Chapter 5: Summary and Findings

Introduction

The research study examines the antecedents and consequences of sexual harassment and the coping strategies used by the victims. The focus of the research study is on analyzing the nature, frequency of sexual harassment experienced by the victim, organizational mechanisms to deal with sexual harassment, individual characteristics such as job status of the victim, and consequences of sexual harassment on the victim-vocational, psychological, interpersonal and physical strain, the strategies (whether external or internal coping strategies) used by the victim to cope with sexual harassment. The research study has adopted a descriptive and quantitative research design. Data has been collected from a sample of 312 victims of sexual harassment (women garment workers) who have approached two unions for support through structured interview method using structured, close ended, standardized interview schedules.

Section 1- Summary

The Indian garment industry is the main source of employment after agronomy. It adds 14% to the industrial production, 4% to gross domestic production (GDP), and 17% to the export income. In Karnataka, the majority of the garment factories are situated in Bangalore and they provide employment to around five lakh women workers, employed in roughly 1200 huge production/buying houses and contract based moderate and mini setups (Lyimo, 2010). The women garment workers hold low job status and are from vulnerable backgrounds that are economically dependent on their jobs.

They constantly work under high pressure of meeting unreasonable targets and are placed under male supervisors who subjugate and harass them. Economic dependence on the job for
their livelihood, the social perception of obeying their superiors and spillover of patriarchal biases into the work environment make the women garment workers victims of physical, verbal and sexual harassment.

Fitzgerald et al. (1997) defined sexual harassment as comprising of three hypothetically distinct but connected classifications of conduct. Gender harassment involves instances of disapproving behavior not envisioned towards sexual collaboration rather, these are rudimentary, physical, verbal conducts that bear intimidating and aggressive outlooks about a particular gender—usually women. By distinction, unsolicited attention includes instances of sexually inappropriate conducts which is unwelcome. This consists of such physical and verbal activities as sexually provocative remarks, unwelcome touching. The third classification is sexual coercion or in legal terminology quid pro quo which is overt bribes or subtle intimidations to make the working situations liable on sexual conduct (Fitzgerald, Swan, & Magley, 1997; Kamal & Tariq, 1997). Legally sexual harassment is represented as two distinct classifications—quid pro quo and hostile work environment (Welsh, 1999).

Organisational culture may create a hostile and intimidating environment for the workers. Organisational power, hierarchy plays a vital role for growth and endurance of such culture. As the environment within the workplace deteriorates, it is more likely for definite inappropriate conduct to occur and be accepted as inevitable which leads to a spiral of incivility. This uncivil conduct becomes regular and is considered normal by the workers and the organisation (Hunt, Davidson, Fielded, & Hole, 2007).

Research studies indicate that women are the victims and the perpetrators are men. Women face vertical harassment i.e. harassment from superiors more than harassment from coworkers or subordinates. This reflects social norms that condition patriarchal attitudes and
also misuse of power by men who majorly occupy higher positions than women (Di Martino et al., 2003).

Establishing legitimate institutional mandates, proactive commitment of the employers or the stake holders, not allowing patriarchal biases to influence work culture, time bound redressing of sexual harassment complaints instils confidence in the working women (Gruber, 1998). Absence of policies and procedures or just mere adherence to the mandatory procedures is ineffective and it may in turn create hostile working environments reflecting organisational acceptance of sexually offensive or discriminative conducts (Hulin, Fitzgerald & Drasgow, 1996; Pryor, LaVite, & Stoller, 1993).

Most of the victims who have experienced an instance of sexual harassment do not report the episode due to a lack of confidence that they would be considered earnestly and the harasser would be reprimanded and the reason being fear of reprisal and/or anxieties about losing their employment (Pierce, 1997).

Victims of sexual harassment could respond in two ways, either externally or internally. The internal approach includes ways to handle the apprehensions and feelings linked to the incident (Denial, detachment, relabeling, illusory control, endurance). The External approach includes responses aimed at the distressing circumstances itself (Avoidance, Assertion, seeking social support, seeking institutional redressal, appeasement).

