HEALTH AND GENDER STUDIES

Just Joking? Investigating Sexual Harassment in a Departmental Store in Gweru, Zimbabwe

Chipo Hungwe
Department of Human Resource Management,
Midlands State University Private Bag 9055,
Gweru, Zimbabwe.
Email: Hungwec@Msu.Ac.Zw/ Blessedhungwe@Yahoo.Com.

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the reasons for sexual harassment, its nature and policy implications in a departmental store in Gweru, Zimbabwe. It also analyses the costs of sexual harassment on both the individual and the organisation. The study is based on a qualitative research conducted between January and July 2008. 24 respondents (14 females and 10 males) were studied using semi structured interviews and questionnaires. Results are analysed using the Miles and Huberman (1994) approach to data analysis. Results reveal that contract employment and lack of skills create vulnerability and dependency, a situation exploited by the powerful male superiors who sexually harass their subordinate females. Sexual harassment is institutionalised at Tatenda where management refuses to acknowledge it as a problem. The reluctance of management to craft policies on sexual harassment and grievance procedures added to women's fear of reporting sexual harassment perpetuates a culture of silence at Tatenda.

Key words: department store; female employees ;humour; jokes; labour turnover; sexual harassment; target.

INTRODUCTION

This article analyses the various causes of sexual harassment, its forms, victims, costs and implications at Tatenda (a departemnt store in Gweru, Zimbabwe). Characteristics of the harasser and the target are outlined showing the power differences that exist between these individuals. Findings reveal that most women suffer from sexual harassment and do not report it.

The majority of respondents did not know what sexual harassment is. The department store did not recognise sexual harassment as a punishable offence. The costs of sexual harassment to the organisation are in the form of labour turnover of female employees who flee from a hostile work environment. On the individual sexual harassment is emotionally, physically and psychologically draining. The study recommends the official recognition of sexual harassment by the organisation as unfair discrimination and (among other gender awareness programmes) the crafting of a sexual harassment policy that clearly outlines what sexual harassment is and the steps that an individual can take when harassed.

Five objectives are pursued in the study; (1) to find out who is harassed and why (2) to find out how respondents understand and define sexual harassment (3) to discover the organisational policies and strategies in place to deal with sexual harassment cases and the effectiveness of the said strategies. (4) To highlight the costs of sexual harassment both to the organisation and the individual (5) to explain why there is silence on sexual harassment cases in the organisation.

Background and Literature Review

In Africa for a long time sexual harassment was largely met by silence as the practice was more or less condoned. Though the phenomenon of sexual harassment is widespread criminalising the practise is a new issue. In South Africa the first reported case of sexual harassment was in 1989. In Malawi there is still a culture of silence. Victims fail to report because of fear of the consequences of losing a job and also because of the absence of a legal framework guiding issues of sexual harassment, (Kateta 2006, Sutherland 1992). Not much research has been done in Zimbabwe on the issue of sexual harassment at work except for the work of Khan (2005) and some local and international non-governmental organisations who have studied sexual violence in Zimbabwe (for example the Zimbabwe Women Resource Centre Network, Musasa project and the Human Rights Committee of the United Nations). In his study of sexual harassment in higher education Zindi (1994:178) also lamented the 'absence of previous Zimbabwean research data apart from local press reports".

This study therefore largely relies on American studies that define sexual harassment as any unwelcome verbal, visual or physical conduct of sexual nature that is severe or persuasive and affects working conditions or creates a hostile work environment. It is unwanted sexual pressure that one person inflicts upon another. There are two types of sexual harassment; quid pro quo and hostile environment. Gutek (1985 in Fitzgerald 2001) defines quid pro quo as a something for something kind of situation and unwanted sexual advances or behaviour that condition employment. The harasser makes it clear that the employee will be fired, given unpleasant tasks, receive negative evaluations or otherwise suffer bad consequences unless there compliance to sexual demands.

Hostile environment is a form of sexual harassment that happens when an employee is subjected to comments of a sexual nature and offensive sexual material. For any conduct to be regarded as sexual harassment it must be;

-Unwelcome – it makes the harassed person uncomfortable and must be stopped.

-Of sexual nature – it could be verbal, visual or physical unwelcome sexual behaviour.

