Relationship of female’s demographic characteristics with experience of sexual harassment at banks in Lahore, Pakistan

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Abstract

Sexual harassment is an issue of great concern for organizations worldwide due to its negative consequences both on victims of harassment and organizations collectively. This article discussed the role of various demographic variables including age, marital status and nature of organization (private/public) in relation to sexual harassment experience of female employees. Data is collected from 250 females’ employees in various banks situation at Lahore, Pakistan using three stage sampling technique. Respondents were asked about their sexual harassment experiences. One way ANOVA is used for more than one factors and t-test is used for only two factors for data analysis. Age and marital status are the most significant predictors for determining the level of sexual harassment experiences at workplace in Pakistan’s context.

Keywords: Sexual Harassment, Demographics, Pakistan.

INTRODUCTION

Demographic variables and characteristics of any individual have been focus of attention for many social sciences researchers since long because individual’s own attributes shapes one’s own perceptions, beliefs and behaviors and social scientists are concerned to study these behaviors and their outcomes (Parsons & Liden, 1984). This current study is investigating various demographics variables and their relationship with sexual harassment experience. Gender is constant in this current research study as demographic variables of females are studied and analyzed being the victims of sexual harassment which literature suggests are more vulnerable to sexual harassment experiences (David & Susan, 1985; Holland & Cortina, 2016). Sexual harassment experiences are based on one’s own perception about the phenomenon. How every individual thinks about any gesture determines it to be harassing or not? This is the reason that till now there is less consensus on the definition of sexual harassment worldwide as perception of individuals vary with the variation in demographics (Toker, 2016). It is very crucial to study experiences of females possessing different demographic characteristics in Pakistan’s workplace settings so that organizations could take preventive action by adopting proactive approach and implement such policies which could minimize sexual harassment experiences at workplace to the maximum.

Demographic variables which are taken into consideration for this research study are age, marital status, nature of bank (Public, Private/Local, Private Multinational, Private Islamic). Gender is a control variable in this study because most of the time females experience sexual harassment at workplace (Fitzgerald, et al, 1988) so demographics of only females are considered for this particular research.

Age and Sexual Harassment Experience

Research indicates that age matters a lot while studying sexual harassment experience. Mostly females of age lesser than 35 report more sexual harassment Experiences at workplace (Gutek, 1985). There are still some studies which highlight the fact that females of older age experience more sexual harassment at work (Brooks & Perot, 1991). Most of the studies still confirm this that younger females are more at risk for experiencing sexual harassment at workplace (Fitzgerald & Ormerod, 1992; Gruber, 1998). So, based on the consistency of the previous data regarding the impact of age on sexual harassment experience, this demographic variable is added in this research to study which age bracket is more at risk of experiencing sexual harassment at Pakistan’s workplace setting.

Marital Status and Sexual Harassment Experience

There are evidences of such data in previous researches which highlights the relationship between marital status and sexual harassment experience (Fitzgerald & Ormerod, 1992). It is reported that females who are unmarried including divorcee, never married, separated and cohabiting experience more Sexual Harassment at their workplace as compared to married including widowed females (Coles, 1986; LaFontaine & Tredeau, 1986; Fain & Anderton, 1987; Ryan & Kenig, 1991; Gruber, 1998). It is pertinent to investigate in Pakistan’s workplace setting that which category of females experiences more sexual harassment so marital status being an important demographic variable is added in this current study.

Type/ Nature of Bank and Sexual Harassment Experience

Sexual Harassment is the problem for every type of organization but its intensity or degree to which it is prevalent in any particular organization varies with the nature of the organization. Every organization whether public, private, local, multinational, Islamic all have their own particular laws, policies and workplace ethics which are prevalent in their organizations making their own unique culture (Fitzgerald & Ormerod, 1992; Lac & Gwartney-Gibbs, 1993). It is important to investigate in Pakistan’s workplace setting that females experiencing more of sexual harassment belong to which type of organization.


