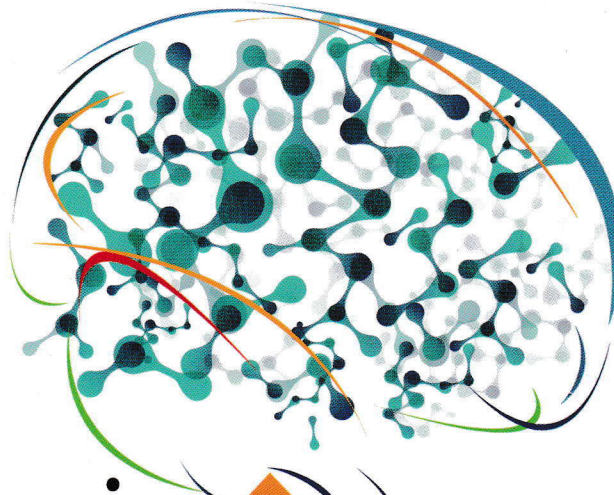


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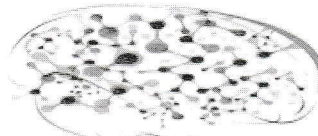
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The solutions to workplace sexual harassment as expressed by the labour-force in Lagos State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Sexual harassment is one of the major challenges faced by the labour-force in the contemporary Nigerian society. Victims of workplace sexual harassment often come under severe pressure exerted by their superiors in the form of threats to terminate appointments of the victims. This study therefore investigated solutions to workplace sexual harassment as expressed by the labour-force in Lagos, Nigeria. Descriptive survey design was adopted with a total of 515 respondents purposively selected across public and private sectors. A questionnaire entitled "Solutions to Workplace Sexual Harassment" was employed to collect data for the study. The instrument possessed a reliability coefficient of 0.81 having been subjected to the Cronbach's alpha method. Mean and t-test statistical tools were used to analyse the data. All hypotheses were tested at 0.05 alpha level. Results revealed that strict punitive measures, increased worker assertiveness, early reporting of attempts, dressing modestly to the workplace are workable solutions to the menace of sexual harassment in the workplace. The study recommended that workers should be more official in the workplace in terms of dressing, conduct while labour laws and policies be strengthened towards ensuring the protection of workers, and teaching more assertive skills in the workplace.

Keywords: sexual harassment, workplace, labour force, solution, Lagos.

1. Introduction

In the past three decades, particularly in the labour force, sexual harassment has subtly crept in without adequate legislation to curb its growing prominence. According to Maypole and Skaine (1983); Richman et al., (2011), workplace sexual harassment affects majorly the female workers. This implies that workplace sexual harassment has been going on for decades. In Nigeria, it was initially more reported in the academia with many researchers as well as the general public focusing attention more on the university environment (Ladebo, 2003). This is because the university system, as the peak of academic learning, is seen as an environment where such immoral act is well established (Ladebo, 2003; Abe, 2012). Despite the fact that there is usually widespread complaints and condemnations against sexual harassments anytime it is reported, there is yet to be any serious legislation or policy against perpetrators of the act in Nigeria (Ladebo, 2003). This however, is contradictory to the International Labour Organization's (ILO) (2013) codes guiding the workforce which states that: "the right to work is an inalienable right of all human beings; the right to safe working conditions as well as equality in treatment at the workplace are inseparable from the right to work. However, the right to work can be seriously impaired when employees are subjected to sexual and gender based forms of violence such as sexual harassment in the workplace" (ILO, 2013).

According to ILO (2013), sexual harassment implies any action that is sexually suggestive. In other words, it can be overt or covert. It is a conduct that is offensive, unwelcome, uninvited, unreasonable and unacceptable. Determining if an act is sexually harassing is a function of its welcoming or otherwise to the person to whom it is directed as well as the circumstances surrounding it (ILO, 2013). Thus, the 2012 labour code prohibited workplace sexual harassment in totality. This, according to ILO (2012) was to lay the foundation for a safe, conducive and healthy work environment.

