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SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE SERVICE: A SITUATION ANALYSIS, PREVENTIVE MEASURES AND GUIDELINES FOR ADDRESSING SEXUAL HARASSMENT

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INTRODUCTION

Public awareness of sexual harassment, has only recently been attained. The sexual harassment of women has however been a problem for as long as women have worked outside their homes (Fitzgerald & Hesson-McInnes 1988:152; Spann 1990:55). Sexual harassment is thus an old problem for its victims and potential victims, but a relatively new one for public concern and debate.

International and South African studies indicate that sexual harassment is a problem in virtually every organisation and that a large number of women are the recipients of unwanted sexual attention (Dancaster 1991:449).

Despite the growing public attention devoted to the subject of sexual harassment internationally, basic definitional issues remain unresolved. However, nowadays most employers have realized that a distinction should be made between acceptable and unacceptable sexually orientated behaviour in the workplace. Research, both internationally and in South Africa, has proven that sexual harassment has become a major concern to employers as they have become aware of its financial and environmental costs as well as the cost to morale in the workplace (Prekel 1989:34; Wagner 1992:1).

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE SERVICE

Sexual harassment in the South African Police Service (SAPS) has in the past been viewed as personal/private, individual and relatively invisible. Since 1996, it is no longer regarded as a personal dispute between employees but as inappropriate behaviour which should be treated as a disciplinary offence. It is thus only recently that sexual harassment in the SAPS has been regarded as misconduct in term of Regulation 18(34) of the South African Police Service Discipline Regulations, 1996. The first formal complaints regarding this illegal misconduct were reported by female employees during 1997 when the National Discipline Officer made it compulsory to report all cases of sexual harassment. According to Rademan (1990:16) there seems to be a reluctance on the part of the victims/harassees to complain to a staff member in the workplace or to institute action. The outcomes of filed charges, the issue of confidentiality, the emotional trauma victims suffer because of the prolonged trials and the lack of policy, seemed to act as a deterrent in reporting this misconduct.

Few cases of sexual harassment have since 1997 been reported in the South African Police Service (SAPS). According to the office of the National Disciplinary Officer, 138 complaints of rape and 30 complaints of other forms of sexual harassment have been made by female employees in the

SAPS for the period of 1997-08-30 to 1998-07-30. This is in line with the universally recognised truth that sexual harassment complaints represent a very small percentage of actual harassment situations in organisations (Wagner 1992:2).

A consensus emerged in the SAPS that it is not sufficient to provide a remedy to a victim of sexual harassment after the harm has been inflicted, but that a preventative policy and procedures should be formulated in order to reduce the risk of sexual harassment. Parties to the National Negotiation Forum of the SAPS have thus on 28 May 1998 signed an agreement regarding a policy document on sexual harassment in order to address this form of abuse. The purpose of this policy is to contribute to the creation and maintenance of an environment of mutual respect and professional conduct in the workplace. The policy should ensure a systematic and effective method of resolving the problem of sexual harassment in a manner which is consistent with the basic principles underpinning the constitution of 1994 of South Africa.

The National Negotiation Forum of the SAPS has identified a need for the development of an implementation programme in order to ensure that the policy guidelines regarding sexual harassment will be utilised effectively. Minimal progress has thus far been made with regards to the development of the aforementioned implementation programme, as priorities in the SAPS seem to fluctuate.

AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of the study was:

- to present demographic information on the prevalence, effects and actual experience of sexual harassment by female employees in the SAPS;
- to explain policy issues and the contents of a programme to prevent and address sexual harassment in the SAPS;
- to present guidelines for the implementation of the existing policy regarding the handling of sexual harassment in the South African Police Service.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

An exploratory study was done. A probability sampling method i.e. purpose sampling was used to select a representative sample of 150 respondents from the study population of 288 female employees. Babbie (1998:228) maintains that probability sampling methods provide an excellent way of selecting representative samples from known populations.

An anonymous self-administered questionnaire was used as data collection instrument. The questionnaire was administered to the 150 respondents. Only 104 female employees completed the questionnaire.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF THE RESEARCH

The data collected with the help of the completed questionnaires will be discussed in a descriptive manner.

DEMOGRAPHICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

In this section, the findings of the demographical characteristics of all the female respondents (i.e. 104 respondents) will be discussed.

Ethnicity of respondents

The research findings indicate that the majority of respondents 84 (80,8%) are coloured. The high frequency of coloured respondents can however be ascribed to the fact that the area from which the sample was selected is dominated by employees of the coloured ethnic group.

It can therefore not be assumed that only coloured females have been or are being harassed in the SAPS, as these findings will in all probability differ from area to area depending on the ethnic distribution of employees. The statement made by Webb (1991:87) that sexual harassment is not limited to any particular ethnic group seems more applicable in this instance in the SAPS.

Age of respondents

Although women over the age of 35 years are not immune to sexual harassment, younger women who are perhaps less experienced with work and harassment and perhaps more desirable targets for men, are more often victims (Gutek 1985:55; Bond 1995:155). In analysing the findings of the study, it seems that the majority of respondents (85 or 81,7%) are from the younger age group namely 19 to 36 years of age. The vulnerability of younger women to sexual harassment is thus reflected in the above findings.