**METHODOLOGY**

**Data collection**

Sampling was done in three stages. First of all, banks were converted into four strata’s i.e. public banks, private banks, Islamic banks and foreign banks. In the second stage random sampling was used to select 300 branches. In the third stage criterion sampling was done to select the final respondent. The respondent in this study were females since literature suggest that they are mostly the victims (Hassan, 2009; Hausen, 2010; Khan, 2011; Sundaresh & Hemalatha, 2013). So, in all the selected bank branches, 480 questionnaires were distributed among female employees. The questionnaire consisted of informed consent which also included assurance of confidentiality of the information. Of the total distributed, 300 questionnaires were returned. Therefore, the final response rate was 62.5%. After data screening, 250 questionnaires were retained. The sample size is sufficient at 5% margin of error (Sauro, 2010).

| Demographic Variable | Ranges (year) | Percentage |
|----------------------|--------------|------------|
| Age                  | 20-30        | 71.2       |
|                      | 30-40        | 20.0       |
|                      | 40-50        | 7.2        |
|                      | > 50         | 1.6        |
| Education            | Bachelors    | 20.8       |
|                      | Masters      | 79.2       |
|                      | PhD          | 0.00       |
| Marital Status       | Unmarried    | 61.6       |
|                      | Married      | 33.6       |
|                      | Divorced     | 3.2        |
|                      | Widow        | 1.6        |
| Bank                 | Public       | 10.8       |
|                      | Private/Local| 74.0       |
|                      | Private/multinational | 2.4     |
|                      | Islamic banks| 12.8       |

**Instrumentation**

For demographic variable of age there are four categories asked from the respondent females. Category 1 depicts the age group from 20-30 years, category 2 depicts the age group from 30-40 years, category 3 depicts the age group from 40-50 years and category 4 depicts the age group of more than 50 years of age. For demographic variable of marital status category 1 depicts “married”, category 2 depicts “unmarried”, category 3 depicts “divorced” and category 4 depicts “widow”. For demographic variable of age there are four categories asked from the respondent females. Category 1 depicts the age group from 20-30 years, category 2 depicts the age group from 30-40 years, category 3 depicts the age group from 40-50 years and category 4 depicts the age group of more than 50 years of age. For demographic variable of education there are two categories i.e. public banks and private local banks. For demographic variable of marital status there are four categories i.e. unmarried, divorced and widow. For demographic variable of education there are two categories i.e. public banks and private local banks. For demographic variable of marital status there are four categories i.e. unmarried, divorced and widow. For demographic variable of education there are two categories i.e. public banks and private local banks. For demographic variable of marital status there are four categories i.e. unmarried, divorced and widow. The other variable is sexual harassment experience. The questionnaire consisted of informed consent which also included assurance of confidentiality of the information. Of the total distributed, 300 questionnaires were returned. Therefore, the final response rate was 62.5%. After data screening, 250 questionnaires were retained. The sample size is sufficient at 5% margin of error (Sauro, 2010).

**Data Analysis**

Interpretation of data is done by employing descriptive statistics and one way ANOVA for demographics having more than two factors (age, marital status, nature of bank) and t-test for demographic variable having maximum 2 factors (education and job status).

| Table 1: Percentages of demographic variables |
|---------------------------------------------|
| Demographic Variable | Ranges (year) | Percentage |
|----------------------|--------------|------------|
| Age                  | 20-30        | 71.2       |
|                      | 30-40        | 20.0       |
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|                      | Islamic banks| 12.8       |

| Table 2: One way ANOVA test for Age |
|-------------------------------------|
| (I) Age (J) Age | Mean Difference | Std. Error | Sig. |
| 30-40            | -.36542*        | .10327     | .003 |
| 40-50            | -.23628         | .15958     | .840 |
| > 50             | -.96485*        | .32621     | .020 |

Table 3: Bonferroni test for demographic variable of Age

| Harassment | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F     | Sig. |
|------------|----------------|----|-------------|-------|------|
| Between Groups | 8.621       | 3  | 2.874       | 6.903 | .000 |
| Within Groups | 102.407    | 246| .416        |       |      |
| Total       | 111.028      | 249|             |       |      |

Table 4: Descriptive statistics for demographic variable Age

| N     | Mean   | Std. Deviation | Std. Error |
|-------|--------|----------------|------------|
| 20-30 years | 178 | 1.3066       | .51277     | .03843 |
| 30-40 years | 50  | 1.6720       | .99656     | .14903 |
| 40-50 years | 18  | 1.5429       | .64650     | .15238 |
| more than 50 | 4   | 2.2714       | .18145     | .09073 |
| Total       | 250 | 1.4121       | .66775     | .04223 |

Table 5: One way test of ANOVA for marital status

| maritalstatus | Difference (I-J) | Mean Square | Std. Error | Sig. |
|---------------|------------------|-------------|------------|------|
| married       |                   |             |            |      |
| unmarried     | -.17631          | .08827      | .281       |      |
| divorced      | -.46565          | .24079      | .326       |      |
| widow         | -.115850*        | .33304      | .004       |      |