Sexual harassment is usually a series of incidents, than just a single remote occurrence. Victims do not challenge the harasser till numerous harassing occurrences have already been typically overlooked (Benson & Thomson, 1982; Dunwoody-Miller & Gutek, 1985; Lindsey, 1977; Loy & Stewart, 1984). Gruber and Bjorn (1982) found that victims in their study responded by either ignoring the harasser or making light of the harassment (Kamal & Tariq, 1997).
The victims usually used the indirect strategy of avoiding the harasser or situations where they would encounter the harasser (Culbertson et al., 1992; Loy & Stewart, 1984). As the frequency of the harassment increases there are more chances of the victim to demonstrate assertion or confront the harasser or use institutional sanctions to cope up with the situation (Gruber & Bjorn, 1986; Kamal, 1998; Livingston, 1982).

A literature search for evidence related to sexual harassment of women garment workers was conducted and search terms included sexual harassment at workplace, sexual harassment of women garment workers, working conditions of garment workers, coping with sexual harassment in Indian population as well as abroad from 1982 to 2015. The comprehensive search resulted in published research articles, reviews and editorials. Out of these 45 relevant studies were selected and were arranged under five main themes:

- Nature, antecedents and consequences of sexual harassment
- Effects of sexual harassment and coping strategy used by the victims
- Models and theories of sexual harassment
- Working conditions and sexual harassment in garment factories
- Intervention studies on dealing with sexual harassment at workplace.

**Objectives of the research study are as follows**

- To study the nature of sexual harassment experienced by the victims of sexual harassment at workplace.
- To study the frequency of sexual harassment experienced by the victims of sexual harassment at workplace.
- To study the organizational antecedents to sexual harassment at workplace.
• To study the association between job status of the victims and the frequency of sexual harassment experienced.

• To study the level of personal strain (vocational, psychological, interpersonal and physical strain) experienced by the victims of sexual harassment at workplace.

• To study the type of coping strategies (internally focused coping strategies, externally focused coping strategies) employed by the victims of sexual harassment at workplace.

• To develop a training manual based on the findings of the study to help victims effectively deal with sexual harassment at workplace.

Research design

Descriptive research design has been utilized to describe the nature and frequency of sexual harassment, the coping strategies employed by the victims of sexual harassment and the personal strain experienced by the victims of sexual harassment. The research study analyzes the association between antecedents such as organizational mechanisms, job status of the victim in relation to the harasser and sexual harassment, the association between the frequency of sexual harassment and the coping strategies employed by the victims and the frequency of personal strain experienced by the victims. It is a quantitative study, employing standardized tools to collect data and statistical methods have been used to measure the relationships between the variables of the study.

Sample of the study

Since the researcher was denied permission by the garment factories to collect data on sexual harassment and the lack of sampling frame (i.e. number of women garment workers who have experienced sexual harassment), the researcher contacted two unions- Karnataka Garment Workers Union and the Garment Labour Union and using the technique of
purposive sampling screened 700 women garment workers who were victims of workplace harassment and who had approached the two unions- Karnataka Garment Workers Union and the Garment Laborers Union for support over the past one year. In order to confirm, that the harassment experienced by the victims fell into the purview of sexual harassment as defined by the law, a screening tool i.e. an interview schedule was developed based on the legal definition of (behaviors which constitute) sexual harassment using which 700 women garment workers who were victims of workplace harassment and who had approached the two unions for support were interviewed. Out of 700 participants, 380 participants agreed to have experienced sexual harassment at their workplace, out of this 312 victims consented to participate in the research study and were included in the study.

**Tools for data collection**

The researcher employed structured interview method to collect data for the main study. The items in the interview schedule were close-ended and each item had multiple response options from which the participants could select the appropriate response.

The following standardized tools have been utilized to interview the participants of the research study-

**Sexual harassment experience questionnaire** (Kamal, 1998)

This includes 35 behavioral units.

It has four response options –never (1), once (2), a few times (3), and very frequent (4). The total score of the 35 items of SHEQ can be thus ranged from 35 to 140. High score indicates the high frequency sexual harassment. The distribution of 35 items under each sub category is as follows-
Gender harassment: Within the category of gender harassment, there are 7 items (lewd jokes or songs, staring, use of obscene material).

Unwanted sexual attention – This category includes 21 items (unwanted discussion of private/ intimate matters, request for dates, unsolicited and forceful attempts to fondle or touch).

