



Sexual harassment in the Workplace in Fiji- 2016 Follow up Study.

Fiji Women's Rights Movement

June- August 2016

In a recent study, commissioned by the Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM) and conducted by the Market Research Consultants, Tebbutt Research it was found that one in five women have experienced sexual harassment in the workplace. This means 20% of all women interviewed agreed to have experienced some form of sexual harassment in the workplace. The number has decreased from the 33% incidence recorded in a similar study conducted in 2002.

In 2002 FWRM commissioned Tebbutt Research to conduct a ground-breaking research on the incidence and nature of sexual harassment of women in the workplace. Results of that study were widely utilised, and assisted FWRM to lobby and advocate against sexual harassment in the workplace, and to provide input into a decision to adopt a broader definition of sexual harassment for legislation being developed at that time. In June 2016, FWRM commissioned Tebbutt Research to update the findings by conducting a follow up study. The core research objective was to replicate and update the key elements of the 2002 study, while incorporating some changes to make the project relevant to the 2016 workplace. A quantitative study with 1000 women currently in paid employment was conducted in Suva, Nadi, Lautoka and Labasa. The study asked the question, *has the prevalence of sexual harassment in the workplace changed with the increasing number of women in the workforce and/or with the increasing number of women in decision-making roles?*

Whilst the incidence of sexual harassment in the workplace in 2016 as compared to 2002 has decreased, the findings of the research point out interesting relations to Fiji's economic development in past decade. The Food, Beverage and Hospitality sector (35%) has the highest incidence of sexual harassment followed by Public Service (25%), Health (24%) and Retail (23%) with Education (8%) sector being the lowest. In the study, Nadi (35%) was identified as the 'hotspot' for incidences followed by Suva (19%), Labasa (18%) and Lautoka (11%). In 2002, Lautoka was reported to be the 'hotspot' for sexual harassment. Two hypotheses can be formed on the improvement in the situation on Lautoka; (1) being the tourism infrastructure restructure has contributed to this and (2) the expiry of the Multi Fibre Agreement in 2005 which saw the demise of many garment establishments in the city.

Younger women (25% of under 30 year olds) and those women from i-Taukei (29%) are most likely to be harassed, as are casual (43%) and part-time (30%) employees. Incidences are higher for women with these job requirements: serving members of the public; working on weekends; working at night; shift work; changing in and out of uniforms at the workplace; working on own in isolation; attending office parties.

The most common types of sexual harassment that women face is Verbal (12%), Gestural (10%) and Physical (9%) harassment.

Most types of harassment are happening at the usual place of work and have occurred in the last 12 months. Most types have been experienced in the current organization rather than previous organization, indicating that majority women remain in workplaces where they experienced sexual harassment. The study confirms that majority of the offenders are males with a small proportion being females. Most of these offenders were between the ages 20-39 years. Therefore, young males are most likely to offend.

For the 20% of women who have experienced sexual harassment in the workplace, half have experienced more than one type of harassment. Those working in the Food, Beverage and Hospitality sector are most likely to report multiplicity (10% 4+types) of offenses.

In the 2016 survey, the idea of sexual harassment instigated through communal or familial ties (tauvu, tavale, kinsmen) was explored. Almost one in eight women claimed to have experienced sexual harassment in the workplace or during the course of doing a job that was the result of traditional, cultural or kinship relationship.

Under Fiji's Employment Relations Promulgation (2007), 76 (2); *an employer must develop and maintain a policy to prevent sexual harassment in his or her workplace*. A total of 62% of all working women interviewed said their employer had a sexual harassment policy. This was much higher in the private sector (70%) than the public sector (57%). While 22% said their employer does not have a policy, a further 16% claimed they did not know if there was a policy or not in their workplace. Despite having proper legislation, majority of cases go unreported (82%). Reporting rates (18%) are down compared to 2002 when it was 23%. Of those that reported, 21% stated that nothing happened and that there was no consequences for the offender.

Most women in the study did not think that sexual harassment was a joke and there was strong support for speaking out and not staying quiet. The decrease in the incidence of sexual harassment in the workplace is encouraging, however, more work needs to be done for workplaces to adopt and implement sexual harassment policies that are consistent with the national standards as stated in the Employment Relations Promulgation (ERP). With strong patterns indicating high prevalence in the Food, Beverage and Hospitality sector, advocacy and knowledge base on sexual harassment needs to be strengthened across this industry. Most young people being victims and offenders of sexual harassment in the workplace indicates a long term issue since these people will remain in the work force for a long time. Strong implementation of the sexual harassment provisions in the ERP and effective workplace policies will help relinquish this issue.

The Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM) is a multiethnic and multicultural non-governmental organization committed to removing discrimination against women through institutional reforms and attitudinal changes, by means of core programmes as well as innovative approaches. The Movement's vision is for the women of Fiji to be free from all forms of discrimination, have equal access to opportunities and to live in a healthy environment where the principles of feminism, democracy, good governance, multiculturalism and human rights prevail.

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