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## Victims' perspectives of sexual harassment prevention measures at work: Using victims' voices to build an anti-harassment working environment

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### Abstract

This mixed-method study revolves around female victims' perspectives and voices concerning sexual harassment prevention measures in their workplaces. Two hundred and eighty-nine participants responded to questionnaires, in-depth questions, and interviews. Data were collected from various professionals who had experienced sexual misconduct at work. The research objectives were to investigate victims' perspectives of sexual harassment prevention and the effectiveness of related measures, to examine the impact of sexual harassment measures on work-related motivation, and to explore female employees' voices concerning reforms involving the implementation of sexual harassment prevention measures. The quantitative results reveal that the victims did not highly evaluate the effectiveness of sexual harassment prevention measures implemented at their workplaces. Also, the measures negatively impacted employees' work-related motivation. Qualitative data indicated that the victims strongly recommended positive changes in sexual harassment awareness education, sexual harassment laws, and women's protection policies to create an anti-sexual harassment working environment.

**Keywords:** sexual harassment; sexual harassment laws; prevention measures; workplace; working environment

## 1 Introduction

Sexual harassment (SH) has recently attracted much attention from researchers, policy-makers, legislators, and activists due to its prominence. Issues related to the sexual violation of vulnerable female workers in society are currently being prioritized for discussion and resolution. Sexual harassment is a partly concealed phenomenon that has become widely entrenched in society, in all fields and occupations, often invisibly. How to identify, control, and prevent it is problematic (Mackinnon, 1979). Sexual harassment is considered a prevalent issue that permeates all working environments. Bondestam and Lundqvist (2020) concentrated specifically on sexual harassment within the higher education setting,

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emphasizing the need for the prevention, handling, and response to incidents of such harassment. Even though the growing number of anti-sexual harassment movements, public concern, and laws protecting women from sexual harassment have significantly supported victims in their struggles against sexual misconduct, the quantity of legal complaints submitted to authorities remains unremarkable. Langer (2017) and Puente and Kelly (2018) acquired insights into their legal entitlements, courses of action, and strategies for navigating the intricacies of addressing harassment in different contexts. Guidance on legal rights, steps to take when facing harassment and strategies for managing harassment situations in various settings may be typically offered. However, these studies do not sufficiently clarify the root of the problem and issues pertaining to sexual harassment prevention measures. The present article delves into victims' perspectives about sexual harassment prevention, including: investigating the effectiveness of measures, examining the impact sexual harassment prevention measures on work-related motivation, and exploring female employees' voices concerning reforms involving the implementation of sexual harassment prevention measures. Mixed-methods research was conducted with the participation of employees from various parts of Vietnam to understand how victims of sexual harassment at work comprehensively evaluate the issues regarding sexual harassment prevention measures (SHPM). This investigation will hopefully empower employees to prevent sexual harassment and make employers or authorities more liable for the impact of SH. The study addresses the following questions:

- (1) How do victims evaluate the effectiveness of sexual harassment prevention measures implemented in their workplaces?
- (2) How do sexual harassment prevention measures at work influence work-related motivation?
- (3) What are female employees' recommendations for implementing sexual harassment prevention measures?

## 2 Literature review

### 2.1 Sexual harassment and Vietnamese law regarding sexual harassment

Sexual harassment is defined as a form of human rights violation. MacKinnon (2012) contends that sexual harassment constitutes a manifestation of gender-based discrimination and explores its ramifications within professional environments. Sexual harassment refers to when offenders use hostile and disagreeable sexual misconduct to compel targets to indulge in their sexual desires (McDonald, 2012). The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunities Commission (EEOC) recognizes sexual harassment as a form of illegal sex discrimination that negatively impacts victims' employment and job performance and creates an intimidating, hostile, offensive working environment. Similarly, Buchanan et al. (2014) acknowledge that sexual harassment, rooted in sexism, represents a form of victimization. Despite ongoing endeavors to diminish its occurrence, it remains a prevalent type of workplace mistreatment.

