Verbal Harassment of Women at Workplaces of Kandahar City, Afghanistan

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Abstract: Since decades, verbal harassment of women is a concerning topic throughout the world. Also in Afghanistan, women employees are faced with verbal harassment at workplaces. This study is conducted to examine the presence of verbal harassment of women and its kinds at workplaces of Kandahar city, Afghanistan. In order to discover the presence of verbal harassment, a quantitative approach, snowball, and purposive method, in particular,were employed and the data was gathered through the questionnaire from a sample of 120 respondents of governmental and private sectors. The questionnaires are distributed equally to both sectors having both male and female employees. The results, as the data was analyzed using Statistical SPSS to test the hypothesis and the results revealed the presence of verbal harassment and its kinds at 42.5% at workplaces in Kandahar city. Findings accept two objectives of the study and one hypothesis out of three hypotheses. Overall, verbal harassment of women at workplace in Kandahar city is under 50%, but it is a confusable phenomenon.

Keywords: harassment, sexual, verbal, workplace, Kandahar

I. INTRODUCTION

Men and women are complementary of each other in a society and both have equal rights in all their life privileges, but most of the times one of these genders create the environment for discrimination and harassment. As the historical documents determine male domination and activities in daily life, so in most era, male domination create the environment for the harassment of women. Women's harassment is a global phenomenon that exists in all countries whether they are developed, developing or underdeveloped.

Scholars all over the world including Asian countries are considering this phenomenon, especially in developing and under-developing countries. Harassment, specifically sexual harassment, and its main type, verbal harassment is a discussable issue in current decade. The ILO (International Labor Organization) reports, sexual harassment is an absolutely clear means of sexual

discrimination which is purely on the basis of gender, which also includes unequal powers given to men and women (Chawla, 2016).

Also, U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (1999) defines sexual harassment as any form of uninvited sexual attention that either explicitly or implicitly becomes a condition of one's work. The European Commission's (EC) code of practice defines sexual harassment as conduct affecting the dignity of women and men at work (Rena, 2008).

Verbal harassment is an offensive and obvious form of sexual harassment that takes shape by sending email, slurs, name-calling, comments, jokes and requesting frequent sexual dates. It is an undesired compliment of sexual nature. In Wise Greek web site, verbal harassment is defined as language that is directed at another person causing that person harm, typically in an emotional or psychological sense. Calling a person names, making him or her feel useless, or otherwise diminishing a person's self-worth can all be forms of verbal harassment. This type of harassment is recognized as a serious offense, but unlike physical harassment, it is very difficult to collect evidence that attests to the existence of verbal abuse. Recording the abuse or finding witnesses may be the only solution to the problem if a verbal harassment case must be pursued (Para- 1). Making sexual comments or innuendos, telling sexual jokes, or asking about sexual fantasies, making insults based on a person's sex or rating their sexuality turning work discussions to sexual topics, requests for sexual favors are often related to promotion (Kumar, 2016). Verbal harassment is a form of violence which takes shape in different places like in public sphere, street, home, and workplace. Verbal harassment at workplace is verbal aggression which takes shape by men on other men or women. Most of the times, this type of harassment is done by men on women in working area. Verbal harassment at work as Sherman (2018) identified ranges from racist jokes to threats (sleep with me or you are fired).

Afghanistan, an Asian country where the phenomenon of starving is high, however, official record show a low stage as it is a hidden phenomenon that majority of the women workers faced and did not complain formally because of social, economic and cultural reasons. According to Afghan Analytical Network (2015), a comprehensive survey specifically focusing on sexual harassment of women was carried out by the women and children's legal research foundation based in Afghanistan interviewed 346 women from Kabul, Badakhshan, Herat, Balkh, Nangarahar, Kandahar and Kapisa. 90 % of the women interviewed said

that they faced harassment at least once in public spaces, 87 % experienced it in their workplace and 91 % experienced in educational institution. A smaller survey, carried by the Youth Development Association (2016) focused on Daykundi province, showed the occurrence of sexual harassment at an alarming rate of over 80 % of the 115 women and girls interviewed and different forms of harassments are reported as well. In this survey, the proportion of verbal harassment is substantially high among other types (Qaane, 2017).