QUALIFICATION OF RESPONDENTS

The majority of respondents (89,4%) have a grade 11 to 12 education qualification, or a higher education i.e. diploma or degree. Those respondents who are not well educated, do however meet the qualification requirements set by the SAPS. It can thus be concluded that these respondents are (irrespective of their education level) just as likely to be harassed as any well educated woman (Gutek 1985:55).

Employment history of respondents

The period of employment was investigated to determine the respondents' experience and familiarity with the organisation and their colleagues. The findings indicate that 77 (74,1%) of the respondents have been employed for a period of 0 - 10 years. This reflects the youthfulness of the majority of the respondents. According to Gutek (1985:54) an employee with a short employment history who is not very familiar with the organisation, the work or her colleagues, is more vulnerable to harassment than employees with a longer employment history, who are more experienced with the work and sexual harassment.

Marital Status

Bond (1995:155) and Gutek (1985:55) emphasize that unmarried women (divorced, separated, never married or cohabiting) experience sexual harassment more often than married or widowed women. The research findings indicate that the majority of the respondents 62 (59,6%) are married. It can thus be concluded that it is the married women and not the unattached women who are harassed more often in the West Metropole of the SAPS.

In analysing the above findings the conclusion is drawn that the women most at risk in the West Metropole tend to be married, coloured females who hold a grade 11 to 12 qualification, who are relatively young (19-36 years) and unsure about how to handle the harassing situation. This profile is not necessarily accurate because of the over representation of respondents who fit this profile.

Status of harasser and nature of the unwanted incident

Littler-Bishop; Seidler-Feller and Opaluch (1982:147) maintain that in climates that emphasise status identity through the use of titles, uniforms and gender - homogenous positions, women may

feel pressurised to respond favourably to high status males. The form of sexual harassment is often immaterial because women are sometimes more distressed by persistent low level harassment, for example leering, and consequently tend to exhibit similar symptoms as women who have experienced sexual and/or physical assault (Renick 1980:660).

Herbert (1994:67) maintains that there is no *one* list of behaviours, gestures, words or literature that constitute sexual harassment. Smythe (1998:18) and Ryder (1998:28) identified eight behaviour scenarios which women consider to be unwelcome sexual advances. These scenarios are listed in Table 1.1 below.

In order to determine whether there is a correlation between the status of the harasser and the type of harassment employed by him, the correlation between the status of the harasser and the form(s) of harassment employed are presented in Table 1.1 below.

TABLE 1.1
CORRELATION BETWEEN STATUS OF HARASSER AND TYPE OF HARASSMENT

PERSON TYPE OF HARASSMENT	HIGHER LEVEL SUPER- VISOR		IMME- DIATE SUPER- VISOR		CO- WORKER		OTHER EM- PLOYEE		SUB- ORDI- NATE		CLIENT/ MEMBER OF PUBLIC	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Letters, phone calls materials of a sexual nature	5	4,8	1	0,96	8	7,7	5	4,8	3	2,9	2	1,9
Sexually suggestive looks or gestures	13	12,5	7	6,7	30	28,9	8	7,7	0	0	5	4,8
Sexual teasing, -jokes, -remarks or gestures	8	7,7	8	7,7	39	37,5	8	7,7	3	2,9	4	3,8
Deliberate touching, pinching or cornering	10	9,6	6	5,8	24	23	7	6,7	3	2,9	1	0,96
Pressure for dates	2	1,9	1	0,96	12	11,5	5	4,8	1	0,96	1	0,96
Pressures for sexual favours	3	2,9	3	2,9	7	6,7	2	1,9	0	0	0	0
Actual/Attempted rape or assault	0	0	1	0,96	5	4,8	1	0,96	0	0	0	0
Threat or insinuation that lack of sexual submission would affect employment conditions	3	2,9	2	1,9	1	0,96	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	44	42,3	29	27,9	126	121,2	36	34,6	10	9,7	13	12,4

N = 104

From the above table it is clear that the co-workers are the group of employees who were mainly responsible for the various types of harassment. Sexual teasing, -jokes, -remarks or gestures were the most common type of sexual harassment displayed by 39 (37,5%) of the respondents' co-workers. Sexually suggestive looks or gestures were exhibited by 30 (28,9%) co-workers. This was followed by the 24 (23%) co-workers who deliberately touched, pinched or cornered respondents and 12 (11,5%) co-workers who pressurised respondents for dates. From these findings, it can thus be concluded that it is the co-workers who are responsible for creating a hostile environment in the workplace. These findings are in accord with the findings of Baroni (1992:21) who found that more women are being harassed by co-workers than by supervisors.

In Table 1.1 respondents indicated that co-workers also committed some of the more serious forms of sexual harassment. Seven (6,7%) of the co-workers exerted pressure on respondents for sexual

favours and five (4,8%) of them attempted (to) rape/assault or actually raped or sexually assaulted a respondent.

Three higher level supervisors (2,9%) followed by two immediate supervisors (1,9%) seem to be the perpetrators responsible for the more covert and degrading forms of sexual harassment. These supervisors threatened or insinuated that a lack of sexual submission would affect employment conditions of respondents.