Regarding categories of sexual harassment, the Department of Veteran Safaris divides sexual harassment behavior into three types: gender harassment, unwanted sexual

attention, and sexual coercion. The force used to coerce someone into engaging in unwanted sexual conduct is known as sexual coercion (e.g., the offer of preferential treatment in the workplace in exchange for sexual favors). Unwelcome sexual action that is directed at another person is known as unwanted sexual attention. Unwelcome activities that denigrate people based on their sex or gender are referred to as gender harassment (for example, unwanted sexual teasing) (Fitzgerald et al., 1997). MacKinnon (1979) delineated two categories of sexual harassment: sexual harassment and hostile environment harassment, a differentiation subsequently acknowledged by the Supreme Court. Paludi (2005) defines sexual harassment as threats or misconducts of coercion and arbitrary deprivations of freedom occurring in the private or public sphere.

In Vietnam, acts of sexual harassment are currently specified in Clause 9, Article 3 of the Labor Code 2019, and Article 84 of Decree 145 of December 14, 2020. The Labor Code, amended and supplemented (and approved by the National Assembly on June 18, 2012), stipulates 'prohibiting the sexual harassment of employees at work'; and that 'employees suffering from sexual harassment have the right to unilaterally terminate the labor contract'; and that 'the domestic worker must report to the competent authority if an employer commits sexual harassment.' Moreover, sexual harassment may currently only be dealt with through an administrative process (stipulated in Point a, Clause 1, Article 5 of Decree 167/2013/ND-CP of November 12, 2013, by the government on penalties for administrative violations). Accordingly, offenders who commit sexual harassment misconduct are only subject to financial penalties. This is one of the main causes of more serious crimes. Regarding individuals' security in the social space, sexual harassment prevention must be encouraged through criminal sanctioning. It can be seen that, along with the development of social norms, addressing the nature and level of criminal acts that infringe human rights in general, particularly women's rights, requires an increasingly sophisticated and complex approach. Therefore, the legal system of Vietnam must be improved to be able to promptly detect, handle fairly, and best protect the legitimate rights of victims.

## 2.2 Sexual harassment prevention: workplace measures

Implementing sexual harassment prevention measures in the workplace is challenging for victims and authorities for various reasons, including female victims' sense of insecurity confronting the issue, concerns about potential consequences, lack of trust in the organization's legal mechanisms, and psychological and social anxieties (Harlos, 2001; McDonald et al., 2015; Vijayasiri, 2008). Moreover, underreporting may be exacerbated by blame-the-victim tactics employed by both harassers and employers. Many victims are unjustly held accountable for incidences of harassment due to their clothing or friendly demeanor, which allegedly provokes the sexual interest of predators. The adverse effects of sexual harassment on the lives and careers of victims highlight the urgency of implementing prevention measures. Seeking recourse by filing complaints with authorities is seen as a practical way to hold perpetrators accountable for their misconduct and restore women's rights. Nonetheless, the process of making claims, exposing such offenses publicly, and seeking damages proves challenging for victims due to a number of barriers. Various prevention-related measures, including establishing effective workplace policies and guide-

lines concerning legal accountability and occupational safety and implementing training programs that enhance coping skills, have been devised to foster a secure environment for female employees (including in the case of nurses) (Zeighami et al., 2023). Countries and regions such as Denmark, South Korea, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Iran have contributed specific strategies that address psychological aspects and attempt to mitigate the repercussions of sexual harassment (Nielsen et al., 2017; Kim et al., 2018; Tollstern Landin et al., 2020; Zeighami et al., 2023). However, Nielsen et al. (2017) emphasize that the implementation of sexual harassment prevention measures should be tailored to the organizational and professional culture, suggesting the need for variation across different work settings. Zeighami et al. (2023) underscored the significance of building comprehensive knowledge regarding coping strategies related to workplace sexual harassment to provide support for victims. Drawing on nurses' experiences can be instrumental when devising interventions that identify coping strategies and diminish instances of sexual harassment in the workplace (Najafi et al., 2018).