Kandahar, as a second largest city of Afghanistan also suffers from women verbal harassment at working areas where most of the opinions and customs depend on blind beliefs and cultural framework plays a key role in political and social decisions of the country. From past up to now, men are dominant in working environment. Men play an important role in social, economic and cultural issues of the society. The role of women in society, however, especially in an administration is not much purer. Since few decades, especially after 2001 when the Taliban regime collapsed and the new government established with the support of United Nations and alliance countries, the role of the women in administrations increased and took part in most of the government decisions. In addition, their fundamental rights developed and got the approval to get secondary and higher education including working opportunities. However, the new phenomenon which prevents women from their fundamental rights like education and working, is sexual and verbal harassment at working area. Currently, it is a big challenge for women and their family that most of the times while women work or want to go to their work, they face with verbal harassment. Usually, the families do not permit their female members to work and get education because of harassment. In this sense, it is essential to seek out the existence, percentage and cause of this phenomenon in Kandahar, Afghanistan. To be more precise, the objectives and hypotheses that guide this study are as follow:

Objectives of the study:

- The main objectives of the study are:

  o To know whether verbal harassment exists at workplace of Kandahar city, Afghanistan.

  o Which types of verbal harassment is more while women work or want to go to work.

Main Question:

- Does the verbal harassment of women exist at work places in Kandahar city?

Hypothesis:

- Women's verbal harassment is in high level at workplace of Kandahar city.

- Women's verbal harassment existing at workplace of Kandahar city, Afghanistan but in low level.

- Women verbal harassment is in not exist in at workplace of Kandahar city, Afghanistan.

II.   Literature of Review

Industrial, social and political revolution provided privileges to women in different segments of the society. Beside these privileges, some obstacles are also generated such as physical and verbal harassment. Verbal harassment is one of the types of sexual harassment and sexual harassment itself is an old concept (Thornton, 2002), which is acknowledged as a socio-legal phenomenon in recent times, coming to the limelight partly due to the rise of radical feminist movements sprouting in the US (MacKinnon, 1979). Also, sexual harassment began to be the focus of sustained research on vocational behaviors by the later 1980s (Fitzgerald, et al., 1988; Fitzgerald & Shullman, 1993).According to McCann (2005), when the women entered to the working environment to become financially stable and taking fundamental rights, the graph of sexual harassment increased.

The author stated that harassment, specifically sexual harassment and its important type verbal harassment has been recognized and addressed at international level by various organizations including the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, International Labor Organization, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, and the European Union. Moreover, to confront the challenge, associations and organizations have formulated policies and introduced mutually agreed clauses, provided direction to abide by the laws, organized training, and introduced procedures with regards to filling sexual harassment complaints (McCann, 2005). This phenomenon has received an increased attention over the past decade. For example, workplace verbal harassment, or bullying.

The studies and researches show that women movements established in 19 century in Afghanistan to facilitate the rights of education, freedom and employment in Afghan society. Soraya Tarzi, Hummaira (wife of King Zahir Shah) and Anahita Ratibzada (the head of Afghanistan democratic women movement) are the best examples who struggled for the enhancement of women social status. Particularly, the significance Afghan women gained started in 2001 while the United Nations and U.S entered Afghanistan struggling with terrorism and making capacity building of human sources. As the US took over, different jobs, educational, vocational and constructive opportunities established. Women and men both started working outside of their homes and social and economic status increased, but many new obstacles generated. Precisely, cultural, social and home honor did not permit to the victims specifically women for revealing their problems. Verbal harassment, for example, existed for decades in Afghanistan, but because of different reasons women employees silently endure.

In August 2009, the Afghan government presented a law called EVAW (Elimination of Violence against Women) for preventing and controlling all types of harassments and violence. This law represented a landmark in the adoption of legislation addressing violence against women in Afghanistan. Furthermore, the law has established a list of abuse against women that constitute crimes, accompanies with specific sentences for perpetrators. Despite the establishment of EVAW units at the Attorney General Office in various provinces and the rule out of a variety of training in support of the governmental bodies by international organizations, the law still experiences major obstacles in its implementation and attempts of further revision and rejection. In 2016, the parliamentary Judicial Commission continued their efforts to amend the law to remove provisions regulating the minimum age of marriage, prescribing punishments for domestic assault, and providing shelters for women.