The above mentioned findings indicate that people with status and power or perceived status and power are in a position to make certain promises and/or threats to those with less power and status. Co-workers who do not necessarily have the power to promise or threaten can however make the work environment unbearable for female colleagues. Prekel (1989:29) explains that even if the harasser has no direct power over the woman, she may fear that rejection could strain work relations or that the male colleague may withhold support or information she might need to be effective in her job.

The person responsible for the sexual harassment incident

The following information concerning the harasser was obtained from respondents.

Research findings indicate that the average harasser in the West Metropole is a repeat offender who harasses more than one female employee at a time. He tends to be married and aged between 25 to 48 years. In comparing the age of the harasser with the age of the respondents it can be concluded that the statement made by Baroni (1992:21) that most women's harassers are older than themselves, is applicable in this instance as the age of the average harasser in the SAPS is described by the respondents as between 25 to 48 years whilst respondents in contrast are aged between 19 to 36 years.

The majority of respondents 47 (78,3%) indicated that their alleged harasser are of the same ethnic group. Only 13 (21,7%) of the respondents indicated that the harasser was from a different ethnic group. It can thus be concluded that these findings are in accordance with that of Tagri, Burt and Johnson (1982:44) who maintained that most victims of harassment are harassed by a person of the same ethnicity. Prekel (1993:4) emphasize that marital status, position in the hierarchy of the organisation and age do not exclude any male employee from being a harasser.

Reactions to the sexual harassment incident

Prekel and Wilkinson (1992:33) maintain that women who are being harassed, usually do not know how to react. If they complain, they may be accused of having led their perpetrator on or their colleagues may not believe them. There are some women who, when faced with a crisis, instead of turning away, will confront the crisis as a challenge to be met en route to full recovery (Kirsta 1988:163). Some women however, fear they are committing professional suicide if they do not co-operate with the harasser but find it difficult to refuse the sexual attention of the powerful harasser (Prekel & Wilkinson 1992:33).

Respondents were requested to indicate what kind of coping strategies they employed when they were harassed. Respondents could indicate more than one reaction as listed in Table 1.2. Thus, the total number of reactions in Table 1.2 is much larger than the number of respondents i.e. 60.

TABLE 1.2
REACTIONS TO THE UNWELCOME INCIDENT

REACTIONS OF HARASSEE	* N	%
PERSONAL REACTIONS		
Ignore it/did nothing	20	11,4
Avoided the man	26	14,9
Made a joke of the behaviour	15	8,6
Felt flattered/complimented	1	0,6
Went along with behaviour, and viewed it as a chance for job enhancement/socialisation	0	0
Went along with the behaviour for fear of retaliation/played along for the sake of peace	8	4,6
Changed behaviour and image	9	5,1
PHYSICAL AND ASSERTIVE BEHAVIOUR		
Verbally attacked the person, threatened, embarrassed, ridiculed, cursed, screamed at him	11	6,3
Slapped, hit, kicked, shoved him away, removed his hand, physically resisted/retaliated	12	6,9
Asked the harasser to stop	23	13,1
Wrote a note, lied/deceived to put him off	1	0,6
Reported the behaviour to the supervisor/manager	8	4,6
Threatened to tell or told other workers	6	3,4
Discussed it with people outside work (friends/family)	17	9,7
BEHAVIOUR WITHIN WORK SETTING		
Took days off from work	6	3,4
Asked for a transfer	3	1,7
Left the job/quit	0	0
FORMAL ACTION		
Reported it to the union	0	0
Requested an investigation by the company	3	1,7
Filed a grievance	5	2,9
Requested an investigation by an outside agency	1	0,6
Took legal action/went to court	0	0
Total	175	100

N = 60

* Respondents could indicate more than one coping strategy.

From the above table, the following conclusions can be made with regard to the reactions of harassees to the unwelcome incident.

- Personal reactions

Respondents indicated that they favoured these indirect non threatening and unassertive responses.

The coping strategy most frequently employed by the respondents 26 (14,9%) was avoidance of the harasser. Twenty (11,4%) respondents coped by ignoring the harasser and/or the harassing incident. Another coping strategy exhibited by 15 (8,6%) respondents was to joke about the behaviour. This was the fifth most frequent coping strategy employed overall.

- Physical and assertive behaviour

This was the category with the second most frequent coping strategies exhibited by respondents.

Twenty three (13,1%) respondents asked the harasser to stop whilst 17 (9,7%) respondents indicated that they tried to cope by discussing the incident with friends and family outside the workplace.

It can thus be concluded that even though the most frequent coping strategies used by the respondents reflect indirect, non threatening and unassertive behaviour, assertive behaviour was employed to a lesser degree. According to Tagri *et al.* (1982:4) indirect and non-threatening responses can be an indication of the harassees' feelings of powerlessness or may reflect the hope (of respondents) that the problem will eventually disappear if ignored long enough. It could also indicate that the harassing behaviour is not a problem to the harassee.

- Behaviour within the work setting/environment

Respondents indicated that they experienced their work environment as hostile and unbearable. Six (3,4%) respondents indicated that this resulted in their taking days off from work or asking for a transfer 3(1,7%). This could indicate that even though these coping strategies are in the minority, the situation was severe enough that respondents wanted to break proximity with the harasser and the environment. Gutek (1985:53) indicates that, despite the low reports of problems, women have taken drastic measures to avoid the harasser.

