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Workplace Harassment and Productivity: A Comprehensive Role of Strategic Leadership.

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Abstract

The issue of the crash of workplace harassment has investigated critically by the researchers and the practitioners in the oriental countries. But in Bangladesh this issue is almost unseen and the executive leaders (managers) are almost reluctant or unconscious about it. The present study on workplace harassment is becoming the most panic issue in the workplace and human resource management, was conducted in the milieu of workplace in Bangladesh. Among the participants 52.11% were experienced of harassment even at every month. 48.12% were harassed by the co-workers. The participants reported that the workers have defective ethics and the management herein Bangladesh practices traditional type response about this issue of panic.

Key words: Workplace Harassment, Productivity and Strategic leadership.

Introduction

Workplace harassment is offensive, belittling or threatening behavior directed at an individual worker or a group of workers (Helen Williams, January 2001). Recently, the matters of workplace harassment have gained interest among practitioners and researchers as it is becoming one of the most concerning areas of effective workplace management. In the oriental countries, it attracted lots of attention from researchers and governments since 1980s, because a significant source of work stress is associated with aggressive behaviors at workplace (Tehrani, 2004; Zapf & Einarsen, 2001). However, Bangladesh is far behind than of the oriental countries and here are limited efforts to investigate the questions on workplace harassment. Thus the country doesn't becoming afforded to wedge the loss of productivity of workers.

Objective of the Study

Though the issue of the crash of workplace harassment has investigated critically by the researchers and the practitioners in the oriental countries, in Bangladesh this issue is almost unseen and the executive leaders (managers) are almost reluctant or unconscious about it. The present study is however designed to reach to the following objectives:

- To get familiarity with the forms and aspects of workplace harassment.
- To show the relationship between workplace harassment and productivity.
- To encourage the effectiveness of strategic leadership concern regarding this issue.

In this setting the significant and general questions those can arise are-

- a) *Does workplace harassment create any variability in the productivity of the workers?*
- b) *What roles can strategic leadership play to minimize workplace harassment?*

Limitations of Study

In the current study the authors' had to face some extent of discourage when chatting with the respondents at the workplace of them. It was discovered that the worked people had a high extent of mental stress when answering the questions in the questionnaire. However, the following limitations were experienced in the present study:

- There is the inadequate availability of the secondary sources of data relating the milieu of workplace harassment.
- The respondents had limited knowledge about forms of workplace harassment (though is very much frequent in the workplace).

Methodology

The study was designed to investigate the forms and aspects of workplace harassment and describe the role of effective strategic leadership that critically affects the reinforcement of the workers' productivity. A structured questionnaire was used to identify the phenomenon of workplace harassment from a population consist of female and male respondents. The systematic sampling technique was used to obtain data from the primary source. The total number of questions presented in the questionnaire was divided into three sections. The first section consists of 8 (eight), second section consists of 2 (two) questions and the third section

consists of 1 (one) question. The items in first section were used to experience the fact of workplace harassment, second section were used to perceive the case of productivity and third section was used to identify responsible entities to workplace harassment and loss of productivity. Beside 1 (one) hypothesis was tested to examine one of the questions in the backdrop of the objective of the study.

Workplace Harassment

Workplace harassment persistently negative attacks on personal and professional performance are typically unpredictable, irrational and often unseen (James Cook University, 2010). It is the odious dealing through pitiless, malevolent, hurtful or embarrassing attempts to undermine an individual worker or groups of workers. It is, whether be verbal or physical badgering based on sex, religion or race, is unlawful and also a form of discrimination (Alison Doyle, 2011). Someone is harassing you if- He (or she) is doing things to make you feel uncomfortable, He (or she) is saying things to make you feel uncomfortable or He (or she) is putting you at risk in some way. However, the harasser might pick the gender, race, disability, age, looks, sexual performance, religions, beliefs, family, birthplace or political beliefs to make one feel uncomfortable (Toronto, ON: Ontario Women’s Directorate, 1995).

