

FEMALE GOVERNMENT OFFICE WORKERS' PERCEPTION OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN COLOMBO DISTRICT, SRI LANKA

T.G.S.L. Prakash

*Department of Forestry and Environment Science, University of Sri Jayewardenepura,
Sri Lanka
prakashtgsl@gmail.com*

United Nations Inter - Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality defined Sexual Harassment (SH) as an unwelcome sexual advance, requests for sexual favours, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. Seventy nine percent of victims are women globally and both men and women can be perpetrators. The objective of this study is to investigate the female office workers' perception, attached to government institutions in the Colombo district. Respondents were selected based on random sampling method (n=57). Data collection was done through a pretested questionnaire survey and data analysis was done with Microsoft excel 2010. Respondents belonged to nine occupations and the age range was 20 - 57 years (Mean 35.31, Median 35, & Mode 35). Forty-nine (86%) were aware that SH can be physical, verbal, or non-verbal. Eight (14%) think that SH should involve physical harassment; forty-three (75%) think they have been subjected to SH in their day to day life and the other 14 (25%) have not faced SH; 38 (67%) maintain SH is a very rare occurrence. Eight (14%) stated that SH was rare, and 11 (19%) said it was common. Forty-three (76%) state that they were harassed when travelling by public transportation, eight (14%) at public places, four (7%) at office, and two (3%) during entertainment events. Four (7%) were harassed by colleagues, and five (9%) by superiors. Forty-eight (84%) do not categorize perpetrators. Thirty-nine (68%) do not hesitate to react against SH while the other 18 (32%) would not react due to fear of retaliation. Based on the respondents' views the study found that the largest set of female office workers attached to government institutions are subjected to SH when using public transportation, but it is very rare occurrence. They know that SH can be physical, verbal, or non-verbal, and do not hesitate to react against SH.

Keywords: Female office workers, Government institutions, Sexual harassment