- Formal actions

From Table 1.3 it can be concluded that the reactions of respondents varied.

Formal actions seem to be one of the strategies used less frequently by respondents. According to Gutek (1985:74) managers can easily conclude that sexual harassment is virtually non-existent on the basis of the few formal complaints made by harassees. Fritz (1989:6) however, emphasizes that the actual rate of sexual harassment is generally far higher than the number of formal complaints would suggest.

One of the reasons for the low usage of formal complaint(s) could be that respondents felt responsible for the harassing incident. Other respondents indicated that they did not have a lot of faith in the formal complaints channels of the SAPS. They are also aware that confidentiality cannot be maintained and that formal actions involve complex procedures which can be time consuming. Most respondents indicated that they believe that they should be able to handle any given situation. These findings are in accord with the findings of Gutek (1985:74) where respondents indicated that they felt that it is their own responsibility to handle the matter. They also indicated a fear of reprisal, ridicule and blame by colleagues and/or superiors. Faley (1982:596) emphasises that the absence of complaints does not necessarily mean that an organisation has nothing to worry about. He maintains that it may only mean that employees who are sexually harassed do not know how to raise a complaint or they fear retaliation.

MANAGEMENTS' RESPONSE TO ACTION TAKEN BY RESPONDENT

Managers have the task of ensuring that incidents which are brought to their attention are dealt with fairly, efficiently, effectively and immediately. Failure to fulfil these tasks, reflect negatively on the managers concerned as well as possibly breaching employer responsibilities (Herbert 1994:89).

Thirty three percent of respondents indicated that management found their charge to be true and that only 16,7% of managers took action against the harasser. This could be an indication that management either did not give the respondents the guidance they needed or that the respondents chose not to lay a formal charge against the harasser but preferred that management give the perpetrators a warning only.

Another 33,3% of respondents stated that management did nothing about the incident. These findings prove the statement made by Prekel (1993:3) that management may take the word of a senior person rather than that of the subordinate as they are likely to have known the senior longer and a manager usually has more credibility in a dispute than a subordinate.

CONSEQUENCES EXPERIENCED BY RESPONDENTS FOLLOWING NOTIFICATIONS OF THE SEXUAL HARASSMENT INCIDENT TO MANAGEMENT

In response to the question whether respondents experienced any negative consequences if they reported the incident(s) to managers, 5 of the 12 (41,7%) respondents who reported the incident, indicated that they have experienced negative consequences. The consequences experienced by respondents varied and included the following: non-co-operation from colleagues (males and females), poor job evaluation, transfer to less satisfactory work, offensive working conditions, missed salary increments and promotion opportunities. These findings are in contrast to the observation made by Herbert (1994:89) that even if a complaint is eventually found to be groundless, no victimisation of the complainant should occur if the complaint was submitted in good faith.

Seven (58,3%) respondents however indicated that they experienced no negative consequences/-retaliation afterwards.

EFFECTS OF SEXUAL EXPERIENCES ON WOMEN

The effects of sexual harassment on victims, differ depending on the nature of the offence, the psychological make up of the victim and the nature of the response to victimization (Singer 1995:2151).

Respondents were requested to indicate how the sexual experience affected them as employees' as well as personally. The aim was to determine what the respondents' emotional, physical and psychological reactions were to the harassing incident as well as the impact it had on the workplace.

From Table 1.3 it would seem that 24 (21,6%) respondents experienced embarrassment. This was the response most frequently experienced by most of the respondents. This was followed by 22 (19,8%) respondents who were disgusted and 13 (11,7%) respondents who experienced fear, 11 (9,9%) respondents felt intimidated and another eleven (9,9%) respondents felt guilty. According to Prekel (1993:3) women who are embarrassed, ashamed or afraid or inclined to excessive guilt or self-blame, often do not discuss the harassment experience with others and thus do not realise that it is not their fault. These emotions inhibited women from directly expressing their anger (Livingston 1982:16). Judging from the responses it is obvious that respondents neither want such attention nor are they flattered by it.

TABLE 1.3
DISTRIBUTION OF EMOTIONAL RESPONSES

EMOTIONAL RESPONSE	* N	%
Anger	8	7,2
Fear	13	11,7
Intimidated	11	9,9
Guilt	11	9,9
Embarrassment	24	21,6
Flattered	0	0
Nervousness	6	5,4
Felt insulted	9	8,1
Friendliness	1	0,9
Disgust	22	19,8
Pleasure	0	0
No effect	5	4,5
Other: Ashamed	1	0,9
Total	111	00

N = 60

* Respondents could indicate more than one emotional response.

PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PHYSICAL REACTIONS

Rubenstein (1992:14) emphasises that sexual harassment by a colleague can have physical and psychological consequences that are as damaging as those from harassment by a superior. Respondents were requested to indicate the psychological and physical reactions they experienced after the harassing incident. These findings are reflected in Table 1.4 below.