Findings and Analysis

In the present study a structured questionnaire formed the foundation of the research findings. From the universe a total of 87 people were chosen randomly, that constituted the sample bulk. Among them 58.62% were male and 41.38% were female. The average age of the respondents was around 29 years, ranging from 21 years to 49 years. However, in the study data pertinent to the frequency of being harassed was also collected from the respondents and it was appeared that the average percentage of being harassed (male & female) in everyday was 4.60% and 45.98% were harassed at least one time in every month. There were only 2.30% respondents who were harassed only one time in their entire work life. However, the findings are summarized in the following table:

Sex	Harassed ?		Harassed by				Inform authority?		Forms of informing			Performance Affected?		Responsible parties			
	Yes	No	Superior	Co-worker	Clients	More than one of	Yes	No	Verbal	Written	Both	Yes	No	Inefficient mgmt	Coworker's ethics	Work environment	More than one of them
Male (51)	74.51 %	25.49 %	27.45 %	49.02 %	23.53 %	31.37 %	80.39 %	19.61 %	64.71 %	35.29 %	39.22 %	76.47 %	23.53 %	39.22 %	27.45 %	33.33 %	39.22 %
Female (36)	86.11 %	13.89 %	13.89 %	50.00 %	36.11 %	44.44 %	22.22 %	77.78 %	61.11 %	38.89 %	19.44 %	83.33 %	16.67 %	41.67 %	44.44 %	13.59 %	41.67 %

Source: Author’s collection through questionnaire.

Table: A-1

The study showed that after being harassed and undermined, 80.39% of the male and 22.22% of the female respondents had clued-up the authority about the issue they became experienced about. Among the male 64.71% informed verbally, 35.29% in written form and 39.22% had taken both of the forms to inform the authority. Whereas among the female respondents 61.11% informed verbally, 38.89% in written form and 19.44% had picked the both forms. It was revealed that, the higher authority is remained unknown about the harassment to the female workers compared to the male of same type.

What matters the harasser pick?

In a workplace, either may be an office, a factory, a building, a private home, an educational institution or a store (Helen Williams, January 2001), the harasser may pick any of the diversity issues to make one feeling uncomfortable. The study showed that in context of Bangladesh, the harasser commonly picked sex, religion, birth place, age, political belief, physical disability of looks of a worker.

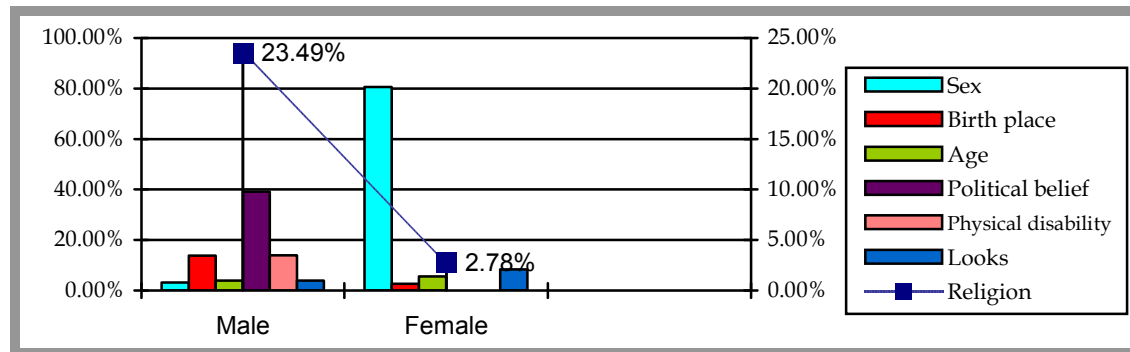


Figure 02: Percentage of each issue that the harassers pick to make one harassed.

