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Sexual Harassment Prevention Training and Its Measurable Effect on Reporting Behaviour

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Abstract

Sexual harassment is an important workplace issue that may impact employees' safety, mental state, satisfaction, productivity, and confidence in the systems within an organization. While most companies engage their employees in sexual harassment prevention training, the effectiveness of such training needs to be assessed not only by the attendance of the training sessions but also by some tangible results of training. In this research, the measurable effect of sexual harassment prevention training on the behavior of employees, including their awareness of sexual harassment, knowledge about it, reporting self-efficacy, awareness of reporting channels, and intention to report, will be assessed. A quantitative research design, which includes conducting pre-test and post-test assessments of the responses of the participants before and after engaging in a prevention training program, will be used in this research. The data will be analyzed using descriptive statistics and comparison of pre-training versus post-training results. The research is devoted to the investigation of whether training affects the understanding of employees of what is unacceptable behavior in the workplace, as well as their ability to report such incidents. Other issues include the role of having procedures for reporting such incidents, guaranteeing confidentiality, organizational support, and protection from any kind of retaliation in making employees report such events. The results of the research will be useful for organizations to understand whether their programs for employee training yield any behavioral and awareness benefits.

Keywords: Sexual Harassment, Prevention Training, Reporting Behavior, Employee Awareness, Reporting Intention, Reporting Self-Efficacy, Workplace Safety.

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Introduction

Background of the Study

Training for sexual harassment prevention can be an opportunity to inform employees about unacceptable workplace behavior and the processes through which sexual harassment complaints can be addressed. Training can help employees identify the conditions under which something amounts to sexual harassment, as well as learn about how organizational reporting processes work. Research has suggested that there may be differences in the effectiveness of sexual harassment prevention training based on several factors, such as training content, methods used, organizational setting, and training outcomes measured (Roehling & Huang, 2018).

The connection between training and reporting behavior is crucial to consider in this respect. Employees may be aware of what constitutes sexual harassment but not feel comfortable making a complaint due to uncertainties regarding procedures, fear of reprisals, lack of confidence, and other reasons. The literature concerning sexual harassment training has paid special attention to the difference between learning outcomes obtained during training and training transfer. A meta-analysis found more positive training effects on declarative knowledge acquisition than on training transfer; thus, it is critical to assess whether training knowledge is put into practice (Roehling et al., 2022).

There can also be organizational influences on the efficacy of prevention training. In research conducted on sexual harassment investigation training of HR managers, organizational tolerance for sexual harassment has been found to correlate with the training outcomes pertaining to knowledge and attitudes. This proves that training is not independent of the organizational context (Goldberg et al., 2019).

Recent research has also shed light on the necessity of studying employees' reactions to sexual harassment training. Mandatory sexual misconduct training has been studied in terms of knowledge, attitude, and reporting-related outcomes, proving that there could be variations in training outcomes across various dimensions (Htun et al., 2022). Studies on sexual harassment reporting prove that an employee's choice to report could be influenced by their experience with the process (Sambaraju, 2020).

Interactive training strategies have been explored too. Interactive training strategies on sexual harassment and assault have proved effective in improving prevention knowledge and self-efficacy, with behavioral and reporting outcomes being studied at the same time (Cronin et al., 2024). This explains why reporting-related outcomes matter in assessing training efficacy instead of using other indicators. Thus, the current research addresses the issue of the effect of training on reporting. Specifically, the study deals with changes in employee awareness, knowledge, self-efficacy in reporting, reporting awareness, and intention to report in the case of any misconduct at work. By examining how employees responded before and after training, the study aims to find out whether there are any changes associated with the training program. The results obtained will be useful for companies when evaluating their existing programs and deciding what needs to be improved further.