TABLE 1.4
DISTRIBUTION OF PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PHYSICAL REACTIONS

PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PHYSICAL REACTIONS	* N	%
Tension, irritation, depression	19	27,5
Fear and anxiety	5	7,2
Migraine	4	5,8
Increased alcohol, cigarette and/or drug abuse	4	5,8
Sleeplessness and tiredness	2	2,9
Problems with weight and diet	2	2,9
Sense of powerlessness/helplessness/vulnerability	11	15,9
Difficulties with family and personal relationships	3	4,4
Physical and mental illness	3	4,4
No effect	15	21,7
Other: Nightmares	1	1,5
Total	69	100

N = 60

* Respondents could indicate more than one reaction.

From the above table it seems that tension, irritation and depression were the reactions most frequently experienced by 19 (27,5%) of the respondents. This was followed by the 15 (21,7%) respondents who had no physical or psychological effects. Feelings of powerlessness, and vulnerability were also experienced by 11 (15,9%) respondents.

EFFECTS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT ON THE WORK SITUATION

Herbert (1994:44) maintains that generally in the workplace in which sexual harassment occurs, people are not performing to capacity and are distracted and made anxious by potential incidents. Another aspect that was investigated in this study was how sexual harassment impacts on the workplace specifically with regards to productivity and morale of respondents.

From the above table it seems that 20 (31,7%) respondents indicated that the incident(s) caused them to become less friendly in the workplace. Nine (14,3%) respondents stated that the harassing behaviour had no effect on their job performance. This could be because the harassing incident had been handled assertively or because the respondents did not allow the harasser to intimidate them. It could also be an indication that the harassing situation was not experienced as severe by respondents.

Eight (12,7%) respondents indicated that the harassing behaviour made them lose interest in their work. Six (9,5%) respondents also seemed to find it difficult to concentrate after the incident had taken place.

It can thus be concluded that all these reactions have a definite impact on the atmosphere as well as the productivity of all employees in the SAPS.

TABLE 1.5
EFFECTS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT ON THE WORK SITUATION

EFFECT ON WORKPLACE	* N	%
Made you less friendly	20	31,7
Made you dress differently	3	4,8
Made you avoid the man/men	3	4,8
Made you lose interest in your work	8	12,7
Spoiled your chances of promotion	0	0
Affected your job performance	1	1,6
Made you request a transfer	3	4,8
Made you feel isolated from other employees	3	4,8
Made it difficult to concentrate	6	9,5
Affected the way you relate to other people	3	4,8
Being absent more often	2	3,2
Affected your job satisfaction	1	1,6
Quitting your job	1	1,6
Being fired from your job	0	0
No effect	9	14,3
Other	0	0
Total	63	100

N = 60

* Respondents could indicate more than one effect.

CONCLUSIONS

The research findings clearly indicate that sexual harassment in the West Metropole of the SAPS (Western Cape) is not a new phenomenon for female employees. Sexual harassment is endemic in the SAPS but poorly understood and consequently nobody talks about it willingly. Fewer and fewer female employees however seem to be prepared to put up with such behaviour. The newly developed SAPS policy on sexual harassment is perceived as a long awaited document. The conclusion is drawn that the implementation of the sexual harassment policy would encourage the basic interpersonal change in attitudes and behaviour necessary for women to have equal opportunities at work, in line with the spirit, rather than the letter of the law. The proper implementation and communication of the sexual harassment policy is crucial as a sexual harassment policy in itself cannot protect employees from the harassing behaviour.

The conclusion is reached that existing research in the field of sexual harassment, has little to offer in the way of guidance to managers and specialists in the SAPS who must deal with sexual harassment issues. Though training is a proven mechanism for promoting any organisational policy and procedures, whilst increasing awareness of managers and supervisors regarding their roles and obligations, training with regard to organisational policy and procedures are rarely done in the SAPS. The conclusion is drawn that an appropriate training programme can prevent sexual harassment from occurring, provide coping mechanisms to employees as well as offering a means of differentiating between sexually harassing behaviour and behaviour that is not sexual harassment.

PREVENTATIVE MEASURES AND IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES FOR THE ORGANISATIONS

In this section, the researcher will explore preventative measures and implementation guidelines for addressing sexual harassment in the workplace.

No organisation can ever be free of the occurrence of sexual harassment. The absence of complaints also does not necessarily mean that an organisation need not be concerned about this phenomenon (Faley 1982:597). It could in fact rather imply that victims of harassment do not know how to raise a complaint and/or fear retaliation.

POLICY AS METHOD OF PREVENTION

Over the last decade, the most common strategy for addressing sexual harassment within organisations, has been to develop and implement formal policies and procedures to address this phenomenon (Bond 1995:163). The South African Police Service (SAPS) has finally developed and agreed upon a policy document on sexual harassment for the SAPS in order to address this phenomenon in the workplace.

According to Bond (1995:164) research indicates that in organisations where policies for sexual harassment do exist, many employees within the organisation are often unaware of them or see them as ineffective.

Prekel and Wilkinson (1992:34) outlined the following guidelines to assist organisations in addressing the problem of implementing a more effective sexual harassment policy:

Endorsement of the sexual harassment policy can be made a part of the organisation's conditions of employment.

