

# **Sexual harassment in Sri Lankan workplaces**

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## **Abstract**

With the identification of copious ways in which sexual harassment can affect employees, employers and the society at large, it has become a much talked about issue among numerous parties in many countries. But sexual harassment at work places has not gained much acknowledgement in Sri Lanka and thus remains a mystery to our employers, employees and the government. Hence with the intention of creating a awareness regarding sexual harassment in Sri Lanka, the present study tries to identify sexual harassment among Sri Lankan working women by examining the different sexual behaviors and expressions of sexuality that occur in workplaces. In addition an examination of the nature and constitution of sexual harassment in our workplaces, are also carried out in the study.

In addressing the above objectives of the study, qualitative methodology is adopted. A sample of 28 female respondents was chosen from 4 companies in the industry category "financial intermediation", by employing 'snowball' sampling technique. In addition 6 top Human Resource Personnel from the 4 companies were also chosen as data sources. The necessary information was collected using in-person, in-depth interviews.

The findings of the study indicate very high prevalence of sexual harassment among the respondents, in varying degrees. Many respondents were identified to have been subjected to sexual harassment in numerous occasions. However many of these instances of sexual harassment can be regarded rather include less in severity. Nevertheless, all these experiences have had some Negative psychological effects on the respondents. It was also identified that the most common Harassers were supervisors and peers. Further analysis revealed that different power aspects and organizational aspects have played an important role in constituting sexual harassment in these 4 companies.