

THE IMPACT OF WORKPLACE HARASSMENT ON WORKING LADIES IN KARACHI CITY

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine the effects of workplace harassment on women's mental health and its broader social consequences in Karachi. A total of 60 structured online questionnaires were distributed to employees to assess the prevalence and impact of harassment in the workplace. Findings indicate that women experience harassment more frequently than men, resulting in psychological outcomes such as low self-esteem, anxiety, stress, depression, poor concentration, and reluctance to perform tasks outside their comfort zone. Additionally, harassment negatively affects marital life and overall well-being. From a social perspective, the study reveals that awareness regarding workplace harassment is limited: many employees are unaware of reporting procedures, organizational policies, or legal options, and hesitate to discuss such issues publicly. Participants also perceive workplace harassment as contributing to social disruption, with minimal societal intervention to address the problem. The study highlights workplace harassment as a growing global concern that demands both organizational and social attention. The main objective is to assess its effects on women and society in Karachi, emphasizing the need for effective policies, awareness programs, and legal mechanisms to mitigate its impact.

Keywords: *Eeoc, Ncwge, Ocr.*

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1. Introduction

Workplace harassment negatively affects women's mental health, job performance, marital life, and social well-being. It can be verbal, physical, psychological, sexual, or digital (cyberbullying), creating a hostile and intimidating environment. Despite laws such as Title IX and guidelines from organizations like NCWGE, OCR, and EEOC, harassment remains prevalent due to low awareness, inadequate reporting, and weak enforcement. This study aims to examine the impact of workplace harassment on women in Karachi, focusing on their mental health, working abilities, marital life, and the broader societal consequences. Understanding these effects is essential, as harassment not only harms individuals emotionally and psychologically but also reduces productivity, increases absenteeism, and contributes to social disruption. By investigating these outcomes, the study seeks to inform organizations and policymakers to develop effective preventive measures, create safer workplaces, and foster social awareness. The independent variable of this study is workplace harassment, while the dependent variables include mental health, working abilities, and social consequences, integrating key research objectives into a concise analysis of the issue.

2. Literature Review

Academic literature identifies workplace harassment as a major concern that influences employees' psychological well-being and overall organizational functioning. Studies in personnel economics by Edward P. Lazear and Paul Oyer explain that workplace behavior is largely shaped by incentive structures, compensation policies, and organizational arrangements. When supervisors control evaluations, promotions, or rewards, the imbalance of authority can sometimes create opportunities for unfair treatment. Eugene F. Fama noted that subjective performance assessments may allow managers to bias evaluations for personal interests, while Bengt Holmström argued that employees may tolerate inappropriate behavior because they worry about career consequences. In this context, workplace or sexual harassment—described by Michelle A. Paludi as unwelcome sexual behavior or pressure that produces an intimidating work atmosphere—has been widely examined in organizational research. The model proposed by Louise F. Fitzgerald suggests that harassment is strongly connected to workplace culture and gender power relations, and it often leads to outcomes such as dissatisfaction with work, withdrawal from job activities, and emotional strain. Similarly, research by William J. Pryor indicates that harassment tends to occur when individuals who have a higher tendency toward such behavior find workplace situations where rules or supervision are weak. Empirical studies also report that poor organizational awareness, weak policies, and limited monitoring increase the chances of harassment, especially in settings where supervisors influence pay or performance evaluations. Prior research consistently shows that harassment produces harmful effects for employees, including lower work

engagement, reduced confidence, and greater intention to resign from employment. Scholars such as Jennifer Berdahl and Lilia Cortina highlight that victims frequently experience psychological pressure, humiliation, and strained professional relationships. Mental health research further links harassment with anxiety, depressive symptoms, trauma, and stress-related disorders. The Conservation of Resources Theory developed by Stevan E. Hobfoll explains that stressful experiences like harassment drain individuals' valuable personal resources such as self-esteem, emotional balance, and job security, which ultimately harms their well-being. Overall, previous studies indicate that workplace harassment affects not only individual employees but also organizational outcomes through absenteeism, low morale, high employee turnover, and declining productivity. For this reason, researchers emphasize the need for stronger institutional policies, employee awareness, and supportive workplace environments to minimize harassment and promote respectful professional settings.