### **2.3 Previous research on sexual harassment prevention measures at the workplace**

Buchanan et al. (2014) explored which effective strategies may be employed at the systemic level to reduce sexual harassment in work settings, utilizing data from the U.S. Armed Forces to highlight the roles of organizations, sexual harassment policies, and training programs in mitigating such incidents and improving outcomes when they do happen. Emphasizing the crucial role of organizational leaders, the authors argued for clear and consistent anti-harassment messages conveyed through a widely disseminated written policy on sexual harassment, regular educational training sessions for all organization members, and establishing formal as well as informal procedures for reporting, investigating, and remedying incidents. Additionally, they proposed that organizations conduct regular self-assessments of sexual harassment occurrences and the overall organizational atmosphere as proactive measures. Based on a survey, D'Agostino (2019) found that most participants felt uneasy about reporting sexual harassment (74.19 per cent). Freedman-Weiss et al. (2020) examined the frequency, type, and reporting of sexual harassment among surgical trainees and tried to identify why some of them might not come forward. An anonymous computerized survey was conducted with the participation of trainees in general surgery training programs nationwide. This found that 7.6 per cent of respondents who had experienced sexual harassment reported it. The most commonly reported justifications for not reporting were that the behavior was harmless (62.1 per cent) and that reporting would be pointless (47.7 per cent). Accordingly, sexual harassment does happen throughout surgical training, but it is rarely reported. The small proportion of sexual harassment accusations being reported to organizations illustrates that victims face significant obstacles to stymying SH. These include the ineffective response to organizations of reports of SH (Bergman et al., 2002), challenges related to procedures and evidence, financial constraints, limited recourse through legal advocacy, the inadequacy of harassment-related laws that insufficiently protect women; violations of employment entitlements and

agreements; instances of retaliation; and prevalent cultural biases. Employee turnover is often affected by SH, as claimed by Chan et al. (2008), Willness et al. (2007), and Sims et al. (2005). The Indian Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 is not considered a conventional academic text. However, this document is significant as a piece of legislation. It delineates the legal structure for handling workplace sexual harassment in India and offers guidelines for both prevention and resolution.

Gianakos et al. (2022) systematically analyzed articles published between 2010 and 2020 in the MEDLINE, Embase, and Cochrane databases. The study shows that residents who are undergoing surgical training frequently encounter sexual misconduct, which is linked to depression, anxiety, and burnout. For fear of reprisals, the majority of citizens refrained from reporting such misconduct. Residency programs should identify ways to let residents air their grievances safely. In terms of the ramifications of sexual harassment, detrimental effects in various areas are specified, such as job satisfaction, job performance, health, financial well-being, worker productivity, employee retention, organizational loyalty, and overall reputation (Herschovis et al., 2009; Sims et al., 2005; Willness et al., 2007). Clarke et al. (2016) explored that job satisfaction was influenced by sexual harassment within the company due to the prior position of the harassers. Campbell et al. (2008) indicated that the aftermath of sexual harassment frequently includes post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), characterized by symptoms like stress, diminished self-esteem, despondency, and impaired decision-making. In summary, the discernible consequences of workplace sexual harassment encompass decreased productivity, increased turnover, tarnished reputation, psychological and physical issues, legal fees, and compensatory payouts.

These previous studies have explored significant issues concerning SH, including the problems, impacts, and solutions. However, not much emphasis has been placed on victim evaluations and perspectives about SH prevention measures. Present studies do not sufficiently clarify stakeholders' evaluations of sexual harassment prevention efforts. Moreover, the respective authors mainly used qualitative or quantitative research methods and did not provide comprehensive insights into the issues. The current study involved mixed-methods research that included data from a survey, in-depth questions, and interviews – a significant attempt to shed light on the topic.

### 3 Methods

#### 3.1 Research design

The researcher employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating quantitative and qualitative methodologies to comprehensively understand the issue. Quantitative data was gathered through the distribution of questionnaires. Qualitative insights were obtained from responses to open-ended questions and interviews, providing detailed information. The interview techniques included direct queries, allowing victims to express their thoughts and assessments, as well as experience-based questions prompting them to narrate stories about instances of sexual harassment they had witnessed, heard about, or personally ex-

perienced (Hard et al., 2016). Ethical considerations were addressed through a voluntary participation agreement, ensuring participants' consent to participating in the survey. The author emphasized the confidentiality of all information, using hidden names or codes to protect anonymity. The answers were ensured to remain confidential.