- Making the topic of sexual harassment part of organisation seminars, management training programmes as well as general assertiveness training, will increase employees' understanding of the policy and their ability to cope with harassment, should it occur.
- Appropriate staff members can be appointed and trained as:
 - complaints officers with authority to institute disciplinary measures when necessary; and
 - counsellors to provide support and advice to victims or to counsel harassers if required.

These counsellors may be the same people as the complaints officers. They could possibly also train and sensitise managers and supervisors in the implementation of the policy.

- Employees and trade-unions should form part of the selection panel when these individuals are chosen. The names, positions, locations and contact numbers of these complaints officers and/or counsellors should be listed for easy and confidential access by staff experiencing problems.
- Complaints must be investigated as soon as possible and as carefully as possible.
- All investigations should be impartial. Any employee found guilty of harassment, should be subjected to appropriate disciplinary procedures, up to and including termination of employment.
- The procedures for redress can consist of two stages:
 - Initially an informal, redress is implemented. This involves discussion and mediation with the relevant manager(s). According to Webb (1991:46) it is not always necessary that a complaint should be in writing or that it has to be signed before an investigation is initiated. She suggests that the manager should write down the complaint and specific allegations and use these notes in trying to resolve the situation.
 - Failing a satisfactory resolution, a **formal** redress follows, by submitting the case in writing to the managing director or complaints officer. The alleged perpetrator will be invited to state his/her case in writing, after which the matter will be dealt with under applicable disciplinary provisions.

Should these procedures fail or be ignored, the matter could be taken to the Industrial Court.

- The rights of all parties should be protected. Depending on the situation, anonymity may or may not be appropriate. Webb (1991:46) indicates that in many cases, the accused ultimately has a right to know the accuser.

If the organisations clarify their position in this manner, both the harassee and all potential harassers will be aware of their individual rights as well as what behaviour is acceptable in the workplace. It is thus in every employers best interest to be pro-active and prevent the problem rather than being reactive and having to redress it after damages have been suffered by all parties involved (Prekel and Wilkinson 1992:34). Merely issuing a policy statement may not be sufficient to create an environment that does not support harassment (Livingston 1982:10). The strength and detail of the statement might however provide evidence of the employer's commitment to eradicating sexual harassment and to providing a work environment free of harassment.

MANAGEMENT SUPPORT

The attitude of managers towards the issue of sexual harassment can be a major obstacle to the effectiveness of training and education. Providing the staff at top management level with additional information and education during management briefings can help to sensitise them to the problem and convince them of the need for general employee training.

A good training programme requires commitment of considerable time and resources on the part of the entire organisation, not only in setting up the training but in employee time to attend the training sessions. A good training programme also takes time, effort and energy on the part of the trainer and all other individuals responsible for the sessions. Webb (1991:73) encourages trainers to use all means necessary to obtain the support of staff at management level albeit the giving of additional information, management training or even threats from the top, as without it the training programme will not be effective.

IMPLEMENTING EMPLOYEE TRAINING

An effective training programme should include a number of presentations and workshops for all employees. The programme should be divided into separate sessions for executive level management, supervisors and other managers as well as general level employees, as they all have different roles and responsibilities.

The emphasis in sexual harassment training should be on changing behaviour first and attitudes second. Webb (1991:75) maintains that changes in attitude are beneficial but optional and that behavioural changes are mandatory. The aim of the training sessions should thus be to bring about behavioural changes through increased awareness and understanding as well as skills development where necessary.

Each training session should address the needs of the specific group of employees who attends the session. Thus, the trainers should utilise teaching methods; for example presentations, exercises and discussions, which are most appropriate for the needs of the employees being trained. More emphasis should be given to the management supervisory level employees because of their responsibility to recognise and handle harassment and because of the organisation's legal liability where supervisors are concerned. When briefing top-level management regarding sexual harassment, the aim should be to provide basic knowledge and an understanding of the issue as well as implications for the organisation if the issue is not addressed. All other managers should attend the management or supervisory sessions. The general-employee presentation, is to provide basic knowledge and understanding of what sexual harassment is, and how to handle it. Throughout the entire programme, the topic of sexual harassment must be approached as a work-related productivity issue and not solely a social, moral or feminist problem. Costs to the work environment and legal liability must continually be emphasised.

FOLLOW UP AND FOLLOW THROUGH

A costly mistake that organisations often make is to assume that once they have "done" their harassment programme, it is over, finished and complete. Efforts at addressing and eliminating sexual harassment should be seen as an overall, ongoing programme within the organisation, not as just a one time or short term issue. Webb (1991:50) emphasises that employee training should occur on an annual basis, for new recruits as part of employee orientation, and that supervisors (especially those newly promoted to supervisory positions) should be provided with updates and reminders in the form of annual training. She also suggests that each case of sexual harassment should be used as an opportunity to reaffirm management's position that such behaviour will not be tolerated in the organisation.

Having a training programme can be one of the best defences for an organisation in a sexual harassment case, both as a preventative measure and as a remedy. Training is a proven mechanism for promoting an organisation's policies and procedures, whilst increasing the awareness of all employees regarding their **roles and obligations** under the policies (Otto 1997:148).

