

Causes and Solutions of Sexual Harassment in Campus and Workplace

Junjie Wang

Kuitun No.1 Senior High School, Kuitun, China

xingf@ldy.edu.rs

Abstract. The unequal distribution of power leads to the emergence of a superior subordinate relationship, which enables superiors to use improper means to threaten subordinates to do things they are unwilling to do. This includes "sexual harassment". In China, sexual harassment is quite common, but there are currently no very specific legal provisions regarding the topic of sexual harassment. Victims may also be afraid to report and expose it due to psychological fear and social pressure, making it difficult to eradicate the problem of sexual harassment. This article focuses on the issue of sexual harassment caused by unequal power, with a focus on both campus and workplace environments. Through two specific case studies, it argues that sexual harassment stems from the background of the incident itself, the perpetrator's privileged mentality, the victim's shame mentality, and social public opinion pressure. Through case analysis, it is found that filling the legal gaps related to sexual harassment, establishing relevant systems for campus enterprises, and avoiding the shame of victims are important. If these two methods are adopted, the problem of sexual harassment can be greatly eradicated.

Keywords: Unequal power; Sexual harassment; Defects in existing laws; Campus and Workplace.

1. Introduction

As the most widely discussed topic in recent years, "power" has brought some problems and also brought people thinking. As long as there is a superior subordinate relationship, there is unequal power. When this inequality is too frequent and one party has a special intention mentality, it will lead to disputes in the traditional sense.

People who use power correctly, through their own abilities, help those around them resolve disputes, safeguard legitimate rights and interests, and strive for positive development, steadily moving towards a "harmonious society". People who abuse power only satisfy their personal desires without considering the positive nature of power itself, frequently opening backdoors, harming those whose power has been violated, and also having a significant impact on public opinion.

The unequal distribution of power, gender stereotypes, and individual psychological differences have led to the widespread occurrence of sexual harassment in both workplace and campus environments.

Regarding sexual harassment in the workplace, regardless of the degree of sexual harassment, it creates a psychological shadow on employees in the workplace, causing them to fear their work environment and develop disgust towards the perpetrator. This not only affects their work efficiency and product output, resulting in the inability to receive the necessary salary benefits, but also affects the victim's normal life, and may seriously lead to psychological and physical illnesses.

For the campus environment, it is even more serious. Most students studying on campus are minors who lack the ability and experience to deal with social problems. At the same time, there are certain problems in communication with family members at this age (commonly known as adolescent rebellion psychology), and there is a lack of communication with the closest people. In addition, the inexplicable sense of shame makes it difficult to truly eradicate sexual harassment and protect the rights of victims. As the pillars of the country and the future of the motherland, students are subjected to psychological pressure caused by harassment, which prevents them from fully dedicating themselves to academic life and affects their normal development.

The survey results showed that 23.9% of the respondents reported witnessing or hearing that other employees in their unit had been sexually harassed, 19.8% of the respondents admitted to having been sexually harassed, and 5.3% of the respondents admitted to having sexually harassed others. Meanwhile, the survey results indicate that in actual sexual harassment, whether mild or severe, only 45.6% of harassers will explicitly warn the harasser, while as many as 54.4% of harassers choose to submit and “turn a blind eye” [1].

For the campus environment, the official has not released nationwide data on sexual harassment. However, multiple hot news events and student interpretations are sufficient to demonstrate that campus sexual harassment is equally common and the situation is even more severe. Most mentors cover up sexual harassment under the guise of “teacher-student romance”.

According to statistics, about 70% of respondents have experienced sexual harassment, with 40% of perpetrators being mentors [2].

Faced with such a severe social environment, official measures are extremely important. So far, there are no specific legal provisions in China regarding sexual harassment incidents. At the same time, the handling and disposal of sexual harassment issues also face difficulties in collecting and reporting evidence, cultural barriers, and victims' psychological shame, which make the handling of sexual harassment issues difficult. If the issue of sexual harassment is not properly addressed, more victims will emerge, which not only violates the legitimate rights and interests of victims, but also deepens the inequality of power, and the influence of gender stereotypes is difficult to eliminate, causing more serious social problems. This social problem not only involves “sexual harassment”, but also has a more serious impact on the perpetrators due to their dependence on power, which leads to the widespread existence of “privilegeism”. If power is placed outside the cage of the system and moral condemnation, it will escalate the problem and affect social security.

Therefore, this article focuses on this topic and selects one case of workplace sexual harassment and campus sexual harassment for analysis. It analyzes the background, motivation, perpetrator's perspective, victim's perspective, and social factors that led to the incident. By analyzing the phenomenon, it seeks to identify the essence of the problem and provides suggestions for solving the issue of sexual harassment.

2. Basic Information of the Case

2.1. A Case of Sexual Harassment in the Workplace

On July 21, 2024, Wang Di, a doctoral student of Renmin University of China, published an article on social media (microblog) to report her mentor Wang Guiyuan in real name.