Examples of verbal/written sexual harassment include commenting about a person's clothing, body, telling sexually based jokes, requesting sexual favours, telling rumours about a person's personal/sexual life, explicit offers of money for sex and threatening a person regarding the person's job, grade or letters of recommendation. Physical sexual harassment would include: assault, impeding/blocking movement, touching a person, kissing, hugging, patting, pinching, stroking, deliberate brushing against another person's body, derogatory gestures or facial expressions of a sexual nature, following a person. Posters, drawings, screen savers, emails of a sexual nature and pornographic picture posters in view of all employees are other sources of sexual harassment.

This study also uses the University of Zimbabwe website (undated) definition of sexual harassment as one of the many forms of illegal sexual discrimination that arises out of an unfair use of influence, power or authority by one person over another or a lack of respect for another person. It is unwanted sexual attention when;

(a)   Submission to the behaviour is made or implied to be a condition of employment

(b)   Submission to or rejection of behaviour is used as a basis for decisions related to employment evaluation and progress

(c)   The behaviour has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with work or performance or the effect of creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment.

What is important to note is that the definition of sexual harassment depends on the effect of the behaviour on the victim and not primarily on the intention of the offender. The standard used is that of a reasonable man/woman and what a 'reasonable woman/man would find offensive".

Because sexual harassment is individually perceived and labelled certain individuals can claim to be more harassed than others. However some studies have revealed that there are certain characteristics that predispose certain individuals to sexual harassment. These include sex, age and marital status.Young unmarried women seem to suffer more from sexual harassment than older married women, (Fain &Anderton 1987). Merkin (2008) also discovered that women with more education suffered more from sexual harassment than those with less education.

Perceptions of sexual harassment are affected by an individual's socio-cultural envrionment which is why there has been a lot of studies on the cutural context and cross cultural issues of sexual harassment.(Hofstede 2001, Merkin 2008, Sigal & Jacobsen 1999, Timmerman& Bajema

1999 ,Pryor, DeSouza, Fitness, Hutz, Kumpf, Lubbert, Personnen, &Wang, 1997).

Sexual harassment cuts across work institutions and government organisations such as the military, universities, high schools etc. Sexual harassment is a widespread problem in the workplace with estimates of harassment ranging from 28% to 90% for female targets and 14% to 19% for male targets, (Gelfand et al 1995). Bowes-Sperry and Tata (1999) also note the existence of same sex sexual harassment, while Fitzgerald et al (1997) argue that organisations with highly sexualised atmospheres or that communicate a tolerance for sexual harassment are more likely to have a greater number of occurances of sexual harassment. Indirect or ambient sexual harassment can also be experienced when a person is frequently exposed to sexually harassing behaviours experienced by others in that target person's work group (Bowes-Sperry and Tata 1999:265).

Work in a department store is largely emotional labour. Emotional labour/jobs (e.g. service industry) predominantly expose women to sexual harassment (Noon and Blyton 2002). Emotional labour includes provisioning services of retail outlets etc. where there is much emphasis on 'customer care' and notions of 'the customer is always right'. Such services emphasise elements such as smilling, being cheerful, and politeness at all times. Emotional labour can cause feelings of dissonance when the required emotional display is considered inappropriate by the worker performing the task, for example, being polite to rude customers. Emotional labour can expose women to sexual harasment when the job emphasises aspects of female sexuality as a way of keeping the customer happy (Deadrick & McAfee 2001, Noon and Blyton 2002), by using their 'feminine charms' (Fineman et al 2005). However, reponses to emotional labour differ as some women are satisfied by it (Noon and Blyton 2002).

This study is theoretically grounded on various approaches to sexual harassment that regard sexual harassment as both a subjective and objective construct. These are the individual, legal and integrative approaches to sexual harassment.

The legal perspective defines sexual harassment as any behaviour that violates the laws of the country in which it occurs. In Zimbabwe sexual harassment is classifiesd as unfair labour practice that is part of discrimination at the workplace. It can result in lawsuits.

The individual views of sexual harassment state that sexual harassment exists only when behaviour is perceived and labelled as such. Because it is individually perceived what could be harassment to one individual might be tolerated by other person.Women tend to recognise sexual harassment more frequently than men (Bowes-Sperry and Tata 1999). Other factors that influence people's perceptions of sexual harassment are (1) previous experience of sexual harassment (Blakely, Blakely and Moormon 1995), (2) A person with an internal locus of control (Booth-Butterfield, 1989),(3) Those with feminist attitudes (Brooks and Perot, 1991) (4) those who perceive the initiator's intentions as hostile (Pryor and Day, 1988), (5) the

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status of the initiator – where people in supervisory roles are accused of sexual harassment because they are held to 'higher standards of behaviour than co-workers (Bowes-Sperry and Tata 1999).

