

# Sexual Harassment Cause Stress: It's Effects & Consequences

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**Abstract:** The problem of sexual harassment is increasingly "coming out of the closet". Companies are starting to realize that the problem is real; some managers are admitting that it could affect their staff, and more victims are starting to gather the courage to complain. And in terms of recent labor legislation, victims do have legal recourse. Everybody wants to work for making life more luxurious and financially secure. Men and women both are earning and doing well on their workplaces. Technologies changes are accepting. People are not afraid anymore from new changes in environment. Workplace is become very important part of life. Every organization is working on their human power and tries to make them more efficient in their work. Organizations provide good working condition, positive environment, supportive colleagues and giving good remuneration etc. These facilities are enough when workplace is full of good people. In this article I am trying to explain effects of stress, stress due to sexual harassment. Sexual harassment has been theorized as a stressor with consequences for the physical and mental health of its targets. Though social scientists have documented a negative association between sexual harassment and mental health, few longitudinal studies have investigated the association between sexual harassment and depressive symptoms. Today many companies are unprepared to deal with actual cases of sexual harassment and undertake adequate and fair investigation any allegations. They are also faced with challenge to answer.

## I. INTRODUCTION

There are two aspects of everything. Every time is not really happening so good way because there are few people make workplace so negative, scary and unhappy. One of the biggest problems now a day is sexual harassment. This is very annoying thing on workplace happen with any worker whether its men or with women. This kind of unexpected activity makes people's life miserable. Anything this indecent activity happen with someone on workplace, is not able to focus and think about work, and feeling disturb all the time.

Sexual harassment at workplace is big problem for women and it cause mental stress. Women not feel safe at workplace and sometime needy people not able to leave that face. This kind of things makes her weak and feeling under confidant. Workplace should very safe and positive. But this kind of harassment makes scary at workplace. There is always a feeling of fear in mind. That feeling of fear, under confidant and lack of locus of control make life full of stress.

Stress may be referred to as an unpleasant state of emotional and physiological arousal that people experience in situations

that they perceive as dangerous or threatening to their well-being. The word stress means different things to different people. Some people define stress as event or situations that cause them to feel tension, pressure, or negative emotions, such as anxiety and anger. Often people experience stress because of problems at work or in social relationships, such as poor evaluation by a supervisor or an argument with friend. Some people may be particularly vulnerable to stress in situations involving threat of failure or personal humiliation.

Stress can have both positive and negative effects. Stress is a normal, adaptive reaction to threat. Positive stress is good for person to motivate us to achieve and fulfill our goals on time. Positive stress helps improvement of work productivity, creative ideas and work with happy and positive feeling. But when positive stress is not there and negative stress takes place it become dangerous.

Sexual harassment is cause of negative stress. If not managed properly, stress can lead to serious problems. Ever since the opening of the Indian society has undergone a sea change with rising aspirations and breaking of stereotypes, especially with regards to evolution of women.

Sexual harassment is any unwanted sexual attention like touching, vulgar comment, looks, gesture, or asking a sexual favor to your subordinates. This happen many time everywhere with girls and women. Sometime it's really difficult to deal with this kind of behavior when you're going your workplace daily. Women should raise voice against this but lack of social support, sometime lack of even family support; she is not able to do that.

Indian law is available there for sexual harassment.

"Section 354(4): A man committing any physical contact advances involving unwelcome and explicit sexual overtures; or demanding or requesting sexual favors; or showing pornography against the will of a woman; or making sexually colored remarks, shall be guilty of the offence of sexual harassment. (Punishment: rigorous imprisonment for a term which may extend to three years.)"

## II. EFFECTS OF STRESS

We have noticed of the long-term health consequences of stress, those psychosomatic disorders that arose from prolonged exposure to stressful condition. Psychological consequences, such as tension, depression, irritability, anxiety,

low self-esteem, resentment, psychological fatigue, and neuroticism. Physiological consequences such as aggressive behavior, high blood pressure, extra sugar level, migraine, and including fearful behavior. Stress involves physiological and psychological responses to excessive and usually unpleasant stimulation and to threaten events in the environment.

### *1. Psychological effects of Stress*

We have described several ways in which excessive work harmful to your health. Stress related diseases are increasing day by day at work and family both. Stress effects can be dividing in two types psychological and physiological. Psychological effects are related to mental health. Few stressors are describing below.

#### *1. Burnout*

Burnout is frequently associated with people whose jobs demand close relationships with other under tension-filled circumstances. The dangerous part of burnout is that it is contagious. A highly cynical and pessimistic burnout victim can quickly transform an entire group into burnouts. It is therefore, important to put the fires early.