### 3.2 Participants

Convenience sampling was used to collect the data since the group's members are active participants, frequently engaging in interactions like posting, sharing personal narratives on news feeds, and commenting on diverse subjects. This elevated level of engagement greatly facilitated the author's survey administration. This group represented the best sample from which to collect the data since no groups of HS victims were publicly available at that time. A Facebook group including female members (women and girls) were asked if they had ever been victims of SH and if they would be participants in this study. Among them, 289 individuals (282 people provided answers to the questionnaires, 20 participants joined in the interviews) acknowledged experiencing instances of workplace-related sexual violation and subsequently agreed to participate in the research. This yielded an initial response rate of 32.5 per cent. The chosen Facebook group encompasses a diverse cohort of female members spanning various ages and professions across different regions of the country. This selection process was undertaken to ensure a comprehensive and representative pool of data. Participants were chosen to respond to the questionnaires, in-depth questions, and interviews. Their ages ranged from 21 to 42. They were employed in various vocations, from manual labor in the construction, textile, and farming industries to intellectual ones such as journalism, reporting, and accountancy. Respondents were randomly selected from various disciplines to ensure the validity of the samples. The author contacted the participants via social networks, email, and telephone. They were provided with a description of the study and instructions and asked for their commitment to participate in the survey. Additionally, the authors committed to keeping the information from the survey and interviews confidential. After completing the survey, each participant was given a small reward.

### 3.3 Data collection instruments

Data collection involved gathering information from questionnaires, open-ended queries, and interviews. A survey comprising 25 items was developed, primarily drawing on the framework of sexual harassment theory by other authors. The reliability and validity of this was evaluated by experts. The author identified Cronbach's alpha values for reliability and validity and removed unreliable variables. Other variables were used in the following stages. The items were included in the following sections:

Section 1: Demographics and details of respondents

Section 2: Victims' evaluation of the effectiveness of sexual harassment prevention measures implemented in the workplace

Section 3: The impact of implementing sexual harassment prevention measures on motivation at work.

The author asked the participants to select the level of impact of specified items (see Appendix). Each answer was based on a five-item Likert scale: (1.0–1.79) very low, (1.8–2.59) low, (2.6–3.39) neutral, (3.4–4.19) high, and (4.2–5.0) very high.

#### *Open-ended questions*

These questions were delivered to participants to collect more detailed information. For instance, could you clarify how your company implemented the measures? Are you satisfied with these measures? What are the strengths and weaknesses of these measures?

#### *Interviews*

After completing the survey and in-depth questions, the participants were interviewed using questions about their recommendations about the changes due to the impact of the implementation of SHPM in relation to building an anti-sexual harassment working environment.

Qualitative data were gathered using the snowball and purposive sampling methodologies. An inductive approach to qualitative research design was employed to gather profound insights from participants systematically during the interview process. The authors conducted a total of 20 interviews involving 20 participants. Of these interviewees, 13 actively participated in both the survey and the interviews, while seven solely engaged in the discussions, abstaining from the survey portion. The data and viewpoints of the respondents remain anonymous and confidential through the utilization of symbols or pseudonyms.

### **3.4 Data collection and analysis**

The researcher collected data primarily by sending questionnaires to participants, synthesized, and presented the data using percentages, means, and standard deviations. The authors conducted the interviews and presented in-depth questions to the respondents through indirect communication (via social networks or mobile phones). The information was noted and rewritten. Descriptive statistics were employed to analyze the quantitative data using IBM SPSS 25.0 software. Participant demographic data underwent analysis through frequency-based descriptive testing. Mean and standard deviation values for victims' assessments of the efficacy of sexual harassment prevention measures were calculated using a descriptive analytical tool. The impact of prevention measures on work motivation was also evaluated using the bivariate correlations formula. Qualitative information was systematically categorized based on the research data using thematic coding by Nguyen (2022). An interpretive description technique was adopted to analyze the categorized data. One coder undertook the coding process, and the consistency of coding was evaluated through intra-observer reliability assessment