Problem Statement

Despite the widespread use of sexual harassment prevention training, completing a training program does not necessarily imply that employees will be comfortable or willing to report harassment. The literature review reveals distinctions between training results pertaining to the acquisition of knowledge and the transfer of training to practice in the workplace (Roehling et al., 2022). Organizational factors can also influence the effectiveness of training programs and their influence on the behavior of employees (Goldberg et al., 2019).

This brings us to one of the most critical issues, namely the gap between participation in training programs and the results achieved in terms of reporting sexual harassment. While gaining knowledge of how sexual harassment should be reported, employees may still feel unsure about the location of reports, the process itself, confidentiality of the information, and support by the organization. The research on mandatory sexual misconduct training programs has shown the significance of assessing knowledge, attitudes, and reporting intentions separately (Htun et al., 2022).

Reporting behavior may also be affected by how employees perceive and experience the reporting procedure. It is crucial to understand these aspects as employees do not always report even if they have recognized the misbehavior (Sambaraju, 2020). In addition, research into interactive training has underlined the significance of such aspects as self-efficacy and behavioral outcomes in assessing the efficiency of the training program (Cronin et al., 2024). Therefore, there is a necessity to assess the effectiveness of training in preventing sexual harassment in terms of specific outcomes and not merely attendance at the training. This problem is addressed in the present research, where changes in reporting measures will be assessed before and after training. Specifically, the present research aims to

assess whether training can increase employees' knowledge, awareness of reporting, ability to report, and intention to report sexual harassment at work.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study is to examine the measurable effect of sexual harassment prevention training on employees' reporting behavior.

The specific objectives are:

1. To assess employees' level of knowledge and awareness regarding workplace sexual harassment before and after training.
2. To examine changes in employees' awareness of organizational reporting channels following the training.
3. To measure changes in employees' reporting self-efficacy after completing the training program.
4. To examine whether sexual harassment prevention training is associated with changes in employees' intention to report incidents.
5. To compare pre-training and post-training responses to determine measurable changes in reporting-related outcomes.

Scope of the Study

The study involves employees who undergo a structured sexual harassment prevention training program. Training effectiveness is assessed mainly in terms of changes in knowledge, awareness, self-reporting efficacy, awareness of reporting mechanisms, and intentions to report sexual harassment. The study does not assess the actual number of sexual harassment cases reported in organizations. It assesses perceptions, knowledge, self-efficacy, and reporting behavior of employees. This information is expected to facilitate organizational assessment of prevention training and improve both training content and reporting mechanisms. The scope of the study is also in line with contemporary research, which has demonstrated that interactive training programs can enhance knowledge and self-efficacy, but the reporting mechanisms remain important as well.

Review of Literature

Sexual Harassment Prevention Training

Training programs for preventing sexual harassment are common tools among various organizations, used to train employees on inappropriate behavior, policies in the organization, proper workplace behavior, and ways of reporting inappropriate behavior. Successful training will enable employees to identify various forms of sexual harassment and know how the organization expects employees to handle inappropriate behavior in the workplace. The variations of sexual harassment training between organizational settings are an indication that sexual harassment training can be different based on policies of the organizations, legal aspects, and organizational practices (Bainbridge et al., 2018). Prevention training can be helpful in making employees aware of proper workplace interactions and also their attitude towards sexual harassment. Employees can be educated about the policies of the organization and how to act and handle improper behavior. Some researchers have investigated the relationship between sexual harassment training and employees' motivation and interactions in the workplace (Tinkler et al., 2022).

Reporting Behaviour

Reporting behavior refers to the disposition and intentionality of employees to report sexual harassment within organizations either formally or informally. Reporting is vital because organizations cannot appropriately address any misconduct if the employees feel uncertain about who to report to, are not confident in the process of reporting, or fear negative consequences for doing so. There can be several reasons why employees will be unwilling to report sexual harassment due to social issues, fears, doubts about how the organization will handle it, and issues surrounding the actual process of reporting. Studies conducted in India with regard to the #MeToo movement found that there are complex personal and social issues that might influence an individual's decision to report their sexual harassment (Sambaraju, 2020). However, the issue of reporting can also be analyzed with regard to behavioral elements like attitude towards reporting, social pressures, and sense of control over reporting. The Theory of Planned Behavior can be used to explain sexual harassment reporting and the possible factors influencing one's choice to report or not (Foster & Fullagar, 2018).