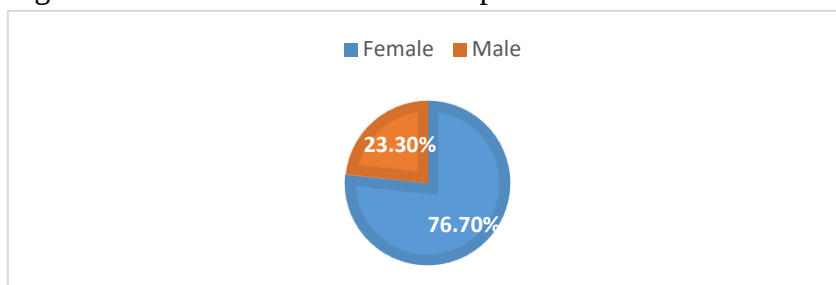
3. Research Methodology

This study employs a structured research methodology to systematically examine the impact of workplace harassment on mental health and social outcomes. Research methodology refers to the organized procedures used to design a study, collect data, and analyze results in order to address specific research objectives. A quantitative research design was adopted for this study because it enables the collection of measurable data and facilitates objective statistical analysis. Research design provides the overall framework that guides the selection of appropriate methods for data collection, measurement, and interpretation while ensuring reliability, validity, neutrality, and generalizability of the findings. The population of the study consists of residents of Karachi, including both male and female participants aged sixteen years and above, with particular focus on working individuals who may experience workplace environments where harassment can occur. To obtain representative responses, a simple random sampling technique was applied, allowing participants to be selected without bias and giving each individual an equal opportunity to participate in the research. A total of 60 respondents were selected for the study. Both primary and secondary data sources were utilized to strengthen the research. Primary data were collected directly from respondents through an online questionnaire survey, while secondary data were obtained from relevant academic materials such as books, scholarly articles, journals, and online publications related to workplace harassment and employee well-being. The main instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire consisting of close-ended questions, designed to obtain clear and consistent responses while minimizing ambiguity. Finally, the collected data were processed and analyzed using statistical software, which enabled systematic organization and interpretation of the responses to evaluate the relationship between workplace harassment, mental health, and social consequences among employees.

4. Data Analysis

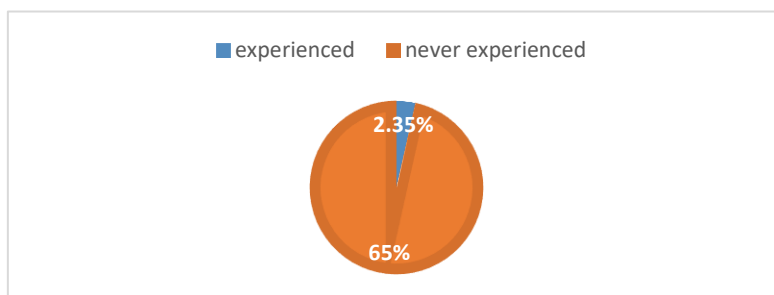
4.1. Descriptive Statistics

Figure 1: Gender Distribution of Respondents



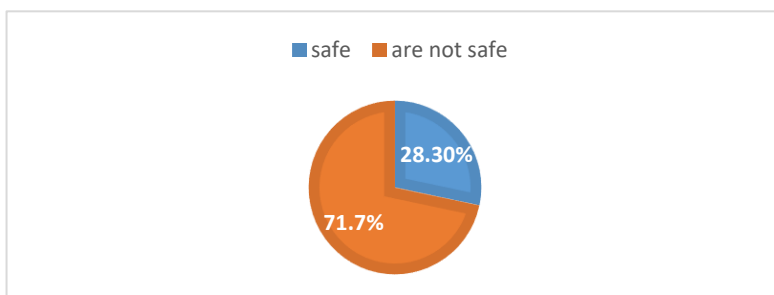
"As shown in Figure 1, 76.7% of the respondents are female, while 23.3% are male, indicating that female participants outnumber male participants in this study."

