



IMPACT OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT ON MENTAL HEALTH OF WOMEN

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Abstract

Women and girls' mental health is impacted by sexual harassment, a type of gender-based violence. In addition to depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), it can also cause victims to experience low self-esteem, suicide thoughts, and thoughts of harming themselves. Sexual harassment may also have an impact on a woman's physical health as well as her capacity to build relationships and trust. This essay examines the most recent research on the effects of sexual harassment on women's and girls' mental health and offers solutions. In order to lessen the prevalence of sexual harassment and the problems it causes, it emphasises the need for additional study and prevention initiatives.

Keywords : sexual harassment, mental health, women, psychological trauma, depression, anxiety

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Introduction

The widespread problem of sexual harassment has a serious effect on the mental health of women. Women who have been subjected to sexual harassment frequently express feelings of anxiety, sadness, and PTSD (PTSD). In addition to experiencing sexual harassment, women may also have low self-esteem, trouble building relationships with other people, and a sense of helplessness. A decline in job satisfaction and productivity, as well as physical health problems including headaches, sleeplessness, and gastrointestinal upset, could also be experienced by them. Sexually harassed women are more prone to adopt harmful coping mechanisms such as substance addiction, disordered eating, and self-harm. In addition to being more likely to develop melancholy and anxiety, women who have suffered sexual harassment may also struggle in their interpersonal relationships. In addition to having trouble focusing, feeling alone and lonely, and finding it difficult to

participate in activities they once enjoyed, women who experience sexual harassment sometimes struggle with these things as well. Additionally, they might have suicide ideas or depressing emotions. Sexual harassment's long-term repercussions on mental health can be severe. Years after the harassment has stopped, women who have experienced sexual harassment may be more prone to endure despair, anxiety, and PTSD. This may make it difficult to carry out daily tasks, cause social isolation, and make it difficult to establish and sustain relationships. Women's mental health is significantly impacted by sexual harassment, therefore it's critical to identify the warning signs and symptoms and support those who are suffering. Additionally, it's critical to raise awareness of sexual harassment and fight to stop it before it even starts.

Women's mental health is seriously impacted by the significant issue of sexual harassment. Physical, verbal, or written acts are all



examples of this type of sexual misbehaviour. It can happen in public areas, workplaces, and educational institutions. Sexually harassed women may have a variety of mental health problems, such as anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and low self-esteem. This essay will address the effects of sexual harassment on women's mental health and offer solutions to lessen its occurrence.

Impact on Mental Health

- Sexual harassment can have a significant impact on a woman's mental health. It can lead to feelings of anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem. Women who experience sexual harassment may also experience symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, such as intrusive memories, avoidance of situations that remind them of the experience, and difficulty concentrating. Additionally, they may be at higher risk of developing substance abuse problems or engaging in self-harm.
- Because the stress of the experience might make it difficult for them to concentrate and focus on their academics, women who experience sexual harassment may also be more likely to struggle academically. In addition, if women feel unsafe or uncomfortable at work, they may be more likely to abandon their jobs or drop out of school. Their career prospects may be negatively affected in the long run, making it more challenging for them to get a job.

Reducing Prevalence

- Preventing, educating, and outlawing sexual harassment are all necessary components of a systematic strategy to reduce its incidence. Employers and educational institutions can take action by offering training on sexual harassment and establishing clear rules for handling complaints, among other measures. They can also make sure that any reported occurrences are looked into and that anyone responsible is held accountable.

- Access to counselling and other support services should also be made available to victims of sexual harassment. This can aid in their emotional processing, resilience development, and return to feeling secure and protected. To ensure that everyone feels secure and supported at work, organisations should also cultivate an inclusive and respectful culture.

The mental health of women can be significantly impacted by the substantial problem of sexual harassment. It can cause challenges in academic and professional contexts as well as feelings of anxiety, sadness, and post-traumatic stress disorder. Employers and educational institutions must take action to foster a respectful, inclusive atmosphere in order to lessen the frequency of sexual harassment. In addition, victims ought to have access to counselling and other forms of support.

Many women's mental health is negatively impacted by sexual harassment, which is a type of gender-based violence. It can appear in a variety of ways, from verbal remarks and gestures to direct physical touch. Sexually harassed women frequently struggle with depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, and post-traumatic stress disorder. These psychological repercussions may be devastating and long-lasting. It is important to address the negative effects of sexual harassment on women's mental health.