As first points of contact, the Afghan National Police (ANP) and prosecutors play a key role in the protection of women victims of violence and in setting a course for proper application of the EVAW law. Later, the AIHRC (Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission) has accused the ANP of not only lacking support for women's access to justice, but actually committing abuses against women. The June 2013 report from the AIHRC found that policemen committed nearly 15% of honor killings and sexual assaults recorded between 2011 and 2013. Similar attitudes were also shared by the workshop participants as they tended to describe police as corrupt, discriminating against women, and being unaware of women's rights (Medica, 2017).

However, according to Qaane (2017), different laws, departments and NGOs work for eradicating verbal and all types of harassment but still results from researches declare that there is very little official record found of harassment against women in Afghanistan. Harassment, the author further stated that whether it occurs within the family or educational institutions, workplace or the public sphere is a little talked about phenomenon. Similarly, the same problem over the past several years is going on in Kandahar province. The graph of verbal harassment is high, while it is quietly endured by the victim of this phenomenon. The author also highlighted that there are very few efforts made for the prevention of this starving phenomenon.

With regards to harassment, numerous studies have attempted to explain harassment and its kinds. A large number of those studies conclude that overall the harassment exists and majority of the victims quietly bear this particular phenomenon. The results of some of these studies are below:

Qaane (2017) in Afghan Analysts Network established an article under the title of "Harassment of Women in Afghanistan: The objective of the article was to figure out the presence of harassment and its types in Afghanistan. The analyzed data in this article determined 24.7% verbal Harassment, 22.7% phone calls, 13.9 % staring at women and girls, 10.3% street harassment, 9.3% bothering and disturbance and 7.2% is workplace harassment (touching, staking etc.). This study proves that verbal harassment and workplace harassment exist, but all the victims silently endured and did not claim against this inequality. The author of the article emphasizes on pen cod implementing for the proprietors and reducing this social fact, and makes the government and people to perform their human responsibility.

Mamarui, Getachewi & Yasmin (2015) conducted a study exploring psychological distress among Jimma University female students. The objective of this study was to identify the rate of sexual harassment and its different forms like physical, verbal, and non-verbal and psychological distress among female student. Overall, 385 females were asked and the majority of the participants were within the age range of 20-25. The outcomes of this research revealed that harassment such as physical, verbal and nonverbal exist. The prevalence of various forms of sexual harassment was higher and strongly associated with psychological distress. Important implications for university officials and policymakers including creating harassment-free

university have been drawn. Otherwise, female students tend to dropout and their academic achievements suffer a lot as a result of psychological distress, and the government's effort for realizing the gender parity in education would be compromised.