Burnout is alarming sounding word identifies a dramatic moment which variably occurs without warning and is instant. It is nature's way of forcing us to stop before something more terminal might occur. Horrible though it obviously feels, it is therefore a valuable and essential event of self-preservation. Most people will know of relation, colleague or friend who has experienced burnout. The victim probably didn't see it coming, but did anyone else?

Other significant links are that all three said they didn't see it coming and it took them by surprise, but colleagues could see that things were not right yet chose to say nothing to avoid embarrassment enlightenment. As about stress is expanding, hopefully the taboo factor is lessening and more people will get their heads out of sand. Managers especially should acknowledge their duty of care responsibility in the matter and provide valuable guidance.

#### *2. Depression and Anxiety*

Many women prefer to work outside the home because it gives them a greater sense of life satisfaction. For other women, such as those who run single-parent households, employment is not an option—it is a necessity. Compared with men, women are frequently given jobs with less autonomy or creativity, which decreases their level of job satisfaction. Women may also have more difficulty being accepted in the workplace because of hierarchical structures preferring men. Documentation repeatedly shows that women's salaries are lower than those of men in comparable positions; women tend to be paid less even when performing the same job as a man.

An interesting twist on such findings was provided by a study of lung cancer in 224 men and women. Lung cancer is a relatively easy cancer for personality researchers to study

because most victims are dead within in a year or two. This particular study followed patients who had been diagnosed only within the past few months. As expected on the basis of biological understanding of lung cancer, most patients had died by the end of one year. As expected on the basis of psychological understanding of disease susceptibility, those patients with a served (as opposed to outgoing) personality were more likely to be dead. The twist was that also more likely to die were who had a personality that was either much more sober or much more enthusiastic than average (Stavraky, 1998). Just as blatant denial seems unhealthy, so too is excessive emotionally.

These studies do not necessarily allow a simple inference that personality cause cancer. In the first place the associations are quite weak. Many people with emotional disturbance do not get cancer, and many people get with cancer do not have unusual personalities. Second personality associated with a multitude of behavior patterns, bodily reaction patterns, and social circumstances, any of which may be routes by which cancer is more likely to take hold and progress. On the other hand, this is also true of so-called traditional risk factors. Many of us know a person in his or her sixties who eats fatty foods, smoke cigarettes, is overweight, and never exercise. Why is this person still alive? For unknown reasons, some people beat the odds. Many people who smoke cigarettes do get lung cancer, and not everyone with lung cancer smoked (or smokes). In other words for many lives – threatening diseases, the risk factors are neither necessary nor sufficient causes. This unsettling state of affairs makes exacts prediction impossible it does not make associations wrong or not worth knowing. These all are first reaction to stress in form of depression.

#### *3. Frustration*

Frustration is a result of a motivation (drive) being blocked to prevent one from reaching a goal if you are trying to finish a report by quitting time in the afternoon, and or interference after another develops to require your time, then by the middle of the afternoon, when you see that you goal for the day may not be reached, you are likely to become frustrated. You may become irritable, develop an uneasy feeling in your stomach, or have other reaction. These reactions to frustration are known as defense mechanism, because you are trying to defend yourself from the psychological effects of the blocked goal. The example given is merely a one-day frustration that probably will overcome tomorrow, but the situation is more serious when there is a long-run such as blocked opportunity for promotion. Then you have to live with the frustration day after day. It begins to build emotional disorders that interfere with you ability to function effectively.

In psychology, frustration is common emotional response to opposition. Related to anger, annoyance and disappointments arises from the perceive resistance to the fulfillment of the individual's will or goal and is likely to increase when a will or goal is denied or blocked.

#### 4. Negative thinking

If there is no positive environment at home and work, then you can't do anything with happy mood. There are always negative aspects in mind to do something and not getting good result. Sexual harassment is one bad thing when victim always is not feeling safe and secure. There is no motivation to do anything. Negativity disturbs all minds and affects body as well.

#### 5. Emotional breakdown /emotional well-being

Sexual harassment can jeopardize the victim's emotional and mental health. It can lead to the loss of self-esteem and it may even compromise personal relationships. Sexual harassment in the workplace can cause significant stress and anxiety. An employment harassment lawyer is also likely to work with clients who have suffered from long-term clinical depression as a result of sexual harassment.

Uncomfortable and illegal situations are always going to cause an increase in stress. No therapist in the world can remove this from you or make it go away. But, that doesn't mean it didn't happen or that it is not real. Sexual harassment is unfortunately a common occurrence in the workplace. It can take on the form of verbal or physical conduct. When it occurs, it is difficult to experience, and it is important to learn the ways to effectively deal with it. People who feel stress a lot because of sexual harassment, sometime they commit crime like suicide.

