

Emotional Consequences in Harassed Women from a Public (Government) Institution

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to identify the emotional consequences in workers occupationally harassed in a public institution in the state of Puebla, Mexico. We conducted semi-structured interviews to 6 employees. There were obtained 9 categories of Harassment in the Workplace: feelings of harassment, types of violence at work, personal beliefs, personality traits of the harasser, emotions, emotional consequences, to the institution, perspective to the harassment and perspective to the emotional regulation. The results of the contents analysis show the emotional regulation is difficult to manage in people who suffer harassment at work, that there is emotional repression in the face of the events of harassment in the workplace to express feelings toward his stalker and that vulnerability is not an emotion expressed in the workers who suffer harassment in the workplace. Emotions such as anger, fear, helplessness and frustration are some of the emotional consequences in victims, as well as the predisposition to harassment and distrust of authority figures, influencing in a negative way to these female employees in a cognitive level, emotional, social and to work policies.

Keywords: Harassment in the Workplace, emotions and work climate

Introduction

The work climate directly influences the behavior of people, the psychological atmosphere is a characteristic of the inside of an organization,

it may be healthy or sick, warm or cold or even successful or not (Pineda and Valencia, 2011).

Various factors form the working climate as the physical environment, structural variables, interpersonal relations, management policies, among others; which can be a strategic mechanism not only for the performance or productivity, but also for the satisfaction and well-being of the employees. This good or bad environment brings consequences for the organization in positive or negative levels defined by the perception of the members of the organization (Soberanes and De la Fuente, 2009).

In this atmosphere or climate, harassment in the workplace is considered one of the main psychosocial risks, followed by the burnout syndrome and stress, although the first, it is a matter of concern for the psychological damage that it generates in the victim (Shepherd, 2006), to the point of being considered by some authors, as a true epidemic (Baron, Munduate and White, 2003).

The harassment damages to workers and the number of cases are so extensive that it is difficult to quantify with accuracy the phenomenon. Research carried out globally, provided several data of the problem, but they converge in 3 important aspects: (a) the harassment is not clearly defined, (b) the harassment can be easily confused with other phenomena and (c) the existing figures are calculated self-reports of people who say they have suffered (although they have suffered due to the fact that the stress has similar characteristics. However, the issue has taken significant importance at the global level (Uribe, 2011).

When studying the harassment in organizational environments, it is common to see that it is suffered mainly within the female gender in a 70%, such as concluded Sánchez Miguel and Ambrosio Morales (2010) in a study conducted in Mexico. However, there is also a percentage of male gender who experience it, although these differences are not significant, in the case of a non-isolated phenomenon that aims primarily to the exclusion and marginalization against specific employees. In Europe and the United States, the harassment is considered an essential element in the study of labor issues (Einarsen and Raknes, Matthiesen, 1994; Rayner, Hoel and Cooper, Niedl, 1995; 2002; 2001; Vartia Salin., 1996; Zapf, Knorz and Kulla, 1996, cited by Fondevilla, 2008), fostering their research on those items, unlike Mexico, where recently begins to deepen in the problems that affect the health at work.

Johnanson (1991, cited by Varela, Puhl And Izcurdia, 2013) has pointed out that one of the most frequent features that harassment generates in the workplace is decreasing the quality of life at work, since it causes various conflicts and negative dynamics that pollute the working conditions