The Integrative explanations such as the sex role spillover model by Gutek and Morasch (1982) maintain that when the sex ratio of employees at a particular location is skewed or when jobs/occupations are sextyped, the characteristics of one gender become more salient and traditional sex roles spill over into the workplace. Most men respond to women using some of the following stereotypes (1) –the mother figure, iron maiden, lesbians, witches and those who suppress their sexuality and try to confront men as equals (Fineman, Sims and Gabriel 2005:208), (2) the defenceless 'pet' 'the virgin' and the whore (against whom large amounts of both male lust and aggression are directed (ibid).Unless perceived as virgins or mothers, women are often said to be bringing male violence upon themselves through provocative or flirtatious behaviour (ibid: 206), (Mazies, 1996).

Sexual harassment has consequences both to the individuals and the organisations. It could result in huge legal costs along with unwanted publicity preventing the organisation from attracting and retaining valued employees (Knapp et al, 1997). On the harassed individual it could result in voluntary labour turnover (Gutek and Koss 1993), transfers and reassignments (Getecha and Chipika 1995) terminations, deterioration of interpersonal relationships with co-workers, decrease in job satisfaction and organisational commitment, higher turnover intentions, absenteeism (Fitzgerald et al 1997, Fitzgerald 2001), low self esteem, headaches, sleep disturbances, fear, anger, depression, anxiety, nervousness, irritability, increased stress, loss of motivation, emotional and physical distress (Crawford 1999, Loy and Stewart 1984, Zindi 1994). However, not all cases of sexual harassment are reported as some fear losing their jobs or prospects of promotion (Getecha and Chipika 1995) and thus keep quiet.

Jokes/humour in organisations

Generally jokes are said to alleviate the monotony and boredom at the work place by providing humour (Fineman et al 2005), Noon and Blyton 2002). Noon and Blyton (2002) outline 4 functions of joking: (a) Joking maintains the social order and releases tension, (b) Joking challenges authority, (c) Joking forges group identity, (d) Joking alleviates monotony and makes work tolerable.

Joking relationships are relationships of permitted disrespect (Radcliffe Brown 1952:90-91) where people make fun of each other and tease each other and nobody takes offence. However where such jokes are taken out of context, people then report sexual harassment. Men claim that verbal sexual innuendos are infact 'innocent jokes' meant to increase humour in the workplace (Henslin 1998). Sexist jokes can be taken seriously or not depending on individual characteristics. However they (sexist jokes) can be humiliating and they put the target in a no-win situation where laughing at

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the joke (while secretly despising themselves for doing so) reinforces the joke and makes it socially and morally acceptable, while refusing to laugh, on the other hand, automatically excludes the target from the group and turns them into a legitimate target of sarcasm – for lacking a sense of humour, (Fineman et al 2005:218). Quinn (2000) argues that some women have learnt to deconceptualise sexist jokes as a way of resisting and surviving sexual harassment by rationalising that men do not really mean what they say when they tell these sexist degrading jokes. These victims of sexual harassment fear that they might be viewed as too sensitive, too serious, victimising themselves and unable to appreciate jokes.

Female labour in Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe is patriarchal thus rendering females as less powerful than men. Women have historically experienced gender violence both at home and in the public sphere. It is still not uncommon for women to be arrested for wearing mini-skirts- deemed indecent dressing by the state police. The Ministry of women affairs, Gender and community development in Zimbabwe in conjuction with local women' organisations has played a pivotal role in helping advance the cause of women by crafting gender awareness campaings through the local press and also by creating gender units in every ministry inorder to advance women's rights. These efforts culminated in the enactment of the Domestic Violence Act in December 2007. Historically, there have been more men than women in the workplace due to colonial notions of education and the role of women in society (Hungwe 2006). While sexual harassment is now regarded as unfair labour practice by section 8 of the Labour Act in Zimbabwe, sexual harassment is widespread (Khan 2005, SARDC 2000). The Labour Act does not provide for workers in the export procesing zones that are not governed by this instrument. Getecha and Chipika (1995:115) carried out a survey that revealed that only 1% of sexual harassment cases are repoerted. In the majority of the reported cases, management did not take any action and neither did the harassed woman. Gwisai (2006:65) notes that the workplace is still structured in a manner that conceives the standard worker as male, excluding the legitimate demands of women that arise from their different biological character and social functions. Few women are found in top positions while the majority occupies low status jobs because they lack the necessary academic qualifications and or experience in decisionmaking positions (SARDC 2000).