## 4 Findings

### 4.1 Victims' evaluations of the effectiveness of sexual harassment prevention measures in the workplace

**Table 1** Victims' evaluations of the effectiveness of sexual harassment prevention measures

	Min	Max	Mean	Sted. v
Having employers/ees sign an anti-harassment agreement	1	3	2.26	.873
Specifying the disciplinary sanctions for sexual harassment misconduct	1	3	2.20	.771
Strictly punishing harassers (fines, dismissals)	1	3	2.12	.706
Criticizing harassers in front of staff	1	3	2.12	.704
Asking harassers to apologize and compensate victims	1	3	2.12	.697
Supporting victims to file claims to higher authorities	1	3	2.08	.731
Recording misconduct using cameras	1	4	3.27	.750
Establishing a women's protection union/organization at work.	1	5	3.21	.936
Training employees in reaction skills classes and psychology courses	1	3	2.06	.678
Establishing confidential reporting channels	1	3	2.10	.731
Building an anti-SH community at the workplace	1	3	2.07	.734
Educating employees/ers to raise awareness of SH: how to realize, prevent, and complain	1	3	2.09	.720
Lightening up on the relevant legal issues	1	3	2.10	.717
Presenting procedures for investigating complaints and formal/informal resolution processes	1	3	2.16	.746
Denouncing misconduct in public	1	3	2.25	.816
Organizing anti-harassment movements	1	3	2.12	.732

As shown in Table 1, the victims evaluated the effectiveness of sexual harassment prevention measures implemented in their workplace. Generally, measures taken by staff were not thought to be sufficient or effective, with most of the mean values for the items less than three (3). It can be seen from Table 1 that companies and offices have made few commitments to SH prevention since the employers/ees had signed their initial contracts ( $M=2.2$ ;  $SD=0.873$ ). Responses to questions were as follows: When SH misconduct happens, did companies react or strictly punish harassers (with fines or dismissal)? ( $M=2.12$ ;  $SD=$

0.706); criticize harassers in front of staff? ( $M=2.12$ ;  $SD=0.704$ ); ask harassers to apologize to victims and compensate them? ( $M=2.12$ ;  $SD=0.697$ ); establish confidential reporting channels? ( $M=2.1$ ;  $SD=0.731$ ); or lighten up on the relevant legal issues? ( $M=2.1$ ;  $SD=0.717$ ). Additionally, community activities were rarely held ( $M=2.77$ ;  $SD=0.847$ ), with few anti-harassment movements or anti-sexual violation communities aimed at deterring sexual misconduct in companies. Regarding litigation, the victims acknowledged that staff weakly contributed to legal support for victims, including clarifying details of claim limitation procedures ( $M=2.16$ ;  $SD=0.746$ ) and assisting victims in filing claims with higher authorities ( $M=2.08$ ;  $SD=0.731$ ). Employee respondents highly evaluated three measures: establishing a women's-protection union/organization at work, setting up recordings using cameras to observe misconduct, and informally informing on harassment misconduct through social networks. Measures regarding educating employees/ers, raising awareness of SH, and organizing anti-harassment movements were awarded low scores of  $M=2.09$  and  $M=2.77$ . Respondents revealed that sexual harassment was not of concern to the leaders in their workplaces since they perceived there were more important issues for them to deal with regarding women. They had only one or two chances a year to join discussions about SH on 'women's days.' However, the related activities were theoretical, impractical, and unhelpful to employees who were threatened with being harassed. Sometimes, no SH prevention measures were taken. An employee stated the following: 'I'm sure that the SH [incident] was a big disturbance, but no voice was raised, and no drastic measure was taken.' This involved an extreme threat to women's lives and rights. Some people acknowledged that the SH prevention measures were actually ineffective and unsatisfactory.

#### 4.2 The impact of sexual harassment prevention measures at work on work-related motivation

Table 2 The impact of sexual harassment prevention measures on work-related motivation

Coefficients							
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
Work-related motivation	4.221	.396		10.670	.000		
Sexual harassment prevention measures	-.238	.099	-.149	-2.410	.017	1.000	1.000

It can be seen from Table 2 that the sig value associated with the dependent variable is below the significance level (0.05), indicating that the sample data are substantial evidence for dismissing the null hypothesis across the entire population. The evidence from the

data supports the idea of a non-zero correlation. Changes in the independent variable align with modifications in the dependent variable on a population scale. This variable has statistical significance and is a valuable component of the regression model. More specifically, the beta value (Beta= 0.149) significantly that SHPM impact work-related motivation. In other words, the claim that work-related motivation and sexual harassment prevention measures are unrelated is rejected.