Also, the United Nations (UN) Women (2017) posits that about 35% of women globally have experienced physical or sexual harassment, either in the public or private places. It further posits that sexual harassment is part and parcel of daily life, particularly in public places, basically to curtail a woman's freedom. According to the UN women, sexual harassment is everywhere (CNN reports, November 29, 2017). Harassers who are in most cases superiors/bosses/employers of labour themselves make use of the tool of sexual harassment to deprive workers their rights, deny them due benefits/privileges or blackmail female or male subordinates/employees into compulsory gratification of their (superior/employer's) sexual thirsts; whereas any attempt by victims to report such threats or experience is met with unimaginable resistance even from the law enforcers. Although, the Nigerian eight Senate passed a bill against sexual harassment in 2016, it was only limited to a punitive measure of five years jail term for guilty university lecturers, not considering other tertiary institutions where sexual harassment is the order of the day, neither was it extended to other sectors in the labour force. It is worthy of note that till date no culprit has been sent to jail for sexual harassment despite several widespread reportage of incidences of harassments of female students by certain lecturers even in many public universities of repute. This further corroborates the study of Ladebo (2003) which assert that sexual harassment is yet to be officially recognized as a violation of a person's rights either in the university environment or other workplaces and organizations.

It is in literature that organizations, companies as well as workers perceive erotic desires of the superior as an employer-employee private problems that can be settled between the duos. This could be so due to the fact that this menace is not considered a serious threat to the labour force and this explains why cases of workplace sexual harassments are strange to Nigerian courts of law because even in the bench, there is sexual harassment (Ladebo, 2003). Therefore, if the sector that is primarily responsible for protecting the rights of the citizens is sexually not exempted, i.e. observed "sexual harassment in the bench, who then is going to judge the case" (Ladebo, 2003).

The menace keeps increasing geometrically without control, even by foreign employers of labour in Lagos state. Examples are some of the reported cases of sexual harassment of female employees by Indian, Lebanese and Iranian nationals in Lagos metropolis, to which there was no serious legal actions taken despite the public outcry (the Punch, June 6, 2013; April 2, 2016; June 19, 2017). In one of the reports, the then President, Goodluck Jonathan said it was time to deport Lebanese and Iranians because of the continuous harassment of female employees of Nigerian extraction by the foreigners. This confirms the earlier findings of Maypole and Skaine (1983), and Richman et al., (2011) which reported that females are the main victims of sexual harassment in the workplace. However, despite the presidential position, sexual harassment by these teeming foreigners as well as local employers of labour, in collaboration with some corrupt law enforcement agents/officials in the bar/bench, has unabatedly continued. It is quite disheartening that one of the perpetrators audaciously said that he would accept the baby if he/she resembled him: this was after the victim reported that she was raped by her Lebanese boss. This may have been largely due to the rape victim's inability to set healthy boundaries/limits when the boss started the advances, hence, she got sexually violated in the course of duty by her employer, or she was coerced into it in order to save her job.

This corroborates Abe's (2012) assertion that sexual harassment occurs when the victims cannot distinguish between official and secular matters in the workplace, or unable to define what action of the superior/employer constitutes sexual harassment or when one can sufficiently say that an harassment has taken place, particularly. Several instances of workplace sexual harassment abound, and this constitute why it is expedient to have this study which focuses on proffering effective and practicable solutions to workplace sexual harassment particularly in Lagos metropolis, Nigeria.

2. Statement of the problem

Sexual harassment in the workplace has become more pronounced in recent times than in the past. It has constituted an unfortunate hindrance to a satisfactory occupational experience, thereby causing workers untold traumatic experiences in the course of carrying out their daily lawful duties as employees, thus, it ultimately reduces their productivity. Regardless of the sector, superiors are often reported as allegedly threatening subordinates of the opposite gender for sexual gratification, the refusal of which has sent many victims out of work. Such experience has devastating emotional, psychological and physical impacts on the victims (Abe, 2012). The societal as well as family expectations from victims of workplace sexual harassments are adversely impaired. Sexual harassment in the labour force differs depending on the degree and nature of the assault on the victim by the perpetrator. The study

of Abe (2012) researched into defining and awareness of sexual harassment among selected university students in Lagos metropolis, Nigeria, and the findings revealed that more females rather than male undergraduates had experienced sexual harassment; while only females are reported to have made official complaints especially of rape cases.