#### 6. Self-sufficiency

Willing to do something new and challenging themselves with new situations makes you more efficient for your work. Self efficiency describes your ability to handle stressful situation. High level of self efficiency helps to decrease negative stress. They motivated by new stress situation and taking challenge happily. Your self-efficacy is your belief in your own effectiveness as a person, both generally in terms of managing your life, and specifically with regard to competently dealing with individual tasks.

#### 7. Giving up

What happens when a person loses all control and 'gives up'? Sexual harassment is one of those situations, when person become emotionally breakdown. There is no hope in and positivity person start giving up and stop trying. This is one of bad situation which person cannot control the wrong behavior of people. Very often, that individual learns to helpless. That is, he or she will not make any efforts at controlling his or her surroundings, even when subsequently placed in a controllable environment. Victim who have faced that situation, feels fear and nervous. There is no option to do work well on same place they work before, so they decided to quit the job and given up that bad situation.

#### 8. Lack of Confidence

Something happens suddenly which we never imagine especially in bad way, on that moment we lose confidence and getting shocked by that. What is happening right now? This disturbs our routine life. Sexual harassment is that situation which takes not a second for losing confidence in ourselves. This is not necessarily that every person is strong and take a stand for this illegal thing, few people are not that much brave. They deal with this situation like quit job, or change their departments or take transfer. But these situations not become same confident person you are.

#### 9. Sociability

Although some theories of psychological factors and health generally predict effect of sociability, few researches found no evidence that the personality trait of sociability or other elements of extroversion are strongly related to health and longevity. Rather, the locus of health-relevant effects seems to be centered in such traits as impulsivity, egocentrism, tough mindedness, and undependability. People restricted themselves when they face unacceptable thing like sexual harassment. They ignore social events whether it's in organization or in personal life. They have fear of something and scare to go outside so they stop attending these events till they are not able to cope up the situation.

#### 10. Cheerfulness

Another interesting finding concerned cheerfulness. When there is no happiness, kind of fear at work due to sexual harassment, unpleasant mind and behavior then how can that make a person cheerful. So if you are not happy with your own behavior from inside, you are not able to give your 100% at work and home both.

### II. Physiological effects of Stress

Mental health problems create physical problems too. If you are not willing to do something it affects your body automatically. There are a lot of changes in your body due to stress. Sexual harassment is annoying illegal activity it affects your mind, and body both. When mind and heart do not function well, then body is also getting dull and tired easily. Some of us feel stress every time when we have something new happen around at workplace and home both. Stress involves psychological and physiological responses to excessive and usually unpleasant stimulation and to threaten events in environments.

Dramatic physiological changes occur during stress. Adrenaline, released from the adrenal glands, speed up all bodily functions.

#### 1. Blood pressure

High stress level increases blood pressure. Blood pressure rises, high rate increases and extra sugar is released into the blood streams. The increased blood circulations bring additional energy to the brain and muscles, making the person stronger and more alert to cope with the threat. A stressful situation mobilizes and directs one's energy, boosting beyond

it normal level. With the excess energy of this so-called 'fight-or-flight' response, an organism will either fight the source of the stress or flee from it.

## 2. Chronic stress

Chronic stress destroys bodies, mind and lives. It wreaks havoc through long-term attrition. It's the stress of poverty, dysfunctional families, of being trapped in unhappy marriage, or in a despised job or career. It's the stress that the never-ending troubles. Chronic stress comes when a person never sees a way out of miserable situation. It's the stress unrelenting demands and pressures for seemingly interminable periods of time. With no hope, the individual gives up searching for solution. Chronic stress kills through suicide, violence, heart attack, stroke, and perhaps, even cancer. This is high level of stress, which not easy to manage.

## 3. Immune Systems

Stress stimulates the immune system, which can be a plus for immediate situations. This stimulation can help you avoid infections and heal wounds. But over time, stress hormones will weaken your immune system and reduce your body's response to foreign invaders. People under chronic stress are more susceptible to viral illnesses like the flu and common cold, as well as different kind of infections. Stress can also increase the time it takes you to recover an illness or injuries.

## 4. Change of behavior

If you are not happy with something it changes your behavior. When you are not able to share few things with anyone like sexual harassment it is really difficult to handle the same behavior. Physical abuse and verbal abuse is common behavior, feeling tired early, these all are symptoms of stress. You feel nervous to do something, sweating a lot, feeling uneasy, and so many changes people can noticed when you stressed. It is not necessary that only women can harass by colleges, in big cities sometime this unexpected activity happen with man too. Matter of job he is not able to take decision to leave job or continue on job, and he is not share this thing with someone, so man may be start bad habits like smoking, alcohol, drugs, and start abuse verbally and physically.

