Antecedents of Sexual Harassment: A Case of Asian Firm’s Financial Performance

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Abstract: A more friendly and relax working environment with lack of sexual harassment contributes toward achieving consistent financial performance based on smooth working. Existing trends in research best bit the importance of antecedents touching the environment of organization. This research goes to explore the antecedents of sexual harassment, which are essential for the efficient and relaxing work environment as well as sustainable financial growth of the firm in the context of Asia. By employing qualitative approach, the study discovered numerous antecedents in Asian context, from which, few of the antecedents are prominent due to some common features in response of experts. Lastly, the research presents policy recommendations based on the findings.

Keywords: Antecedents, Sexual Harassment, Financial Performance

1. Introduction

Sexual harassment is a least researched phenomenon although its occurrence is everywhere in the world. It has a variety of impact on organizations with reference to employees like performance and productivity which may leads to the inefficient financial performance of the firm (U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, 1981, 1984 & 1993; Martindale, 1990; Culbertson, Rosenfeld, Kewley, & Magnusson, 1992; Schneider, Swan, & Fitzgerald, 1997). There are different perspectives on sexual harassment. From the psychological point of view sexual harassment is the outcome of unwanted and unwelcome sexual desires. From the view point of sociology sexual harassment by men occurs in order to show the dominance of their being. Sexual harassment at a work place and discrimination are two different concepts. Discrimination is related to unfair treatment in the career path of individual based on their gender. Harassment can be verbal as well as nonverbal.

An early misconception concerning sexual harassment was that it can only take place between the members of the opposite sex and consequently most of the older studies concluded that only females are victims of sexual harassment. Nevertheless, with the passage of time and through the efforts of progressivism researchers conducting in-depth studies it dawned upon the academic circles that sexual harassment can take place not only between members of the opposite sex, but also the same sex, and that males may also be victimized in cases of sexual harassment while
females may assume the roles of harassers in these instances. Stubbornly though, the major focus of sexual harassment has remained on females as victims. Most of the researchers, over the last two decades have highlighted, discussed and attempted to resolve women’s experiences of sexual harassment. Many of these studies assume and portray women as most affected as compared to men and have positioned men as generally the perpetrators compared to women in cases of sexual harassment and yet men’s experiences of sexual harassment are still considered a rare phenomenon and hardly ever acknowledged or studied.

The sexual harassment has effected high profile personalities in all spheres of life. The awareness about sexual harassment is widespread due to large coverage by social media. The MeToo movement is one such example. This hashtag has created awareness among working women. There are serious implications of sexual harassment especially at work place. Most rather all the consequences of sexual harassment are negative including mental and physical health problems. Sexual harassment is one of the most demotivating factor among career oriented women.

Sexual harassment may not only affect the careers of women, as its affects the careers of men too (Mohamad & Suhaimi, 2020). Sexual harassment is one of the prominent antecedents behind global goal achievements (Brennan & Rajan, 2020). Moreover, most of the Asian countries are currently facing some major problems that can be the cause for poor goal achievement ability in globalization, such as: lower rate of employment, high rate of poverty and corruption, instability of political environment, increase in population rate, and the most important one is to be considered as developing and underdeveloped countries too. Zameer, Yasmeen, Wang, Tao, and Malik (2020) bring to a close that the proper use of natural resources is necessary for the development of a country and to fulfill their developmental necessities as well. Pascha (2020) terminate that Asian countries must focus on their infrastructure and also stabilize their macro-economic fluctuations by making well-organized government policies and allocating governmental resources in a resourceful way.

The main research questions behind this qualitative study are:

- To how much extent sexual harassment may affect the financial performance of the firm?
- How sexual harassment may leads to the financial performance of the firm?
- How corporate governance structure may affect the sexual harassment?
- How the environment of sexual harassment may develop in the organization?
- To identify the degree to which sexual harassment may affect the financial performance of the firm.

Moreover, the main objectives behind this qualitative study are:

- To identify the ways through which sexual harassment may leads to the financial performance of the firm.
- To identify the corporate governance structure behind sexual harassment in the organization.
- To identify the antecedents of sexual harassment in the organization.

There must be a reasonable, relaxing atmosphere of working in the organization, for which, most of the factors are to be considered, and sexual harassment is one of them. However, in an existing situation, sexual harassment is one of the big issues towards stable working environment of the organizations. By lack of efficient Islamic Corporate Governance (ICG) structure, the employees are facing sexual harassment which may further leads to the inefficient working environment that may results toward unstable financial performance of the firm. One of the big issues is that no one exactly knows the antecedents behind the sexual harassment in the organization, due to which
organizations are ultimately facing the environmental and financial issues. Additionally, due to lack of know-how about the antecedents of sexual harassment in the organization, firms may not properly apply the ICG model. So, in order to remove the problem of sexual harassment from organizational culture, it is mandatory to first identify the antecedents of sexual harassment in the organization and then properly apply ICG model in the organization.