Webb (1991:95) emphasised the crucial role of the supervisor in the handling of sexual harassment complaints and states that complainants must however be willing to take action themselves in a rational and responsible way.

Prekel (1989:30) suggests the following practical approaches that may help women to cope with unwelcome sexual advances in the workplace.

- Be professional in behaviour, dress and discussions at work. It might be safer to seem a bit of a prude if it saves you the hassles of harassment. Focus on being a competent person at work and rather save your sexy dresses and naughty jokes for your social life.
- Make your position clear. It is dangerous to play along with a flirtation even jokingly. Make sure your message is unambiguous.
- Playing deaf or ignorant may also help. If you pretend not to hear or understand a "pass" or suggestion, the man may back off and turn his attentions elsewhere. It might sometimes work to treat the pass as a joke but there is the risk that the harasser might feel insulted and retaliate or he might even think that you are interested.
- Avoid situations which could create an opportunity. Rather accept an invitation for lunch or tea instead of dinner or cocktails. Go out in a group rather than a twosome. Travel in your own car if possible, so that you are independent.
- If the harasser persists, it may help to befriend his wife as this might encourage him to explore other possible relationships.
- Be informed regarding your organisation's policies on misconduct of this kind.
- Do not overreact and see every male colleague as a potential "office rake". Try to build relationships of mutual respect and trust. If colleagues are aware of your principles, they may be able to defend you if necessary.
- Have answers ready for possible approaches, for example "I prefer to keep my personal and professional life separate". By making such a firm policy statement you can state your case without rejecting or insulting the other party (even if he is not deserving of your thoughtfulness). On the other hand, it is not necessary for any woman to apologise or to give reasons. Sometimes a simple "NO" will eventually get through. Here, assertiveness training and development of a healthy self-esteem can help women to deal with harassers (Prekel 1993:7).
- Check whether other women are having similar problems as an harasser tends to have a history of bothering several women over time. This might strengthen the victim's case if she should decide to make a complaint to the personnel department.
- Remind the harasser of your rights and name his behaviour for example "what you are doing is sexual harassment and it is illegal. If you do not stop, I am going to lay a charge".
- If a problem develops, document interactions in detail in case you need to make a formal complaint later. Keep record of when and where, what has been said and done as well as your own responses. If there are any witnesses to these incidents, this should be recorded in case corroboration should later be needed.

Practical approaches to help women cope in the workplace (Prekel 1989:30).

If woman adhere to the above suggestions made they will be better equipped to handle unwelcome sexual advances in the workplace.

OTHER PRO-ACTIVE OPPORTUNITIES

Wagner (1992:26) and Prekel (1993:7) outline other pro-active opportunities that could prove valuable to organisations like the SAPS in addressing sexual harassment.

(a) Equal opportunity programmes

An effective equal opportunities programme, which ensures well designed career planning for all (based on merit but ensuring that historically disadvantaged employees get a fair deal) will reduce the vulnerability of individuals to harassment by people who abuse power and authority.

(b) Creating a positive corporate culture

A positive corporate culture in which the rights and dignity of all employees are recognised and respected and where management sets a positive example, will do much to create a healthy environment in which sexual harassment will be unable to flourish.

(c) Rumour and innuendo

Line managers and human resources professionals are frequently hearing the latest, office gossip. When whispers regarding sexual harassment is heard, particularly when the same persons are involved, the employer cannot ignore these rumours. Direct enquiries may uncover a situation that requires fast and professional intervention.

(d) Walking the floors

A quick preventive measure with significant potential payoff, is simply to walk through the office premises. As you walk through, look and listen for:

- Any displays of graffiti in rest rooms, photocopying rooms, locker rooms or in nooks and crannies.
- Any displays i.e. posters, calendars and magazines of a sexual nature in offices, cubicles and other public spaces.
- Any general exchanges where the content is sexual or harassing in nature. Friday afternoons are a good time for this kind of informal check.
- Any concerns should be discussed with the manager or supervisor involved so that preventive action can be taken.

(e) Complaint resolution audits

Conducting an informal audit of the organisation's internal complaint resolution system, is another good preventative measure (Webb 1991:127). This in depth monitoring may continue for quite some time, until the credibility and trust that make the system function well, have been rebuilt.

(f) Getting references

Employers who hire individuals without inquiring into the individual's personal record and history of mental illness involving violence or abuse of others, will increasingly be subjected to unexpected and unwanted litigation and negative publicity.

(g) Conducting employee surveys

As sexual harassment is a volatile issue with detrimental consequences for all involved, employers should conduct a survey amongst all levels of employees. The whole range of

behaviours and the consequences of harassment should be emphasised. The results of these surveys should then be published.

Taking steps to prevent sexual harassment before it occurs, benefits not only the organisation but also the individual. Thus, these preventative measures can be of great value to organisations like the South African Police Service and all its employees, provided the staff at management level, professional personnel and all other levels of employees commit themselves to working together on implementing the aforementioned preventative measures to address and eradicate sexual harassment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made based on the conclusions.