Sexual coercion - This category includes 7 items (direct or subtle bribery for sexual favors, negative consequences for noncooperation).

Coping with harassment questionnaire (Fitzgerald, 1990) is a 50 item inventory categorized into two segments i.e., externally focused approach and internally focused approach. There are 26 items under internally focused approach and 24 items under externally focused approach.

Personal strain questionnaire (Osipow and Spokane, 1987) consists of 40 items which is classified into 4 subdivisions with ten units categorized under specific area- vocational strain, psychological strain, interpersonal strain and physical strain. There are five response options extending from never to always.

Validation of the tool

To establish the validity of the translated tool, the original English version, was translated into Kannada and back translated into English, seeking the guidance of an expert so that the process of translation does not lead to change in the meaning or interpretation of the words. The translated Kannada version and the back translated English version were reviewed by five experts who have knowledge of the subject area and both the languages. Their responses confirmed the validity of the translated version. To check the reliability, the researcher used test retest method and analysed the scores using paired t-test.
Analysis of the data

The following are the statistical tests used-

- **Descriptive statistics (mean, frequency)** has been used to analyze the socio demographic variables, presence or absence of internal complaints committees, functioning of internal complaints committee, the extent of sexual harassment experienced by the victims, to identify high scores among sub categories of sexual harassment, internal focused coping and external focused coping and personal strain.

- **Inferential statistics (chi square, Mann Whitney U test)** has been used for cross tabulation of socio demographic variables with sexual harassment, distribution of the sample under low and high frequency sexual harassment in relation to absence of functional internal complaints committee, job status of the victim, to analyze the association between frequency of sexual harassment and coping strategies of victims and personal strain experienced by the victim.

Section 2- Findings of the study

Findings indicating socio demographic profile of the participants

- 83% of the participants in the study are between the age group of 18-32 years.
- 42% of the participants in the study under have completed their secondary schooling.
- 38% of the participants in the study belong to the reserved caste.
- 77% of the participants in the study are Hindus.
- 95% of the participants in the study are located in Bangalore urban.
- 51% of the participants in the study are unmarried.
- 60% of the participants in the study live in nuclear families.
- 56% of the participants in the study have no children.
• 61% of the participants in the study have been working for a period 1-3 years.

• 90% of the participants in the study have been employed in the current garment factory for a period 1-3 years.

• 97% of the participants in the study work for export garment factories.

• 98% of the participants in the study work in day shift.

• 44.6% of the participants in the study are tailors.

• 98% of the participants in the study have received job training.

• 74.4% of the participants in the study have a family income ranging between Rs 9000-13000.

• 97% of the participants of the study get paid on a monthly basis.

• 98% of the participants of the study receive employee insurance card.

• 95% of the participants of the study receive maternity leave.

• 69% of the participants of the study do not receive annual paid leave.

• 97% of the participants of the study receive provident fund.

• 84% of the participants of the study do not receive gratuity.

• 97% of the participants of the study receive bonus.

**Findings indicating the nature of sexual harassment experienced by the victims**

• Among the three sub categories of sexual harassment, the mean value of gender harassment which is 3.14 is high in comparison to the mean value of unwanted sexual attention which is 2.70 and sexual coercion which is 2.44. The mean value indicates that the victims of sexual harassment experience gender harassment more than unwanted sexual attention and sexual coercion.
Findings indicating the frequency of sexual harassment experienced by the victims

- 75.3% of the victims have experienced high frequency sexual harassment and 24.7% of the victims experience low frequency sexual harassment.

Findings indicating the age of the harasser, job status of the harasser and reporting relationship of the victim of sexual harassment in relation to the harasser-

- 77% of the harassers are older than the victims of sexual harassment and 20% of the harassers are of the same age as the victim and 3% of the harassers are younger than the victims.
- 67% of the harassers are supervisors, 28.5% of the harassers are managers and 4.5% of the harassers are co-workers.
- 81.7% of the victims are in a reporting relationship with the harasser and have to interact with them on a regular basis 18.3% of the victims do not report to the harasser.

Findings indicating the coping strategies employed by the victims of sexual harassment

Among the internal coping categories, endurance as a coping strategy shows highest usage (mean= 19.28) and detachment as a coping strategy shows lowest usage (mean= 10.43).