The study showed that the most of the frequent issues, the harasser pick to make one feeling uncomfortable are the sexual difference (for female- 80.56%) and political beliefs (for male- 39.22%). Thus these two particular issues in workplace have become the critical areas of placing concentration in management of workers.

Responsibility of harassment in workplace

Harassment in workplace is usually manufactured by a person might be a boss, superior, manager, director, coworker, customer, patient, delivery person or a person in a union (Helen Williams, January 2001). However, the responsibility of workplace harassment is generally the offence of the human side of an organization in which the management and administration effectiveness is an immense part. The present study showed that in workplace the female mostly harassed by their clients/ customers (44.44%) and the male workers are by their coworkers (50.90%). Both the male and female respondents reported that mostly the workers became subject to the workplace harassment due to the inefficiency of management (male- 39.22% & female-41.67%).

Workplace harassment and Productivity

For organization workplace harassment is deteriorate and it has serious impact on the workers’ career prospect. Due to the harassment, the workers may loose their reputation. Aside as aforementioned, it compels an organization to experience some problems as- reduce the workers morale, negatively affect the productivity and performance of the workers, create defective relationship in the workplace and cause the absent, labor turnover, late, poor concentration to work etc. Yet, when the authors computed the findings, it was appeared that when become harassed by anyone in any form, it negatively affects the performance of the workers. The respondents manufactured different forms of negative behavior when they had become the subject of harassment that eventually led the loose of productivity.

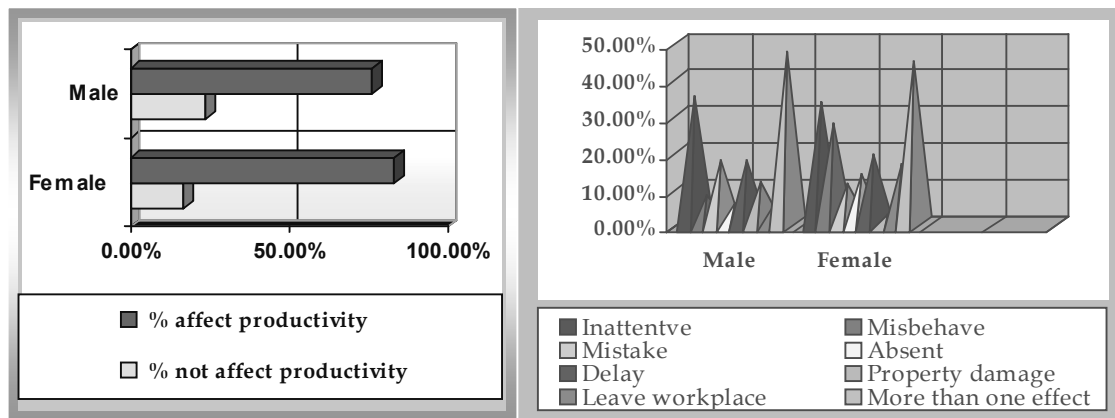


Figure 04: Percentage of respondents experienced affect in productivity and forms of behavior produced.

The above graph shows that, due to harassment in workplace, the female experienced more affect in their productivity (83.33%) than of the male respondents (76.47%). The respondents also reported that, when anyone make one feeling uncomfortable, it consequently manufacture defective attention to the work and sometimes it led to produce misbehavior towards both the coworkers and the customers. However it is a critical affair of concerns that, “due to harassment, variability in the productivity of male and female is formed”.

Hypothesis Testing

Data table

Harassed vs. Productivity	Male: Y	Female: y	Total
Harassed (not affect productivity): X	13	05	18
Harassed (affect productivity): x	38	31	69
Total	51	36	87

Source: Author’s collection through questionnaire.

Table: A--2

Let us take the hypothesis that, $H_0 =$ There is no variability in the productivity between male and female workers due to workplace harassment.

On the basis of the hypothesis, the expected frequency corresponding to the number of respondents harassed (not affected productivity) and male would:

Expectation of $(XY) = \frac{(X) \times (Y)}{N}$ when, X represents harassed (not affected productivity) and Y represents male workers.