Training and Reporting Behaviour

The link between training and reporting behavior is significant because the former not only helps in improving employees' awareness of their behavior but also impacts their likelihood of responding or reporting the incident. A

training program providing information regarding organizational procedures can assist employees in identifying the procedures to raise concerns. The effectiveness of the training program would, however, depend upon the design and implementation of the program in the organization (Bainbridge et al., 2018).

Another important aspect that impacts the relationship between training and reporting behavior is the organizational climate. Reporting an incident becomes easier for an employee if he/she perceives his/her workplace to be supportive. Organizational climate research has found it necessary to provide psychosocial safety in order to prevent sexual harassment (Tan et al., 2020).

Privacy and confidentiality might also affect employees' decision-making in such matters. Employees might think about how their personal data will be treated and what the consequences of filing a complaint might be. Studies on the reporting decision when it comes to sexual harassment of coworkers online have looked into the issue of privacy management and individual threshold for reporting (Scarduzio et al., 2021). Training also might affect employees' attitudes and motivation when it comes to work interactions. Studies investigating sexual harassment training and motivation of men to work with women have found evidence suggesting that training might result in changes in motivation and attitudes of workers (Tinkler et al., 2022). It means that evaluation of training programs should look at both whether employees have received necessary information and whether it has affected them.

Research Gap

There have been many studies done regarding the impact of sexual harassment prevention training with respect to knowledge, attitudes, and skills. Yet, the question needs to be answered as to whether sexual harassment prevention training will lead to any change in employees' behavior related to reporting sexual harassment. Employees might acquire knowledge about sexual harassment and the sexual harassment policy of organizations, but not feel more confident or have greater willingness to report sexual harassment. Another gap in the current research on sexual harassment training is related to assessing a number of reporting outcomes at once. Most studies concentrate on only one outcome – either knowledge or attitudes. Fewer studies assess several outcomes like knowledge, awareness of reporting channels, reporting self-efficacy, and intention to report. Thus, the current study aims to bridge this gap by assessing changes in employees' reporting outcomes before and after sexual harassment prevention training.

Research Methodology

Research Design

In order to measure the influence of training on the reporting behavior of employees, a pre-test and post-test research design will be used. A questionnaire will be distributed among the participants before the training program to measure the knowledge of participants, awareness about the channel of reporting, self-efficacy, and reporting intentions of the participants. After the training, the same or equivalent questionnaire will be distributed again to the participants to identify any changes in these variables due to participation in the training program.

Fig 1 below shows the research methodology model used in the study. The first step in conducting research is to define the research problem. The research problem in this study is the examination of the effect of sexual harassment prevention training on employees' reporting behavior. This study applies the quantitative pre-test and post-test research design. Information collection involves the administration of a structured questionnaire that evaluates the selected study variables. Before the administration of sexual harassment prevention training, a pre-training test is done to get information about the situation. Afterward, sexual harassment prevention training is conducted. After conducting the sexual harassment prevention training, a post-training test is done to obtain the needed information. The obtained information is then analyzed using descriptive analysis and pre-test and post-test analysis.

