

## **DEMESTIFYING THE EFFECTS OF SEXUAL ABUSE ON EMPLOYEE PRODUCTIVITY WORKING IN THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY**

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**Abstract:** Inappropriate sexual advances has been documented as a widespread and damaging phenomenon yet the specific patterns of behaviour reported in alleged inappropriate sexual advances cases and the factors influencing the lodging of formal, legal complaints have received little attention. The extent of inappropriate sexual advances in the hospitality industry has become a serious problem nationwide. As one of the nation's largest employment sector, the hospitality industry is particularly susceptible to this problem this is based on the long hours often at night, the pressure and intimacy of hospitality service that makes inappropriate sexual advances is a problem with the industry. The purpose of this research paper was to assess hospitality workers (both male and female) perception and attitudes on inappropriate sexual advances and the influence that inappropriate sexual advances has on their work. By analyzing the responses of the employees and employers, a better understanding of the issues brought about by inappropriate sexual advances was obtained. This research paper provides some useful information when it comes to inappropriate sexual advances in the hospitality industry and what policies should be implemented. The target population was 55 individuals aged 18years and above both male and female. A sample size of 48 respondents was selected, 20, 13, 15 from the three hotels picked through simple random sampling. Data analysis involved descriptive statistics. From the findings 75% of the respondents claimed to be aware of inappropriate sexual advances existing and that it affected their productivity in general.

This paper will go way in assisting hoteliers to handle this grave issue and therefore establish a conducive working environment where employees will be more productive, the government will also benefit in coming up with laws that will protect their key clients.

**Keywords:** Sexual harassment, Attitude, Policies, Productivity, Victim

### **INTRODUCTION**

Inappropriate sexual advances have been described as one of the "hot issues" that is plaguing the workplace of today's society. "Inappropriate sexual advances is usually defined as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favours, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature, when submission to or rejection of such conduct is used as a basis for employment decisions affecting an individual, or where such conduct has the purpose or effect of interfering unreasonably with the individual's work performance, or creates an offensive, hostile or intimidating working environment" (Civil Rights Act of 1964), Organizations have set forth formal written policies and procedures designed to educate employees about the subject and avoid liability.

Most organizations have made it clear that this type of behaviour will not be tolerated. However, what happens to these policies and procedures concerning this behaviour when it comes to the working environment of the hotel industry? Because of the differences in the "hospitality service versus other industries, what may be normal behaviour among the hotel employees may very well be sexual harassment.

When one listens to the employees of any restaurant, you will hear tales of sexual behavior, joking and horseplay at work. While most of this behavior is viewed as normal social interaction in a service industry, in an actual setting this behavior is known as sexual harassment. The hotel industry is especially susceptible to incidents of sexual harassing behaviors due to certain social characteristics. The most obvious is that of hotel's attracting or recruiting employees with "outgoing personalities"(this is described as employees with outward or physical beauty who can socialize well with both staff and guests) and this goes especially for the waiting staff. Waiting staff who have a friendly and outgoing personality usually sell more to the customer which in turn produces higher profits for the hotel as well as larger tips for the waiting staff.

Today, people do not just go to hotels to eat, but they go to be entertained. One has to just look at the explosion of Theme Restaurants to justify this statement. Due to the high number of people, hotel employees are in contact with on a daily basis whether it be customers or employees, those who have "outgoing or friendly personalities" are likely to be more social.

Other social characteristics include the high degree of social contact in the workplace, the unusual hours of work, including long, irregular hours involving evenings and holidays and the involvement with a number of different people in the course of delivering the service. For these reasons, restaurants create a very informal atmosphere (environment) which in the end actually encourages greater intimacy with co-workers.

Despite the education and awareness training that has been conducted, the biggest problem with this issue is that the majority of employees and managers are still unsure about what constitutes sexual abuse. Inappropriate sexual advances can be a confusing issue for many people because anything that is "unwelcome" can be determined in the mind of the receiver. "An important factor to understand in determining whether a behaviour can be inappropriate sexual advances is that what matters most is how the behavior makes another person feel." (Business & Legal Reports, Inc.).