Figure 2: Respondents' Experience of Workplace Harassment



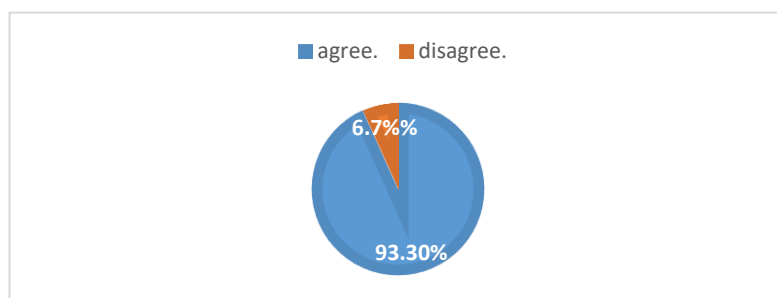
As shown in Figure 2, 35% of the respondents have experienced workplace harassment at least once in their lifetime, while 65% have never experienced harassment at their workplaces.

Figure 3: Perception of Workplace Safety for Women



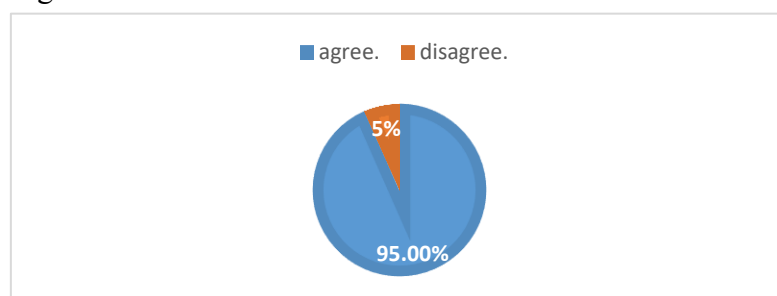
As shown in Figure 3, 71.7% of the respondents believe that workplaces are not safe for women, whereas 28.3% think that workplaces are safe for women.

Figure 4: Perception of Increasing Workplace Harassment



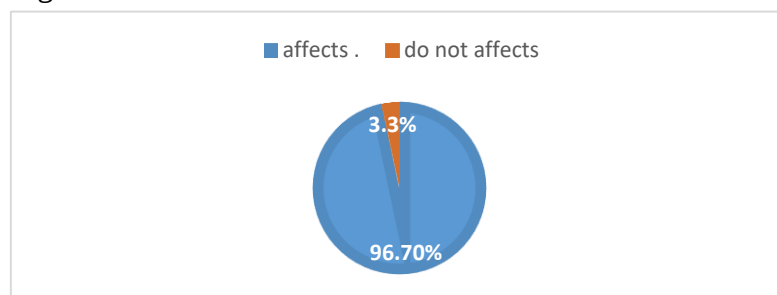
As shown in Figure 4, 93.3% of respondents agree that workplace harassment is increasing day by day, while 6.7% disagree.

Figure 5: Effect of Harassment on Women's Work Abilities



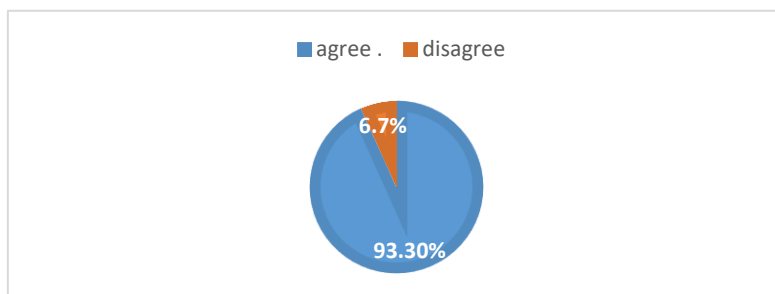
As shown in Figure 5, 95% of respondents agree that workplace harassment decreases women's working abilities and capabilities, while 5% disagree.

