment experiences questionnaire, Beck depression inventory II, IPAT anxiety scale along with the personal data sheet were administered on the sample. The obtained score does not follow the normal distribution curve hence for correlation Spearman rho correlation method was used. Spearman non parametric test used to find out correlation between all variables. Result shows that there is positive correlation between experienced sexual harassment and depression. Also result shows that there is no correlation between experienced sexual harassment and anxiety.

Keywords: *Sexual harassment, Anxiety, Depression.*

The study of sexual harassment at the workplace among working unmarried women have been maintained for more than decades. The issue has been explored from the perspective of several conceptual frameworks, and has included numerous empirical investigations. One of the consequences of the increasing integration of men and women in the workplace has been the increased opportunities for conflict based upon gender differences. Sexual harassment remains common at workplaces. It is an invisible violence against women. Thus, confusion arises as people may perceive ambiguous behaviors differently; for example, research indicates that women perceive a wider range of behaviors as sexually harassing than do men. There is no thumb rule for defining what constitutes sexual harassment but generally accepted principle is that it is an unwelcome sexual attention given by harasser to someone who is not ready to accept or welcome it. Also sexual harassment can leave negative impact on women. It can damage victim physically as well as mentally. Society is evolving therefore the law but still we like to hide things under carpet i.e. we cover all hypocrisy under culture.

¹ M.A, Department of Psychology, Modern College of Arts, Science and Commerce, Pune, India

² Professor, Department of Psychology, Modern College of Arts, Commerce and Science, Pune, India

*Responding Author

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Sexual Harassment:

It refers to the unwelcome sexual advances, request for sexual favor and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature by males towards females (equal employment opportunity commission 1980).

There are three dimensions of sexual harassment. (Fitzgerald and Drasgow 1995)

1. Gender harassment: This dimension encompasses a verbal and non verbal behavior generally not aimed at sexual cooperation; rather they convey insulting, hostile, degrading and sexist attitude about women.
2. Unwanted sexual attention : It includes both verbal and non verbal which ranges from repeated, non reciprocated, request for dates, intrusive letters and phone calls, touching, grabbing and cornering; and gross sexual imposition or assault. Although frequently experienced as intimidating or coercion, it can be distinguished from the third category (sexual coercion) by its lack of job related losses or benefits, either explicit or implicit.
3. Sexual coercion: It is the classic instances of quid pro quo harassment. Behavior of this type refers to bribes or threats, whether explicit or subtle, that conditions some job-related benefit on sexual cooperation. Although it is almost universally recognized and labeled as harassment, it perhaps not paradoxically also the latest common.

Depression:

Depression according to Beck (1996) is the result of faulty or maladaptive cognitive processes. The emotional and physical symptoms are consequences of the thinking patterns that Beck assumes to be the cause of the disorder. Depression in psychology a mood or emotional state that is marked by feelings of low self-worth or guilt and a reduced ability to enjoy life.

Anxiety:

David Barlow defines anxiety as "a future-oriented mood state in which one is ready or prepared to attempt to cope with upcoming negative events". Anxiety can be appropriate, but when it is too much and continues too long, the individual may suffer from an anxiety disorder.

Rationale

This study examined the effect of sexual harassment in the work environment and social dogma about women's independence, ability, male dominance on working women who are unmarried. The role of women in the society is constantly questioned and for centuries women have struggled to find their place in world that is predominantly male oriented.

Anxiety & Stress symptoms affect over mostly in women especially in working unmarried women day by day because of the sexual harassment. Today most of the women are working who are unmarried. They are working with high posts, more responsibilities and so the stress. They are expanding their lives to include career and they must also maintain their traditional roles in society. This combination of social dogmatic responsibilities and work, career is the

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reason why working unmarried women are facing more stress, depression and anxiety than other. These mental problems are encouraging many health issues like blood pressure, cholesterol, obesity, lower weight and so on. There is a need to support all nonworking women in order to increase women's chances to learn, to develop self efficacy and self assistance, to built social network and open access to informational, instrumental and emotional support to avoid the risk of developing anxiety. The term "working women" refers to women who get paid to work outside the home. Working outside the home is a big boost for women psychological and even physical health. Being gainfully employed is good for one's role fulfillment, self-confidence and self-esteem. And those kinds of feelings can lead to psychological problems like anxiety and depression.