Table 6: Bonferroni test for marital status

| N     | Mean   | Std. Deviation | Std. Error |
|-------|--------|----------------|------------|
| married | 84   | 1.2701       | .47210     | .05151 |
| unmarried | 154 | 1.4464       | .73138     | .05894 |
| divorced | 8    | 1.7357       | .74077     | .26190 |
| widow    | 4     | 2.4286       | .00000     | .00000 |
| Total     | 250   | 1.4121       | .66775     | .04223 |

Table 7: Descriptive statistics for marital status

| Harassment | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F             | Sig. |
|------------|----------------|----|-------------|----------------|------|
| Between Groups | 6.846       | 3  | 2.282       | 5.389          | .001 |
| Within Groups | 104.182    | 246| .424        |                |      |
| Total       | 111.028      | 249|             |                |      |

Table 5: Bonferroni test for marital status

Table 6: One way test of ANOVA for marital status

Table 7: Descriptive statistics for marital status

Table 5-table 7 narrates the results of second demographic variable of marital status. It depicts that one way ANOVA model for this variable is highly significant. Table 6 depicts that there is significant difference between the unmarried and widowed experience of sexual harassment at workplace. Table 7 shows the difference in means and depicts that widowed females are more vulnerable and they report more experiences of sexual harassment at workplace than other categories of females.
Table 10: Descriptive statistics for type/nature of banks

| Bank Type            | N  | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error |
|----------------------|----|------|---------------|------------|
| Public bank          | 32 | 1.7268 | .77607 | .13719 |
| Private local bank   | 142 | 1.3960 | .71219 | .05977 |
| Private foreign bank | 44 | 1.3442 | .47845 | .07213 |
| Islamic bank         | 32 | 1.2625 | .47079 | .08322 |
| Total                | 250 | 1.4121 | .66775 | .04223 |

DISCUSSION

This article presents some mixed findings including both divergent and convergent point of views as compared to previous studies. Demographic variable of age shows that females with more than 50 years of age experience more sexual harassment at workplace. As experience of sexual harassment mostly depends on perception and understanding of females about this issue so the results also indicates that females of this age are more confident to report their experiences regarding this issue. Conversely it is also expected that younger females are more acceptable towards those actions which older women considered as harassment. Secondly it is reported that widowed females are more vulnerable towards experiencing sexual harassment. In a culture like Pakistan where it’s hard for a female to survive alone, a widowed female becomes an easy target for potential perpetrators. In a male dominating society, males take it as their right to control females and widowed females are a simple way to do that. Thirdly it was found that public organizations are more tolerant towards these types of activities. Females working in banks under the control of government experience more sexual harassment at workplace than other types of banks especially the Islamic banks.

This study was conducted to investigate in detail the role of various demographic factors in relationship to sexual harassment experience of females. Banking sector was selected for investigation as this sector is growing at a rapid pace and more and more females are joining this sector as profession. Females were the main respondents based on the overview of the previous literature which relates this phenomenon more to females as victims.

Caution is recommended while interpreting the results of the current study. First Pakistan is a conservative society and questions asked from respondents are considered a taboo in this culture. Therefore, it is probable that responses are not as accurate and do not represent a true picture of reality. In addition, while responding to the perceptual questions, problems like “halo effect” and “recency” may occur in responding to the questions.

It is required that caution should be taken while interpreting the results of this study due to various reasons. Firstly, questions asked from respondents were quite bold and culturally it was impossible to get a clear view picture regarding these variables. Secondly, some questions asked are related with memory of the respondents in which they have to recall about their experiences at different point of time. There are chances of errors like “halo effect” and “recency” in describing these occurrences and incidences. Hence effects of other elements cannot totally be ignored or undermined in determining the sexual harassment experience at workplace.

LIMITATIONS

For future research it is recommended that some other sectors could be taken as sample because various newspaper articles reveal the fact that in Pakistan for prospective perpetrators house maids, factory workers and university students are more vulnerable and easy targets for harassments (Gruber, 1998; Toker, 2017; Subhani & Azmat, 2012) so by investigating demographic variables of such females may give more insight into this phenomenon. Secondly, future researchers should also conduct studies in other provinces of Pakistan, as well as in smaller cities where women suffer more atrocities as compared to women living in one of the developed cities i.e.; Lahore. It is recommended that future researchers may conduct a related study and take under investigation demographic variables of those females who have already reported about their sexual harassment experience. There is a chance that those women will be more open about their experiences. In line with the findings of this study, females with more than 50 years of age and widowed females may be provided with protection and extra care at workplace to avoid such experiences at workplace. Secondly, public sector banks may formulate policies and make such workplace environments which are comfortable for females to work.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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harassment (gender harassment, unwanted sexual attention and sexual coercion) at workplaces in Pakistani society.

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