Antecedents and Experience of Sexual Harassment at Individual and Group Level

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Sexual Harassment is recognized as a serious problem globally with respect to individual, organizations and society. In Pakistan some research have been done on the experience of sexual harassment and its outcome, the predicator- experience relationship still needs to be explored.

Literature Review :In this conceptual paper we have reviewed previous literature and research on the antecedents and experience of sexual harassment. The literature review consists of definition of sexual harassment, review of antecedent theories like biological theory, organizational theory, socio-cultural theory, sex-role spill over, person by situation Illionis model and four factor theory.

Framework: Furthermore by combining person by situation model and Illionis model of sexual harassment, we have developed few hypotheses which relate individual male's proclivity of sexual harassment, group gender ratio and organizational tolerance for sexual harassment with the female's experience of sexual harassment at both group and individual level.

Conslusion: The conclusion outlines some future guidelines for research in the domain of sexual harassment and the possible limitations and constraints of this research.

Sexual harassment has lived out the start of account of history of humanity. The global recognition of the problem and research over the past 30 years on this topic has, indeed, put sexual harassment on the map and made people aware that it is a grave and everyday problem that could affect anyone. Although not a gender specific, most of studies have revealed women to be the victim in the unwanted, undesirable and unwelcomed harass attempts (Luthar and Luthar, 2007, Pina et al., 2009)

Antecedents, outcomes and definition (Anila, 1998a) of sexual harassment in a specific area of the world cannot be generalized globally due to divergence in behaviors, based upon effects of domestic, regional, national (Luthar and Luthar, 2007), and organizational cultures and individual characteristics (Gruber et al., 1996).The definition of sexual harassment varies from society to society based upon, both victim and perpetrator's perception, social values and norms. It is a common observation that social-sexual behaviors norm in one culture may be totally unacceptable in another (Hardman and Heidelberg, 1996)

According to a survey carried out by a non-governmental organization of Pakistan, the women who reported some form of sexual harassment at workplace, stood at staggering 93% (Press 2008). Taken as a taboo to talk about this issue, it has been one of the least explored areas in this country. Research has found that the incident of harassing widely practiced at every possible mingling places of two genders (co-education institutes, workplace, public places etc) in the form of staring, sexual comments, molestation and some form of unwanted physical contact (Anila 1998). Although most prone are the overexposed and assertive ladies, not safe are the

sober and protective type as well (Anila 1998). One interesting point to mention is the diversity in perception amongst the men and women of different culture, regarding the initiation and definition of sexual harassment process. Men and women see and evaluate such behaviors very differently. For example prolonged staring may not be regarded as harassing act by a male, on the other hand a lady may perceive as an act of sexual harassment.   Studies that have found large sex differences in perceptions and reactions to sexually harassing situations throughout the globe that is both genders maintain a difference of opinion on perception of sexual harassment experience.

Most of the work on sexual harassment has been confined to individual level and exploring the relationship between sexual harassment and its outcomes. In this paper we attempt to develop a conceptual model integrating the organizational and individual level antecedents of sexual harassment with sexual harassment experience of females at individual and group level. In addition we also proposed a model by placing different globally accepted acts of sexual harassment at three different intensity levels.

WHAT IS SEXUAL HARASSMENT?

Literature has defined gender discrimination at a workplace as a bias behavior towards a person based upon his or her gender but a unanimous and globally accepted definition of organizational sexual harassment has yet to evolve (Luthar and Luthar, 2008) which is due to diverse approaches and perspectives adopted by researches towards studying antecedents and outcomes of SH. Difference in sexual harassment definitions and evolution of multiple theories are due to diverging national culture, characteristics and perceptions of perpetrator and victim, culture and climate of organization along with the dissimilar instruments of