Figure 6: Effect of Harassment on Mental Health



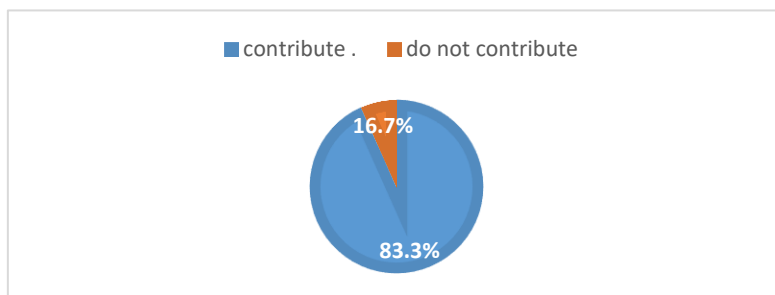
As shown in Figure 6, 96.7% of respondents believe that workplace harassment negatively affects women's mental health, whereas 3.3% do not.

Figure 7: Effect of Harassment on Personal Relationships



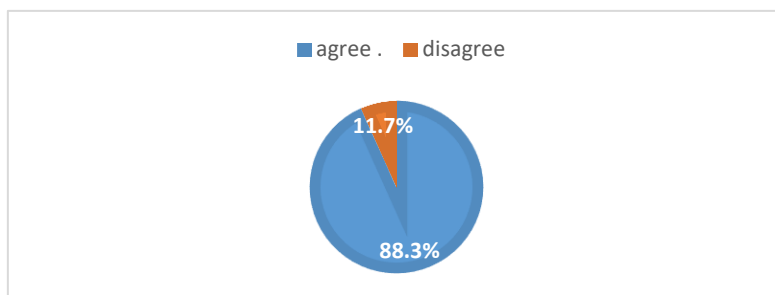
As shown in Figure 7, 93.3% of respondents agree that workplace harassment affects personal relationships, while 6.7% disagree.

Figure 8: Workplace Harassment as a Cause of Low Female Employment in Karachi



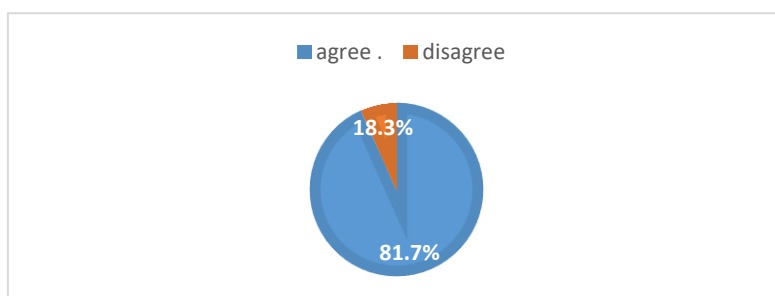
As shown in Figure 8, 83.3% of respondents believe workplace harassment contributes to low rates of female employment in Karachi, whereas 16.7% do not.

Figure 9: Society's Ignorance Toward Workplace Harassment



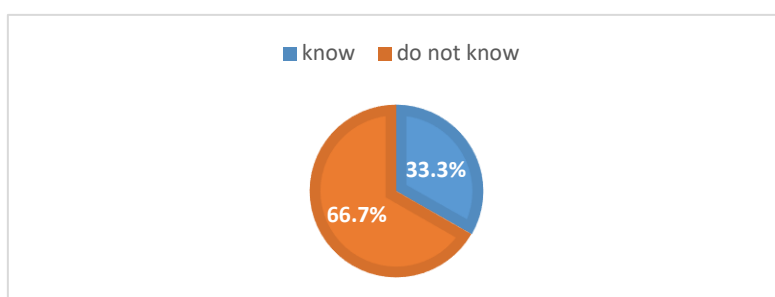
As shown in Figure 9, 88.3% of respondents agree that society ignores the issue of workplace harassment, while 11.7% disagree.