Statement of the problem:

To study correlation between level of sexual harassment and anxiety , depression among working unmarried women.

REVIEWS

- Sexual harassment-experiences of the working women in private and government sector by Kamal Tariq(1995)
- The aim of the study is to sexual harassment, experiences of married and unmarried working in private and government sector.. Sample was selected randomly from private as well as government sector from Nagpur city. Age group was 25 to 35 years. SHEQ by Kamal Tariq questionnaire was used. 2X2 factorial design was used. Statistical treatment of the data was used in which first mean and standard deviation was calculated, secondly two way ANNOVA was used and last significant results were followed by Sceheffe's test of multiple comparison. Findings of the research indicated that unmarried women working in private sectors experience more sexual harassment as compare to married women working in government sectors.
- Childhood sexual abuse as a risk factor for depression in women: 1999 psychosocial and neurobiological correlates. This study was conducted by Erica L. Weiss, M.D. James G. Longhurst, M.D. and Carolyn M. Mazure, PhD studies were identified by means of computerized and, manual searches; further reference were obtained from the bibliographies of reviewed article. Results were found that childhood sexual abuse is associated with adult-onset depression in both men and women, and occurrence of such abuse is more common in girls, than in boys. Also research found that the HPA Axis (Hypothalamic- pituitary-adrenal) in females may be more susceptible to stress induced deregulation, which might contribute to an increased vulnerability to depression in adulthood.
- The importance of low control at work and home on depression and anxiety by Joan M. GRIFFIN¹, Rebecca FUHRER¹, Stephen A. STANSFELD, and Michael MARMOT Department of Epidemiology and Public Health, University College London, London, UK Basic Medical Sciences Building, Queen Mary and Westfield College, London, UK

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- This study considered both a gender model, a model that focuses on the stress associated with social roles and conditions in the home environment, and a job model, which addresses the stressful characteristics of the work environment, to investigate patterns of women's and men's psychological morbidity across different social positions. They hypothesise that a lack of control in the home and work environments affects depression and anxiety differently for women and men and across three social class groups. Both women and men with low control either at work or at home had an increased risk of developing depression and anxiety. There was no interaction between low control at home and work. Results found that the risks associated with low control either at home or work were not evenly distributed across different social positions, measured by employment grade. Women in the lowest or middle employment grades who also reported low control at work or home were at most risk for depression and anxiety. Men in the middle grade with low work control were at risk for depression while those in the lowest grade were at risk for anxiety. Psychological morbidity was measured at both Phases 3 and 5 using the 30-item General Health Questionnaire (GHQ) (Goldberg, 1972) which has been validated against the Clinical Interview Schedule in a study sub-sample (Stansfeld and Marmot, 1992). The GHQ is a well-established screening questionnaire for minor psychiatric disorder suitable for use in general and clinic population samples. In our bivariate analyses, we examined the distribution of demographic and social role variables, GHQ mean scores, percentage of GHQ cases, depression cases, and anxiety cases, and the percentage of those reporting high and low control by gender and employment grade.

Hypothesis:

- There will be no correlation between level of experienced sexual harassment and anxiety.
- There will be no correlation between gender harassment and anxiety.
- There will be no correlation between unwanted sexual attention and anxiety.
- There will be no correlation between sexual coercion and anxiety.
- There will be no correlation between level of experienced sexual harassment and depression.
- There will be no correlation between gender harassment and depression.
- There will be no correlation between unwanted sexual attention and depression.
- There will be no correlation between sexual coercion and depression.

