

# **SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN THE WORKPLACE**



## **THE FUTURE OF WORK WITHOUT WOMEN?**

# SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN THE WORKPLACE



- Sexual harassment is a persistent problem in our workplaces and society
- It reflects the patriarchal nature of our society – a society that grooms misogynistic culture
- A society that allows the degrading of women and sexualises their presence in the public space
- Sexual harassment is about masculine dominance – an expression of heterosexist oppression

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- Sexual harassment is a consequence of gender inequality in the workplace
- Workplaces are gendered – with gendered occupational hierarchies
- Heterosexual men often enjoy the privilege of being assigned to positions of power
- They are often placed in strategic positions with decision making powers – hiring, promotion, salaries and work benefits
- They are the gatekeepers in the workplace

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- Bradley (1999) argues that gendered power enables those with access (often men) to have control over the behavior of those who do not have access (often women)
- Women are often employed as support staff – admin positions that serve men
- Acker argues that the sexualisation of women is often inscribed in the description or definition of their job titles

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- StatsSA 2017 shows that women constituted:
- 32% of Supreme Court of Appeal judges,
- 31% of advocates,
- 30% of ambassadors and
- 24% of heads of state-owned enterprises according to data from 2014.
- Top 40 JSE listed companies, only one company had a female CEO

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- COSATU's former general secretary, Zwelinzima Vavi – junior admin
- DA member of parliament Archibald Figlan – junior colleague
- Former ANC Provincial leader – Marius Fransman - PA
- Primedia Senior Broadcast Executive – Mark Jakins – 15 staff members

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- Reporting of sexual harassment is still a challenge for most women. Why?
- What are the laws on sexual harassment and how effective are they?
- Fear to report such cases – as women are expected to provide evidence
- How many workplaces have dedicated offices that deal with gender discrimination?
- What are the implications of challenging powerful men in the workplace

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- Impact of sexual harassment on women's health and wellbeing –
- Most women suffer from depression, anxiety – leading to resignations
- Research identifies gender inequality as a threat to women's health (de los Reyes 2017; UN Global Health Report 2017)
- Sexual harassment is therefore an issue of health and safety in the workplace

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- Increasing numbers of women in professional positions – higher numbers of women graduating from universities
- Workplaces increasingly becoming female
- Transformation requires a conscious effort aimed at eliminating sexist patriarchal attitudes that discriminate against women

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- Sexual harassment is a challenge for workplaces
- High incidents of sexual harassment show weaknesses in workplace laws and enforcement of these laws
- Failure to prioritise gender equality in the workplace

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- Genderedness of the workplace has implications for equality and full inclusion of women
- How do we conceptualise transformation? Or what are transforming in the workplace?
- If we are not transforming power and how it is distributed in the workplace then we are still far from addressing gender inequality in the workplace

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- Gender equality is a human rights issue
- Equality is about recognising women as full human beings in the workplace