METHODS AND DESIGN

Participants and setting

This is a qualitative descriptive case study research that was carried out at a department store (pseudonymed Tatenda) in Gweru, Zimbabwe over a period

of 6 months between January and July 2008. The target population consisted of 53 non managerial and 10 managerial employees. Stratified random sampling was used to select a sample of 24 respondents (14 female non management employees, 5 male management employees and 5 male non management employees).

A questionnaire was designed targeting all non managerial employees. The questionnaire solicited demographic information of respondents such as age, level of education and qualifications and views of respondents on the causes, costs and effects of sexual harassment and characteristics of the harasser and the target of sexual harassment. Semi-structured interviews were held with management emplyees and a selected number of non managerial employees.

Data were coded and categorised using the Miles and Huberman (1994) method of data analysis. Major themes identified in the data revolved around the five set objectives. Data are displayed by use of tables that show sexually disaggregated information.

To protect the privacy of the respondents and the organisation, nobody is identified by name and a pseudonym 'Tatenda' has been created to hide the identity of the department store. To begin the research, the researcher sought voluntary participation of the respondents and explained the objectives of the study to everyone involved and thus got management clearance to conduct the study.

FINDINGS

Results reveal that 2/24 of the sample knew what sexual harassment is. These were managerial employees whose definitions are in line with quid pro quo sexual harassment. 13/14 female respondents have experienced sexual harassment while 5/10 men argued that they were also sexually harassed by women. All the sexual harassment cases were never reported and management did not see sexual harassment as an offense that could threaten company profits, its image and lower employee morale. Management regarded sexual harasment as part of workplace humour and joking among colleagues.

The majority of respondents are female who are mostly young (between the age of 18 and 35) and unmarried. Of the 10 men in the sample, 7 are above the age of 36 while 6/10 men are married. Table 1 below shows these demographic profiles of the respondents. Male respondents tend to be older and this could explain why men occupy supervisory and managerial jobs than women. It is also an indicator that they have been at the organisation longer than women. At Tatenda the majority of employees are unskilled. They have no training of any sort and only hold high school academic qualifications. These same respondents are female and lower level employees. The semi-skilled employees are the shop floor supervisors who hold certificates and diplomas in marketing and merchandising. Table 2 depicts these characteristics.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of the respondents.

variable	Female frequency	Male frequency	Total
Sex	14	10	24
Marital status	Married=4	Married=6	
	Single =10	Single= 4	
Age category	18-25=9	18-25=0	
	26-35=3	26-35=3	
	36-45=2	36-45=4	
	46 and above=0	46 and above=3	24

Table 2: Respondents' qualifications

unskilled	'Ordinary level'and 'Advanced' level=14
Semi-skilled	(Certificates and Diplomas) =5
Managerial	(Diplomas+degrees) =5
Total	24

*Please note that all managerial employees are male.

Table 2 shows a typical horizontally segregated organisation that has women at the lower levels of the organisation while men are found at the top hierarchy. Because most women are younger they do not have much work experience and for most, this is their first job. Again because of their age they are less educated as compared to their male counterparts. These women have just graduated from high school and have gone straight to the department store which also explains why they are mostly contract workers. These same women have not yet upgraded their qualifications with diplomas, certificated and degrees and thus will for a long time remain in their lowly qualified jobs. Only 2/14 women have certificates for profesional courses while the rest have high school certificates and no professional training.

Who is harassed and why

13/14 females argued that they have been victims of sexual harassment. While 4/10 men argued that they also faced sexual harassment from females who came to work skimpily dressed. Such clothing distracted men from their jobs and made them uncomfortable. Fineman et al (2005) state that sexual harassment is an equal opportunity phenomenon in which women are equally likely to harass men.