measurement(Cantisano et al., 2008). Moreover we can posit that there are diverging perspective in defining a single phenomenon as is always the case in psychological and management studies. Statistics collected from all over the world has concluded that millions of women in organizational setup experiences harassment and have to cope with its consequences. Authority position may allows women to attempt the act, research has shown that women are mostly the victim(Celik and Celik, 2007). Four dimensions are identified to define sexual harassment that is legal, psychological, behavioral and sex based (Kelly et al., 2009). Fitzgerald et Al. has defined sexual harassment as a negative psychological experience by the victim which is because of an offensive and threatening sexual advance by the co-worker or supervisor in an organization(Magley et al., 1999) with individual characteristics, group behavior and situational factors as predicators and possible outcomes same as other job stressors(Fitzgerald et al., 1995). Some of the developed sexual harassment predicator, experience and outcome theories are natural-biological, Organizational, Socio cultural(Tangri et al., 1982, Schwartz et al., 1997, Tangri and Hayes, 1997, Tangri et al., 1997), sex role spill over(Gutek and Morasch, 1982), person by situation(Pryor et al., 1995), Illionis Model(Fitzgerald et al., 1995, Fitzgerald et al., 1997, Mcinnis and Fitzgerald, 1997, Hurt, 2000) and Four factor Theory(O'Hare and O'Donohue, 1998). Two legal categories have been identified which are 1. "Quid pro quo" i.e coercive behavior or demand of sexual favor related to workplace decisions and special treatment. 2. "Hostile Environment" i.e those unwanted sexual acts which hinder the normal work process and may result in hostility and offensiveness(Cantisano et al., 2008)

Sexual harassment at a work place is associated with a weakening of interpersonal relationships, lower levels of organizational commitment, job motivation and job satisfaction and higher levels of job stress, absenteeism and turnover (Gutek and Koss, 1993). Quantitative data

shows a negative relationship of Sexual Harassment with short and long term physical, psychological, psychosocial and occupational cost for harassed and their families(Yusuf Celik, 2007). It clearly indicates how detrimental, sexual harassment can be for the efficiency and effectiveness of the organization.

ANTECEDENTS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Why sexual harassment occurs is still a widely explored concept and lot of diversifying theories have been presented to explain the antecedents and outcomes of sexual harassment which tries to explain the characteristics of both harasser and victims, the experience of sexual harassment for both harasser and victim and the environmental issues. These theories can be classified into early theories of sexual harassment and contemporary theories which include two very important models of sexual harassment, that is a model of sexual harassment presented by Fitzgerald et Al. and Person by Situation(PXS) Model developed by Pryor et Al. ((Hurt, 2000). Illionios Model of sexual harassment (Fitzgerald et al., 1997, Fitzgerald et al., 1995, Mcinnis and Fitzgerald, 1997) and PXS Model (Pryor, 1987, Pryor et al., 1995) are by far the two most developed and explored frameworks of both antecedents and outcomes of sexual harassment which describe the sexual harassment phenomena in a very beneficial manner. In the next few lines we are going to discuss the antecedents of sexual harassment as proposed by few of the developed theories of sexual harassment.

By reviewing the sexual harassment literature, court cases, reports and related press, Tangri, et al. has proposed three models of sexual harassment, 1) the biological-natural model, 2) the organizational model, and 3) the social cultural model(Tangri et al., 1982). All these "Macro" theories of view organizational sexual harassment in a broader framework and cannot

single handed explain the antecedents and consequences of sexual harassment, hence are overshadowed by the contemporary models of Fitzgerald, et al and Pryor, et al.(Cleveland et al., 2000). In addition the biological model was not empirically proved although there were some significant positive empirical results for the organizational and socio-cultural model(Tangri et al., 1982, Paludi, 1990).

Biological Theory

The biological model of sexual harassment (Tangri et al., 1982, Schwartz et al., 1997, Tangri and Hayes, 1997, Tangri et al., 1997) has proposed that sexual harassment is a result of natural sexual characteristics of human being. First of the two "versions" of the theory proposes that biologically men has strong physiological urge for sexual activity hence may exert coercive powers towards women, the weaker link, in order to satisfy the sex drive, where as the other version has perspective that, naturally men and women has mutual attraction and likeness hence they both are responsible for sexual acts at workplace. This implies that a person may not have an intention of sexual harassment but still would involve in the act owing to the motivation provided by opposite sex attraction, a natural attribute. (Tangri et al., 1982).

Organizational Theory.

Organization structure and climate influence the act or attempt of sexual harassment (Tangri et al., 1982). Fitzgerald and associates have declared organizational climate as the most important predicator of sexual harassment in organizations(Fitzgerald et al., 1997). The organizational theory (Tangri, et al., 1982) postulates that occurrence of sexual harassment is depended upon control structure, power exercising and decision making authority, the gender ratio and certain characteristics of organizational culture such as "gendered organizational

norms" which may view females as sex objects.(Cleveland et al., 2000). Females who have relatively lower position in organizational hierarchy and have a vulnerable career position are most likely to be the victims. On the other hand perpetrators would be the one who are higher in hierarchy chain and not likely to be reported by the victim. The office arrangement (for example a close room office or lot of private places) would, to a large extent, determine the intensity of the sexual act (Tangri et al., 1982)

Socio-cultural Theory.