III. Theoretical Background

Research is closely based on theory and the theory presents a conceptual model for research. Theory is a set of system of ideas intended to explain something, particularly one based on general principles independent of the thing to be explained. Life experiences of youth in present societies evolved significantly. The changing effect on their personality and brought big changes in their relationship with their friends, family and many other sections and keep them as independent in all of their activities. Several of these activities direct the youths for enhancing knowledge, work experiences, flexible employment practices and making social policies. As a result of these changes, youths have to negotiate uncertainties with their parents which are unknown. Since this study is concerned with harassment, the following social theory is closely related to harassment.
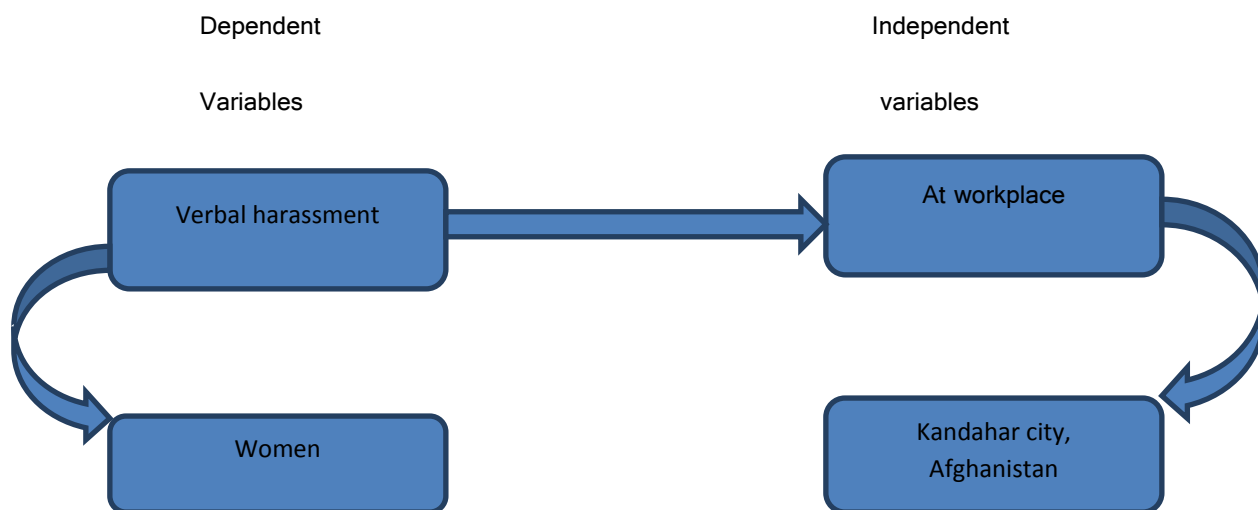
While Islam (2005, p. 117) focuses on social dominance theory formulated by Jim Sidanjus and Felicia Partto which is more concerned with social and intergroup relations. According to the author, it focuses on how people develop hierarchy supporting belief structures as a support for institutional dominance. With regards to this theory, the author further added that it involves studies of who is likely to hold such attitudes, how they come to do so, and what are the ramifications for thoughts and actions. In addition to this observation, all human societies are interested to be structured as systems for group-based social hierarchies. Also, Jim and Partto (2000) determined two kinds of social hierarchy such as individual-based social hierarchy and group-based hierarchy. The prior is related to individual characteristics as they enjoy great prestige, wealth or power with regards to their achievements and the latter refers to social power, privilege individual possesses because of particular social groups such as race, religion, tribe, or ethnic group. Furthermore, social hierarchy consists system namely gender system, which men have unequal social or political power over women.

Moreover, in relation to harassment, social dominance orientation theory is summarized as a measure of individual difference in levels of group-based discrimination. In this theory, men are higher in representing military, law and finance than women representing attenuating roles such as social work and charity work (Pratto and Stewart, 2001). In the same manner, one's level

of social dominant orientation, according to Sidanius and Pratto (2000), depends on one's gender where the males will have significantly higher average levels social dominance orientation than females have. Overall, social dominance theory and social dominance orientation point out that normative institutional discrimination and ideology play an important role in group oppression. Lastly, social dominance theory analyzes that least oppressive type of peace that societies can realize would result from reducing social inequality and from recognizing the rights of all groups to be empowered to obtain what they need.

In addition to harassment, legitimizing myths are only known within a society that includes values, beliefs, stereotypes and ideologies that provide a moral and intellectual justification for social practices for influencing groups. Legitimizing myths is the ideology of Marx and Durhenim's notion of collective representations. The theory of social dominance identifies the function of legitimizing myths in two broad functional types such as hierarchy-enhancing legitimizing myths and hierarchy-attenuating legitimizing. The prior helps maintain or increase group-based inequality and promote egalitarian relations among social groups. This kind of myths includes universal rights of myth, multiculturalism, socialism and Christian brotherhood. Additionally, legitimizing myths have a direct relationship with issues of human rights and social justice. By offering these rights to all people, these legitimizing myths argue for a reduction of the disparities that exist between social groups in their access to resources, power and legitimacy (Pratto and Stewart, 2011).

Conceptual framework:

IV.   Methodology

This study investigated the existence of harassment against women and its kinds in Kandahar, Afghanistan. According to Fraenkel, Wallen & Hyun (2016), in a survey method, the researcher collects information from a large group of participants through their responses to the questionnaire items. The authors added that quantitative study essentially tries to explain the problem using numbers and attempts to generalize the results of the study to a larger population.