Sexually harassed organizations considered unstable and immature in terms of their governance structure (Farley, 1978). As per the study of Willness, Steel and Lee (2007), it is mandatory to study the antecedents of sexual harassment in order to efficiently apply the governance structure in the organization. So, this study will be important for the firms towards their working conditions and financial performance. Moreover, it is also important for the employees of the organizations who really need relaxing, friendly and stable working environment in the organization.

2. Literature Review & Conceptual Framework

The strength of an organization’s culture, in terms of the values and norms woven in the organization’s fabric, as well as the intensity of the rules imposed with the organization, has a considerable impact on the behaviors and attitudes of its members. Put simply “Organizational culture refers to a system of shared meaning held by members that distinguishes the organization from other organizations.” Although the term “Organizational culture” has alluded being defined and explained unanimously. Consequently, researchers have formulated a plethora of different interpretations originating from different schools of thought and based on varying assumptions (Martin 1992; Alvesson, 2004; Martin-Storey, & Crosnoe, 2012). Some indicators can detect sexual harassment, the main indicator is unsolicited, and offensive advances of sexual nature. It could be physical, verbal as well as nonverbal. The prevalence of sexual harassment is more in women as compared to men. The cases of women sexually harassing men needs to be probed. Different organization have different ways to cope with the incidence of sexual harassment. A strong organization culture where there is zero tolerance with reference to sexual harassment is very important for the positive financial performance of the organization (Louis, 1980; Rentsch, 1990; Schein, 2004).

Sexual harassment at work place can have very thoughtful concerns both for the beleaguered individual along with for other workers who experience it hand-me-down (Ahmad, 2020). In past, there has been a rising response of the importance of sexual harassment in the place of work. Researchers have found that sexual harassment practices are harmfully linked with job-related results, mental well-being, and bodily fitness conditions (Hansen, Garde, & Persson, 2020).

The penalties to the specific worker can be numerous and solemn. In few conditions, a hassled woman threatens losing her job or the chance for a raise if she trashes to give in to the erotic hassles of somebody in authority (Mainiero, 2020). In other conditions, the annoying erotic behavior of co-workers makes the working environment antagonistic and unfriendly- putting unintended burden on her to leave the job. Occasionally, the worker is so disturbed by the nuisance that she agonizes serious expressive and corporeal concerns and very often, turn out to be incapable to complete her job correctly (Clarke, 2020). Additionally, sexual harassment is statistically connected to over-all rudeness and it inclines to co-occur in organizations, leading to grander deteriorated worker comfort with the addition of each type of workplace exploitation (Harrison, Trevethan, Pasciak, & Irwin, 2020).

The penalties to workers as a group are no less serious. Sexual harassment has a snowballing, crushing result that daunts women from declaring themselves within the place of work, although among men it underpins typecasts of women workers as sex objects. Simple or universal sexual
harassment in definite types of businesses creates an intimidating atmosphere that reasons women to leave their jobs and look in another place for work or dejects them from looking for those jobs in the first place (Paleker, 2020).

The outcome on the confidence of all workers can also be somber. Both men and women in an office can find their work disturbed by sexual harassment even if they are not right involved (Isenhardt & Hostettler, 2020). Sexual harassment can have a distressing upshot overall world within range of it, and it frequently adversely effects company efficiency overall. Furthermore, opposing traditional insights may lead to dissimilar styles of message as a response to sexual harassment tries. Partialities for divergent response plans have insinuations for handling sexual harassment in the place of work.

Workplace sexual harassment is usually credited to workplace features for example administrative lenience (Kaur, 2020). However, sexual harassment may also befall when there be present an irregularity of enticements among managers and employees. Precisely, high-powered enticements for employees and low-powered enticements for managers create a susceptibility of employees to managers with a tendency to sexually annoy (Rice, Taylor, & Forrester, 2020). Managers may pursue sexual nepotisms in exchange for a constructive performance appraisal or production-linked bonus.

3. Methodology

This study is based on the qualitative approach, as previous studies (Fitzgerald & Cortina, 2017; Vargas, Brassel, Cortina, Settles, Johnson, & Jagsi, 2019) also checked sexual harassment through survey-based data. Qualitative data analysis is a vigorous part of all qualitative research. Each research starts off with the assortment of worthy material. The collected material is then systematized and evaluated to lure conclusions on the theme of the research. This method of forming and evaluating the material collected thru research is what is usually recognized as data analysis in the world of research. Qualitative data refers to non-numeric data such as: discussion records, minutes, filmed and audio soundtracks, pictures and typescript papers.

This research is qualitative as there are no previous researches who identified the reasons behind sexual harassment in the organization, and the degree of sexual harassment affecting the financial performance of the firm. This study examines the antecedents of sexual harassment towards the relaxing environment and stable financial performance of the firm. According to Bainbridge, Perry and Kulik (2018), Sexual harassment (SH) is a progressively prominent issue for organizations across the Asia Pacific. So, it is mandatory to do this sort of qualitative study in Asia Pacific region.