METHODOLOGY

In this study the sample was selected from several companies from Mumbai, through the purposive sampling technique, the participants of this study were 100 working unmarried women with the age range of 24 -33 year. For this research correlational research design was used to study the relation between experienced sexual harassment, anxiety and depression. Descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation were used to describe the collected data. Data was not normally distributed therefore non parametric Spearman's rho correlation method was used. This

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was used to analyze the overall relation between sexual harassment and anxiety, as well as between sexual harassment and depression.

The permission from the companies will be taken to conduct tests. Personal data sheet will be provided to obtain demographical information about the sample. The explanation about the purposes of study was given to the women, and the questionnaires were distributed, the questionnaire was administered to the participant, they required to fill in the questionnaire, the questionnaire consist of demographic information, Experienced sexual harassment at workplace by Kamal Tariq, IPAT anxiety scale and Beck depression inventory second edition. All the necessary precautions were well taken care of and instructions will be given properly. After that scoring was done then statistical analysis with the help of SPSS was done and conclusion was drawn.

Variables for correlational study were as follow:

- Predictor variables: Level of Experienced Sexual Harassment
- Criterion variable : Anxiety and Depression
- Control variables: Age (25-33), Marital status (unmarried), Occupational status (women working in same company for at least 2 years of experience and also on executive level) and Socioeconomic status (upper middle class).

RESULT TABLES

Item	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation
Gender harassment	11.29	11	2.868
Unwanted sexual attention	36.25	37	6.053
Sexual coercion	9	9	1.783
Total	56.98	57.50	7.437
Anxiety	41.11	42	6.791
Depression	16.89	18	5.207

Correlational table

	Gender harassment	Unwanted sexual attention	Sexual coercion	Total
Anxiety	0.035	0.083	-0.055	0.048
Depression	0.218*	0.482**	0.007	0.462**

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*correlation is significant at the 0.005 level (2-tailed).

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FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

The present study consist sample of 100 working unmarried women from Mumbai. All women were working in private sectors and were from same occupational background. Personal data sheet, Sexual harassment experiences questionnaire by Kamal Tariq; Beck depression inventory; IPAT anxiety scale were given to the sample. After the data collection statistical analysis was done. For descriptive statistics the arithmetic mean, median and standard deviation was computed for Sexual harassment, depression and anxiety. The overall mean for sexual harassment, depression and anxiety were 56.98, 16.89 and 41.11 respectively. The SD scores for Sexual harassment, depression and anxiety were 7.437, 5.207 and 6.791 respectively. Obtained scores did not follow the normal distribution curve and hence for correlation Spearman's' rho correlation method, non-parametric test was used. In the present study null hypothesis was formed. Socioeconomic status (upper middle class), occupational status (women working in same company for at least 2 years of experience and also on executive level), Age (25-33), Marital status (unmarried) was controlled.

- The first main hypothesis stated that, “There will be no correlation between level of experienced sexual harassment and depression”. As seen in table two, there is positive correlation between level of experienced sexual harassment and depression which is 0.462 i.e. significant at level 0.01. Meaning that higher the level of experienced sexual harassment, the depression is also high. Sexual harassment at workplace can have very negative impact on women mental as well as physical health. Unwelcomed sexual attention can lead to doubt about self identity, guilt, feelings of inner turmoil, fright which are maladaptive thinking processes and these all symptoms can lead to depression. Sexual harassment is a combination of verbal and physical abuse. Abusing verbally can lead to less life satisfaction and diminished self worth. The association between depression and abuse in women is significant even after adjustment for social indicators associated with depression. Sadia Malik and Yasmin Nilofer Farooqi (Department of applied psychology, university of Punjab, new campus Lahore, Pakistan) conducted a research on the role of general harassment and sexual harassment as predictors of posttraumatic stress symptoms which found that depression can occur after sexual abuse.
- Next hypothesis stated that “There will be no correlation between Gender Harassment and Depression” was not supported .There is positive correlation between gender harassment and depression which 0.218 and significant at 0.005 level. Gender harassment encompasses a verbal and non verbal behavior and they convey insulting, hostile, degrading and sexist attitude about women. As we live in male dominated society, it is found that when a woman is on higher post than men, she often face bullying or making some vulgar comments about her. This type of behavior never damage women physically but has great impact on mental health. Perhaps the biggest issue though is women's overall lower status in Indian society.
- Hypothesis stating that, “There will be no co relation between Unwanted Sexual Attention and Depression”, was not supported. As seen in table there is positive correlation between Unwanted Sexual Attention and Depression i.e. 0.482 significant at 0.01 level. Unwanted sexual attention includes verbal and nonverbal request for dates, intrusive letters and phone calls, grabbing and