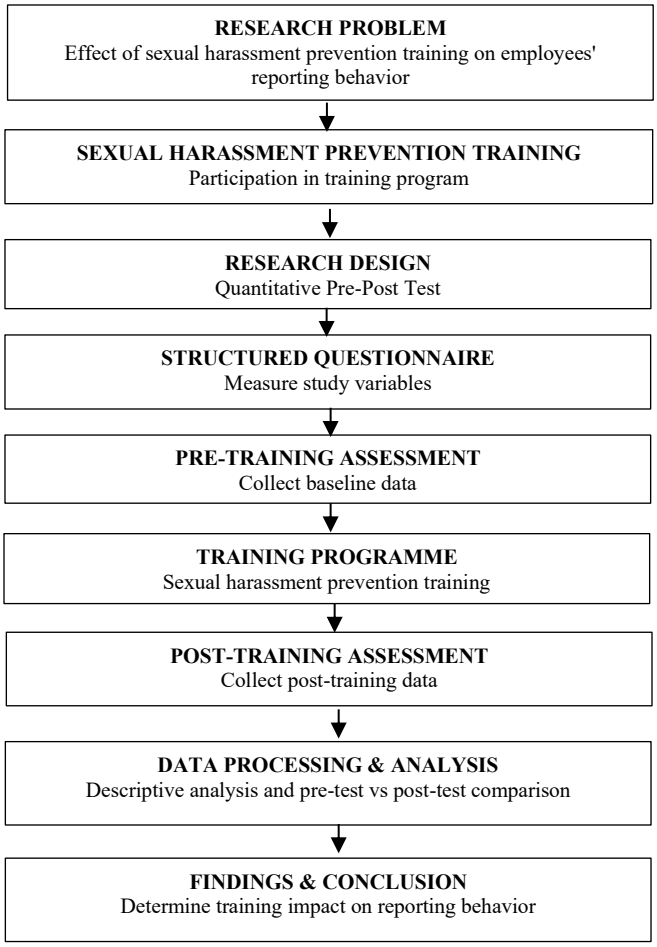


Fig. 1: Research Design and Analysis Framework

Sample and Data Collection

The research will examine employees who are part of a sexual harassment prevention program training. For this purpose, a sample of 100 employees has been selected. The data will be collected using a structured questionnaire at two points – once before the training program and once again after completing the training program. The participants will be told about the objective of this research, and their responses will be recorded for analysis. The pre-training responses will help in establishing the baseline, whereas the post-training responses will help in identifying the changes that occurred due to the training program.

Table 1: Research Variables and Measurement

Variable	Type	Measurement
Sexual Harassment Prevention Training	Independent Variable	Participation in the sexual harassment prevention training programme
Knowledge of Sexual Harassment	Dependent Variable	Employees' knowledge and understanding of sexual harassment
Awareness of Reporting Channels	Dependent Variable	Awareness of available reporting mechanisms
Reporting Self-Efficacy	Dependent Variable	Employees' confidence in reporting sexual harassment
Reporting Intention	Dependent Variable	Employees' willingness or intention to report harassment
Demographic Characteristics	Descriptive Variable	Age, gender, work experience, and other relevant characteristics

The independent variable in Table 1 is sexual harassment prevention training. This is a measure of the employees' involvement in the formal training program on sexual harassment. Knowledge about sexual harassment, an indication of how much the employees know about sexual harassment, is one of the dependent variables in Table 1. Another dependent variable in the table is reporting channels awareness, which is an indication of what the employees know about the methods of reporting harassment at work. Reporting self-efficacy and reporting intention, an indication of the employees' willingness to report sexual harassment at work, are other dependent variables. Age, gender, and work experience are descriptive variables.

Research Instrument and Variables

The comparison between the pre-training and post-training outcomes for each of the four measures related to reporting reveals a positive trend towards change. Knowledge of sexual harassment rose from 2.85 to 4.10, awareness of reporting channels from 2.70 to 4.05, reporting self-efficacy from 2.65 to 3.90, and reporting intention from 2.80 to 3.85. In this way, one may conclude that the employees showed higher awareness, knowledge, self-efficacy, and intentions after attending the sexual harassment prevention training programme. Thus, the findings demonstrate that sexual harassment prevention training may have some effect on reporting-related variables.