Historically cultures and societal norms have developed in a way that males exercise their dominance over women, basically due to physical, economical and political superiority(Tangri et al., 1982). Socio-cultural theory posits that each gender has specific roles to play in the social interaction network. Sexual harassment is a way for men to express dominance hence are more likely to be perpetrators whereas due to intrinsic physical weakness and submissive behavior, females are the most possible victims(Cleveland et al., 2000).

Sex Role Spillover.

Sex role spillover suggest that men may carry over their high sexual desire and gender based expectations at workplace stereotyping women as a commodity to release the sexual urge instead of considering them as their co-workers in a job role. Spill over occurs in both male dominated organizations and female dominated organizations with a different approach (Gutek and Cohen, 1987, Gutek and Morasch, 1982) For example if there is a job in which men are greater in number, the numerically less females are "role deviates" who are given more sexual attention and they are aware of this special treatment. On the other hand in female dominant jobs it becomes difficult for women to differentiate between work roles and sex roles, hence the extra

sexual attention they receive are considered part of job (Cleveland et al., 2000). This also leads to the conclusion that likelihood of both reported and unreported sexual harassment and would be greater in a male dominated organizations as compared to the female dominated ones.(Ragins and Scandura, 1995). "Occupational culture" is also an important component to explain the sex spill over phenomena. A more masculine culture would be corresponding to a male dominated culture, having greater physical and sexual attributes(Cleveland et al., 2000)

Person by Situation.

Although sex-role spill over is a numerically tested theory and takes a more holistic view of sexual harassment and in comparison with previous three theories, it is still not successful in incorporating the individual perpetrator characteristics and organizational and situational variables that may moderate the harasser and harassment relationship(Pina et al., 2009). One of the two most discussed contemporary sexual harassment theories is Pryor et Al's "person by situation" theory(Pryor, 1987, Pryor et al., 1995) which assumes that men have potential likeness for the act of sexual harassment which can be accurately measured and men high in likeness of sexual harassment are likely to exhibit the behavior if grounds are clear and situation is suitable(Willness et al., 2007). To start with, Pryor adopted the notion that previous research on sexual harassment lacks research on characteristics of harasser due to the fact that people normally are reluctant to reveal being sexual harasser (Pryor, 1987). Pryor took an initiative by developing LSH (likelihood to sexually harass) Scale, the most widely used scale to measure the proclivity of sexual harassment of an individual, in a self reporting, but indirect manner(Pina et al., 2009). This also implies that when come across an opportunity (situational factor), men who scored high in LSH are more likely to indulge in the sexual harassment activity, as compared to the low scoring ones.

Illinois Model

Organizational climate and job gender ratio have been identified as the two most important antecedents (Willness et al., 2007) in model of sexual harassment developed by Fitzgerald et Al. (Fitzgerald et al., 1997, Fitzgerald et al., 1995, Mcinnis and Fitzgerald, 1997) at the University of Illinois and was endorsed by a longitudinal study carried out two years later(Glomb et al., 1999) discussing that reported sexual harassment experience and measure of organizational tolerance variables can be used to anticipate future occurrences of the act in the same environment.

The Illinois model(Hurt, 2000) posits that the experience of sexual harassment is a workplace stress whose antecedents and outcomes are to be explored with organizational and its environmental context as other organizational stressor(Fitzgerald et al., 1995). Organizational stress is a psychological state which occurs when an individual perceive a potential threat of lose something they value because they feel helpless in properly fulfilling work roles or the return on effort may not be as significant as expectations (Halbesleben and Buckley, 2004) and would result in negative job attitudes and negative workplace behaviors such as job satisfaction, coworker perceptual support, psychopathological and physiological outcomes, absenteeism, turnover intentions, anxiety, strain, tardiness, low commitment, depression, burnout, boredom, job performance (Sullivan and Bhagat, 1992).