- Sample:

The available respondents were all female workers from private and governmental sectors which were selected purposively because in line with this, an appropriate sampling technique should be purposeful and it should be based on the assumption that researcher wants to discover, understand and gain insight (Kassing, 2011). In governmental sector, 60 questionnaires were distributed to Mirwais Hospital of Kandahar province, Women School, Agriculture department, Women affairs directorate and Kandahar radio-television department. In private sector, 60 questionnaires were distributed to save the children organization in Kandahar city, promote (NGO), private radios.

- Research Design and instrument:

This is a quantitative study which collected data through a questionnaire. A questionnaire is a well-established tool within social science research for obtaining data on participant social characteristic, present and past behavior, standards of behavior or attitude and their belief and reasons for action with respect to the topic under investigation (Blumer, 2004cited in Bird, 2009).Before the questionnaire was distributed, the researcher consulted with experienced Ph.D. holder for constructive feedback and comments in terms of context, content, structure, and to validate and ensure that the questions included in the questionnaire covered all features of the research and its objectives.The

questionnaires were submitted to the respondents directly by the researcher and all the doubts are explained to the

respondents. The questionnaire had different sections related to verbal harassment.

V.   Data Analysis and Result:

This part presents the result collected from the participants. The entire participants were responsible for answering the oriented

question which is given by the researcher.

	Your Boss/co-worker/subordinate/client	Never	Once	A few time	Very frequently	Total
1	Told any dirty joke to you	82	16	14	8	120
		68.3%	13.3%	11.7%	6.7%	100%
2	Made comment on your figure	78	13	19	10	120
		65%	10.8%	15.8%	8.4%	100%
3	Stared at you from head to toe with dirty look	75	18	16	11	120
		62.5%	15%	13.3%	9.2%	100%
4	Tried to make you site with him on lame excuses	92	19	8	1	120
		76.3%	15.8%	6.7%	0.8%	100
5	Tried to talk about your or his sexual life	95	12	9	4	120
		79.2 %	10.0 %	7.5 %	3.3 %	100%

Table − 1: Collected data from different departments of Kandahar city

Table -1 illustrates the collected data from different departments of Kandahar city, Afghanistan. From the above 5 questions

68.3%, 65%, 62.5% 76.3% and 79.2% of the responses seem that respondents never faced with dirty joke, comment dirty look,

lame excuse and talk about sexual life. However, 31,7%, 53%, 37.5%, 23.7%, and 20,8% of the responses present that

respondents faced once, a few time and very frequently in each status of the question.

No	Boss/co-worker/subordinate/client	Never	Once	A few time	Very frequently	Total
6	Admired your dress or makeup	89 74.2 %	12 10.5 %	7 5.8 %	9 7.5 %	120 100%
7	Hummed filthy songs in your presence.	89 74.2 %	20 16.6 %	6 5.0 %	5 4.2 %	120 100%
8	Obnoxious calls to you on the telephone	83 69.2 %	14 11.7 %	15 12.4 %	8 6.7%	120 100%
9	Took interest in your personal life with the intention that you might start responding favorable to him.	78 65.0 %	14 11.7 %	15 12.5 %	13 10.8 %	120 100%

Table − 2: collected data from different administrations of Kandahar city

Table -2 explain the collected data from different administrations of Kandahar city, Afghanistan. From the above 4 question

74.2%, 74.2%, 69.2% and 65% of the respondents declared that they never faced with admiring makeup, hummed filthy song,

No	Verbal harassment	Agree	Disagree	Undecided	Strongly Disagree	Total
25	Verbal harassment is very common in Kandahar Administration.	51 42.5 %	35 29.2 %	26 21.6 %	8 6.7 %	120 100%

obnoxious, took interest in your personal life, but 23.3%, 25,8%, 30.8%, and 3,8% of the respondents stated that they faced

once, a few time and very frequently in each status of the question.

Table-3: specific question related to verbal harassment at Kandahar workplaces and administrations

Table – 3 is a specific question related to verbal harassment at Kandahar workplaces and administrations. The above table

shows that42.5% verbal harassment exists in Kandahar province. 29.2 % of the respondents disagreed and believed that it does

not exist. 21.6 % of the respondents had no idea regarding verbal harassments. Lastly, 6.7 of the respondents strongly

disagreed with verbal harassment at workplace of Kandahar city, Afghanistan.