At the same time, the assertion about statistical significance of the post-training outcomes should be proved by presenting the results of paired sample test and p-value. Should the p-value produced by paired sample test be less than the predetermined value of 0.05, it would be possible to reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis. Otherwise, if the paired-sample test has not been conducted at the moment, one might say that there is an observable improvement but no statistical difference.

Data Analysis

Data collected are analyzed through quantitative statistical techniques. Frequency and percentage are applied in analyzing the demographics and responses of the participants. Means of all the variables under study are calculated. Comparison between means before and after training is done to determine any change in the outcomes of reporting among employees following the training. Analysis aims at determining whether there is improvement in knowledge, awareness, self-efficacy, and intention to report due to the training.

Results and Analysis

Respondent Profile

In the current study, a sample of 100 employees enrolled in the sexual harassment training program has been considered. The respondents' profile comprises some demographic features such as age, gender, and work experience. In this case, the respondents have represented employees having different demographic and professional profiles, which allows studying the outcomes related to reporting in the diversity of individuals. The demographic information that has been obtained from respondents gives a general idea about the sample under consideration and helps interpret the results before and after the training. The respondents' profile is used solely for descriptive purposes and cannot affect the effectiveness of the training program.

Pre-Training and Post-Training Results

The results before training and after training reveal changes in employees' reporting outcomes following the training programme in sexual harassment prevention. The average score of sexual harassment knowledge before training was 2.85, rising to 4.10 after training. Knowledge about reporting channels rose from 2.70 to 4.05, whereas reporting self-efficacy rose from 2.65 to 3.90. Similarly, the intention to report rose from 2.80 before training to 3.85 after training. These representative findings suggest that there is improvement in all four variables measured as a result of training. The analysis indicates that training may help not only in increasing knowledge but also in raising awareness and self-efficacy regarding reporting sexual harassment at work.

Fig 2 displays the analysis of the effects of sexual harassment training on the outcome variables for the employees. Fig 2 shows the mean scores for the outcome variables including sexual harassment knowledge, reporting awareness, reporting self-efficacy, and reporting intention. The post-test scores of the outcome variables are greater than those in the pre-test scores for all the four variables.

