

Countering Harassment in the Workplace Seminar Report

Seminar on

Countering Harassment in the Workplace

Pakistan Human Resource Network

In collaboration with

School of Politics and International Relations

This report is authored by the School of Politics and International Relations

Introduction

The School of Politics and International Relations hosted a delegation from the Pakistan Human Resource Network (PHRN), in collaboration with the Shaheed Bhutto Foundation (SBF) for a seminar on countering workplace harassment. This one-day seminar, sponsored by SBF and the School of Politics and International Relations, aimed to highlight various types of workplace harassment and the best strategies to counter such behaviors.

The two-hour seminar engaged about 100 students, providing them with valuable insights and education on how to enhance their workplace experience by recognizing and addressing harassment effectively.

The exercise was part of a series of seminars conducted at universities around Islamabad by PHRN. The project's aim is to educate students about workplace harassment, equipping them with the knowledge and tools to navigate their professional lives. By raising awareness and providing practical strategies, the seminars intend to help students avoid victimization and better prepare for their future careers.

In particular, PHRN is hoping to target women in these campuses to educate them on the steps that they can take and to connect them with a network of legal experts who are willing to assist such women on the legal front. In this regard, PHRN has signed a Memorandum of Association with the Islamabad High court Bar Association where a group of lawyers will be providing legal help to the effected women. The seminar was attended by the IHCBA president. The detailed agenda for this seminar can be located in

Annex-A

Major Events

In this section we will be looking at the major events that took place during this seminar. This will help the reader form an understanding of the proceedings of this seminar and the debate that took place.

1. Dr. Saweeda

Dr Saweeda opened the seminar by highlighting the importance of women in our society, how they constitute a major position in our society and the steps needed to enhance their experience in our country.

2. Dr. Nadeem Mirza - Director SPIR

Dr. Nadeem Mirza welcomed the guests and outlined the measures SPIR has implemented to combat harassment. He emphasized that SPIR has a robust system for addressing harassment issues. The Student Affairs In charge for harassment is available to discuss matters confidentially, and complaints are handled both at the departmental level and by the university harassment committee. The primary objective is clear: harassment is a red line, and strict action will be taken against it. The principles of dignity, honor, and respect are paramount, and SPIR is committed to protecting them.

Dr. Mirza also highlighted the importance of clearly defining what constitutes harassment and what does not. Educating the community about these definitions is essential. He stressed the need for everyone to come together to discourage such behavior, creating a safer and more respectful environment for all.

3. Mr. Asif Khan - CEO SBF

Mr. Asif Khan introduced the Shaheed Bhutto Foundation (SBF), established in 2004 as part of Benazir Bhutto's legacy, dedicated to advocating for women's, youth, and minority rights. The speakers emphasized the persistent and pervasive nature of harassment issues and highlighted SBF's ongoing commitment to advancing women's rights.

The discussion critically examined the Harassment Law of 2012, noting that its practical application remains inadequate. The speakers called for reforms and transformations to enhance the law's effectiveness in protecting victims and deterring perpetrators.

Mr. Asif Khan also traced the history of women's rights, referencing the struggles in Britain and India before partition. It underscored the dichotomy of women's struggles in both the personal and public spheres and highlighted the significant role women play in development. The speakers articulated how Islam supports women's progress and the broad scope of transformation achievable through women's empowerment.

Prominent figures such as Mehran Baloch and Syeda Sherbano were mentioned, further illustrating the diverse and impactful roles women have played and continue to play in advocating for their rights and contributing to societal development.

4. Riasat Ali Azad - President IHCBA

During the seminar, Mr, Riasat Ali criticized the Harassment Law of 2012, highlighting several bureaucratic procedures that hinder its efficient implementation. They pointed

out financial issues and social taboos that discourage individuals from filing harassment cases, creating significant barriers for victims seeking justice.

The discussion included various cases where women suffered due to harassment, illustrating how the pervasive social taboo often leads to women being dismissed from their jobs after lodging complaints. This outcome is contrary to the law's initial intent, which is to protect victims, not penalize them.

Mr, Riasat Ali also addressed the legal processes involved in harassment cases, emphasizing how these processes can be burdensome and counterproductive. These challenges ultimately deter victims from coming forward and seeking the protection and justice they deserve, highlighting the need for reform and transformation to enhance the effectiveness of the law.



Figure 1 Riasat Ali Azad, President IHCBA speaking in the seminar

5. Ms. Mehar Jami - FOSPAH

Ms. Mehar Jami highlighted the need for significant improvements and amendments to the Harassment Law of 2010. They pointed out that Section 509, which criminalizes harassment, is not easily accessible for women, as navigating the court system can be challenging. Additionally, the accused often benefit from legal loopholes.

The speakers discussed the role of the Federal Ombudsperson Secretariat for Protection against Harassment (FOSPAH), which provides expedited justice within 90 days. They revisited the definition of harassment, explaining that differing standards of sensitivity can complicate its interpretation and enforcement.

The types of harassment were categorized as follows:

1. Typical harassment
Involves demands for sexual favors.
2. Digital harassment
Includes sending explicit pictures or messages.

Gender-based discrimination is also addressed by FOSPAH, which considers students among those eligible for evaluation and protection under its jurisdiction. The seminar highlighted numerous amendments, particularly since 2022, that have strengthened the law and expanded the scope of protections offered by FOSPAH.



Figure 2 Ms. Mehar Jami from FOSPAH speaking in the seminar.

6. Ms. Hafsa Bukhari - Adv Supreme Court

Praised the arrangement of the seminar. Spoke that the most important loophole is the lack of social acceptance of women in society. Narrated events from the 2013 law which faced a lot of hinderance from the lawmakers during its passing. Said that there are a lot of law to protect women, however these are toothless laws which realistically have no real impact.