Any unwanted or uninvited sexual advances or requests for sexual favours are considered sexual harassment. It can take the form of remarks or jokes spoken aloud or actual groping or touching. Threats, compulsion, and intimidation are other forms of sexual harassment. Numerous detrimental psychological impacts, such as sadness, anxiety, low self-esteem, and post-traumatic stress disorder, are frequently experienced by women who are the targets of sexual harassment (PTSD). Some women report symptoms of these psychological aftereffects months or even years after the harassment took place. Suicidal thoughts and attempts are

also more common among women who have experienced sexual harassment. After experiencing sexual harassment, women could also feel ashamed and guilty, which can worsen the psychological impacts. Women may also be less inclined to report sexual harassment out of concern that they won't be believed or that they'll get additional abuse or punishment. This may worsen psychological suffering and obstruct the healing process. It is important to address the negative effects of sexual harassment on women's mental health. It's critical to foster an atmosphere where sexual harassment is not allowed and where women feel protected and supported. To ensure that women are aware of their rights and how to react in the event of sexual harassment, education and awareness are also essential. In order to help women who have suffered sexual harassment cope with the psychological impacts, it is also crucial to offer them resources and support.

The World Health Organization defines sexual harassment as "any unwanted or unwelcome sexual behaviour that is insulting, threatening, or humiliating, interferes with the individual's performance at work, or produces an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment" (Hailes et al.2019). Women are disproportionately affected by sexual harassment, a form of gender-based violence that can negatively effect their mental health. According to an American Psychological Association research, women who reported experiencing sexual harassment were more likely to show signs of post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, and anxiety. Other research has revealed that sexually harassed women are more prone to self-harm, suffer higher levels of stress, and have poorer levels of self-esteem (Vargas et al.2020). Women who have experienced sexual harassment are also more likely to have a weaker sense of self-worth, to feel insecure at work, and to be less satisfied with their jobs.

Literature Review

Impact on Mental Health of Women	Description
Anxiety and Stress	When speaking with the offender, women who have suffered sexual harassment may feel pressured, apprehensive, or afraid. Additionally, they could feel guilty or ashamed as well as helpless or powerless. Deficiency As a result of the harassment, women may suffer from despair, a sense of worthlessness, or low self-esteem. They might start to retreat, isolate themselves, and struggle to focus.
Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)	Women may have obsessive thoughts, nightmares, and memories connected to the harassment. They can have trouble falling asleep and experience emotional numbness or emotional detachment. Food Addictions The harassment may lead to women developing an eating disorder like bulimia or anorexia. They could develop an obsession with eating, self-image, or losing weight.
Substance Abuse	To deal with the trauma of the harassment, women may turn to drink or narcotics. They could get dependent on these substances and go through withdrawal when trying to stop.
Eating Disorders	The harassment may lead to women developing



	an eating disorder like bulimia or anorexia. They could develop an obsession with eating, self-image, or losing weight.
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Table 1: Impact on Mental Health of Women

Source: (Made by Author)

Studies have also shown that sexual harassment can have long-lasting repercussions on one's mental health, with the severity of these effects increasing with the frequency and severity of the harassment. It has been discovered that the psychological consequences of harassment can last for months or even years (Kahsayet al.2020). Additionally, research have shown that the stigma attached to sexual harassment as well as the lack of support from employers, coworkers, and family members can exacerbate the negative consequences of sexual harassment on mental health. Women's mental health may suffer a major and long-lasting effect from sexual harassment. Employers and co-workers must assist those who have suffered sexual harassment, and organisations must take action to stop and address the problem. In order to help women cope with the impacts

of sexual harassment, mental health treatments should also be made available to them.

Millions of women experience sexual harassment at work, which is a widespread issue with long-term psychological, physical, and financial repercussions. According to studies, women who have experienced sexual harassment at work are more susceptible to mental health problems like melancholy, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (Dworkin et al.2020). Additionally, these women are more susceptible to physical health issues like headaches, exhaustion, and insomnia. People who have experienced sexual harassment may also feel less satisfied at work and find it hard to trust colleagues. Additionally, they could be less inclined to pursue promotions or assume leadership positions out of concern for continued harassment.