Among the external coping strategies, seeking social support (mean= 20.25) as well as avoidance (mean =19.56) as coping strategies show high usage among the victims and assertion (mean=9.92) and seeking organisational relief (mean=8.97) show least usage among the victims of sexual harassment.
Findings indicating the personal strain experienced by the victims of sexual harassment.

Among the categories of personal strain the most experienced strain by the victims of sexual harassment is physical strain (mean= 35.56) and the least experienced is interpersonal strain (mean =31.58).

Findings indicating the cross tabulation of low and high frequency sexual harassment with specific socio demographic variables (sub independent variables) i.e. age, marital status, number of children of the participants

- The’ p’ value <.001 indicates a significant association between age of the victims and the frequency of sexual harassment experienced. 61% of the participants experiencing low frequency sexual harassment are above 27 years (mean age) and 92.8% of participants experiencing high frequency sexual harassment are below 27 years (mean age).
- The’ p’ value <.001 indicates a significant association between marital status of the victims and the frequency of sexual harassment experienced. 53.2% of the participants experiencing low frequency sexual harassment are married and 61.7% of the participants experiencing high frequency sexual harassment are unmarried.
- The’ p’ value <.001 indicates a significant association between number of children victims have and the frequency of sexual harassment experienced. 59.7% of the participants experiencing low frequency sexual harassment have one child and 67.2% of participants experiencing high frequency sexual harassment do not have children.

Findings related to the hypothesis

- The ‘p’ value <.001 shows that there is a significant association between sexual harassment experienced by the victim and presence of complaints committee.
90.8% of the participants experiencing low frequency sexual harassment are employed in garment factories which have functional complaint committees where sexual harassment can be reported and 9.2% of the participants experiencing high frequency sexual harassment are employed in garment factories which have functional complaint committees where sexual harassment can be reported. 96.6% of the participants experiencing high frequency sexual harassment are employed in garment factories which do not have complaint’s committees where sexual harassment can be reported and 3.4% of the participants experiencing low frequency sexual harassment are employed in garment factories which have no complaint committees where sexual harassment can be reported.

- The ‘p’ value <.001 shows that there is a significant association between the job status of the victim and frequency of sexual harassment experienced by the victim. 65% of the victims experiencing low frequency sexual harassment are in non-reporting relationship with the harasser and 35% of the victims experiencing low frequency sexual harassment are in a reporting relationship with the harasser. 97% of the victims experiencing high frequency sexual harassment are in a lower job status than the harasser and are in a reporting relationship with the harasser and 3% of the victims experiencing high frequency sexual harassment are not reporting to the harasser.

- The ‘p’ value <.001 indicates there is a significant association between high frequency sexual harassment and experience of high personal strain and low frequency sexual harassment and experience of low personal strain. The mean scores (procured from cross tabulation of sexual harassment and personal strain) indicate that higher the frequency of sexual harassment higher the vocational strain experienced by the victim (mean=35.13), higher the psychological strain experienced by the victim
(mean=37.05), higher the interpersonal strain experienced by the victim (mean=38.43), higher the physical strain experienced by the victim (mean=41.41) and therefore higher the personal strain experienced by the victim (mean= 152.04).

- The ‘p’ value <.001 indicates there is a significant association between high frequency sexual harassment and employing external focused coping and low frequency sexual harassment and employing internal focused coping. Higher the frequency of sexual harassment greater the probability of employing external focussed coping strategies (mean=85.92) to cope with sexual harassment which include attempts to pursue social support, appeasement, avoidance and lower the frequency of sexual harassment greater the probability of employing internal coping strategies (mean=99.11) such as detachment or distancing themselves from the event, minimizing the event, ignoring the harasser, reinterpreting the situation as non-threatening, blaming oneself for being victimized and enduring the harassment. When responses of the victims to each category of coping is segregated, the observation is majority of the victims experiencing high frequency sexual harassment have employed negative coping strategies such as seeking social support (mean=41.41) or avoidance (mean=38.43) or appeasement (mean=38.43) instead of confronting the harasser or seeking redressal.