HYPOTHESIS -1: Women's verbal harassment is in high level at workplace of Kandahar province.

- o Due to percentages and results in the above tables, this describes that verbal harassment of

  women in Kandahar city is not in high level. Therefore, it directs us that this hypothesis is rejected.

HYPOTHESIS – 2: Women's verbal harassment existing at workplace of Kandahar city, Afghanistan, but in low level.

- From percentages and results in above tables, we can infer that verbal harassment of women in Kandahar

  city exists but in low level. Thus, the achieved data directs us that there is the existence of verbal

  harassment.

HYPOTHESIS -3: Women verbal harassment does not exist in aworkplace of Kandahar city, Afghanistan.

- To determine women verbal harassment does not exist in Kandahar city, the percentages are drawn. This

  can be concluded that presence of verbal harassment of women at workplace of Kandahar city exists. Due

  to this consideration, the hypothesis is rejected.

VI. DISCUSSION

This study investigated whether or not the participants of this study faced any discourteous behaviors such as dirty jokes, dirty

looks, lame excuses, or talk about one's sexual life. The findings of this research indicate that the majority of the participants

never encountered with any of the above behaviors, whereas a low percentage of the participants revealed that they once, few times and frequently faced such kind of harassments. Meanwhile, this result is different from a previous study which reported a case that a senior male staff member who was famous for sharing ill-intentioned behaviors, engaging with lady staff members in talk, sharing dirty jokes, talks about nakedness and eventually ending up with blocking a female staff's passing way in the unit (Naveed and Alwani, 2010).Also, the results of this study is not in harmony with Çela (2015) who reported statistics from six European countries which showed a similar increasing trend in sexual jokes women frequently experienced.

In this study, a large proportion of the participants pointed out that they never experienced any kind of admiring makeup, hummed filthy songs, obnoxious and took interest in their personal life. This research is not in accordance with a study conducted by Aquino et al (2014) who discovered in their study that a female banker admitted that she usually gets an admiration of her physical appearance from her colleagues. The researchers further specified that the woman banker was admired and flirted of her dress and legs and with this kind of declarations, women seem to become aware of that women's worth is intensely related to their look in many societies. Moreover, the current study tried to find whether or not the verbal harassment exists at Kandahar workplaces and administrations. The findings of this study revealed the existence of verbal harassment at workplaces in Kandahar province, but at a low level. A small percentage of the participants in this study indicated no clue regarding verbal harassment. However, these findings are in contradiction with the findings discovered by Unnikrishnan et al.(2010) who carried out a study in India where the majority of the women were verbally harassed at workplaces. Similarly, with regards to verbal harassment, Burnes and Pope (2007) indicated in their study that majority of the common forms of harassment took place at workplaces was verbal harassment.

VII.   CONCLUSION

This study could be useful in determining women status in Kandahar environment. Verbal harassment which is offensive and obvious form of sexual harassment always takes shape by sending email, slurs, name-calling, comments, joking and requesting repeatedly sexual dating favors. It is a psychological and social problem of the society. Currently, most of the countries prevented this offensive and unwanted phenomenon in their countries. The purpose of the prevention is to provide equal

opportunities for both males and females. Afghanistan is also one of these countries which struggle for prohibition of all types of

harassment against women especially verbal harassment of women in working environments. Even this study found that verbal

harassment exists less than fifty percent, it is still a worrying phenomenon considering social and cultural sides in Kandahar. Yet,

survey evidence shows that verbal harassment workplace is common in Kandahar city. The result and researches show that

verbal harassment is silently endured by women in Afghanistan especially in Kandahar but the complaints are not registered by

the victims of harassment in responsible organizations and administrations.

VIII.   Recommendation

There is a need for further studies to be carried out and find out other types of harassment and their types. There should be

collective efforts by the government, employers and employees towards the elimination of this unreasonable phenomenon. More

importantly, there needs to be independent awareness of the individuals. Lastly, a legal remedy for avoiding this phenomenon is

to pressurize the administrations by the government and Human Resource for implementing Afghan constitution and law and

forming strict sustainable policy to those who are involved.

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