She claimed that on May 21, 2022, Guiyuan sexually harassed and forcibly molested Wang Di, and demanded to have sexual intercourse with her. Due to Wang Di's refusal, Guiyuan retaliated against her in the following two years and threatened her cannot to graduate. As soon as the article was published, it received a strong response on the Internet. Renmin University of China immediately announced that it would set up a working group to investigate the matter seriously. On the second day of the school's statement, the investigation yielded results. On July 22nd, the school reported that the report was true, and the school expelled Wang Guiyuan from the party and revoked his professorial title.

2.2. A Sexual Harassment Case on College Campus

On July 6, 2023, the victim Hong went to Zhou's company to apply for a job. The next day, Zhou requested Hong to attend an interview at a designated location. At around 17:00 that day, Zhou asked Hong to drive to a hotel in the city to check in. After entering the room, Zhou hugged Hong and demanded that Hong have sexual intercourse with him, citing the reason of discussing work affairs, but was refused by Hong. Zhou threatened Hong based on his knowledge of Hong's family situation

and detailed address, claiming that he could prevent Hong from establishing himself in the industry. Hong, out of fear of his power, was forced to accept Zhou's lewd behavior such as kissing and touching his chest.

Through the unremitting efforts of the procuratorial and public security organs, the surveillance video and registration information of Zhou bringing Hong into the hotel were finally compared and analyzed. Because Zhou refused to confess, the procuratorial organs provided psychological counseling and urged Zhou to confess. Finally, Zhou was sentenced to six months in prison for the crime of forced indecency.

3. Specific Analysis of the Case

3.1. Reasons for Perpetrators of Sexual Harassment Cases

In the first college sexual harassment incident, the reason why Wang Guiyuan was able to sexually harass Wang Di is likely due to his psychological factors. He and Wang Di are in an unequal position of power, and compared to Wang Di, he has more academic authority. The awkwardness and discomfort of the victim can make Wang Guiyuan feel the power and control ability, thereby satisfying his power psychology. Moreover, Wang Guiyuan's subconscious gaming mentality is also one of the reasons. Harassment behavior is not only a result of curiosity seeking stimulation, but also one of the ways to prove that the perpetrator has the ability. During harassment, the victim's resistance may exacerbate the perpetrator's abnormal psychology, resulting in more serious consequences [3].

In the second workplace sexual harassment incident, Zhou, like Wang Guiyuan, engaged in sexual harassment towards Hong because Zhou had greater power, but Hong did not. When Zhou has no way to vent his sexual desires and his sexual control ability is low, in order to satisfy his own desires, he, as a person in power, will use his power to act impulsively [4]. Under the influence of various factors, impulsive behavior can transform into sexual harassment, thereby having a significant impact on the victim. In the workplace environment full of "power and wealth", perpetrators often define sexual harassment behavior simply through monetary transactions. When the perpetrator proposes sexual harassment but is rejected, they only consider it as a damage to the victim's self-esteem. Therefore, they will use "work environment" and "working conditions" to coerce and entice, intentionally retaliating against the victim [4]. Therefore, after Zhou threatened Hong, Hong was forced to agree to Zhou's sexual harassment behavior.

3.2. Self Factors of Victims in Sexual Harassment Cases

Without a doubt, the victim's handling of sexual harassment is also one of the factors that encourage the perpetrator to continue the harassment. If the victim and the perpetrator have the same level of power, when the victim is subjected to sexual harassment, they often directly refuse the perpetrator or use legal means to protect their rights, because these victims are not afraid of losing something. But precisely because this article discusses sexual harassment caused by power inequality, victims often fear the authority of the abuser and are afraid of academic, work, and personal harm from refusing the abuser's actions, so they are forced to agree to the abuser's behavior.

In the campus case, Wang Di clearly refused Wang Guiyuan's attempt to have sexual intercourse with her, and in this regard, Wang Di protected her personal safety very well. However, Wang Guiyuan claimed that he wanted to have sexual intercourse in May 2022, and Wang Di posted an article on social media to protect his rights in July 2024. During these two years, Wang Guiyuan still harassed Wang Di and threatened her that she would not be able to graduate smoothly, demanding that Wang Di have sex with him. Some victims worried that their educational process would be disrupted if their stories were made public [5]. Perhaps for this reason, Wang Di chose not to speak out for her rights for two years and only refused Wang Guiyuan's actions. As a student, worrying about academic issues is an important factor that victims of campus sexual harassment dare not report. Of course, it is also possible that Wang Guiyuan's behavior seriously disrupted Wang Di's approach to dealing with this

matter. Sexual harassment can have serious repercussions, from psychological distress to poor academic achievement [6]. Sexual harassment in educational institutions can also have an enormous detrimental effect on pupil performance, in particular, students who are sexually harassed report lower levels of academic satisfaction, and their views of teachers, involvement, and accomplishment are all adversely impacted [6].