Figure 10: Workplace Harassment as a Barrier to Talented Women



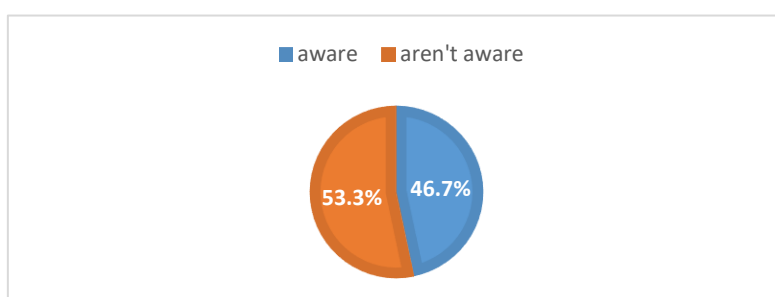
As shown in Figure 10, 81.7% of respondents believe that workplace harassment limits the presence of talented women in society, while 18.3% disagree.

Figure 11: Knowledge of Reporting Workplace Harassment



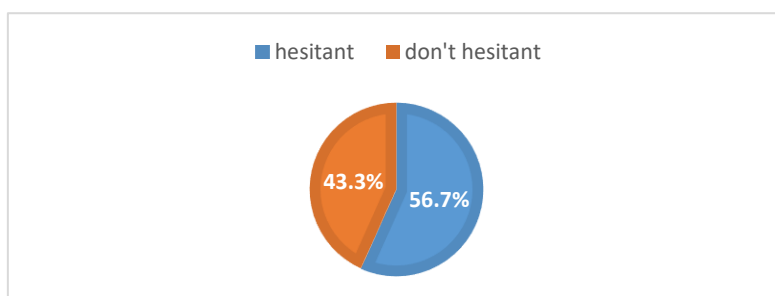
As shown in Figure 11, 33.3% of respondents know how to report workplace harassment, whereas 66.7% do not.

Figure 12: Awareness of Harassment Policies



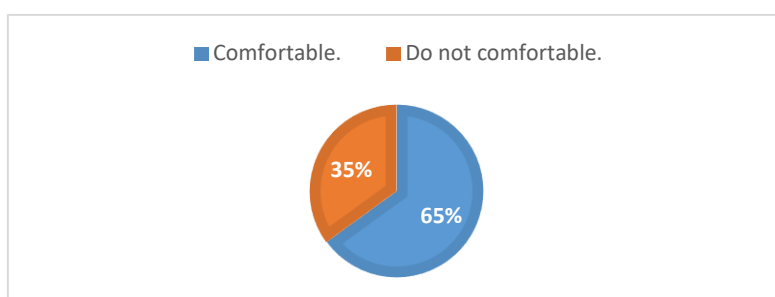
As shown in Figure 12, 46.7% of respondents are aware of organizational policies related to harassment, while 53.3% are not.

Figure 13: Fear of Reporting Harassment



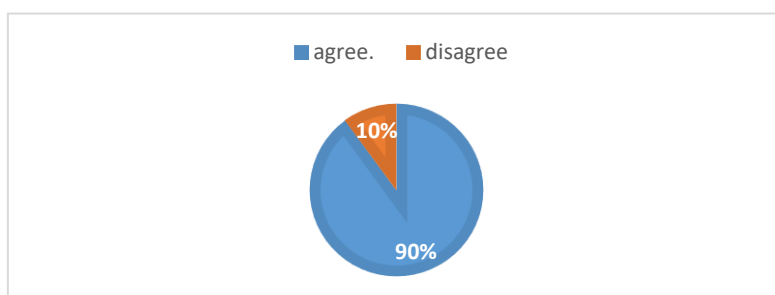
As shown in Figure 13, 56.7% of respondents are hesitant to report harassment due to fear of job loss, while 43.3% are willing to report.