Philosophically, this qualitative research is constructivist and based on subjective approach. Generally, the importance of qualitative researches is to simplify, cognize, and define the experiences of human, by way of it involves accumulating a series of robust, comprehensive, and soaked explanations of the information under exploration (Polkinghorne, 2005).

The emphasis of this research is to highpoint the actual data related with the sexual harassment in the organizations. Population for this research is multinational firms operated in Asian countries. In this context, the study collected data via interviews from a small sample of people – top executives of HR, members of human right’s committees in the organizations and victims of sexual harassment - and then evaluated them in detail to understand the sentiments of large group of people.
4. Results and Discussions

As per the HR Heads and Governance Policy Makers of the various international organizations in Asia, the discussion contiguous sexual harassment be likely to centre, justifiably, on the physical and demonstrative effects on survivors, but by investigating the monetary facet, the overwhelming significances of nuisance really come into view.

According to them, sexual harassment may not only affect the environment and financial performance of the firm, as it weakens women, their relations, societies and states too. It also drops financial sustainability, drains capitals from public services and employers, and decreases human capital development.

In terms of “physical trauma”, the financial impact of an individual because of sexual harassment starts in the instant repercussion of the spell. There are possible therapeutic costs that be an adjunct to sexual harassment: emergency maintenance, preemptive medicines, psychological services, and many more. Emergency healing action is every so often essential, not just safeguarding that the prey is bodily treated for any damages but also to act as a sign in the situation of an unlawful trial. Moreover, economic data is portray a hostile image of the significances of sexual harassment – not only towards persons who experience it, but also for our economic ecosystem.

In terms of “legal consequences”, sexual harassment understated for a variety of whys and wherefores, from dread of vengeance to concerns nearby skepticism of fatalities. The remarkably low onset for public backing meritoriously creates a ‘poverty gap’ for financially weak societies, where people are usually unable to take benefit of national aid or pay for set apart legal counsel. If wounded do agree to pursue set apart financial assistance, this could hurried a debt spiral that they are then powerless to discharge from. This is particularly likely if they are incapable of recurring to work because of physical or psychosomatic shock.

In terms of “affirmative action”, they have faith in that ethnic variation needs to occur at each level of the practiced bionetwork, and ought to mean that all workers treat stayers with empathy and kindness: “a place of working should be a friendly and vigorous enough place to start with that individual touches that they can share that particular experience and doesn’t sense that they will be sheepish, or miss their job, or agonize further monetary difficulties if they cut through and say ‘this is my experience, this is what happened to me, and I need to take time off, or I need legal help’.”

In terms of a “numbers game”, while espousing a monetary point of view may look a bit cold when conferring such an emotionally hurtful happening, it is nevertheless a vigorous part to study in terms of occasioning transformation.

Finally, the “bigger picture” is that sexual assault also leaves the public inferior for countless whys and wherefores, ranging from vanished production to a lack of gender diversity in the place of work. Moreover, lack of female exemplification at the uppermost also has a knock-on effect for freshness women endeavoring to halt into characteristically male-dominated businesses. It has been confirmed time and another time that corporations with women in control positions are extra economically fruitful than those short of. However, it is very problematic to appeal women into atmospheres with no female role models, particularly if there is a high probability that they will be frugally deprived in contrast to their male coworkers. Either furthermore, for women that have formerly been fatalities of sexual harassment, in the office or somewhere else, they may be discreet to go in an atmosphere where somewhat alike could reoccur. If women are incapable to headway
5. Conclusion

The prevalence of sexual harassment is more in organization where there is a culture of tolerance with reference to sexual harassment. The unequal incentives between supervisors and workers may result in sexual harassment also. Moreover, the power distance or asymmetric power within the organization hierarchy is another factor, which may contribute to the sexual harassment. Sexual harassment and bullying have same negative effects on the workers. The moral and ethical environment may prevent the occurrence of sexual harassment. The sexual harassment cause anxiety, anger, mistrust and depression among workers. The productivity and efficiency of workers will be adversely affected. These all factors may lead to the poor financial performance of the organization.

The companies have to bear the financial losses in terms of the settlements of claims. The overall image and good will of the company is adversely effected. The talented people will not opt for that company where there is occurrence of sexual harassment. The companies, which respond quickly with reference to handling of sexual harassment, may benefit because it leads to increase in integrity of an organization. The adverse effects of sexual harassment on the financial domain of companies include higher settlement cost either privately or through courts. The low productivity, absenteeism, high turnover etc. these all contribute to the financial loss of company. The stock price is adversely affected. The harassment must not be tolerated at any stage and it must be uprooted.

The companies, which do not respond properly, can drive away investors and all other stakeholders. There are sexual harassment laws in different states and the companies have to bear the financial losses by reacting late or improperly to the sexual harassment incidents. The companies where there is zero tolerance with reference to sexual harassment gets financial as well as ethical benefit. The role of all stake holders in eradicating this menace is very critical specially the employer role. The creation of equal opportunity rights and safe environment is the primary responsibility of employer. However, there is a little research on sexual harassment with reference to economic losses.

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