Also, Ladebo (2003) worked on sexual harassment in academia in Nigeria: how real? He adopted an experimental design and found that both male and female students were of the opinion that sexual harassment by faculty members, i.e. lecturers was commonplace and already becoming a culture in the university system. In some instances, it is a common phenomenon amongst staff and female students. Other findings revealed that weak students offered lecturers sex in return for marks. From the foregoing, it is clear that in Nigeria, the lack of appropriate legislation against sexual harassment is partly responsible for its perpetual rise. According to Ladebo (2003), the absence of policy guidelines which defines what constitutes institutional and/or organizational sexual harassment may further embolden perpetrators to continue in the act. The two researches limited their scopes to the university system, hence, the reason for this study to extend literature by determining the solutions to workplace sexual harassments in as expressed by the labour force in Lagos State, Nigeria.

Arising from the gap in literature, this study therefore investigated the solutions to workplace sexual harassment as expressed by the labour force in Lagos State, Nigeria.

3. Research question

What are the solutions to workplace sexual harassment as expressed by the labour force in Lagos State, Nigeria?

3.1 Research hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference in the views of male and female workers on the solutions to workplace sexual harassment.
2. There is no significant difference in the solution to workplace sexual harassment as perceived by the labour force in Lagos based on type of work.
3. There is no significant difference in the solution to workplace sexual harassment as perceived by the labour force in Lagos based on years of working experience.

4. Objective of the study

The main objective of this study was to identify the solutions to workplace sexual harassment as expressed by the labour force in Lagos State, Nigeria. The study was aimed at advancing useful recommendations that could serve as workable intervention plans against incidences of sexual harassments that has become commonplace in the workforce in Nigeria, in particular, Lagos metropolis.

5. Methodology

The design adopted in this study was the descriptive survey method in which quantitative approach was employed. The researchers used questionnaire to collect the required data from the samples. The population for the study were all workers, either working in the public or private sectors in Lagos State. A purposive sampling technique was used to select 515 respondents across government and private establishments in Lagos State. The selection was purposive because only workers in the public and private sectors participated in the study. A questionnaire entitled "Solutions to Workplace Sexual Harassment Questionnaire (SWOSH)" was adopted. It comprised two sections (A & B); while section A dealt with the demographic data of respondents, section B contained possible solutions to sexual harassment in the workplace. The instrument was patterned in a Four-point Likert scale format on a continuum of 4 – 1 scoring. The instrument was subjected to the cronbach's alpha method of reliability. The result yielded a coefficient of 0.81, which was very reliable for use in the study. The researchers sought the informed consent of the respondents and only those that agreed to participate responded to the questionnaire. Therefore, participation was voluntary. Data collected were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistical tools. The demographic data were analysed using percentage, while t-test statistical tool was used to test the three formulated null hypotheses. All hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

6. Results

6.1 Demographic data

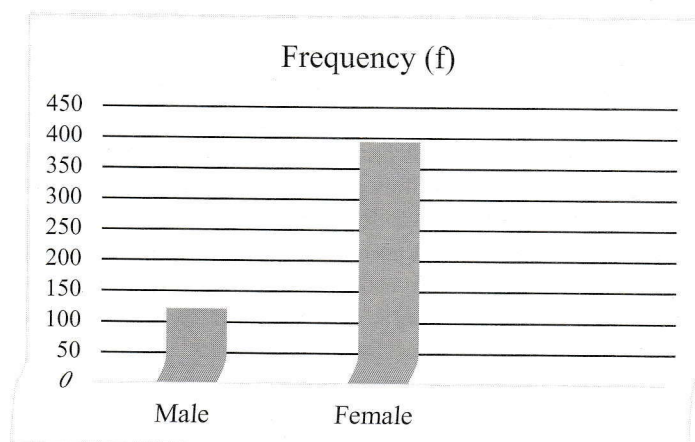


Figure 1: Distribution of respondents by gender

The result in figure 1 revealed that (121) 23.5% of the respondents were males while (394) 76.5% were females. This implies that more female employees participated in the study. This may have arisen because of the nature of the study, i.e. *solutions to sexual harassment in the workplace*. It also means that female employees have more understanding of the subject matter than their male counterparts, who might not have been victims of such.