Figure 14: Comfort in Seeking Legal Help



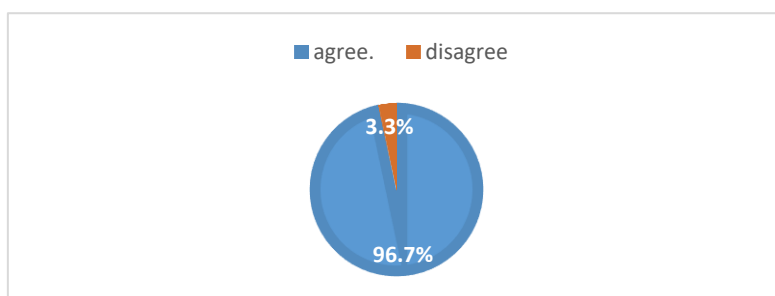
As shown in Figure 14, 65% of respondents feel comfortable asking for legal help regarding harassment, whereas 35% do not.

Figure 15: Investment in Employee Training Against Harassment



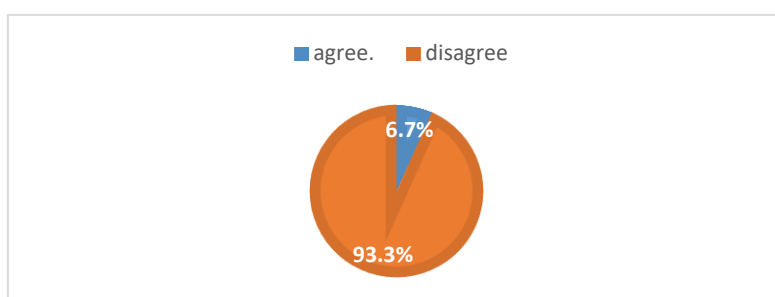
As shown in Figure 15, 90% of respondents believe companies should invest in training employees against harassment, while 10% disagree.

Figure 16: Harassment's Effect on Women's Confidence



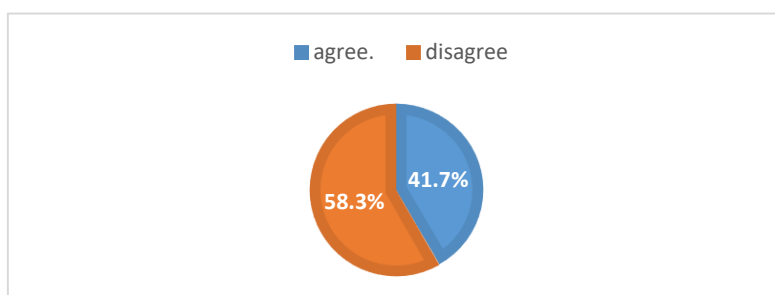
As shown in Figure 16, 96.7% of respondents agree that workplace harassment reduces women's confidence, whereas 3.3% disagree.

Figure 17: Misconceptions About Who Is Harassed



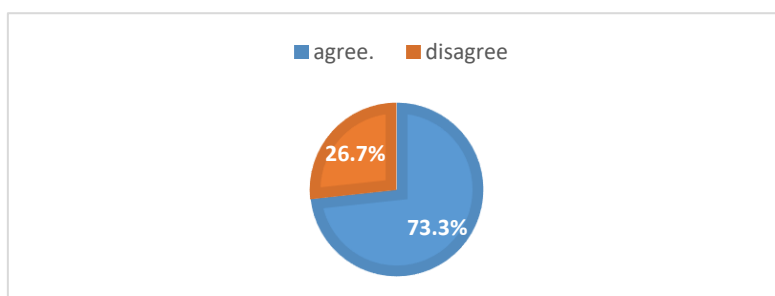
As shown in Figure 17, 93.3% of respondents disagree that only young and attractive women are harassed, while 6.7% agree.