In other words, what may be considered a abusive behavior to one person may be simple social interaction to another. "The line between work and social interaction in a hotel setting can easily be blurred. And that makes monitoring harassment all the more difficult" (Anders, 1993). Part of the confusion lies in the vagueness of the law itself. As defined by the EEOC in 1980, there are two different categories of sexual harassment. The first, quid pro quo harassment, occurs when an individual's acceptance or rejection of sexual advances that are made as a condition of keeping ones position at work or to have a promotion granted. This type of inappropriate sexual advances is essentially a power game. The second type of inappropriate sexual advances is that of "hostile environment"."A hostile environment exists wherever employees are exposed to persistent and unwelcome lewd remarks, sexual taunting, talking in seductive tones, queries about one's personal life, suggestive sounds, obscene gestures, pinching, touching and references to anatomy and physical appearance by anyone entrusted with control of company policy if the acts were performed in the execution of a corporate function",(Sherry 1995).Inappropriate sexual advances does not only have to happen from management to employees or from employees to employees it can come in the form of delivery men, clients or customers and even service personnel in the establishment. This is known as third party sexual harassment.

Inappropriate sexual advances has been documented as a widespread and damaging phenomenon yet the specific patterns of behaviour reported in alleged inappropriate sexual advances cases and the factors

influencing the lodgement of formal, legal complaints have received little attention. The extent of inappropriate sexual advances in the hospitality industry has become a serious problem nationwide. As one of the nation's largest employment sector, the hospitality industry is particularly susceptible to this problem this is based on the long hours often at night, the pressure and intimacy of hospitality service that makes inappropriate sexual advances problem with the industry. Inappropriate sexual advances occur in a variety of situations. Some examples of sexual harassment, not intended to be all inclusive are, unwanted jokes, gestures, offensive words on clothing, and unwelcome comments and repartee, touching and any other bodily contact such as scratching or patting a co-worker's back, grabbing, or interfering with an employee's ability to move. Repeated requests for dates that are turned down or unwanted flirting.

Transmitting or posting emails or pictures of a sexual or other harassment-related nature. Displaying sexually suggestive objects, pictures, or posters. Playing sexually suggestive music.

The industry has faced very high turnover's, high labour cost and sinking supply of workers for many years and maintaining a well trained workforce has become a critical issue for its success. The attitude and knowledge of inappropriate sexual advances may protect those prone to the same from being sexually harassed. This subject has for a long time been taken for granted and those affected choose to go low for the sake of protecting their job positions and guarding their names. The purpose and primary objective of this study is to examine employees' Knowledge and attitudes towards sexual harassment.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

This research adopted the descriptive survey research design. This design aims at exposing the details of the situation under study. It proceeds from the systematic establishment of facts towards the formulation of some general and specific principles of knowledge and solutions to the problems at hand from the collected data. The descriptive survey research design entails measurement, classification, analysis, comparison and interpretation

of data from a set sample and analysis of behaviour, trends attitudes and values explored. In this particular research the study sought to determine the knowledge of inappropriate sexual advances to respondent, their attitude and perception of inappropriate sexual advances and its effects in their productivity. The researcher's central aim here was to evaluate the level of inappropriate sexual advances in the selected hotels as well as other hotels and gauge its influence.

### **Study area**

The study area was in Eldoret town. Eldoret is located in the western region, 310km North of Nairobi. It is one of the renowned towns in Kenya and is found in the Rift valley province, one of the administrative provinces. Eldoret is a connector to some East African countries like Uganda. The town has business and transportation hub with service by road, rail and air it boasts of hills and valleys and enormous landscapes. A cross sections of the hotels that will be sampled are; white castle motel, Hotel Sirikwa and Eldoret club.

### **Target Population**

The target population for this study were the employees in the hotel and hospitality industry.