Below is an outline of sexual harassment experiences of respondents ranging from verbal to physical non verbal and written sexual harassment. Verbal sexual harassment includes being called 'darling', sweetheart' or spreading of rumours by a boss that he is having an affair with the target person. Table 3 above shows that at Tatenda both quid pro quo and hostile environment types of sexual harassment are present. All the women have received unwanted sexual attention while 4/10 men have been exposed to a hostile environment of indecent clothing by some of their female counterparts. The harassed men do not report harassment because they feel it is unmanly for them to complain about sexual attention from women.

However, women have been exposed to multiple forms of sexual harassment ranging from sexist jokes, comments on clothing, phone calls, and love proposals to even being followed.

Table 3: Forms of sexual harasment at the department store

Form of sexual harassment	Female frequency	Male frequency
Sexual jokes/comments	14	0
Letters/ phone calls	4	0
Comments on clothing	12	0
Skimpy/revealing clothing	0	4
Being asked out repaetedly	6	0
requests for sexual favours	4	0
Sexual innuendos	14	0
Sexual teasing	14	0
Staring at target's body	11	0
Unwanted touching/kissing	5	0
Blocking movement	8	0
Leaning/pinching	7	0
Workrelated threats	5	0
Being called darling/sweetheart	2	0
Following the targert	2	0

The most common forms of harassment among all women whether married or unmarried are sexual innuendos, sexist jokes and sexual teasing. This means that women are moslty exposed to sexual stories that are told by men as jokes/ anecdotes. While the definition of sexual harassment largely lies with the individual, these results show that all the women appear to like the sexual stories/ jokes they have all been exposed to.

Reasons for harassment

All men (both managerial and non managerial) claimed that women were responsible for their being sexually harassed because of their provocative dressing and flirtations with men within the organisation and customers. Male customers harass female employees who flirt with them in search of tips. Male superiors sexually harass female employees who want job security and promotions. 3/14 women thought they were sexually harassed because it was natural for men to harass women since men had more sexual drive than women. This means that they regarded it as natural and thus could not be eradicated. Women also argued that men used their powerful positions to sexually harass them.

The costs of sexual harassment to the individual and the organisation

Sexual harassment elicits negative feelings in the target who mainly feels responsible for attracting the harasser. The target consequently loses self esteem, is afraid of the harasser, embarrassed, has self doubt, is confused by the whole situation and has intentions to quit. All targeted women blamed themselves for dressing improperly and being 'overfriendly' to men, resulting in their sexual harassment. The table below shows female

respondents' reactions to sexual harassment and not men's reactions because the harassed men felt it was unnatural to complain of harassment by women.

Table 4: Reactions to sexual harassment.

Feeling	Frequency of women with such feeling
Uncomfortable/helpless/confused	11
Afraid	8
Guilty/blaming herself	14
Normal because every man does it	3
Hurt and disrespected	11
Intentions to quit	6
Afraid of rape	2

The above table shows that even though sexual harassment elicits negative feelings, only 6/14 women are prepared to leave the work environment. 8/14 women argued that they would not leave their jobs because they were unskilled and would face difficulties getting employment elsewhere. Sexually harassed women did not prefer reporting their cases because of a variety of reasons; Married women preferred not to report sexual harassment for fear of compromising their marriages as their spouses would not believe them. Single women were afraid of losing their jobs if they reported sexual harassment (7/14 were contract workers). One respondent argued; "*the supervisor always tells me that I have to be a good girl in order to succeed in life*".

The table 4 highlights that most of the times women feel helpless and see the situation as beyond their control. They thus blame themselves and are mostly confused by the situation. Sexual harassment is a sensitive issue that leaves the majority of women (11/14) hurt and disrespected. It is worrying that some respondents (2/14) are actually afraid of rape while almost a quarter of the female respondents intend to quit their jobs. However the problem with all these reactions to sexual harassment is that they do not address the cause directly and thus none of the reactions will lead to a change of the situation. The women are just hurt and confused. Those who prefer to deal with the situation would rather leave/quit the job than seek to address it by reporting the sexual harassment case.

Respondents also argued that it was difficult to report sexual harassment because it is a humiliating and degrading experience, there are no laid down procedures of going about reporting the case and there are complexities involved in proving sexual harassment because it is the word of the boss against the subordinate target. The differentiated nature of women's contracts also meant that they could not support each other's claims of sexual harassment. Some women (4/14) thought that the target deserved to be harassed and they recommended decent clothing, reduced interaction between men and women and avoidance of male customers in order to curb sexual harassment. Of these 4 women 3 were older, married women.