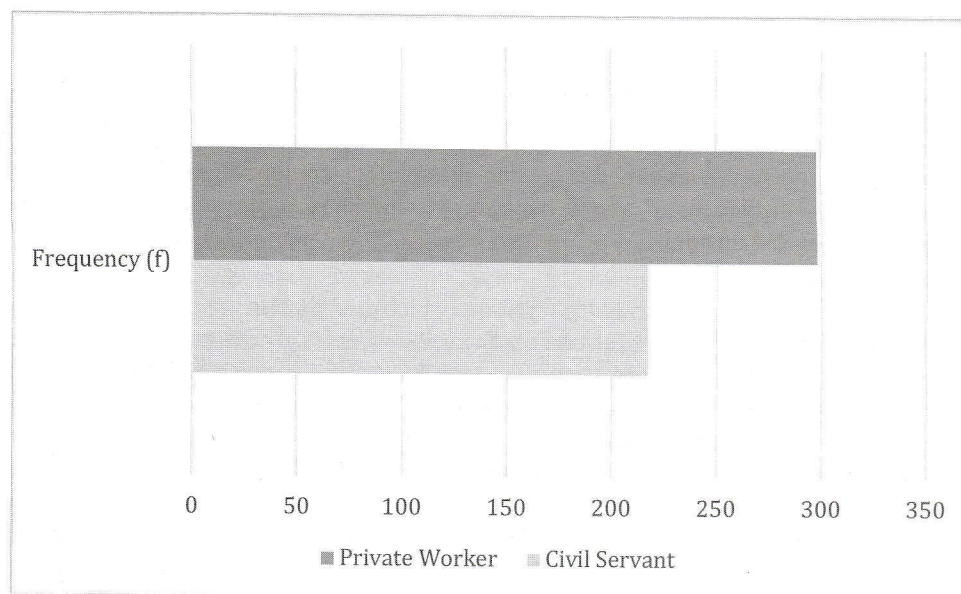


Figure 2: Distribution of respondents by Work Type

The result in figure 2 showed that (217) 42.1% of the respondents were from the civil service, while 298 (57.9%) were from the private sector. Although, workplace sexual harassment has been well reported in the civil service, it tends to be more pronounced in the private sector.

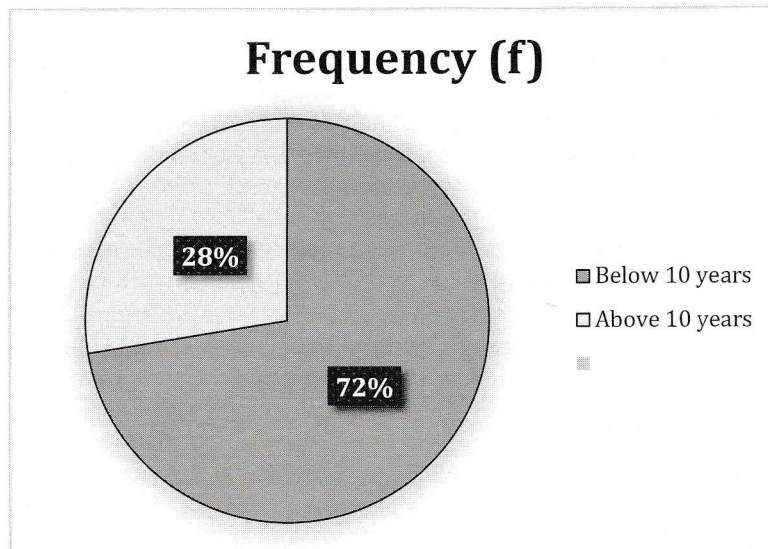


Figure 3: Distribution of respondents by Years of Working Experience.

The result in figure 3 indicated that (373) 72.4% of the respondents had spent between 1-10 years on their jobs whereas (142) 27.6% were already above 10 years in their working experiences. This suggests that more relatively new employees in different establishments participated in the study.