Graph 1: Woman sexual harassment

Source: (Wood et al..2021 pp 4542)

Sexual harassment can have psychological implications outside of the workplace. Researchers discovered in a study from 2020 that women who had experienced sexual harassment at work were more likely to express higher levels of stress, rage, and terror in their private life. This may therefore

have a detrimental impact on their friendships and family ties and cause them to feel lonely. Sexual harassment has negative psychological and physical effects in addition to financial ones. According to studies, women who have been the targets of sexual harassment are more likely to leave their jobs and may have

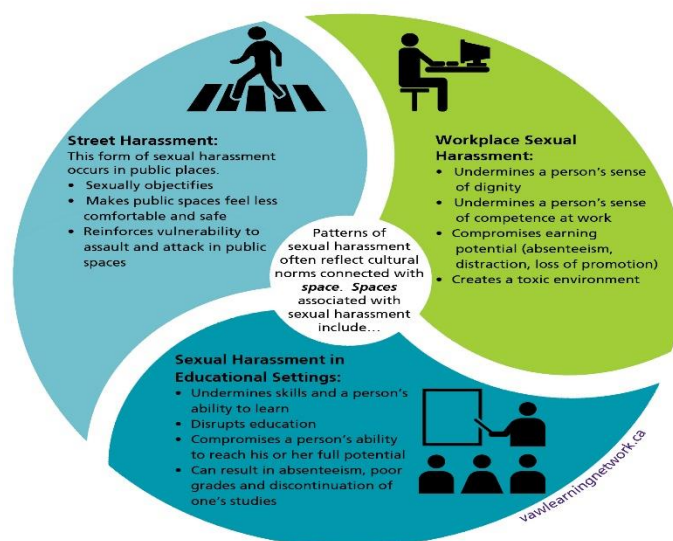


trouble finding new ones (Rinehart et al.2020). Their future employment prospects and sense of financial security may be significantly impacted by this.

Women's mental health is significantly impacted by sexual harassment. According to studies, women who experience sexual harassment are more susceptible to mental health problems like melancholy, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, and others. Additionally, they are more prone to feeling dread, guilt, shame, and self-blame. Furthermore, sexual harassment can result in a drop in self-esteem, an increase in tension, and a feeling of helplessness. Additionally, studies have revealed that sexually harassed

women are more susceptible to physical health issues like headaches, stomach issues, and sleep difficulties (Keplinger et al.2019). The psychological discomfort brought on by sexual harassment might exacerbate the physical symptoms. Sexual harassment can also make you irritable, tired, and unable to concentrate. Furthermore, sexual harassment can have a long-term effect on a woman's capacity to establish and keep healthy relationships. Sexually harassed women are more prone to mistrust people, find it difficult to build deep connections, and struggle to trust their own judgement. Feelings of loneliness and disconnection may result from this.

SPACES WHERE SEXUAL HARASSMENT OCCURS & ITS POTENTIAL IMPACTS



Sexual harassment can negatively impact every domain of a survivor's life.

Graph 2: Patterns of sexual abashment of woman

Source: (O'Neal and E 2019 pp 158)

Additionally, sexual harassment might make it harder for a person to perform their job. Sexually harassed women may be less likely to succeed, be less productive, and have trouble carrying out their jobs (Rapsey et al.2019). This may negatively affect a woman's job in the long run and exacerbate her financial insecurity. In general, sexual harassment adversely affects women's physical and emotional health. To help them manage their

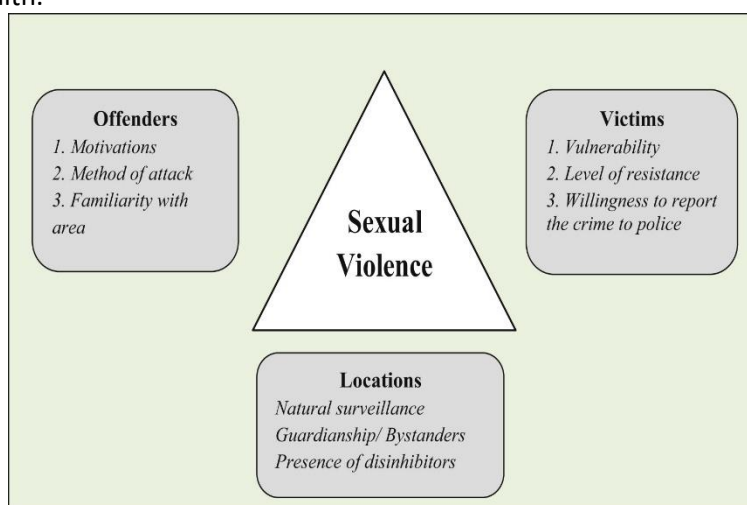
emotions and deal with the psychological anguish, women who suffer sexual harassment should seek professional assistance as well as support from family and friends.