Staff at management level

It is recommended that at management level the following should be considered:

- A complaint investigation and resolution process should be established. This process should be clearly tied to the chain of command and should utilise specialists from core staffing functions like professional services, labour relations and legal services.
- Specific individuals or groups of individuals should be appointed to deal with allegations of sexual harassment. The complaint resolution team should be balanced by race and sex. These individuals should be unbiased and should have a sound knowledge base of sexual harassment and related issues. As sexual harassment is an extremely sensitive issue, which affects the lives and reputations of the employee as well as employer, prompt and professional handling of the situation is required. The industrial social worker in the SAPS has a vital role in this regard.
- Actual and potential harassees (victims) should be genuinely invited to complain and should feel a reasonable sense of safety in doing so. The top management in the SAPS should publicise cases of sexual harassment so that employees are aware that making a formal complaint is not a futile exercise but that it can have positive results for the harassee and employer.
- The formal complaint system should also serve to protect the alleged harasser from unfounded or frivolous complaints. Every effort should be made by the management of the SAPS to ensure procedural fairness to both the complainant and the accused.
- The sexual harassment training programme should be mandatory for all employees of the SAPS in order to ensure that those who need it most will attend. The training should differ for all levels of employees. It should not be rushed because of time or money constraints as this will defeat the purpose. It is important that the staff at top management level should show their support of the training programme if the programme is to be effective.
- Managers and supervisors should be trained to respond quickly and effectively to sexual harassment complaints of employees.
- All supervisory personnel in the SAPS should be trained, if only minimally to listen to their subordinates in order to reduce the incidents of sexual harassment. Managers at the middle management level must be made aware that some individuals and groups are more susceptible to harassment than others. Both supervisors and managers must be made aware of their responsibility to treat employees as individuals and to make work as gratifying as possible for them.

- Staff at all levels of management should be reminded that they have a responsibility to ensure that the work environment is free from sexual harassment or victimisation (of a complainant or other employee wishing to give or giving evidence) in the event of a complaint.
- The staff at top management level should indicate their concern about the seriousness of sexual harassment by clearly stating and publicising what remedial sanctions will be implemented should an employee be in violation of the sexual harassment policy. A mere statement of policy without specific sanctions for violators are likely to be looked at by employees and the courts as an ineffective policy. The actions of the managers in the SAPS should reflect their genuine concern for the sensitivity of this issue.
- An organisational culture that promotes equal opportunities for women, and which exposes, discourages and censures sexual harassment in the workplace should be established in the SAPS. Intervention by the managers of the SAPS should have the effect of attenuating the harassment process and limiting what social support it has. Serious managers must recognise that sexual harassment is symptomatic of larger cultural and organisational problems.
- The staff at top management level should consider the development of an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) to provide counselling and referral services to employees experiencing exceptional stress. This stress, if ignored may be expressed in harassing behaviours.

Professional personnel/Personnel specialists

It is recommended that the professional personnel employed by the SAPS should consider the following:

- The available channels for the assistance of victims of sexual harassment should be adequately publicised so that employees will know whom to approach when they are faced with a harassing situation. Names of contact persons should be readily available.
- Professional personnel (for example social workers) should endeavour to clarify the extent of the problem of sexual harassment and should bring the seriousness of sexual harassment to the attention of management and employees. This can be done by assisting with the implementation of the sexual harassment policy and by doing research surveys.

Staff at management level and professional personnel

It is recommended that the staff at management level in co-operation with the professional personnel of the SAPS should consider the following:

- The top management and professional personnel should endeavour to make every effort to ensure that all employees are made aware of the existence and extent of the sexual harassment policy because more than half of the respondents seem to be unfamiliar with the contents of the sexual harassment policy document of the SAPS.
- A creative publicity campaign for the advertising of the sexual harassment policy should be embarked on in order to deal more effectively with sexual harassment and its consequences.
- Extremely high visibility should be given to the issue of sexual harassment as a legitimate problem, and it must acquire the status of a taboo.
- Employees in the SAPS should be made aware that no matter what their position in the organisation, there is much they can do to deal with the harassment should it occur.
- Support offices should be made available to all employees in the SAPS. The specialists (e.g. industrial social workers and employee assistance practitioners) should be more accessible to

employees. A multi-disciplinary approach would have a higher impact in addressing the issue of sexual harassment.

- Good communication between managers and employees, should be encouraged in order to encourage internal settlements and to eliminate the need for harassees to involve outside sources to resolve their complaints.

Lower level employees

It is recommended that all lower level employees in the SAPS should consider the following recommendation.

- Employees in the SAPS should endeavour to familiarise themselves with the sexual harassment policy and should equip themselves with the necessary skills and knowledge in order to handle unwelcome sexual advances with confidence in the workplace.

Trade unions

It is recommended that the existing trade unions in the SAPS should consider the following recommendation.

- Steps should be taken by the existing trade unions in the SAPS (SAPU, POPCRU, PSA) to raise awareness of the problem of sexual harassment in the workplace in order to create a climate which is free of harassment.

FURTHER RESEARCH

It is recommended that:

- (i) An audit should be done by the industrial social worker at each police station in the Western Cape, in order to obtain a reliable account of how extensive the problem of sexual harassment really is in the Western Cape.
- (ii) An evaluation by the social worker should be done after the anti-harassment training programme has been implemented, in order to determine the effectiveness of the prevention training programme for sexual harassment in the SAPS.

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