### **4.3 Employees' recommendations concerning the implementation of sexual harassment prevention measures**

#### **4.3.1 Reforming the implementation of sexual harassment prevention measures**

The focus of interviews involved women's recommendations for reforms to implement sexual harassment prevention measures effectively, building an anti-sexual harassment working environment where sexual-harassment-related misconduct is discouraged, victims are protected from sexual perpetration, and organizations are made liable for SH-related damages.

##### *4.3.1.1 Educating employees about the issues relevant to sexual harassment*

A common barrier preventing employees from reporting incidents to authorities is a lack of awareness and misconceptions about sexual harassment. Many individuals do not recognize such behavior as a violation of women's rights or sexual discrimination, resulting in a less earnest response to instances of sexual victimization. For example, a participant admitted to experiencing harassment from her supervisor but chose not to react or report it to her employer, perceiving the actions as morally inappropriate rather than criminal. A significant portion of female workers may not identify themselves as victims of sexual violation because they associate sexual harassment solely with sexual penetration. However, applying the understanding of feminist rights, they are entitled to make complaints to protect themselves and avoid such action from the first stage. Feminist law should be taught and permeate employees' lives on an ongoing basis, accomplished by holding contests or talks about legal matters. The interviewees admitted gaps in their legal knowledge and an insufficient understanding of sexual harassment at work. They underestimated and were unaware of women's important roles and rights, so they did not take vigorous measures to protect themselves. In some situations, the harassers engage in sexual misconduct that is considered to be inconsequential and does not intensely affect the victims. Thus, the victims tend to neglect or tolerate it. Some SH even resulted in employees becoming pregnant, but the victims raised no voice. Numerous female workers who live precariously tend to tolerate the bad behaviors of their bosses to maintain a stable or good position in the workplace. This creates more opportunities for perpetrators to pursue their villainous goals. Consequently, it is necessary to broaden employees' legal knowledge and social understanding to encourage them confidently raise their voice against SH.

#### *4.3.1.2. Training employees on how to react to emergencies related to sexual harassment*

Perpetrators may threaten female workers in tandem with attacking their targets for sexual purposes. As a result, resisting sexual intercourse and powerful harassers is extremely challenging for victims. However, the victims confessed that they should not have taken such threats for granted. Everything would have been better if they had known how to resist. Thus, training employees on how to react to emergencies related to sexual harassment is imperative to help them escape danger effectively, behave properly toward their higher-power harassers to avoid retaliation, and prevent the negative impacts of harassment on their work and lives. Conducting tailored training programs focused on enhancing interpersonal and communication abilities is essential for enhancing employers' effectiveness to various scenarios. This proposal is of strategic significance in terms of preventing harassment. Training initiatives should be extended to encompass employees from all sectors as a proactive measure. Training content should center on developing skills related to managing emotions, evaluating potential risk factors, and adopting appropriate measures in response to instances of misconduct.

Ensuring transparency regarding sexual harassment, which employers currently often conceal, is a crucial preventive step that workplaces should adopt. This would signal to potential wrongdoers that their unacceptable actions will be exposed and reported to higher authorities. It is essential to implement strong consequences, such as publicly addressing misconduct or notifying the families of harassers, in order to eradicate instances of sexual harassment from the workplace and ensure a secure and harassment-free working environment.

#### *4.3.1.3. Increasing the responsibility of authorities and staff for harassment prevention*

The participants argued that the boards and representative organizations of workplaces should take responsibility for solving SH-related problems promptly and effectively. To fight against the harassers, the support and cooperation of all stakeholders, including victims, witnesses, organizations, and the boards is required.

At the moment, I feel that a post on Facebook about a sexual harassment story informally shared is more effective than waiting for a formal solution or decision from the board of the company. Pressure from the community is the most powerful effect, which spurs the authority to take prompt measures to address the issue (P.7, 31 years).