The victims of sexual harassment may experience considerable, long-lasting negative repercussions on their mental health. Significant links between sexual harassment and mental health issues like depression,



anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and substance use disorders have been documented in existing literature. A increased risk of suicide and self-harm may also result from sexual harassment, according to studies. Because they are more likely to be targeted because of their gender, women are especially susceptible to the impacts of sexual harassment (Lu et al.2020). This examination of the literature will look at how sexual harassment affects women's mental health. Studies have repeatedly demonstrated that among female victims of sexual harassment, psychological anguish and mental health issues are more common. Those who had experienced sexual harassment were more likely to show signs of sadness and anxiety, as well as lower levels of self-esteem and worse mental health, according to a study of college students in the United States. Similar findings were observed in an Indian research of high school students, which revealed that those who had experienced sexual harassment were more likely to experience anxiety and sadness as well as have lower levels of self-esteem and poorer mental health.

Sexual harassment has been connected to a higher risk of PTSD in women in addition to psychological distress. Those who had experienced sexual harassment were more likely to exhibit PTSD symptoms such as intrusive thoughts, avoidance, and hyperarousal, according to a study of college students in the United States. In a similar vein, a study of university students in South Africa discovered that PTSD symptoms were more prevalent among individuals who had experienced sexual harassment. Additionally, studies have revealed a link between sexual harassment and a higher incidence of substance use disorders among women (Gautam et al.2019). Those who had experienced sexual harassment were more likely to report higher levels of alcohol and drug use, as well as higher levels of nicotine dependence, according to a study of college students in the United States. Similar results were reported in an Indian research of adolescent girls, which showed that those who had experienced sexual harassment were more likely to report higher levels of alcohol and drug use.



Graph 3: Sexual Violence

Source: (Eisenberg et al.2021 pp 78)

Finally, research has shown that women who experience sexual harassment have a higher risk of self-harm and suicide. According to a study conducted on college students in the United States, individuals who had experienced sexual harassment were more

likely to report having suicidal thoughts and to engage in more self-harm (Chang et al.2020). Similar findings were reported in an Indian research of female adolescents, which showed that those who had experienced sexual harassment were more likely to report



having suicidal thoughts and self-harming behaviours. Overall, this literature review discovered that sexual harassment has serious and lasting repercussions on its victims' mental health, especially women. Female victims of sexual harassment are more likely to experience psychological distress, PTSD, substance use disorders, suicide thoughts, and self-harm. Therefore, it's critical to understand how sexual harassment affects women's mental health and to offer victims the necessary resources and support.

The impact of sexual harassment on women's mental health is particularly alarming, and it has been recognised as a significant public health issue. According to studies, women who experience sexual harassment are more likely to feel stressed out, depressed, anxious, afraid, and helpless (Finkelhor 2019). Additionally, these events may result in lower self-esteem, more intense emotions of guilt and shame, and even post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). These mental health

problems can significantly harm a woman's wellness overall, resulting in diminished productivity, social isolation, and even trouble accessing healthcare treatments.

According to studies, sexual harassment can have a negative influence on the workplace by lowering job performance, job satisfaction, and supervisory trust. Further evidence that sexual harassment has a large effect on the workforce as a whole comes from the fact that women who encounter it are more likely to quit their jobs (Pegram et al.2019). Overall, the data indicates that sexual harassment negatively affects both the workplace and the mental health of women. By offering training on sexual harassment and enforcing appropriate disciplinary measures when occurrences occur, businesses can help establish and maintain a safe workplace. It's also critical that women who experience sexual harassment get expert mental health assistance.

Sexual harassment can have a catastrophic effect on a woman's mental health. According to studies, women who have experienced sexual harassment frequently experience depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). They could also have trouble trusting others and battle with feelings of guilt and humiliation. In addition to having trouble focusing, women who have experienced sexual harassment may also suffer from bodily symptoms like migraines, stomach-aches, and trouble sleeping. In extreme circumstances, women may experience suicide thoughts and make attempts to end their lives.