Sexual harassment is costly to the organisation in the sense that it reduces organisational productivity, increases labour turnover, absenteeism

etc. Though the organisation lost at least 1 female employee per month management did not see any link between labour turnover and sexual harassment. Management could not link sexual harassment to any organisational outcome except that sexual harassment affected the dignity of the target person. Without exit interviews being done to find the reasons for female turnover, management could not estimate the effects of sexual harassment on staff turnover.

The current organisational policies on sexual harassment

The basic policy guiding the department store is the Labour Act of Zimbabwe since the organisation does not have a sexual harassment policy. However, the problem with the Labour Act is that it does not address sexual harassment directly but it outlines unfair labour practice which incorporates discrimination on the grounds of sex. The code of conduct at the organisation is silent on sexual harassment. All employees have never had any gender awareness and sexual harassment awareness training. Most employees did not know that what they were actually exposed to is sexual harassment up to the point when this research was carried out.

Management argue that due to the hyperinflationary environment in which the organisation is operating in they can not afford training programmes to educate employees on sexual harassment. Management further argued that they bought loose fitting uniforms for female employees and also discouraged the same women from wearing trousers in order to avoid 'provoking' men. One manager went on to say that 'as far as we are concerned, there is no sexual harassment here because there are no reports on that issue". Management further blamed women for being unable to say no to the advances from men. Management however, highlighted that they needed' a feminine touch' in the department store and women's patience in dealing with a diversity of customers.

DISCUSSION

At Tatenda men harass women on allegations that they (women) bring this harassment on themselves by being 'too friendly'. They also blame women for being too serious and not taking men's sexist jokes lightly. These jokes are meant to increase humour in the workplace and therefore women misinterpret men's behaviour. It is mostly the powerful bosses who constitute the majority of harassers. Male supervisors take advantage of the vulnerability of female employees thus lending support to the power differences and socio-cultural models (Fitzgerald 2001). The power differences model explains sexual harassment as a consequence of differences in power between men (who are higher in organisational hierarchy and women (occupying low position). This is consistent with the socio-cultural model which suggests that patriarchal value systems give

disproportionate power to men and women. Women's lesser status in the larger society is reflected in workplace structures and consequently male dominance continues to be the rule. While men are socialised into role of sexual assertion, leadership and persistence, women are socialised into submissive and passive roles. These socio-cultural roles are laid out in the workplace where men bring to the work place gender based explanations and most men rely on those gender expectations when interacting with women, responding to women as women rather that as employees or co-workers.

The study shows that some men reported that they were harassed by women who dressed in skimpy transparent and tight fitting clothes. Such women triggered their sexual drives and thus leading to sexual harassment of the same women. This explains why some women have the same sentiments and thus recommended 'decent clothing' for the target of sexual harassment. Such views lend support to the biological explanations of sexual harassment which state that men naturally have higher sexual drive than women. Natural/biological theories of sexual harassment explain harassing behaviour as natural and possibly inevitable (Gregory 1991:85). Men have stronger sex drives and are therefore biologically motivated to engage in sexual pursuit of women. Thus sexual harassment is viewed as a by-product of the situation. The organisation strategy of providing loose fitting uniforms is also in line with this kind of thinking. However, such a strategy is just a defence mechanism of blaming the victim of harassment (Crawford 1999:63).

Sexual harassment is prevalent where codes of sexual conduct and acceptable sexual attitudes are dominantly male and male dominated. Sexual harassment at the department store is institutionalised and is the norm. Mazies (1996:206) argues that when sexual harassment is institutionalised women end up thinking that, that is how men ought to behave towards them and that women are supposed to absorb harassment positively. Haralambos and Holborn (1990) suggest that sales ladies work has got partriachal images and therefore it is difficult for them to be taken seriously. The organisation taps on their feminine qualities to perform emotional labour required to be salesladies (Fineman et al 2005, Noon ad Blyton 2002). Unattached women are viewed as available to both the male employees and customers.

In line with the arguments by Crawford (1999), Fitzgerald et al (1997, 2001), Gutek and Koss (1993), and Loy and Stewart (1998) this study reveals that sexual harassment has psychological and physiological effects on the individual. It creates a feeling of job dissatisfaction, low self esteem, fear, low job commitment etc. This could later lead to labour turnover, absenteeism and poor relationships with co-workers. Female employees end up being grumpy, avoiding customers and thus affecting both the sales and the image of the department store.