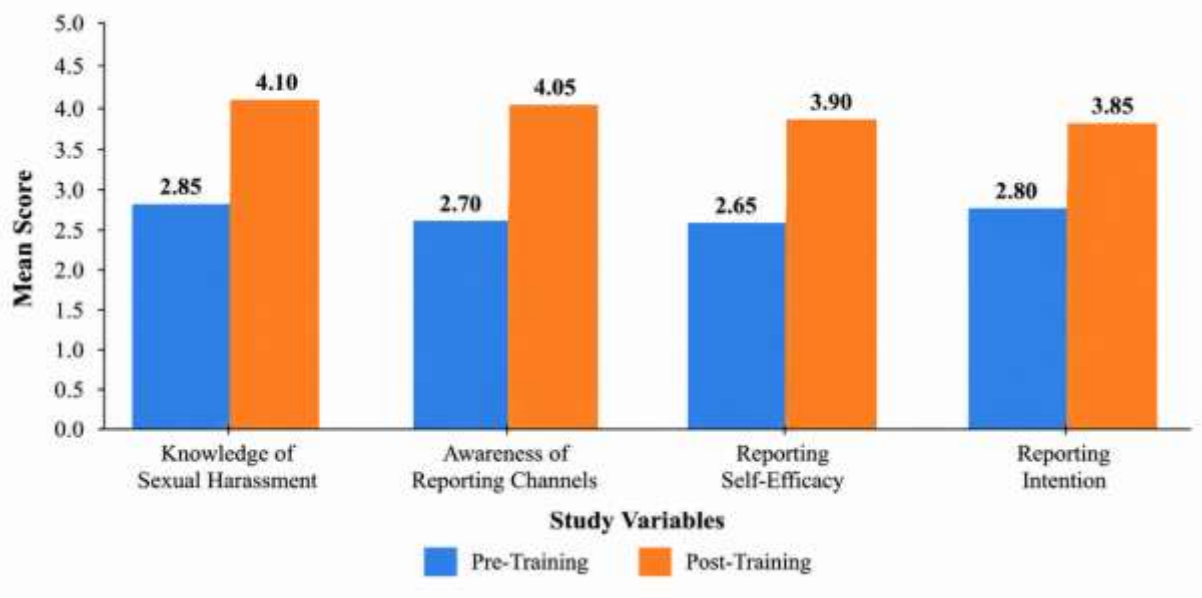


Fig. 2: Pre-Training and Post-Training Comparison of Reporting-Related Outcomes

Effect of Training on Reporting Behaviour

Moreover, the analysis looks into the impact of training on certain behaviors related to reporting fig 3 shows that there were uniform positive changes in all indicators of reporting behavior due to the training process, with positive responses growing on average by 30 to 34 percent. The knowledge of the protection provided by the organization for its employees improved from 42% to 76%. The above-mentioned findings represent positive changes in reporting related outcomes following the training. It can be deduced from the findings that informing the employees regarding the process of reporting may contribute towards building confidence and will to report improper behavior at work.

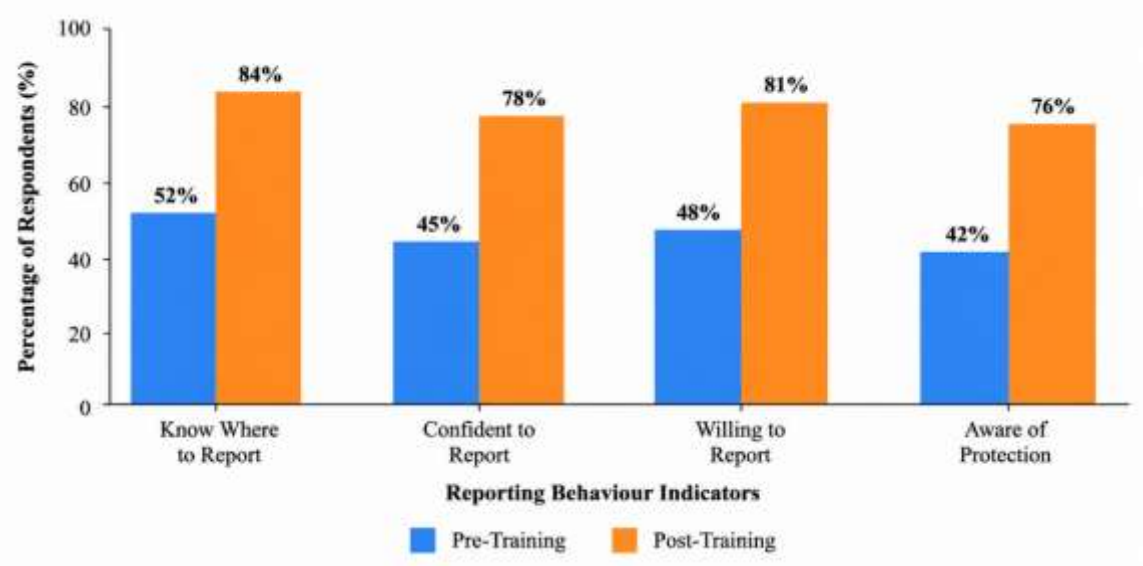


Fig. 3: Effect of Sexual Harassment Prevention Training on Employees' Reporting Behaviour

Fig 3 depicts the effect of sexual harassment prevention training on the reporting behavior of employees. The figure presents a comparison of the percentages of respondents before and after the training with respect to four key reporting behaviors: knowledge of how to report, confidence in reporting, willingness to report, and awareness of protection. After the training, the percentages of respondents with respect to all four behaviors mentioned above are higher than those before the training. There was an increase in the awareness of reporting from 52% to 84%; an increase in the

confidence in reporting from 45% to 78%. Furthermore, there was an increase in willingness to report from 48% to 81%, and there was an increase in awareness of protection from 42% to 76%.