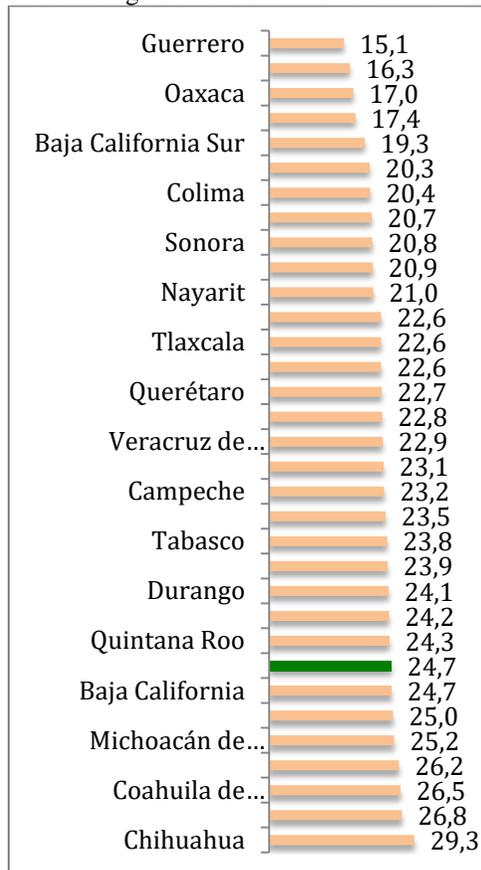
and thinning the labor climate, bringing up the accident rate, absenteeism and diminishing the performance.

Harassment in the workplace in the State of Puebla

The National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI, 2011), on the basis of the National Survey on the Dynamics of Relations in Households (ENDIREH), reports that in Puebla there are 22 of every 100 married women who work and who have been the victims of some type of workplace violence, violation of their economic situation or have been the target of discriminatory practices, such as the blocking of opportunities, lack of recognition or threats that end up affecting its position within the family.

On the other hand, it was found that married women tend to suffer more often this type of harassment positioning the entity of Puebla two points above the national average with 25 of every 100 women more frequently abused in the workplace, occupying the place number 8 in respect to the rest of the entities (Table 1).

Table 1. Percentage of Harrased Women at Work by State



Source: ENDIREH with database data from INEGI (2011).

According to studies carried out by (Das, 2009; Timmerman and Bajema, 1999, cited by Cold, 2011), pregnancy discrimination and sexual harassment labor affect many Mexican women, but unlike in other countries, it is not known with accuracy the prevalence and the factors associated to this experience of violence. However, he estimates that in Mexico it can be found data of people who have sought help at government agencies or have filed a complaint.

The violence in private and public institutions is causing great damage in working life because it affects social security, health, as well as the psychological well-being. However, greater emphasis is placed on the female sex by the statistics of reference showing the trend during the years 2011 and 2013 (National Institute of Statistics and Geography, [INEGI], 2011).

Specifically on the topic of harassment in the workplace and, in accordance with the declaration of Vanessa Barahona de la Rosa, Delegate of the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare in Puebla (Ministry of Labor and Social Security [Stps], 2016), at federal level rarely there are protocols and regulations that detect this crime, so it has been difficult to deal with.

Fondevilla (2008) mentions that there can be classified several types of harassment in Mexico. The intensity and frequency vary although one typically performed is the "freezing". This violence is described when the head ceases to assign specific tasks to the employer, out abruptly from their activities until there is nothing work on, excluding the employee from the employee from the work production system. This is a conflict-resolution mechanism for managers and allows you to set limits to the employees while other forms of freezing may be the exclusion of training, meetings and communications.

The Negative Emotions and the Impact on the Health

Ardid and Zarco, (cited by Ovejero, 2006) reported that events such as the increase in unemployment, precarious work and job dissatisfaction has led to consequences of psychosocial risk in people where the presence of stress has begun to form part of the everyday life of the workers. Symptoms such as anxiety, fatigue, harassment in the workplace, insomnia, loss of appetite and lack of motivation are some elements that generate stress. To investigate these phenomena at work, we find a variety of information on the health consequences. Harassment in the workplace, for example, increases the discomfort in those who suffer as well the rise of new risks of physical, psychological, and social issues related to this.

Considering this topic and emotions, Lazarus and Folkman (2000; 1991, cited in Vega, Muñoz, Berra, Nava and Gomez, 2012), reported that, depending on the assessment that we made on the situation presented, we can

experience anger, happiness, joy, disgust, fear and sadness. In this study, the emotions have been classified into two: positive and negative. Both share characteristics such as duration, intensity and adaptive functions, social and emotional needs (Vega, Muñoz, Berra, Nava and Gomez, 2012).