Organizational internal environment parameters such as permissiveness of the organizational climate (tolerance for sexual harassment), gendered occupations, and organizational ethics, norms and policies affect the likelihood of sexual harassment occurrence but the majority of literature empirically declare organizational climate as the most important

predicator of sexual harassment at organizations(Tangri et al., 1982, Pryor et al., 1995, Hulin et al., 1996, Fitzgerald et al., 1997, Mcinnis and Fitzgerald, 1997). Hulin, Fitzgerald and Drasgow identified three important aspects of organizational climate i.e potential danger faced by the harassed on complaining, power status of the harassed which disallows any legal and organizational action, and importance given by the organization to the complain (Hulin et al., 1996). These three aspects indicate that organizational tolerance for sexual harassment is a perception and is measure by "Organizational tolerance for Sexual Harassment Inventory(OTSHI)" scale developed by Hulin, Fitzgerald and Drasgow (Hulin et al., 1996). According to Fitzgerald et Al, the extent of organizational tolerance for sexual harassment is determined by the group behavior at workplace (Fitzgerald et al., 1995) Organizational power structure can also be used to predict the occurrence of sexual harassment at workplace which is not gender specific. (Jeanette and Melinda, 1993). The second antecedent variable in the Illionis model of sexual harassment, Job gender context is also discussed in the spillover theory with detail (Gutek and Cohen, 1987, Gutek and Morasch, 1982). it refers to the gender ratio in an organization and measure of gender dominance (masculine or feminine)(Fitzgerald et al., 1997).

Four Factor Theory

O' Hare and O' Donohue incorporated socio-cultural factors, organizational factors and individual characteristics in relation to the both perpetrator and harasser, propose the four factor theory(O'Hare and O'Donohue, 1998) hypothesizing that four factors are necessary for sexual harassment to take place: 1. Some motivation force like physical attractiveness of opposite sex, power and control needs; 2. Overcoming internal resistive forces like perceiving sexual harassment as illegal, immoral, hazardous and possible empathy for victim; 3. Overcoming external resistive forces like organizational and environment variables such as organizational

procedure for handling sexual harassment complaints, professionalism, gender ratio, privacy at work place and socio cultural variables like sexist attitudes, possible outcomes for the victim; 4. Overcoming the resistance of victim for example emotional stability of the victim, the familiarity with complain procedures, job status and perceived sex role. The above four factors encapsulates organizational and socio cultural theories and individual characteristics making it a comprehensive framework. In order to empirically test the model, O'Hare and O'Donohue administered questionnaires for sexual harassment experience(Fitzgerald et al., 1988), personality traits and characteristics of organizational climate.

The above literature review leads us to our first three hypotheses:

H1: in a group arrangement, self reported sexual harassment proclivity of males is positively related to self reported sexual harassment experiences of females in that group.

H2: gender ratio of females in the group is positively related to self reported experience of sexual harassment by females in that group.

H3: organizational tolerance for sexual harassment has a positive relation with an individual female self reported sexual harassment experience.

INDIVIDUAL TOLERANCE FOR SEXUAL HARASSMENT

In a study conducted on college students, tolerance for sexual harassment was found to be positively correlated with likelihood to rape, (Reilly et al., 1992) which suggest that a man who has greater proclivity for sexual harassment is likely to be more tolerant for sexual harassment. Organizational factors which account for tolerance of sexual harassment and individual attitude

towards females to a large extend determines tolerance for sexual harassment for that person(Vogt et al., 2007).

This leads us to our fourth hypothesis:

H4: self reported sexual harassment proclivity of an individual male is positively related to his perceptual tolerance for sexual harassment.

For females the predicators of tolerance for sexual harassment has been found to be self definition of sexual harassment, perception of attractiveness, social status and likelihood for dating a male (Angelone et al., 2009)

H5: individual female tolerance for sexual harassment moderates the relationship between organizational tolerance for sexual harassment and self reported sexual harassment experience.

From a managerial perspective, sexual harassment issues pose difficult challenges for multinational corporations that send employees overseas where they often have to contend with cultural values and conditions much different from the ones in the host country(Luthar and Luthar, 2007). Social-sexual behaviors acceptable in one culture may be totally unacceptable in another (Hardman and Heidelberg, 1996). Using Hofsted's cultural dimensions (Hofstede and Bond, 1984) to explain cross cultural sexual harassment behaviors, (Luthar and Luthar, 2008) implicated that Each culture would define the act with a different perspective based upon social acceptance and perception of the definition. Luthar and Luthar proposed from literature review that in countries with lower individual index, high uncertainty avoidance, masculinity and high power distance index, females will be more tolerant to sexual exploitation at workplace and men will tend to engage in sexual behavior and vice versa.