6.2 Research Question: What are the solutions to workplace sexual harassment as expressed by the labour force in Lagos State, Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean and Rank Order of Respondents' Expressions

S/No	Workplace sexual harassment can be reduced by:	Mean	Rank
1	strict punitive measures against perpetrators	3.54	1 st
2	early reportage by victims	3.50	2 nd
3	adequate knowledge of one's workplace responsibilities	3.43	3 rd
4	increased assertiveness in workers	3.37	4 th
5	being sensitive to reactions of other colleagues to one's physical appearance	3.37	4 th
6	becoming more aware of existing labour laws	3.33	6 th
7	creating no space for unnecessary bonding with superiors of the opposite sex	3.32	7 th
8	learning to vehemently reject unnecessary gifts	3.30	8 th
9	conforming to workplace rules of engagement	3.30	8 th
10	maintaining cordial relationship with everyone	3.29	10 th
11	labour-friendly policies against the act	3.22	11 th
12	learning to be independent of others at work	3.17	12 th
13	periodic campaign against the act	3.15	13 th
14	taking official matters very seriously	3.15	13 th
15	modest dressing in the workplace	3.14	15 th
16	workers' adherence to job specifications	3.10	16 th
17	maintaining healthy workplace boundaries	3.05	17 th
18	learning to maintain one's standpoints with superiors without insulting them	3.04	18 th
19	avoiding any form of query as much as possible	2.67	19 th
20	becoming more dutiful to avoid unnecessary complaints	2.58	20 th

The results in Table 1 revealed that strict punitive measures against perpetrators ranked 1st among the solutions to workplace sexual harassment as expressed by the labour force in Lagos State, Nigeria. Therefore, that

provides answer to the research question raised. In particular, early reportage by victims, adequate knowledge of one's workplace responsibilities as well as increased worker assertiveness and being sensitive to reactions of colleagues to one's physical appearance (i.e. outfit to work) ranked 2nd, 3rd and 4th respectively. It is also interesting that all other items had mean scores above 3.00 except items 17 and 18 which were 2.58 and 2.67 respectively. In other words, all the items had strong mean scores, thus, they are workable solutions to the menace of sexual harassments in the workplace, particularly in Lagos metropolis, Nigeria.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the expression of the labour force on the solutions to workplace sexual harassment based on gender.

Table 2: Results of t-test on the basis of Gender

Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	Cal. T-val	Crit. T-val	P-val
Male	121	63.3140	7.26869	513	1.866	1.96	0.173
Female	394	64.2310	6.65163				

*significant; $p > 0.05$

The results in the Table 2 revealed that the p. value (0.173) was greater than the alpha level (0.05), while the T-value was less than 1.96, thus the null hypothesis was not rejected. Therefore, there is no significant difference in the expression of the labour force on the solutions to workplace sexual harassment based on gender.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the expression of the labour force in Lagos state on the solutions to workplace sexual harassment based on work type.

Table 3: Results of the t-test on the basis of work type

Work Type	N	Mean	SD	df	Cal-T.val	Crit.T-val	P-val
Civil Servant	217	63.8664	7.04914	513	0.822	1.96	0.365
Private Worker	298	64.1242	6.63234				

*Significant; $p > 0.05$

The results in Table 3 revealed that the p-value was greater than the alpha level 0.05, while the T-value obtained was less than 1.96, hence, the null hypothesis was not rejected. This implies that there is no significant difference in the expression of the labour force on the solutions to workplace sexual harassment based on work type.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference in the expression of the labour force in Lagos state on the solutions to workplace sexual harassment based on years of working experience.

Table 4: Results of t-test on the basis of years of working experience

Years of Working Exp.	N	Mean	SD	df	Cal.T-val	Crit.T-val	P-val
Below 10 years	373	64.2842	6.47781	513	7.214	1.96	0.007
Above 10 years	142	63.3099	7.57860				

*Significant; $p < 0.05$

The results in Table 4 revealed that the p-value (.007) was less than 0.05 alpha level of significance), while the calculated t-value was 7.214 which was greater than the critical t-value of 1.96; thus, the null hypothesis was not accepted. Hence, there is significant difference in the expression of the labour force on the solutions to workplace sexual harassment based on years of working experience.

7. Discussion

The findings of this study revealed that major significant solutions to workplace sexual harassment include strict punitive measures against perpetrators, early reportage of its signs by victims, adequate knowledge of one's