Laws are there to protect women, but these laws are never implemented. There are also laws in place to make committees to address this harassment with women as permanent members in institutions, however, they are seldom generated or implemented. Harassment laws are quasi civil and quasi criminal depending on the situation.



Figure 3 Ms. Hafsa Bukhaki, Advocate Supreme Court of Paksitan speaking on countering harassment at workplace.

7. Mian Zahid - Human Rights Council of Pakistan

Mian Zahid addressed the dynamics of workplace harassment, emphasizing the crucial roles that colleagues and supervisors play in supporting victims. The speakers highlighted the importance of understanding and adhering to the organization's rules and regulations, particularly for new employees, to distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable behavior.

Mian Zahid underscored the importance of supporting and advocating for victims to prevent a chain reaction of harassment. They emphasized the necessity of follow-up actions to ensure that those who complained against are appropriately dealt with. This proactive approach is essential to create a safe and respectful workplace environment where harassment is not tolerated, and justice is served.



Figure 4 Mr Mian Zahid, Human Rights Council of Pakistan speaking at the seminar.

8. Farhat Ullah Babar - Former Senator

Praised Quaid-I-Azam University for arranging this seminar on the fascinating topic. He spoke on the fact that laws are not implemented in the way they should have been. He said he experienced a case of harassment while working on the syndicate of the university. He spoke of the impact that cases of sexual harassment have on both men and

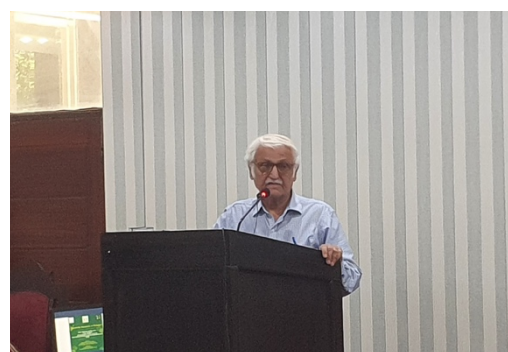


Figure 5 Mr. Farhat Ullah Babar, Former Senator of Pakistan, speaking on countering harassment at Workplace.

women. The taboo associated with harassment is such great that people avoid participating in this.

He narrated the tale of the evolution of the 2012 law where the original law which shared dynamics between employee and employer evolved to include relationship between professor and student. He narrated how the laws go through different phases before implementation is successful through sharing his own tale of the 2012 law. There also needs to be a strict monitoring and evaluation of the degree to which these laws are implemented.

9. Ms. Maria Rafiq - President PHRN

Thanked the speakers and highlighted the importance of working in favor of women rights and the potential impact that such movements can have. Ms. Maria concluded the session and highlighted the important position that people around the impacted people have in terms of providing support to the impacted people.



Figure 6 Ms Maria, President of PHRN concluding the session.

Way forward

The recent seminar on countering workplace harassment is a commendable initiative that addresses a critical issue within the university and beyond. To build on this positive step, similar seminars should be organized across various departments to educate students about harassment and the steps to mitigate such situations.

Dr. Nadeem Mirza's suggestion of conducting a series of seminars with speakers from gender studies and inviting field leaders will significantly contribute to this cause. Furthermore, Mr. Asif highlighted that Pakistan needs more efforts to improve the status of women in society. Following Mr. Riasat Ali's recommendation, promoting women's rights and providing them with a larger platform is essential.

Empowering women and fostering social change are crucial to addressing harassment. Efforts should focus on breaking the taboo surrounding this issue to ensure fair trials and encourage more people to come forward and report harassment. By doing so, we can create a safer and more inclusive environment for everyone.

Annex-A: Seminar Agenda

QUAID-I-AZAM UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF POLITICS AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

NO.SPIR/2024-

22 May 2024

SBF, PHRN, SPIR SEMINAR

“Protection Against Harassment at Work Places”

Date	23 May 2024 (Thursday)
Time	10:30 A.M.
Venue	SPIR Seminar Hall, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad

AGENDA

10.30-10:35	Recitation of Holy Quran
10:36-10:41	Welcome note by Dr Muhammad Nadeem Mirza Director School of Politics and International Relations
10:42-10:52	Address by Mr.Asif Khan CEO, Shaheed Bhutto Foundation
10:53-11:08	Address by Ms. Mehr Jamy (Law Officer) FOSPAH
11:09-11:14	Address by Mr. Riasat Ali Azad (President) Islamabad High Court Bar Association
11:15-11:20	Address by Ms. Hifsa Bukhari Advocate Supreme Court/Former Assistant Attorney General of Pakistan
11:21-11:30	Address by Mr. Muhammad Awais Anjum, Assistant Director Ministry of Human Rights
11:31-11:40	Address by Mr. Mian Zahid Sultan (President) Human Rights Council Pakistan
11:41-11:55	Address by Senator Farhatullah Babar
11:56- 12:00	Vote of Thanks by Ms. Maria Rafiq, President Pakistan Human Resource Network

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Director
School of Politics and IR
22/05/24

Distribution:

- Dean F.S.S.
- All Faculty Members (SPIR)
- All MPhil & PhD Scholars (SPIR)
- All Departments/Schools/Centers of Social Sciences (Faculty)
- Security Officer (For Security Arrangement)
- SVC
- PRO

Annex-B: Seminar Agenda



"Countering Harassment at Workplace"

Date: Thursday, 23 May, 2024
Time: 10:30am
Venue: Quaid-e-Azam University
Dept: School of Politics and International Relation
(SPIR)

Organizers:
Shaheed Bhutto Foundation (SBF)
Pakistan Human Resource Network (PHRN)
School of Politics and International Relation (QAU)

Collaborators:
Ministry of Human Rights
Islamabad High Court Bar Association (IHCBA)

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