Furthermore, food disorders, substance misuse, and self-harm may be more prevalent in women who have experienced sexual harassment. They might also be more likely to experience long-term mental health problems like PTSD, anxiety, and depression.

A woman's social life can be severely impacted by sexual harassment. They could have a sense of loneliness and lose faith in others around them. They might also be reluctant to ask for assistance or support because they worry about the consequences of coming out about their experiences. Overall, sexual harassment has a serious negative effect on women's mental health. Long-term psychological repercussions on women who have experienced sexual harassment are common and can have a major impact.

Table 2: The impact of sexual harassment on mental health of woman

Source: (Made by Author)

Gender-based discrimination, such as sexual harassment, can negatively affect women's mental health. Numerous studies have demonstrated the increased risk of psychological distress, sadness, anxiety, and low self-esteem in women who suffer sexual

harassment. Even after the harassment has stopped, these psychological impacts might last for a very long time (Turnianskyet al.2019). Additionally, research have indicated that sexual harassment can have a long-term effect on a woman's job prospects and



financial security, and that women who encounter sexual harassment are more likely to develop post-traumatic stress disorder. Research has also shown that victim blame and social stigma frequently exacerbate the psychological impacts of sexual harassment. Due to denial or fear of retaliation, women who experience sexual harassment could be reluctant to come forward and report it. They frequently feel alone and helpless as a result, which can further exacerbate their mental health problems. Overall, the evidence shows that sexual harassment can have substantial and perhaps long-lasting implications on women's mental health. Employers, legislators, and society as a whole must act to solve this problem and guarantee that women are protected from sexual harassment (Morabito et al.2019). By doing this, we can ensure that women may work in an environment free from harassment and discrimination and lessen the negative effects of sexual harassment on mental health.

Conclusion

The mental health of women can be significantly and permanently impacted by sexual harassment. Sexual harassment victims may develop emotional anguish, post-traumatic stress disorder, despair, and anxiety. Physical symptoms including headaches, stomachaches, and sleep difficulties may also occur in them. Sexual harassment victims may have trouble trusting others, which can lead to loneliness and social isolation. They might also be more inclined to indulge in negative behaviours like substance misuse. Recognizing how sexual harassment affects mental health and offering resources and assistance to those who have is crucial.

In conclusion, sexual harassment can negatively affect women's mental health in a major and long-lasting way. Numerous psychiatric conditions, including depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, and suicidal thoughts, can affect sexual harassment victims. Sexual harassment can have negative impacts on the victims' quality

of life that can endure for a long time. Therefore, it's crucial to take action to stop sexual harassment, deal with it, and offer assistance to those who have.

Women's mental health may be negatively and permanently impacted by sexual harassment. Numerous mental health conditions, including anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and post-traumatic stress disorder, can affect victims. They might also suffer with emotions like wrath, resentment, guilt, and shame. Additionally, those who experience sexual harassment may adopt unhealthy coping strategies including substance misuse, self-harming habits, or even suicidal thoughts. To deal with the psychological impacts of sexual harassment and to help victims regain their sense of safety and self-worth, it is crucial that they seek professional assistance.

Sexual harassment can have a significant negative effect on women's mental health. In addition to other mental health problems like low self-esteem, trouble sleeping, increased substance misuse, and suicidal thoughts, women who encounter sexual harassment frequently face despair, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder. The ability of women to pursue their goals and lead happy, fulfilling lives can be severely hampered by these psychological impacts, which can be devastating and long-lasting. Therefore, it is crucial that women are encouraged and shielded from sexual harassment, both at work and in the larger society.

The effects of sexual harassment on women's mental health are severe and persistent. Their mental health may suffer severely as a result, and they may experience despair, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, and negative emotions like guilt, shame, and worthlessness. Sexually harassed women frequently feel helpless and alone, which can cause additional psychological problems. It is crucial to acknowledge the negative effects that sexual harassment has on women's psychological wellbeing and to take action to

make sure that they are safe and comfortable in every situation.

Sexual harassment can have a catastrophic effect on a woman's mental health. Anxiety, despair, low self-esteem, and even post-traumatic stress disorder might result from it. Physical symptoms like headaches, stomach issues, and persistent weariness are also common in women. Other long-term mental health problems like decreased job satisfaction, alienation at work, and a higher risk of substance misuse can also be brought on by sexual harassment. Therefore, it's critical to take action to stop and address workplace sexual harassment in order to protect women's mental health and welfare.

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