workplace responsibilities, being sensitive to reactions of other colleagues to one's physical appearance, increased assertiveness in workers, rejecting unnecessary gifts, creating no space for unnecessary bonding with superior colleagues of the opposite sex, as well as periodic campaign against workplace sexual harassment and maintaining healthy workplace boundaries. The findings of this study corroborate the study carried out by Richman et al., (2011) in which the authors found that workplace sexual harassment increases when advances involve threats, bribery and inability of concerned workers to have a good understanding of their conditions of employment or service. The authors further averred that workers' lack of confidence to report such experiences emboldens its perpetrators to continue in the act unchallenged. The findings also support the study of Abe (2012) which found that the hostility of the environment makes it almost impossible for victims of sexual harassment (in the university setting) to muster the courage to raise a voice against the act. The results of the current study is an indication that many individuals in the labour force, particularly female workers are undergoing untold and unimaginable non-consensual sexual harassments, and if such victims must achieve a satisfactory work life, there is the urgent need to put adequate measures in place to checkmate the activities of workplace superiors as well as labour employers in terms of their offensive amorous relationships with their female employees or subordinates as the case may be, while also seriously punishing the guilty bosses to serve as deterrent to others.

Other workable solutions to workplace sexual harassment include taking official matters very seriously, adhering to one's job specifications, dressing modestly in the workplace, avoiding queries as much as possible and becoming more dutiful to avoid unnecessary complaints. Abe (2012) and Ladebo (2003) have averred in their studies that victims of workplace or institutional sexual harassment sometimes offer sex in return for special favour or consideration from the superiors. This further exposes them to sexual abuses from the said superior bosses or lecturers. Furthermore, the present study found that if workers adhere strictly to the rules and terms of employment, there would be little or no space for any form of sexual threats or advances from superiors because some of the victims may not have met the expectations of the organization and in order to secure their jobs, they end up confronting sexual abuses.

Furthermore, the findings of this study revealed that there was no significant difference in the expression of the labour force on the solutions to workplace sexual harassment based on gender. This finding supports the study of Richman et al., (2011) in which the authors affirmed that there is a generalized workplace sexual abuse among females and males across occupational groups. According to these authors, workplace sexual harassment affects male workers of lower occupational groups more than those in the higher occupational group. In other words, workplace sexual harassment is not exclusively a female workers' menace alone as there are male employees who are equally being sexually harassed, though the authors agreed that there are more female workers being sexually harassed than males. It however sharply contradicts the earliest findings of Maypole and Skaine (1983) who found that the main victims of workplace sexual harassment are females. The findings also revealed that there was no significant difference in the expression of respondents based on work type. This supports the study of Abe (2012) which found that government and private workers alike experience sexual harassment, although it is more reported in the private sector. However, there was significant difference in the expression of respondents based on years of working experience. This implies that workers within the group of below 10 years had better knowledge of workplace sexual harassment than those above 10 years. This could have resulted due to the fact that sexual harassment in the workplace is more prominent in recent times than in the past decades where it was exclusively a university system affair (Abe, 2012); Ladebo (2003). In the modern times, sexual escapades are also not seen as a serious issue compared to the past decades where morality was the order of those times.

8. Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study the following conclusion were drawn:

- The most significantly workable solutions to sexual harassment in the workplace are strict punitive measures against perpetrators, early reportage by victims, increased assertiveness in workers and adequate knowledge of one's workplace responsibilities.
- There was no significant difference in the solutions to workplace sexual harassment as expressed by the labour force in Lagos state, Nigeria based on gender and work type.
- There was significant difference in the solutions to workplace sexual harassment as expressed by the labour force in Lagos state, Nigeria based on years of working experience.

9. Recommendations

The following recommendations are therefore made:

- Since it is evident that absence of punishment of workplace sexual offenders makes it convenient for them to continue in the act, and victim workers also hardly speak up when sexually harassed, it has become imperative that strict punitive measures be put in place to deal decisively with workplace sexual offenders irrespective of their affiliations.
- Labour laws and policies should be strengthened for the protection of workers, particularly, female workers against experiences of workplace sexual harassment.
- There should be continuous campaign against workplace sexual harassment both within the work environment and the society at large, and workers should also be admonished to be more official in the workplace in terms of dressing, conduct and appearances that may appear as being sexually suggestive in the workplace.
- Workers should learn to be more assertive when faced with sexual advances or threats in the workplace.
- At entry point, workers should be adequately informed of their role expectations in any organization to avoid being molested sexually due to their ignorance.
- There should be conducive atmosphere for any worker to make complaints against any incidence that he or she feels uncomfortable with without fear of being witch-hunted at the long run.
- Government through its ministry of labour and employment should periodically visit public and private establishments as a follow up on their worker-employer relationship, which can provide clue into what employees are experiencing in such organizations.

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