### **Sampling frame**

### **Sample size**

There being no estimate available for the proportion in the target population assumed to have the characteristic of interest, 50 % was used as recommended by Fisher et al.<sup>3</sup>

Therefore if the proportion of a target population with a certain characteristic is .50, the Z-statistic is 1.96 and we desire accuracy at .05 levels, then the sample size was calculated with the formula:

$$n = \frac{(Z^2PQ)}{d^2}$$

$$n = \frac{(1.96)^2(.50)(.50)}{(.05)^2}$$

$$n = 384$$

The target population being less than 10,000, the required sample size would be smaller therefore to find the sample estimate (nf) the formula below was used:  $nf = n \div \{1 + (n \div N)\}$

$$nf = 384 \div \{1 + (384 \div 55)\} \quad nf = 48$$

Therefore the sample size for each hotel was as follows:

$$\text{Sirikwa hotel } (23 \div 55)48 = (20)$$

$$\text{White castle motel } (15 \div 55)48 = (13)$$

$$\text{Eldoret club } (17 \div 55)48 = (15)$$

$$\text{TOTAL } (48)$$

The total numbers of questionnaires that were used to collect data were 48.

### **Pilot Test**

A week before the collection of data, the researcher set up a pilot study at highlands inn to test the effectiveness of the instruments. The pilot study was done on 8 members of the organization to determine whether the instrument could be relied upon for results that relate logically to the objectives and the research questions of the study. The instruments proved largely successful except for a few anomalous responses that arose because of printing errors on the questions. This was however corrected and important inclusions were factored for the actual study at Sirikwa hotel, white castle and Eldoret club. In so doing the instruments were accredited as valid for the data collection.

### **Data Analysis Procedure.**

Data was analyzed using the SPSS software that presented options for feeding the raw collected data and the program in turn converted this into quantitative mode thus producing tabulated form of the data that could be later converted into charts (Pie, bar charts, and columns e.t.c) due to having common charts the researcher opted to using Microsoft word to create charts that could be edited without rigidity as encountered in the SPSS output program.

### **RESULTS**

Knowledge and awareness of sexual abuse due to the growing number of inappropriate sexual advances cases, more attention is now focused towards establishing awareness to the masses in this case the he hospitality workers. Some researchers have indicated that inappropriate sexual advances is one of the factors, which causes employees to be less productive, lose motivation, and is even responsible for the turnover in the hospitality industry. Hospitality workers can be a major force within the industry and can play an influential role to affect change only if they are aware of the degree of harassment already taking place. How much do they know, how do they feel, and what else do they need to understand today toward this issue are important questions.

This study's findings brought to light the connection of workers awareness to the inappropriate sexual advances issue in the hospitality workplace. The findings made it quite clear that a majority of the workers in the hospitality industry actually know what inappropriate sexual advances is and have even in their work walk encountered sexual harassment. There has always been a stereotype that the female gender is one bound to be

sexually harassed and are normally the victims of this escapade the study proved this wrong, 46% out of the possible 100% were men who answered possibly to having been harassed. It was evident that 75 % of the respondents agreed to know what inappropriate sexual advances actually was.

Male college students derive most of their fun from computer related electronic media another indication that the workers were aware of what inappropriate sexual advances is and if it existed in their workplace was qualified by their response when asked if there had been cases of inappropriate sexual advances in the hospitality industry, 54% of the respondents agreed to this statement. 41% of the respondents this is the workers in the hospitality industry have actually encountered harassment face to face this is they have been sexually harassed thus making it clear that they actually are aware that sexually harassment is a prevailing issue in their workplace. The researcher conducted an informal review with hospitality workers in the past three months and learned that a percentage of them had experienced or had known about inappropriate sexual advances problems that occurred in the hospitality workplace. Many of these workers however had encountered difficulties in finding the right solution to take regarding the encountered workplace inappropriate sexual advances situation.