Based on their encounters, participants shared their beliefs regarding their organizations' responsibility for averting instances of workplace sexual harassment. They emphasized the necessity for organizations to shoulder responsibility for instances of sexual transgression transpiring within their establishments and to safeguard all employees against sexual harassment through company regulations. Moreover, it is essential that workplaces introduce measures that ensure the protection of victims following legal action. When individuals are hired for the workplace, they enter into agreements in which they acknowledge work-related expectations, and employers assure them of remuneration for their contributions and protection against potential hazards. Consequently, in situa-

tions of harassment, employers should assume accountability. Numerous individuals who have experienced harassment expressed frustration that despite their efforts to navigate obstacles and report the incidents to higher-ups, they witnessed no consequences or actions taken against the perpetrators. Those who engage in harassment, along with the management of the workplace, should bear the responsibility for the emotional and physical harm suffered by employees due to sexual harassment within their organizations.

#### 4.3.2 Reforming current law and policy to ensure women's rights at work

Complaint mechanisms need restructuring to enable workers to report incidents of sexual harassment and initiate legal action more easily. Streamlining the process of lodging complaints is essential, making it easier for employees to report instances of sexual harassment and commence legal proceedings. Simplifying the litigation process, including the burden of proof, evidence requirements, and financial aspects, would benefit those who have experienced harassment. Employees expressed that pursuing legal action related to sexual harassment is a formidable challenge due to the complexities associated with taking such cases to court. It entails a significant investment of time and money, and there is uncertainty about whether their claims will receive the necessary attention from relevant authorities. The challenge lies in collecting evidence, such as proof of physical harm, as witnesses and evidence are often not readily available or conclusive enough for use in court proceedings. Additionally, in cases involving mental health injury due to sexual harassment, determining the extent of harm is challenging. Therefore, laws pertaining to sexual harassment should be based on (levels of) the impact of psychological harm on job performance and private life, serving as legal evidence to convict the accused. Courts should accept evidence recorded through recorders, cameras, and messaging platforms.

Requiring employers to take measures that ensure their accountability for any sexual misconduct at their workplaces should be prioritized. Also, laws should hold both employers/organizations and individual workplace harassers liable for their crimes, regardless of their position in the company. Aggravated penalties should be applied to employers if they are found to have attempted to hide harassers' misconduct, created obstacles to the victim making a report, or taken no immediate and appropriate corrective action.

Additionally, consideration should be paid to whether employees are courageous enough to overcome the related barriers and tell their stories. For this, women's support teams and consultant groups should be established to bear witness to victims' negative feelings caused by sexual harassment and to give prompt legal advice.

Severe penalties or even criminal sentences should be applied to the men involved in sexual harassment misconduct that results in severe consequences for women, including psychological harm. Authorities should promulgate strict regulations about rights violations and ensure appropriate penalties for harassers to ensure an anti-harassment workplace. The accused must be made accountable and compensate the complainants for financial damage, psychological trauma, insult to dignity, and harm to job-related performance. If the victim experiences severe consequences, for instance, psychological treatment at a hospital or suicide, the harasser must be jailed.

Sexual harassment laws should be enacted that include serious financial punishment as a warning to men who commit misconduct against women. Moreover, state laws should

be attached to company employment agreements that define the legal tools and initiatives that support employees to fight power inequalities and discrimination and restore victims' voices. The provisions of employment agreements and laws should be oriented to protect female workers' rights, facilitate employees to file claims or go to court, and stop sexual violations at work through the use of strict penalties such as firing, demoting, and even jailing harassers.

## 5 Discussion

Results associated with the first research question indicate that sexual harassment prevention measures are not effective and are insufficient. A wide range of measures was mentioned, but participants evaluated their effectiveness as weak, and their knowledge of the implementation of SHPM was problematic. Little vigorous anti-SH action had been taken at their workplaces from when they signed a labor agreement to when the SH issue occurred. Consequently, the victims were not supported, so they could not go forward with filing claims. This finding is in alignment with the results of studies by D'Agostino (2019), Bergman et al. (2002), Clarke et al. (2017), Freedman-Weiss et al. (2020), and Gianakos et al. (2022).

Regarding the relationship between harassment prevention measures and work-related motivation, according to the findings, sexual harassment prevention measures have a significant effect. This result aligns with the findings of Campbell et al. (2008), Clarke et al. (2016), Chan et al. (2008), Sims et al. (2005), and Willness et al. (2007). In companies or offices where harassment prevention measures are intensively applied, employees are motivated to work harder and more effectively. They manifest more job contentment, dedication to the organization, and commitment to the workplace. By fostering a positive work environment where employees feel respected and supported, harassment prevention measures nurture a culture of inclusivity. When employees are highly valued regardless of gender, ethnicity, or background, they are more inclined to experience a sense of belonging, which further fuels their motivation to engage actively in work-related tasks. Prioritizing employees' safety and well-being also increases their likelihood of staying loyal to the organization, resulting in improved retention rates and decreased turnover.

