



CENTRE FOR WOMEN'S STUDIES

Pt. Ravishankar Shukla University, Raipur

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//Report //

Two days workshop on Sexual Harassment of Women at workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013

14th -15th December, 2023

The Centre for Women's Studies Pt. Ravishankar Shukla University, Raipur, organized an awareness program on the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, Redressal) Act 2013 on December 14-15, 2023. The event aimed to educate participants about the Act and foster a safer environment for women in the workplace. Sexual harassment in the workplace is a grave issue that undermines the well-being, dignity, and rights of employees. It includes unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature that creates a hostile or intimidating work environment. Employers have a legal and ethical obligation to prevent and address sexual harassment promptly and effectively. This responsibility entails implementing clear policies, providing training, fostering a culture of respect, and taking swift action to investigate and resolve incidents of harassment.

Inaugural Ceremony:

The program commenced on December 14 at 11:00 am with an inaugural ceremony led by the Honorable Vice Chancellor, Prof. Sachinand Shukla, and Prof. Reeta Venugopal, Director of the Centre for Women's Studies. The ceremony began with the worship of Mother Saraswati, the lighting of lamps, and the singing of the university's Kulgeet. The event was well-attended by university teachers and approximately 130 students.

In the opening session, Dr. Reeta Venugopal welcomed the participants and the esteemed guests. She highlighted the importance of the program and its objectives. The keynote speaker, Dr. Bhupendra Karvande from Government J. Yoganandam, Chhattisgarh College, Raipur, provided an in-depth discussion on the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace

(Prevention, Prohibition, Redressal) Act 2013. He emphasized the significance of creating a safe workplace environment for women and the role of educational institutions in disseminating information about sexual harassment to female students.

Keynote Address by Vice Chancellor

Vice Chancellor Prof. Sachinand Shukla addressed the audience, emphasizing that sexual harassment is a sensitive and pervasive issue that negatively impacts society. He underscored the moral responsibility of higher educational institutions to cultivate disciplined and socially responsible youth. Prof. Shukla advocated for integrating moral education into the curriculum to foster respect and sensitivity towards women's rights.

Dr. Bhupendra Karvande further elaborated on the legal framework surrounding sexual harassment in India. He detailed the provisions of the Indian Constitution and the Indian Penal Code related to sexual harassment, including:

Section 354: Outraging the modesty of a woman

Section 354A: Sexual harassment

Section 354B: Assault with intent to disrobe

Section 354C: Voyeurism

Section 354D: Stalking

Sections 375-376: Rape

The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act of 2013 widened the definition of workplace and brought the informal sector, including domestic workers, within its ambit. Popularly known as POSH, the Act provides protection to all workers in health, sports, education, as well as in public and private sectors or

government institutions and in any place visited by the employee during his employment, including transport.

The Act defines sexual harassment as physical contact and advances, or demands or requests for sexual favours, or lewd remarks, or exposure to pornography or images, or any other unwelcome physical, verbal, or non-verbal conduct of a sexual nature. Any of these acts, whether overt or implied, is sexual harassment under the law. The Act provides an alternative to filing a criminal complaint with the police. The Act mandates employers in the case of a private company, or local government authorities in the case of the informal sector, to constitute a committee to hear complaints, investigate and recommend action against offenders. The action can range from a written apology to termination.

Under the POSH law, every employer is required to constitute an internal committee (IC) in every office having 10 or more employees. In establishments with less than 10 employees where an IC has not been constituted, or if the complaint is against the employer, or for women employed in the informal sector, the district officer or collector of the state government is required to constitute a local committee (LC) in each district, and if necessary, at the block level. The government is also responsible for developing training and educational material, organising awareness programmes, monitoring the implementation of the law and maintaining statistics on the number of cases filed and disposed of in cases of sexual harassment at workplace.

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Giving information about the laws, he said that strict laws exist to prevent sexual harassment. Men and other colleagues should talk to women respectfully. No such joke should be made with them which hurts their mind. Desiring sexual favours is sexual harassment. Many strict laws exist to prevent incidents of sexual harassment of women in the workplace, which women should take advantage of.

He said that many rights have been given to women to make the workplace safe for women. In such a situation, if you are also a victim of sexual harassment, then you can complain about it to protect yourself. For this, internal complaint committees are formed in every department where the victim can register her complaint and the victim can ask for help from them.

Dr. Karvande also discussed the Vishaka Guidelines issued by the Hon'ble Supreme Court, which laid the foundation for the current legislation. He explained the objectives of the Act, the formation of Internal Complaints Committees, the procedure for lodging complaints, and the redressal mechanisms.

Interactive Sessions and Activities

Following the detailed discussions, students were divided into groups to participate in various interactive activities related to the prevention of sexual harassment. These activities aimed to engage students and deepen their understanding of the issue.

Day Two: December 15, 2023

The second day of the program saw an enthusiastic turnout of about 100 teachers and staff members from Pt. Ravishankar Shukla University. Dr. Bhupendra Karvande continued his role as the subject expert, delving deeper into the intricacies of the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, Redressal) Act 2013. The day concluded with a series of activities designed to reinforce the participants' knowledge and commitment to combating sexual harassment.

The program successfully raised awareness about the critical issue of sexual harassment in the workplace, equipping participants with the knowledge and tools to address and prevent it effectively.