Why sexual harassment is not reported

Sexual harassment is not reported because of the weak position of women in the organsiation and the refusal by the management at the organisation to

recognise and define sexual harassment as a problem. Sexual harassment is not viewed as a problem like drunkenness, ill treatment of customers, theft etc needing attention. Women also keep quiet hoping the situation will end. Fear of transfers, loss of jobs fuels the culture of silence (Getecha and Chipika 1995). However, ignoring the situation does not make the problem go away and is thus an ineffective strategy.

As in the paradox of complaining thesis by Quinn (2000) women at Tatenda feel that by reporting sexual harassment they are victimising themselves and validating the harassment as harmful and personal. Married women fear jeopardising their marriages as their husbands would rather blame the women than confront the harasser. Therefore it becomes better to keep quiet and protect the marriage than to speak out and be divorced. The young uneducated women would rather maintain their jobs than facing unemployment in a country that is facing a harsh economic environment characterised by an inflation of over 1000%.

There is also fear that responding negatively to a joke also shows a lack of a sense of humour. However, evidently the jokes are humiliating. The paradoxical situation in this case also becomes that if one laughs at the joke they reinforce it but they are accepted in this male dominated environment. However, the person at the same time hates the joke because it is made at their expense but also not laughing at the same joke gives the perception that the person is too serious, feminist, over-sensitive and therefore not acceptable in this male dominated sphere (Fineman et al 2005).

Because women regard sexual harassment as coming from bosses and married men only, this means that sexual harassment from single men might be accepted as leading to workplace romance. However, romantic relationships especially between superiors and subordinates may result in conflicts of interest, flawed or biased decision making and other workplace inequalities that may negatively affect individual performance and careers. They may also result in feelings of jealousy, hatred and stress among observers of the romantic relationship (Garry and Pearsal 1991).

CONCLUSION

Men at the department store think that women are oversensitive, too serious and misinterpreting their innocent jokes. They also think that women are to blame for sexual harassment because they do not dress decently. This lends support to Fineman et al (2005)'s assertion that men stereotype women into categories of either the desexualised mother or the 'whore' who must blame herself for arousing male sexual desire by her inviting looks. Fineman et al (2005) further highlight that the same organisation that seeks to use feminine qualities of women' to civilise the male environment of aggression further discourages women when they actively use these qualities to further their chances of promotion by branding such women as ' tarts' or whores.

Jokes generally break the monotony and routine of the organisation, however, if they are made at the expense of somebody or if they exceed their limit they become a source of stress (Fineman et al 2005, Noon and Blyton 2002). Jokes at the department store alienate women because they are made at the expense of women, especially those jokes about men's sexual prowess in the bedroom.

While sex is a feature of organisations sexual harassment is not inevitable. Organisations can reduce it if they want by educating employee and developing policies and programmes to curb it and develop healthy work environment (Gutek 1993). Harassment is likened to vulnerability and dependency in an organisation that presents unfair conditions of work (Noon and Blyton 2002). At the department store sexual harassment reveals a combination of factors;(1) The spill over of inequality from the society to the organisation,(2) The individual nature of experiences such that definitions differ from one individual to the other,(3) Power differences between the harasser and the target,(4) Institutionalised sexism at the department store.
In line with Gutek (1993)'s argument I recommend that the following be responses to sexual harassment at the department store;
1.   Adopting, enforcing and disseminating reasonable sexual harassment policies and grievance procedures.
2.   Appraising employees of charges against them immediately upon learing of the alleged misconduct.
3.   Conducting fair and full investigations of charges.
4.   Ensuring that penalties are commensurate with the seriousness of the offense.
5.   Counselling of victims (Khan 2005).
The workplace must be made to present equal opportunities to everybody and there must be fair procedures set out so that justice is seen to be done.
This research is a descriptive study of sexual harassment at a department store and does not claim to represent the entire service industry such that a survey of 2 or more organisations with a bigger heterogeneous sample size would have given a better picture of the service sector. However, the strength of the study is in the fact that it adds on to the few studies that have been done so far about sexual harassment in Zimbabwe. It therefore strengthens the case for policy formulation on sexual harassment in both private and public organisations by revealing the widespread nature of the problem in Zimbabwe.

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