Carver (2004) and Cole et al. (2004) (cited by Lench, Tibbett and Bench, 2016) reported that the "Negative Emotions" result when there is a discrepancy between what people want and what we have at the moment when there is a problem, although many theorists of the item indicate that these are direct signs when the goals are in danger. Although emotions have a biological basis, people can influence them, and therefore, in the manner in which these are expressed, leading to emotional regulation (RE).

There are all extrinsic and intrinsic processes, responsible for monitoring, evaluation and modification of emotional reactions, particularly in their intensity and duration. Such reactions may be more adaptive than others according to Thompson (cited by Garnefski and Kraaij, 2010).

So that to Cano and Tobal, (cited by Adairis, 2012), more than 90% of illnesses have a psychosomatic origin and elements such as the characteristics of personality, emotional control, strategies for coping with stress, conflict and frustrations, can increase or develop psychosomatic diseases.

Negative emotions such as fear, anxiety, anger, sadness, depression and disgust have a high physiological activation and, therefore, have been the most studied in the health-disease processes, because in spite of being adaptive reactions can become pathological in certain situations due to a mismatch in the frequency and intensity. When this occurs, may occur as a mental health disorder (anxiety disorder, major depression, anger pathological) or physical (cardiovascular disorders, rheumatologic, immunological, and so forth) or refer Piqueras Rodriguez et al. (2009) in a descriptive research carried out in Spain.

Rocha (2006) mentions that it is important to understand the psychosocial study of the phenomenon of the work as "a source of material and spiritual wealth that gives meaning to the lives of people although it can also be a source of diseases and psychic alterations that transform the work and the worker's behavior" (p.56), as a feature of capitalist production, where most of the workers is far from live it as a creative activity.

It is so that the relationship between the psyche and the body becomes essential to inquire about the diseases that arise from emotions, which to stressors in everyday life appear as a form of expression of what happens in the body. Therefore, as Lazarus "seems to be that it is the external expression of the personality or what counts most, but the way the individual experiences internally their emotions" (p. 22) Tobo-Medina and Canaval-Erao (2009,).

Methodology

Considering the topic of study, we performed a qualitative approach using semi-structured interviews and a non-random sampling with the scope of an exploratory, descriptive study.

Participants

The sample was composed of 6 women, all active workers with a permanent contract, belonging to a public institution in the state of Puebla, Mexico with ages of 23 to 55 years. The 16.7% had technical career, the 33.3% with a bachelor's degree and 50% with a master's degree completed.

Inclusion Criteria: Women who voluntarily live a situation of harassment in the workplace in their work environment in a period of 6 months to 1 year.

Instrument

To assess the emotional consequences, we conducted semi-structured interviews. Each question is included in one of the 9 categories of analysis, while the subcategories were specified considering the responses of the interviewees (Table 2):

Table 2. Categories and Subcategories of Content Analysis Applied to the Interviews

CATEGORIE	NUMBER	QUESTION	SUBCATEGORIE
1. Feelings of Harassment	1	How do you feel to be harassed at work?	1. Devalued and Denigrated. 2. Powerless. 3. Frustrated, Hurt, Rejected and Vulnerable.
2. Types of Violence at Work	2	What have been the violent situations to which has been exposed?	1. Offenses and Screams. 2. Workload and Ridicule. 3. Hide and Threats. 4. Freezing, Exclusion and Defamation.
3. Personal Beliefs	3	Why do you think that is harassed at work?	1. Inferiority. 2. Personality and Vulnerability. 3. Not to be part of the Team, Labor Competence, Lack of Policies and Unpleasant Working Environment.
4. Personality Traits of the Harasser	4	4 How are the people that harass and how is your behavior with you?	1. Rude. 2. Derogatory, Female Gender, Arrogant, and does not listen. 3. Strong Character, Intolerant, Intrusive, Defamatory and Younger Age. 4. Hierarchy, Impatient, Omnipresent, Being on the Defensive, Jealous, Hypocritical, Egotistic.
5. Emotions	5 and 8	What emotions did you feel to be a victim of harassment?, What emotions were more	1. Anger. 2. Fear, Helplessness and Frustration. 3. Humiliation. 4. Sadness, Devaluation, Insecurity, Incapable, Being on