Furthermore, it is critical to mandate that companies take action to stop sexual harassment. The participants' expectations of the responsibility of companies to impede sexual harassment at work were revealed. With regard to improving SH prevention and encouraging victims to make claims, the respondents expressed their expectation that laws against sexual offenses, women's protection policies, and the awareness of sexual harassment should be changed. The individuals recognized that a gap in the legal understanding and misperceptions regarding sexual harassment remains. The survey participants expressed a desire for an increase in awareness about sexual harassment, modifications in policies for safeguarding women, and changes in sexual offense laws to curb instances of sexual harassment and encourage victims to come forward. They emphasized the importance of sharing knowledge and information related to sexuality. Targeted training programs focusing on interpersonal and communication skills are recommended for enhancing employees' ability to respond effectively in emergencies. Reforming complaint

procedures is essential for making it easier for workers to report sexual harassment and pursue legal action. Streamlining the litigation process, including in areas such as the burden of proof, procedures, and financial considerations, would be advantageous for victims. Based on interview feedback, victims indicated that consistent updates to sexual harassment prevention policies are necessary to motivate their engagement and contribution to the workplace.

## 6 Conclusion and recommendations

The paper sheds light on the implementation of sexual harassment prevention in the workplace and victims' expectations. The quantitative results revealed that the victims did not highly evaluate the sexual harassment prevention measures of workplaces. SHPM adversely affects work-related motivation. Poorly evaluated prevention measures hinder employees from undertaking their work effectively, demotivating them. The qualitative findings illustrate women's recommendations for alterations in policies and laws to prevent sexual harassment, including promoting sources of support to which victims can report incidents. Extensive modifications in law regarding women's rights and women's rights protection policies should be consistently implemented to foster the struggle against SH. Concerning employee psychology and awareness, the broader dissemination of knowledge about sexual violence is crucial. This should involve targeted advocacy, public awareness campaigns, and educational initiatives for female industry workers. The aim is to enhance their understanding of sexual harassment, relevant laws, policies, and their rights in such situations. Continuous skills training, conferences, contests, and forums should be maintained to exchange knowledge and experiences. These platforms will empower female employees to develop effective prevention and response strategies to address sexual harassment. Women's rights advocates must develop comprehensive strategies to empower employees to combat workplace sexual harassment. These strategies should encompass various aspects of employee psychology and awareness, response skills, sexual misconduct laws, woman-centered empowerment, safety assurance policies, and mechanisms for reporting sexual harassment. Emphasizing woman-centered empowerment and safety assurance policies is pivotal for improving employees' living conditions. Such improvements could reduce incidents of sexual harassment among employees. There should be a focus on upholding human rights-related laws, anti-discrimination regulations, and sexual harassment prevention policies. Holding employers and harassers accountable for their actions is crucial. Legal frameworks should establish appropriate penalties for perpetrators, as current laws often fail to deter predators from victimizing vulnerable women.

Reforming the complaint system requires ensuring fairness, accessibility, and affordability for victims seeking legal recourse. This includes reducing the burden of proof, extending time limits for filing claims, and addressing financial barriers to pursuing lawsuits. Organizations and unions should play an active role in supporting victims through sexual harassment complaint mechanisms. This support can encompass legal assistance, financial aid, and guidance through the claims process. It is recommended to investigate resources provided by reputable organizations that focus on human rights, workplace

equality, and legal assistance. These resources can provide comprehensive advice on dealing with sexual harassment, including information on legal rights, appropriate actions to take when encountering harassment, and effective strategies for handling harassment in different environments.

This paper has several limitations that call for further research, such as the limited participant pool. In order to improve the reliability of the findings, larger samples might be used in subsequent research. Researchers should conduct more insightful investigations into female victims' lives and work to draw informative and accurate pictures of the impact of SH on women. By amplifying women's voices, valuable recommendations can be provided to social activists, policymakers, and legislators to safeguard women's rights.

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