

Sexual Harassment in the Workplace: The Effect of Perpetrator Attributes and Recipient Attributes in the Judgment of Sexual Harassment Instances

Arosha S. Adikaram
Chandra Gunawardena
Travis Perera

Abstract

All socio-sexual conducts that occur in a workplace would not constitute sexual harassment. Whether a conduct is judged as sexual harassment or not would depend on a number of factors and contexts. In this article, we attempt to explore and explain how various attributes of the perpetrator and the attributes of the recipient herself influence this judgement of sexual harassment. Employing qualitative research methodology, 40 in-depth interviews and four group discussions were used in gathering information. The findings of the study clearly indicated a number of perpetrator attributes such as perpetrator's marital status, his reputation as a flirt and his organizational status as well as a number of recipient attributes and perceptions, such as the marital or relationship status of the recipient, her organizational status, and whether the recipient considers the perpetrator as a friend or not, affect the judgment of sexual harassment instances.

Key words: Sexual harassment at workplaces, perception, judgment, perpetrator, recipient.

Arosha S. Adikaram is a lecturer in Human Resource Management at the Faculty of Management and Finance, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka. Email: arosha@fmf.cmb.ac.lk

Prof. Chandra Gunawardena is Professor Emeritus, COL-UNESCO Chair in Distant Education, Open University of Colombo, Nawala, Nugegoda, Sri Lanka. Email: gunawardena@hotmail.com

Dr. Travis Perera is Senior Consultant, Postgraduate Institute of Management, University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Sri Lanka. Email: drtravisperera@gmail.com