		expressed in the woman who is bullied?	the Defensive, Worn, Rejection, Disorientation, Hatred.
6. Emotional Consequences	6 and 12	What are the consequences of emotions presented to you to know that he is a victim of harassment in the workplace?, What damage or psychological consequences create submit you to live in a situation of violence?	1. Fear. 2. Personal Insecurity. 3. Predisposition to Harassment. 4. Distrust toward the head and Demotivation. 5. Emotional Damage and Emotional Repression. 6. Anger Content, Sensitivity, Gastritis and Colitis.
7. Perspective to the Institution	7 and 9	What aspects should be considered the institution to eradicate violence at work?, What actions it considers should be taken to resolve situations of work harassment on the job?	1. Follow up on Cases of Harassment. 2. Assess Human Talent, Promote Healthy Relationships, Surveys of Labor Climate and Mailbox of Complaints. 3. Awareness of the Heads, Regulation, Standards and Policies, Relocation of Area.
8. Perspective to the Harassment	11	What do you think about the institutions that allow harassment in the workplace among its employees?	1. Toxic Institutions and Cultural Poverty. 2. Leadership Problems and Preference for Power. 3. High Labor Turnover and Lack of Human Being.
9. Perspective to the Emotional Regulation	10 and 13	Why do you think it is so difficult to control the emotions in the person suffering from harassment at work?, What do you to repressed emotions?, What are they and why?	1. Emotional Confusion and Repressed Anger. 2. Sadness. 3. Mental Schok and Not Emotional Control. 4 Resentment and Frustration.

Source: Own elaboration.

Procedure

Once spoke with each participant individually, it proceeded to explain the reasons for the study for signing of the informed consent and the appointment for interview. Four of the participants agreed to conduct the interview in your home while the rest was interviewed at their place of work. Appointments to interview were scheduled one month in advance, considering the spaces and activities of each of the participants. Subsequently, we used the technique of content analysis for the subcategories for each of the 9 categories of the interview.

Results

With the intention to describe what are the consequences of harassment in the workplace in the emotions of women workers, she applied a content analysis for the subcategories and so an understanding of the emotions, the emotional consequences and the emotional regulation in tables 3, 4 and 5 (only the significant results of this study).

Table 3. Negative Emotions Presented

EMOTIONS			
1. Anger	E1, E2, E3, E4 ,E5, E6	10. Be on the Defensive	E2, E3
%	100	%	33.3
2. Fear	E1,E3,E5,E6	11. Worn	E3, E4
%	66.6	%	33.3
3. Hopelessness	E1,E2,E3,E4	12. Rechazo	E3
%	66.6	%	16.6
4. Frustration	E1,E2,E3,E6	13. Rejection	E3
%	66.6	%	16.6
5. Humiliation	E1,E3,E4	14. Hatred	E4
%	50	%	16.6
6. Sadness	E1, E5	15. Disappointment	E5
%	33.3	%	16.6
7. Devaluation	E1, E4	16. Grief	E5
%	33.3	%	16.6
8. Insecurity	E1, E6	17. Exclusion	E3
%	33.3	%	16.6
9. Incapable	E1, E4		
%	33.3		

The results show that the negative emotions present in the participants (Table 3) are: 1) Anger (100%), 2) fear, helplessness, frustration (66.6%) and 3) humiliation (50%). The main emotional consequences, in Table 4 are broken down mainly: 1) fear (100%), 2) personal insecurity (83.3%), 3) predisposition to harassment (66.6%), 4) distrust toward the head and motivation (50%) while the emotional repression, anger content, gastritis and colitis are reported in 33.3%.