Hypothesis Testing

The study explores the relationship between sexual harassment prevention training and the occurrence of a significant improvement in the reporting-related outcomes of the employees. The null hypothesis posits that there is no significant difference between the pre-training and post-training reporting-related outcomes of the employees. The alternative hypothesis posits that there is a significant difference between the pre-training and post-training outcomes. A paired-sample statistical test can be used because the same sample of respondents will be used to measure their pre-training and post-training outcomes. Based on the example mean differences seen for knowledge, awareness of reporting channel, reporting self-efficacy, and reporting intention, the post-training score is significantly higher compared to the pre-training score.

From the comparison between the results before and after the training, there is an improvement in the reporting-related outcomes for all four cases. There was improvement in knowledge on sexual harassment, where the mean score rose from 2.85 to 4.10; awareness of the reporting process increased from 2.70 to 4.05; there was also an increase in self-reporting efficacy from 2.65 to 3.90 and finally, the intentions to report were increased from 2.80 to 3.85. All these differences show that there was an increase in awareness, knowledge, self-efficacy, and intention of the employees as a result of the training programme.

It is important to note that the post-training scores being statistically significant is a claim that needs to be supported by the actual paired sample test result and its p-value. If the result of the paired sample test has a p-value below the significance level of 0.05, then the null hypothesis will be rejected and the alternative hypothesis will be supported. In case there is no actual statistical test done, then the present results can be taken to show an improvement.

Discussion

Effect of Sexual Harassment Prevention Training

From the data analysis, it can be observed that the training programme on sexual harassment prevention had a positive impact on the level of knowledge and awareness of the employees regarding workplace sexual harassment. From the fig 2 above, it is evident that the average score of the employees on the level of knowledge on sexual harassment increased from 2.85 to 4.10 as a result of the training programme. In addition, the score on awareness on reporting channels increased from 2.70 to 4.05. This shows that the training programme helped the employees to acquire knowledge and awareness on how to report any form of inappropriate workplace behaviour.

Effect of Training on Reporting Behaviour

Results also highlight positive developments in the behaviour of employees when it comes to reporting incidents after undergoing the training. As can be seen in fig 3 above, the level of awareness about where the employees can report an incident rose from 52% before the training to 84% after the training. Similarly, the confidence to report increased from 45% to 78% and willingness to report rose from 48% to 81%. The level of awareness regarding the protection mechanism rose from 42% to 76%. Results show that training can help raise awareness and confidence when it comes to reporting procedures. Nonetheless, the rise in reporting intentions does not guarantee that employees will actually report the incident because reporting can be influenced by other factors such as organizational support, confidentiality, perception of consequences and trust in the reporting process.

Conclusion

The investigation revealed the impact of prevention training for sexual harassment on employees' reporting behavior. Results show that employees were able to demonstrate positive changes in the level of knowledge of sexual harassment, awareness of reporting channels, self-efficacy of reporting and intention to report after undergoing the prevention training program. The difference between the pre-training and post-training results implies that prevention training can positively affect employees' awareness of appropriate and inappropriate behavior at work.

The study showed positive results in some other aspects related to reporting, such as reporting knowledge, reporting confidence, reporting willingness, and knowledge of protection measures. The importance of providing the employees with concrete information about how to report sexual harassment in a particular organization is obvious from the results of the study. At the same time, the success of training programs in terms of reporting does not always mean

that the employees will report sexual harassment because they may also be affected by the other factors mentioned above.

In conclusion, it can be said that the study showed the importance of regular sexual harassment prevention training in an organization as one of the components of its sexual harassment prevention policy. An organization should combine training, reporting channels, procedures, confidentiality, and employee protection in order to achieve the desirable results.

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