Section 3 – Conclusion, Implications of the study and Suggestions for further research

Conclusion

The focus of the research study was on analyzing the nature and frequency of sexual harassment experienced by the victim, institutional mechanisms to deal with sexual harassment, individual characteristics such as job status of the victim in relation to frequency of sexual harassment experienced by the victim, and effects of sexual harassment on the
victim in terms of vocational, psychological, interpersonal and physical strain, the internal and external coping strategies employed by the victims to cope with sexual harassment. Victims experience gender harassment more than unwanted sexual attention and sexual coercion. Victims experience high frequency sexual harassment when there is absence of functional complaints committee and sexual harassment policy (at their workplace) with regard to sexual harassment. Victims experiencing high frequency sexual harassment are in a reporting relationship with the harasser who is in a higher job status than the victim. Victims experiencing high frequency sexual harassment also experience high vocational, psychological, interpersonal and physical strain (collectively personal strain). Victims experiencing low frequency sexual harassment employ internal focussed coping strategies and victims experiencing high frequency sexual harassment employ external focussed coping strategies to cope with sexual harassment. Therefore the hypothesis higher the frequency of sexual harassment experienced by the victim when there is absence of functional complaint committee and workplace sexual harassment policy, victims of sexual harassment are in a reporting relationship with the harasser who is in a higher job status than the victim, higher the frequency of sexual harassment at workplace higher the personal strain experienced by the victims, higher the frequency of sexual harassment at workplace higher the probability of employing externally focused coping strategies as compared to internally focused coping strategies by victims of sexual harassment is proved.

Implications of the study

Practical implications

- Employers are responsible to create and sustain a workplace environment void of sexual harassment. Their intolerance for such behaviours should be reflected in the
institutional sanctions and proactive steps should be taken to spread awareness about sexual harassment.

- Strict, immediate, time bound actions are to be taken while dealing with sexual harassment complaints.

- Having workplace sexual harassment policies or committees which are non-functional will create a hostile environment which will adversely affect workers (vocationally, physically, and psychologically) and also the organisation in terms of increased employee turnover and decrease in productivity.

- The employers should have training programs to create awareness with regard to sexual harassment and how to respond in specific situations (preventive and remedial) for all the employees including blue collar workers and support staff. The content of the training module should be designed to educate the management as well as employees in the lower cadre.

- Representatives of the employees should be on the drafting committee when the workplace sexual harassment policy is drafted.

- The most important implementing agency as recognised by the law is Internal complaints committee and this a multi stakeholder committee having representatives of the employee, employer and an external member. Periodical training of this committee is necessary as they directly deal with the victims.

- The human resource department should take an active role in disseminating information about sexual harassment in the orientation and also provide gender sensitivity training to the employees.
Educational implications

- Sexual harassment as a concept, as a social issue needs to be included as part of social work curriculum. It needs to be analysed from a socio cultural perspective, psychological perspective as well as from a legal perspective.

- Sexual harassment at workplace is a spill over of patriarchal biases cultivated and practiced in societies and it is an interplay of different factors. So it is important to develop a holistic view while studying the concept of sexual harassment.

Social work implications

Sexual harassment at workplace reflects gender discrimination and the misuse of power. Although there are legal mechanisms to address sexual harassment, simultaneously there is a need to provide education and training about gendered hierarchy, patriarchy which are broadly social justice issues. It is responsibility of social workers to emphasize the interplay of power and gender in creating oppression, how they are largely connected to the generally consented to patriarchal beliefs, conditioned sex role expectations and encourage a more egalitarian environment.

Research implications

- Keeping this research as a base, a training manual has been developed focussing on providing awareness about how victims should respond to sexual harassment (assertiveness training) and the measures employers have to take to prevent such occurrences in the workplace.

- While remedial measures are taken to help victims of sexual harassment cope with the situation, counselling as a method can be adopted and specific modules can be developed.
Limitations of the study

- The research study is limited to women garment workers who are members of the two unions.
- The researcher did not have access to the garment factories. This limits the researcher’s knowledge of the work environment.

Suggestions for further studies

- Research study which focuses on sexual harassment across cross section of working women’s population that is women working across different sectors can be taken up and a comparison can be made across the sectors.
- Intervention modules which are preventive and remedial in nature should be implemented and evaluated.
- Further research could be carried out on the role of the stake holders in the prevention of sexual harassment- media, civil society, labour inspectors. State women’s commission, academia.