Figure 18: Influence of Women's Dressing on Harassment



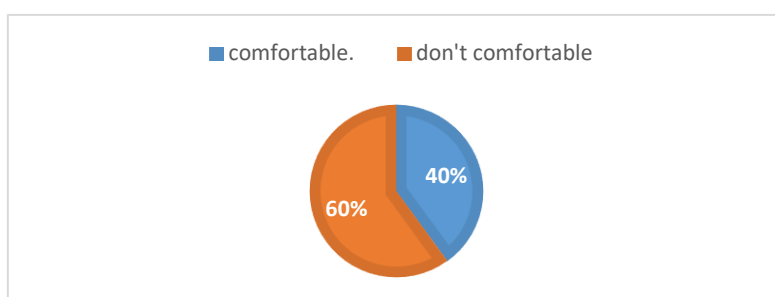
As shown in Figure 18, 41.7% of respondents agree and 58.3% disagree that a woman's dressing influences whether she is harassed.

Figure 19: Gender Disparity in Workplace Harassment



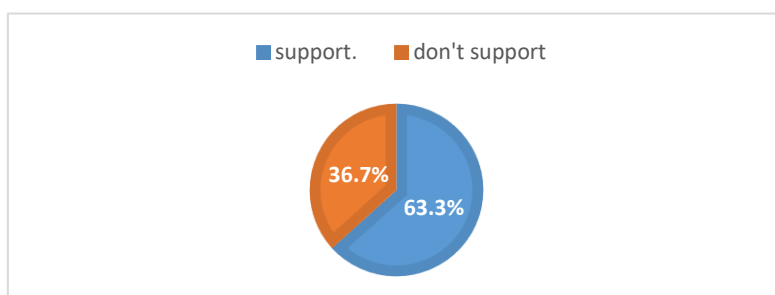
As shown in Figure 19, 73.3% of respondents believe women experience harassment more than men, while 26.7% disagree.

Figure 20: Comfort Discussing Harassment Publicly



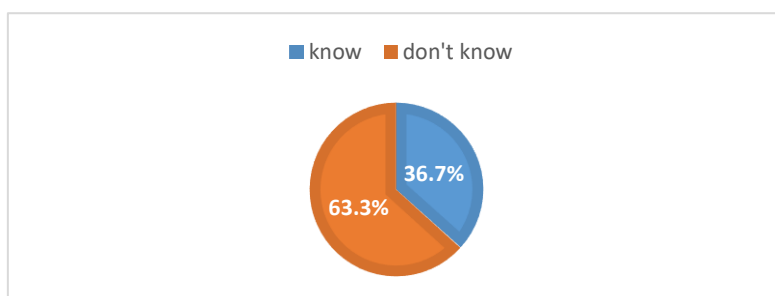
As shown in Figure 20, 40% of respondents feel comfortable talking publicly about harassment, whereas 60% find it difficult.

Figure 21: Societal Support for Anti-Harassment Efforts



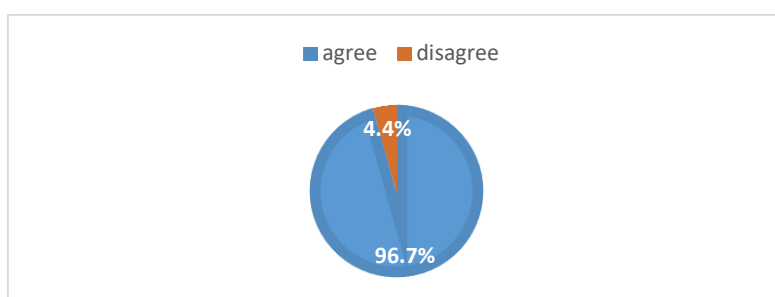
As shown in Figure 21, 63.3% of respondents believe society would support efforts to stop workplace harassment in the future, while 36.7% do not.