So, $(X) = 18, (Y) = 51$ and $(N) = 87$. Thus, Expectation of $(XY) = \frac{(18) \times (51)}{87} = 10.55$

Now using expectation of (XY) , we can write the table of expected values as follows:

Group	Observer frequency (O_{ij})	Expected frequency (E_{ij})	$O_{ij} - E_{ij}$	$(O_{ij} - E_{ij})^2$	$(O_{ij} - E_{ij})^2 / E_{ij}$
XY	13	10.55	02.45	06.0025	0.5689
Xy	05	07.45	-02.45	06.0025	0.8057
xY	31	40.45	-09.45	89.3025	2.2077
xy	38	28.55	09.45	89.3025	3.1279

Putting the calculated value in Chi-square formula, we get,
$$X^2 = \sum \frac{(O_{ij} - E_{ij})^2}{E_{ij}} = 6.7102$$

Here, the degree of freedom = $(r-1)(c-1) = (2-1)(2-1) = 1$. The table value for 1 degree of freedom at 5 percent level of significant is 3.841. The calculated value of $X^2 = 6.7102$, that is much higher than the table value. Thus the experiment doesn't support the null hypothesis (H_0). So it can be concluded, there is relationship between workplace harassment and the variability of the productivity of workers (male vs. female).

Strategic Leadership

Strategic leadership is one of the key strategic roles of both general and functional manager to use all their knowledge, energy and enthusiasm to provide leadership for their subordinates and develop a high performing organization (Hill and Jones, 2009). The distinctive characteristic of the strategic leadership phase as compared with operational level leadership and executive level is that, it implies conscientiousness for achieving the right balance between the entire scope, like the needs of organization, and the parts, be they small i.e. teams or individuals or large i.e. functions.

To make strategic leadership effective some key characteristics of strategic leaders are critical (Martin, January 2009)-

- They are mission focused, They have an ability to see both the forest and the trees
- They are at least as outward looking as inward looking
- Their thinking is complex and they look for non-obvious causes and solutions
- They think probabilistically
- They spend most of their time thinking about the future and
- They realize there is only one aspect of an organization, and it is human

However, the intent of strategic leadership is to build up an atmosphere wherein workforce estimates the organization's desires in milieu of their own job.