Table 4. Emotional Consequences

EMOTIONAL CONSEQUENCES			
1. Fear %	E1, E2, E3, E4 ,E5, E6 100	11. Colitis %	E3, E4 33.3
2. Personal Insecurity %	E1,E2,E4,E5, E6 83.3	12. Facial Paralysis %	E5 16.6
3. Predisposition to Work Harassment %	E1,E2,E3,E4 66.6	13. Depression %	E1 16.6
4. Mistrust (toward the boss) %	E2,E3,E6 50	14. Anxiety %	E1 16.6
5. Low Motivation %	E3,E4,E6 50	15. Tension %	E5 16.6
6. Emotional Damage %	E1, E3 33.3	16. Stress %	E5 16.6
7. Emotional Repression %	E1, E3 33.3	17. Guilt %	E4 16.6
8. Anger Content %	E2, E6 33.3	18. Shame %	E1 16.6
9. Sensibility %	E2,E6 33.3	19. Associations of Profile Stalker %	E3 16.6
10. Gastritis %	E3, E4 33.3	20. Loss of Friendship %	E5 16.6

Source: Own elaboration.

Table 4 shows the main emotional consequences present in the interviewed, again being the fear (100%) the response with the highest percentage. The personal insecurity is another consequence to occur in 83%, and is mentioned in the third place a predisposition to be harassed in a 66.6%, that is to say, to return to this type of violence. The distrust toward the head and motivation are presented in a 50%. Psychosomatic diseases such as gastritis and colitis appear in 33.3%.

Table 5. Perspective to the Emotional Regulation

PERSPECTIVE TO THE EMOTIONAL REGULATION			
1. Emocional Confusion %	E1, E3, E4, E5 66.6	5. Mental Schok %	E1, E6 33.3
2. Repressed Anger %	E1,E2,E3,E4 66.6	6. Resentment %	E1 16.6
3. Sadness %	E1, E4,E5 50	7. Frustration %	E1 16.6
4. No Emotional Control %	E2, E6 33.3		

Source: Own elaboration.

In Table 5, the position of the interviewed before the emotional regulation reflects that the emotional turmoil and the repressed anger are experienced often violent situations in a 66.6%, while the sadness appears in a 50%. Not having emotional control, creates a state of mental shock in a 33.3%, given that the workers do not know how to respond to the attacks in their work.

Discussion

In the first instance, it is pointed out that the sample was small given that most of the people who suffer from harassment in the workplace are afraid to present their cases for fear of reprisals. However, the study shows interesting information to analyze the data, which was reinforced in the content analysis of the interviews with the workers in their workplace. On the other hand, the value of such research lies in the real events that describe the workers who are immersed in organizational environments, little motivators that indirectly influence in your personal, professional and labor. Despite the fact that there are measurement tools to assess the intensity and frequency of harassment in the workplace, little is known about its influence on emotions.

In this investigation it was found that when there is harassment in the workplace, the employees develop emotional consequences that leave a psychological damage on women workers. In other words, the consequences are expressed in emotions such as fear, in the personal image, in the predisposition to such violence at work again and, mainly due to the fact that emotions such as anger content generate psychosomatic diseases such as colitis, gastritis and in some extreme cases, the facial paralysis. On the other hand, there is a rupture in the quality of life of the worker, because in the short and long term will affect their social relationships, their family environment, their work performance will be in danger as fear and insecurity increase the frequency of errors, fueling the violent circle of harassment at work.

In the State of Puebla, it is still a new item to study the problems of harassment in the workplace in the emotions in both public and private institutions, although there have been great advances in the creation and modification of legislation to eradicate it and fight it. However, the main challenge for the organizations and the staff in human resources areas, is to make visible the psychosocial phenomena that occur within and affecting the industry to prevent diseases, while at the same time, qualitative studies that compare the information in real contexts, considering that the damage caused to the victims of harassment is irreparable.

Finally, the record-keeping system on labor demands still turns out to be biased since not all of the people who have a complaint of harassment in the workplace are registered in the databases by the lack of evidence, lack of credibility on the part of the authorities and follow up on cases of violence by specialized personnel. It is essential that institutions and non-governmental organizations protect the worker so that you can return in a healthy way to new working environments considering that the integrity of the human person must be present in all organizations.

The results obtained and described above indicate an urgent need to assess the damage to the emotions and the harassment generated in the health of the person. Proposals for intervention are a priority in public institutions in order to provide a follow-up to cases of violence presented to prevent disease, rates early, voluntary resignations, the leakage of talent or loss of employment.

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