The consequences of power inequality are more clearly reflected in the workplace. Due to the relationship between gender and class, sexual harassment in the workplace is inevitable [7]. In the workplace case, Zhou clearly made unreasonable demands and indicated that if Hong did not agree, Zhou would use his power to cause harm to Hong's family and herself. Hong was forced to agree to Zhou's sexual harassment behavior out of fear of losing his reputation in the industry and fearing that his family would be injured. This is also due to the fear of the victim, which causes the perpetrator to engage in sexual harassment towards the victim. As an employee, the fear of losing a job or the impact that an employer may have on employees in the industry is an important factor that makes victims of workplace sexual harassment hesitant to report.

There is another common situation that occurs, but it does not exist in this case, and some analysis should be made here. There is another common situation that occurs, but it does not exist in this case, and some analysis should be made here. In certain situations and circumstances, female subordinates may perceive the behavior of their male superiors as constituting sexual harassment, but the male superiors are not aware of it [7]. Perhaps it is due to female subordinates interpreting male superiors' behavior excessively or overprotecting themselves, or it may be due to male superiors' behavior having already crossed the line but their gender awareness being too low to notice. This situation needs to be analyzed in conjunction with specific cases.

3.3. Social Factors of Sexual Harassment Cases

Various social factors are also reasons for the occurrence of sexual harassment incidents.

Firstly, changes in the workplace or learning environment. Earlier studies have shown that sometimes drastic reforms implemented by the government can seriously affect employees, leading to social and psychological effects such as frustration, stress, and negative work environments. Conversely, this may increase the likelihood of serious phenomena such as workplace bullying and harassment [7]. Or, like the workplace case mentioned in this article, Hong has just changed her employer and is not familiar or familiar with the new company, which can lead to a certain fear of unfamiliar environments and prevent her from directly rejecting Zhou's sexual harassment behavior. Analogous to changes in the workplace, if a student suddenly changes their environment in the school they have been studying for a long time and transfers to another school to start learning, it will definitely take time to adapt to the new environment. This environment includes the natural campus environment and the humanistic group of teachers and classmates. If there is sexual harassment against transfer students at this time, the victims may be afraid due to unfamiliarity with the environment. Although the campus sexual harassment cases mentioned in this article do not fall into this category, an analysis is still needed.

Secondly, whether in the workplace or on campus, improper management by companies and schools can also lead to the occurrence of sexual harassment. When the perpetrator has too much power and dares to harass the victim recklessly, it is enough to prove that the management mechanism of the institution, including companies and schools, has significant problems. At the same time, with the socialization of work and learning, some communication has shifted from the workplace and campus to unregulated social places, which can lead to an increase in the probability of sexual harassment [8]. Moreover, the externalization of the relationship between companies and schools can blur the definition of responsibility and contribute to the occurrence of sexual harassment incidents. In this relationship, it is not just the relationship between employees and superiors, but also between students and professors, which may become the relationship between employees and the leadership of other companies, and between students and professors of other schools. If sexual harassment occurs in such

a relationship and the definition of responsibility is unclear, it will lead to the inability to reasonably resolve the sexual harassment incident.

4. Suggestions for Sexual Harassment Cases Due to Power Inequality

From an analysis perspective, in order to address the issue of sexual harassment in the workplace and campus environment, it is necessary to start from three perspectives: the perpetrator, the victim, and relevant institutions.

For perpetrators, it is important to strengthen moral education and provide legal education. Emphasize how the rights held by the perpetrator should be used correctly, clarify the boundaries of "sexual harassment" for the perpetrator, and impose severe punishment when the perpetrator commits a crime.

For victims, overcoming shame and fear of authority is crucial. At the same time, take good care of yourself. If you notice that the perpetrator intends to engage in sexual harassment, promptly use recordings, videos, or other means to preserve evidence for reporting and exposing.

Relevant institutions need to clarify disciplinary regulations. Promote a "zero tolerance" leadership policy for all forms of harassment, evaluate the effectiveness of implementation measures and actions in creating a fundamentally intolerant culture, and ensure that leaders take a strong stance against harassment [9]. At the same time, institutional leaders, including superiors and teachers, need to actively respond to reports from victims and conduct timely investigations to safeguard their legitimate rights and interests. This requires institutions to develop corresponding policies and encourage open communication, ensuring that every complaint is taken seriously and holding perpetrators accountable, regardless of whether they have authority within the company [10].

5. Conclusion

Through this article's discussion and other research, it is shown that sexual harassment caused by power inequality is widespread in today's society. The reasons for this phenomenon are not only the perpetrator's own power psychology, abnormal psychology, gaming psychology, etc., but also the victim's fear of power, fearing that their work and studies will be lost. Of course, there are also other external factors, such as changes in workplace and study environment policies or environments that lead to victims' fear, or incomplete disciplinary rules in institutions, which can promote sexual harassment behavior caused by unequal power. All sectors of society should pay more attention to such issues, improve corresponding laws and regulations, and enhance the moral exemplary sense of social members. The issue of sexual harassment is not only related to the loss of victims' rights, but also reflects whether there is "privilege ism" in a society, which concerns the legitimate rights and interests of every member of society. Properly addressing the issue of sexual harassment caused by power inequality, achieving social equality, and allowing members of society to enjoy legitimate rights and interests.

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