Figure 22: Knowledge of Self-Defense Techniques



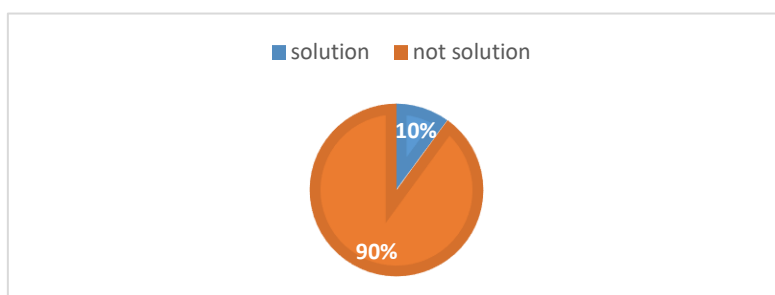
As shown in Figure 22, 36.7% of respondents know self-defense techniques, whereas 63.3% do not.

Figure 23: Effectiveness of Severe Punishments



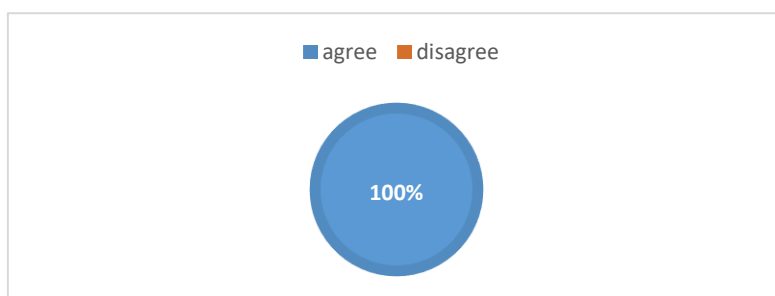
As shown in Figure 23, 96.7% of respondents agree that severe punishment could help reduce workplace harassment, while 4.4% disagree.

Figure 24: Ignoring Workplace Harassment



As shown in Figure 24, 90% of respondents believe ignoring workplace harassment is not an effective solution, whereas 10% think it is.

Figure 25: Workplace Harassment and Social Destruction



As shown in Figure 25, 100% of respondents agree that workplace harassment contributes to social destruction in society.

5. Conclusion

Workplace harassment has become a serious social issue that affects not only individuals but also families and society as a whole. It leads to emotional stress, mental health problems, and reduced performance among working women. The study highlights that harassment is not accidental but a deliberate act that violates women's dignity, rights, and opportunities for growth. It exists in different forms and creates long-term negative impacts on victims as well as their social environment. Therefore, addressing workplace harassment is essential to ensure a safe, respectful, and productive environment for women in society.

5.1. Summary of the Findings

This study was conducted to examine the impact of workplace harassment on women's mental health, marital life, and society in Karachi. Data was collected from 60 respondents through an online questionnaire using a simple random sampling technique and analyzed using percentage methods. The findings reveal that a large majority of respondents believe workplace harassment significantly affects women's mental health (around 96%) and marital life (approximately 93%), while all respondents agreed that it leads to social disruption. These results clearly indicate that workplace harassment is a widespread issue with serious personal and societal consequences.

5.2. Recommendations

1. Employers should develop a workplace culture that does not tolerate harassment and encourages respect and decency. Employers should convey and model a commitment to this purpose.
2. Employers should examine their workplaces for potential harassment risk factors and brainstorm methods to minimize those risks.
3. Employers should perform climate surveys to determine how prevalent harassment is in their workplace

4. Employers should provide adequate resources to harassment prevention measures, both to guarantee that such efforts are effective and to emphasize leadership's commitment to a harassment-free workplace.

5. Employers should guarantee that if harassment is discovered, retaliation is swift and proportionate to the seriousness of the offence. Employers should also ensure that where harassment is discovered, discipline is consistent and does not show (or appear to show) bias toward any particular employee.

6. Employers should use metrics and performance reviews to hold mid-level managers and front-line supervisors accountable for preventing and/or responding to workplace harassment.

7. If an organization has a diversity and inclusion plan and budget, harassment prevention should be a crucial part of work places.

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