CONCLUSION

Due to the fact that people usually do not openly like to discuss the topics which involve sex and genders, there are chances that the result obtained would depict a large discrepancy between observed instances and gathered data.

Why sexual harassment occurs is still a widely debatable issue, and this study present a model to explore the antecedents of sexual harassment in relation with the experience of sexual harassment by females. As discussed earlier, there are factors related to organizational climate that make it suitable for sexual harassment and individual characteristics that may lead him to sexual harass a female. Female sexual harassment experience to a large extend would be contingent upon her tolerance for sexual harassment. The model devised in this study is a combination of person by situation model (Pryor et al., 1995) and Fitzgerald's Illinois model of sexual harassment (Fitzgerald et al., 1995). Person by situation model which depicts a relationship between males' proclivity for sexual harassment and females sexual experience was used in first hypothesis at group level. This hypothesis assumed that in a group if males have greater accumulative likelihood of sexual harassment, the females will have a greater accumulative sexual harassment experience. To study this relationship at individual level, we must have a one to one data collection from a perpetrator and corresponding victim, which is very difficulty due to different people at both ends and to identify such people (Hurt, 2000). A major issue in the relationship between males proclivity for sexual harassment and females sexual harassment experience in a group is the effect of those males sexual harassment proclivity and sexual harassment attempts, who are not part of the group but may come in close contact with females, either outside the university or students of same university but other groups.

FUTURE RESEARCH

The phenomena of sexual harassment in last few decades have been explored in a very scientific and systematic manner giving birth to numerous theories which can be used to predict the consequences, experience and outcomes of the phenomena in quite accurate manner (Kelly et al., 2009). In a country like Pakistan discussing topics like sexual harassment was considered a taboo and people were generally reluctant to participate in research surveys (Anila, 1998b), although the trends have changed recently and people are getting aware of the seriousness of increasing trend and government passed an anti sexual harassment law in the beginning of 2010, for the first time recognizing the legal status of sexual harassment.   The lack of courtship opportunities, late marriages and more exposure to sex material via electronic media and internet, has acted as a catalyst in enhancing incidence of sexual harassment, both in and outside organizations. This demand for a research identifying sexual harassment predicators and outcomes variables, pertaining to a particular national culture, like Pakistan. In addition current model can be extended to different industries and large sample size.

With sexual harassment a common act in Pakistan's culture, it is necessary to define the perception of sexual harassment by working women. There is a drastic change in the cultural values of Pakistan as it is more liberal due to a sudden outburst of foreign media and Pakistani women have rapidly adopted the liberal standards. This is clearly evident in the informal social environment along with the workplaces. Many behavioral aspects considered as sexual harassment ten years ago may not be valid now a days. The less chance of open man-women courtship as compared to western liberal societies and more exposure of women in open with bold gestures and revealing outfits cause an intense sexual stimulation in men, which may lead higher chances of sexual harassment. In order to develop a comprehensive definition of sexual

harassment we need to find out that what gestures, actions and dialogues of fellow male workers at workplace are perceived as acts of sexual harassment by the female workers and they rate them at what intensity level, hence we propose three standards. (Chelsea R. willness, 2007) that is 1. High level of sexual harassment (HLSH), 2. Average level of sexual harassment (ALSH), 3. Mild level of sexual harassment (MLSH). We propose following acts of sexual harassment distributed in the three standards that is, High level of Sexual Harassment (HLSH) may include attempted or actual rape, assault, deliberate physical touch like massage from the back, leaning over, pinching, cornering, smooching, and hugging, sharing sexual jokes or sexual material; Average level of sexual harassment (ALSH) may include slight physical touch or standing extremely close, patting, asking direct obscene questions, sexual comments and personal question regarding sexual life, blocking the path, and making sexual gestures with hands or body movement; Mild level of sexual harassment (MLSH) may include those act which do not include physical contact may be termed as mild in intensity, mostly bared and ignored by many women. These are giving personal gifts, telephone calls and messages, staring, whistling, hanging around and talking uselessly and sexual facial expressions. A survey can be conducted at large scale to determine the intensity and definition of sexual harassment in Pakistani women.

An important issue that needs to be explored in the study of sex and gender is the effect of companionship on sexual harassment proclivity of a male. We propose that sexual harassment tendency of a male can be significantly reduced by a bidirectional relationship with opposite gender. The study was focused primarily on antecedents of males harassing females, research needs to be expanded to study the harassment of males by females, males by males, females by females, group harassing a male or female, dominant group harassing submissive group.

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