### **Perception and attitudes on sexual harassment**

Sexual harassment is perceived as a poor moral issue and nobody enjoys being sexually harassed as this is backed up by the fact that the respondents provided such great contempt on the issue. A greater percentage, 67% did not agree to the fact that they would tolerate inappropriate sexual advances this is an indication that they do not wish to be associated with the building of sexual harassment and allowing for the harassers to walk scot free around their environment however in the same figure 10% of the respondents agreed to tolerating inappropriate sexual advances this can be said or can imply that this group comprises of the harassers themselves and those who enjoy the pleasure of being harassed it can also indicate that having seen nothing being done to the previously reported cases they have sought to reluctantly accept that they would be fine to tolerate the act. Harassment actually happens but they are reluctant to saying that it is a daily occurrence in their workplace. Another amazing observation is the fact that some respondents term sexual jokes as not harassment yet they majority counter parts disagree with this, 21 % agree that sexual comments are not harassment if meant as jokes even if they make the target of the comments uncomfortable.

Their counterparts of 75 % disagree to this. Policies and legal action governing against sexual harassment It was quite evident that most establishments do not have clear cut policies on inappropriate sexual advances, 30% saying the policies are bad and 23% being neutral not willing to say if the policies were available or not. Upon asking the hotels visited to show the researcher some of the policies governing against inappropriate sexual advances most of them confidently agreed that the hotels had none some even acted in surprise and claimed to never have heard of such a thing as policies governing against inappropriate sexual advances however upon being asked to list don some of the policies they had heard through hearsay on inappropriate sexual advances they clearly gave answers, 51 % opted for firing as the policy they knew, 38 % opted for punishment whereas 11 % opted for the common unpaid leave option. Some of the legal actions the respondents proved to side for were as seen in figure 4.5.4 that indicated that some of the legal actions the respondents would recommend are 36% opting for life imprisonment, 16 % castration and 47 % opted for punishment.

## Conclusion

This research set out to investigate the impact of inappropriate sexual advances in the workplace. A sample population of 48 respondents was sought from three hotels around Eldoret town and administered with questionnaires for the study.

The study adopted four objectives. The first objective was to examine the employee's knowledge and experience of any form of sexual abuse. The second objective was to establish employee's attitudes towards sexual harassment. Objective three was to establish the effects of inappropriate sexual advances to the affected employees and the establishment they work for. The fourth and last objective was to examine the policies governing

Against inappropriate sexual advances in the hospitality industry with inappropriate sexual advance policies. The study concludes its case thus that there is a great influence of inappropriate sexual advances to both the workers and the establishment they work for. It is evident and with no doubt that inappropriate sexual advances is actually happening in the hospitality industry.

## Recommendations

The purpose of one's workplace is to provide the worker with their intended need as to why they joined or agreed to work in that particular establishment. Therefore it would be very appropriate that they work with no worries of dealing with issues that can be avoided such as sexual harassment.

It is recommend that employers have policies that govern against sexual harassment Employers can opt to follow the following 5 basic rules of inappropriate sexual advances that distinct an employer's liability to their employer as from the perspective of law as listed by Omilan (1986).

The five basic rules define the situations under which an employer is liable for

- 1) Inappropriate sexual advance cases in the workplace. An employer is legally responsible for the inappropriate sexual advances of his employees by supervisory personnel even if he had no notice of illegal conduct.
- 2) An employer may not be liable for actions by his supervisors if the illegal conduct created a "hostile offensive and intimidating workplace "and the employer had no notice of the conduct.
- 3) An employer is legally liable for the inappropriate sexual advances of its employees by co-workers only if it had actual or constructive knowledge and did not take immediate corrective action.
- 4) An employer is liable for the acts of non-employees who sexually harass employees in the workplace only if the employer has actual or constructive knowledge of the harassment and has failed to take immediate and appropriate corrective action.
- 5) An employer may be legally liable for unlawful sex discrimination if it gives employment opportunities or benefits to employees who submitted to sexual advances, but not to other employees, who were qualified but denied those employment opportunities or benefits.

Another recommendation would be to ensure those caught in inappropriate sexual advances dealings are properly dealt with. Suggestions for Further Studies. This study dwelt exclusively on inappropriate sexual advances influence to the hospitality Industry employers and employees, and it would be appropriate for future studies to investigate the influence of inappropriate sexual advances to other dignitaries in the industry such as guests, tourists, suppliers, e.t.c It would also add value for future studies to probe into the precise dimensions of damage that inappropriate sexual advances creates on the victims vis a vis the possible positive aspects achieved by the harassers.

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