## 5. Other physical affects

There are more physical affects on person who feel a lot of stress. Aches, pain, nausea, dizziness, rapid heartbeat, frequent colds, poor judgment, constant worrying, anxious or racing thoughts, become short temper and neglecting people.

This reaction is pure stress and is a result of a cascade of hormones that starts as soon as your brain realizes that a demand is being made on your body.

These physiological effects of stress are meant to be short term. Once the danger passes, the body should return to its state of homeostasis, the state of internal equilibrium when all the body systems function smoothly and are balanced.

## III. CONSEQUENCES OF STRESS

Stress reveals itself in a number of ways. When eustress is experienced, the result is usually improved job performance which is self-rewarding to an extent, propelling the individual to do better in future. Distress experienced by individuals has negative consequences for them their families and for organization they serve. Sexual harassment creates stress in negative sense and its consequences are affecting to person itself, to family and the organization where he or she works.

### 1. Consequences for the individual

The impact of distress on individuals has subjective, cognitive, physiological, behavioral and health facets to it. The subjective or intrapersonal effects of stress are feeling of anxiety, boredom, apathy, nervousness depression, fatigue, anger, irritability, and sometime aggressive behaviors on the part of the individual experiencing the stress. The cognitive effects include poor concentration, short attention span, mental blocks, and inability to make decisions. The physiological effect can be seen in increased heart and pulse rate, high blood pressure, dryness of throat, and excessive sweating. The behavioral consequences are manifest in such things as accident proneness, drinking, excessive eating, smoking, nervous laughter, impulsive behaviors, depression and withdrawals behaviors. The manifest health effects could be stomach disorders, asthma, eczema, and other psychosomatic disorders. In addition, the mental health i.e., the ability to function effectively in one's daily life will also decline as excessive stress is experienced.

### 2. Consequences for the family

Distress which is handled by individual in dysfunctional ways, such as reasoning to drinking or withdrawal behaviors, will have an adverse effect on home life. Spouse abuse, child abuse, alienation from family members, and even divorce could result from dysfunctional coping mechanisms.

Stressors in steadily increasing number of dual-career families, where both spouse pursue career which demand a lot of personal commitment from them (both to their jobs and to the family), are varied in nature. The stresses experienced by the couple stem from role overload since both partners have managed their careers as well as help the family. Additional stresses are experienced while handling the personal, social, and cultural dilemmas of balancing work family, discharging parenting responsibilities, handling competition at the workplace and within the family, and being an involved member of extended family. For a complete discussion on the stresses experienced in dual-career families and effective coping strategies for dual career spouses, refer to Sekaran (1986).

### 3. Consequences to Organizations

The organization effects of employees stress are many. The adverse consequences include low performance and productivity, high rates of absenteeism and turnover, lost



customers because of poor worker attitudes, increased alienation of the worker from the job, and even destructive and aggressive behaviors resulting in strikes and sabotage. The stresses experienced by employees who take on critical and are responsible for public safety can sometimes be detrimental to the well being of the constituents served. For instance, the stresses experienced by a train driver or railway guard, or an air pilot, navigator, or air traffic controller can result in several hundred lost lives. Needless to say that the costs of employee stress to the organization in term of lost profits, declining assets, bad image projection, poor reputation and loss of future business are enormous.

#### IV. SUMMARY

The research found that men and women self-esteem affected by work stress, whereas depression was more affected by family. Sexual harassment is one of the most emerging problems on workplace. This illegal and indecent activity gives emotional breakdown to victim. It is really important to make our employee secure at workplace and always feel positive. If they are not happy even in that work they used to be happy, it affects their psychological and physiological well-being. Mind and body both are affected by stress due to sexual harassment. This is really important for every organization to give good environment and hired good people. If anything happen regarding to sexual harassment like any favor, unwanted touch, vulgar comment and wrong gesture, person should raise her/his voice against this. Employee can complain in their higher authority and tell about this. They can take action to avoid this kind of indecent activity in their

office. People can complain in police and take help of Indian law against sexual harassment. These right actions can help victim to get back to work and positive environment. We avoid bad consequences and get something good. Lack of education and gender equality is also creating this kind of bad environment. To reduce these kinds of thing people should hire educated, well manner people and with good body language towards colleagues. Even gender equality behave is also important to organization. Top level management start program about education, gender equality and create good environment in organization.

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