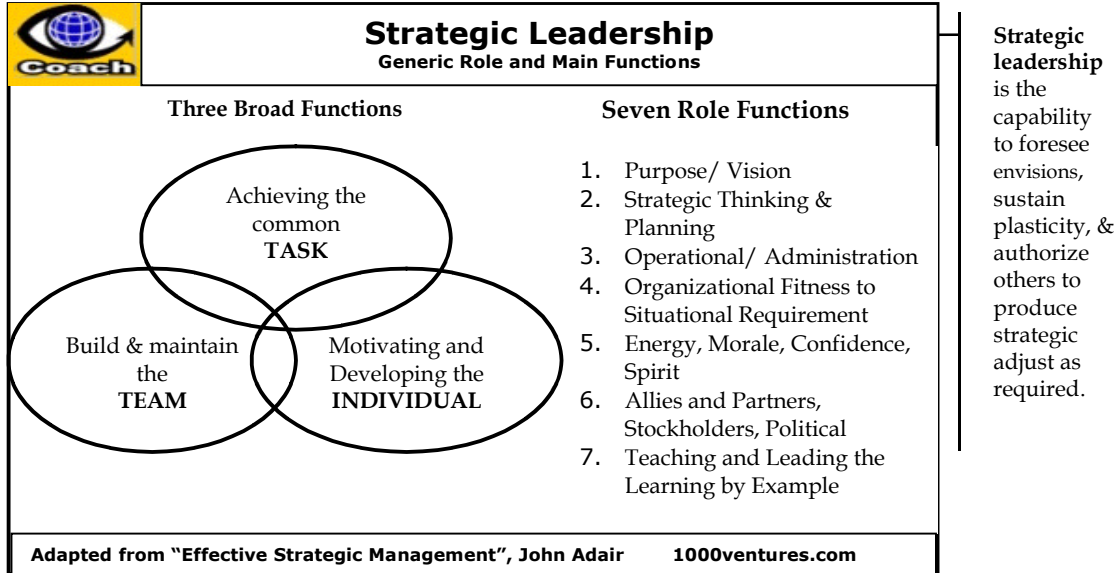


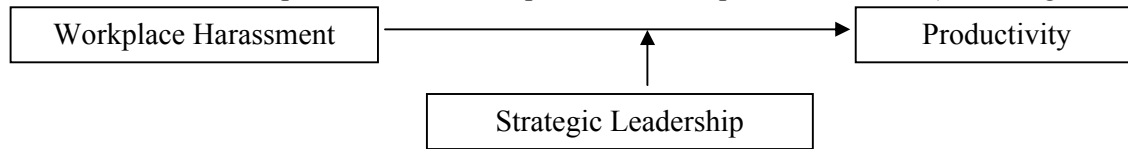
Figure 05: A model of effective strategic leadership.

Strategic leadership and workplace harassment

Strategic leaders encourage the employees in an organization to follow their own ideas. To prevent workplace harassment the organization should have written policy statement on the organization's commitment to positive working relationships and practices in the workplace, including refusal to tolerate any form of workplace harassment (Helen Williams, Jan 2001). Organizations' strategy for preventing workplace harassment should comprise the 5 elements:

- *Policy statement:* The statement of policies, how the organization will deal with the case of workplace harassment i.e. upholding workplace values, elimination of harassment etc.
- *Dealing procedure:* The procedures for dealing with the issues of workplace harassment should ensure the involvement of top management, individual worker and the workplace harassment contract officer. The contract officer should assist the senior management by articulating the plot of harassment and the individual worker should provide the scope to defend their own.
- *Information and training:* The worker should be provided with information pertinent to the policy to be implied in the case of workplace harassment. Necessary training program should also be arranged to manufacture the awareness among the workers.
- *Keeping of record and confidentiality:* To keep the strong confidential record of any action i.e. attempts to harass, outcomes of harassment, actions taken against individual worker, is very much important.
- *Monitoring and evaluation:* The entire of the above should be monitored to evaluate the performance of the policies, procedure, information flow and training. It will also help to measure the effectiveness of any action taken.

The authors completed a qualitative analysis of variables to show the relationship in the backdrop of the title of the present study. Here workplace harassment is shown as an independent variable (the variable doesn't affected by), productivity is as dependent variable (the variable affected by) and strategic leadership is as moderating variable (the variable affects the relationship between the independent and dependent variables). See figure-06.



The test of hypothesis showed that when anyone in the workplace became harassed, variability in his/her productivity is manufactured and is obviously negative. The qualitative analysis on workplace harassment and strategic leadership showed that, an effective strategic leadership can reproduce the behavior of the worker as the organizations' expects to keep the workplace free from harassment and thus can secure the optimum productivity.

Conclusion

The current research shows that harassment is a critical (common but unseen) issue in work environment and its costs to the productivity are vindictive. The researcher's findings of this study suggest that workers are likely to involve in negative behavior in the workplace when they became the subject of harassment. Strategic leadership has significant implications for reducing workplace harassment because strategic leadership has been considered as important process of influencing workers to change their attitudes, behaviors, values and ethics towards the productivity of an organization. It is reasonable to assume that strategic leadership is related to the issue of workplace harassment and productivity. Finally, this research is an attempt to have the sense of hearing the attention to the issue of workplace harassment and to help the readers and practitioners to understand that workplace harassment should be wedged to the maximum level to secure welfare of the workers therein the organization and the interests of the organization as well.

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