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cornering, gross sexual imposition or assault, touching etc. Indian women are very vulnerable when it comes to their status in society. If women are experiencing unwanted sexual attention she could not be able to tell anyone and if she exposes that then blame will be on her. Also women who come forward to accept this are often blamed than men. So hiding these things leads to consumption of alcohol or substance abuse which leads to depression. Also women who are emotionally vulnerable tend to think that if someone is giving them unwanted sexual attention means that she has given some wrong indications. This type of thinking also leads to low self esteem, low self confidence and hence to depression.

- Hypothesis stating that, “There will be no co relation between Sexual Coercion and Depression” was supported. Spearman’s rho correlation was found 0.007 which is not significant. Sexual coercion is classic example of quid pro quo harassment. This type of behavior includes bribes, threats whether explicit or subtle that conditions some job related benefits on sexual cooperation. Under this dimension of sexual harassment include direct physical approach towards victim which includes forceful kissing, rape etc. This type of harassment is very less at workplace because people are afraid of doing so and consequences of this can lead to great extent including prison or damage to social status of both men and women.
- The Second main hypothesis stated that, “There will be no correlation between Level of Experienced Sexual Harassment and Anxiety” was supported. As seen in table two, Spearman’s correlation was found 0.048 which is not significant. Hence there is no correlation between level of experienced sexual harassment and anxiety. Sample was collected from Bombay where women have aimed for a recognized place in society, guided by their own field of knowledge and acknowledgement. The changing role of women in India is beginning to follow the direction that the women of the western world took more than eighty years ago: demanding treatment as human equals. Women with high education and that to working on higher posts are found to be less anxious as compare other women.
- Next hypothesis stated that, “There will be no correlation between Gender Harassment and anxiety” was supported. The traditional role of man has been the one earning money for the running of home. This has changed to a great extent. This sharing responsibilities and expecting dignity from men has made women at strong and so the anxiety cannot be found in modern women
- Hypothesis stating that, “There will be no co relation between unwanted sexual attention and anxiety “was supported. As they have available themselves for educational opportunities and learn to empower themselves. The status of women in modern India is a sort of paradox. The modern Indian women have honed their skills and jumped into battlefield of life fighting against social restriction, emotionalties, religious boundaries and cultural dogmas. She is now being working on par men in every field as compare to past women.
- Hypothesis stating that “There will be no co relation between sexual coercion and anxiety “was supported. Spearman’s rho correlation was found -0.055. As the sample was collected it is found that chances of occurring sexual coercion at workplace is very low. Hence the correlation between sexual coercion and anxiety was not found significant

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CONCLUSION

- There is no correlation between experienced sexual harassment and anxiety i.e. no significant difference was found and null hypothesis was accepted
- There is positive correlation between experienced sexual harassment and depression i.e. significant difference was found and null hypothesis was rejected.

IMPLICATION

The research was conducted to study correlation between experienced sexual harassment and anxiety, depression among working unmarried women. Result proved that there is positive correlation between sexual harassment and depression. Result also proved that there is no correlation between sexual harassment and anxiety. It will be very helpful for the women. On the basis of these results we can plan some counseling program for them. It will be helpful to identify sexual harassment and its physical and mental impact on women. This research can also help to make people especially women aware of sexual harassment and its consequences and can prevent them by conducting special training program for them.

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